

# *Sin Coyote Ni Patrón: Why the “Migrant Network” Fails to Explain International Migration*

Fred Krissman

*University of California, San Diego*

The “migrant network” concept cannot explain large-scale international migratory flows. This article goes beyond a critique of its ahistorical and *post factum* nature. First, I argue that restrictions on its composition and functions also render the migrant network unable to explain why such migratory flows continue or expand even further. Second, a review of five studies illustrates why this concept, the propositions on which it rests, the methods it employs, and the conclusions that it imparts must be reconsidered. Third, the network analysis literature, along with my research data from the Mexico-U.S. case, suggest an alternative approach.

“International migration networks” include those from the labor-sending hometowns who are emphasized in migrant network studies, as well as a variety of other actors based in the militarized border zone and the labor-receiving regions. I conclude that accurate studies of migration must include the employers that demand new immigrant workers, as well as the labor smugglers and all other actors that respond to this demand. Immigration studies that fail to do so provide erroneous analyses which camouflage the activities of many network actors, and furnish an academic fig leaf behind which unintended, counterproductive, and even lethal public policies have been implemented.

By and large, the effective units of migration were (and are) neither individuals nor households but sets of people linked by acquaintance, kinship, and work experience who *somehow* incorporated American destinations into the mobility alternatives they considered when they reached critical decision points in their individual or collective lives (Tilly, 1990:84, emphasis added).

[Migrant n]etwork connections constitute *a form* of social capital that people can draw upon to gain access to foreign employment (Massey *et al.*, 1993:448, emphasis added)

A review of the immigration and network analysis literatures, as well as my field data, led me to conclude that the “migrant network” is inadequate to study international migration. The epigraphs above inadvertently reveal the feebleness of the model used by most immigration scholars. Advocates (Massey *et al.*, 1993:448; Massey *et al.*, 1994:728) concede that the migrant

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network cannot explain how migration flows originate, rendering it both ahistorical and *post factum*. Charles Tilly granted as much by using the word “somehow.” But undue restrictions on its composition and functions also distort analyses of how migration flows expand and endure over time. The sole “form” of social capital considered by Douglas Massey and colleagues is one proof of my contention that using the migrant network concept led immigration studies astray.

<sup>3</sup> Most immigration researchers have excluded a variety of actors involved in the origination and perpetuation of migratory flows from data collection, analytical assessment, theoretical construction, and/or public policy promotion. These actors have been ignored because the ubiquitous migrant network concept focuses on symmetrical relationships among the natives of the same labor-sending hometowns. However, the assumption that employers, labor smugglers, and their myriad assistants are not active participants in international migration networks is no longer shared by federal officials, the media, or even all immigration researchers (*e.g.*, *Los Angeles Times*, “Nefarious Role for Employers,” November 27, 1998; *New York Times*, “Under the Counter, Grocer Provided Workers,” January 24, 2002; Spener, 2001; Peck, 2000). Similarly, a growing number of scholars (*i.e.*, Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Mahler, 1995; Menjívar, 2000) have disputed the notion that network exchanges are necessarily reciprocal.

The failure to consider all the actors and actions that help migration networks develop is particularly egregious in those studies that claim to ascertain the principal causes of international migration and/or recommend policies to regulate these flows.<sup>1</sup> Scholars of community studies were cautioned long ago to include all critical linkages to the larger society (Wolf, 1966a), while network researchers were warned to define boundaries based on the topic studied and functions based on analyses that include all relevant exchanges (Mitchell, 1969:40). The migrant network concept ignores all of these guidelines. As a result, assumptions and hypotheses about the migratory process have gone unchallenged, important research data have gone uncollected and/or unreported, and public policies with unintended, coun-

<sup>1</sup>Escobar *et al.* (1998), Singer and Massey (1998), Massey and Espinosa (1997), Massey *et al.* (1998, 2002), Hatton and Williamson (1994), Cornelius *et al.* (1998), Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub (1991), Fawcett (1989) and Escobar *et al.* (1987) all used the migrant network concept in their attempts to explain, and/or propose policies to curb, international migration; as a result, non-hometown actors were partly subordinated to, or wholly ignored in favor of, a narrow focus on migrants and others from their hometowns.

terproductive, and even life-threatening consequences have been at least tacitly supported by the findings of immigration scholars.

In this article, the current paradigm is reconsidered and an alternative approach proposed. The article first outlines and critiques the migrant network concept. I argue that it is too heavily weighed toward labor “supply-side” factors (*e.g.*, Massey 1993:463) due to a narrow focus on labor-sending hometowns and the migrants originating in them. The next section reviews five studies that compromised basic premises of the migrant network concept so that the researchers could incorporate all of their fieldwork data. Labor “demand-side” variables (*i.e.*, Piore, 1979), non-hometown actors, and complex socioeconomic exchanges within migration networks are all documented here. However, none of these studies directly challenged the efficacy of the migrant network model. Therefore, the following section offers an alternative approach, which includes all of the actors in, and functions of, the networks used by international migrants. Finally, I conclude by noting how the migrant network concept has provided cover to those who have promoted public policies that effectively punish the principal victims of global socioeconomic integration.

### *THE MIGRANT NETWORK MODEL VERSUS LABOR DEMAND*

Peoples around the world construct elaborate systems of social support – commonly referred to as “networks” of one sort or another – to meet many human needs. Networks are critical to those living close to the economic margin and/or lacking access to the services often provided by formal institutions (*e.g.*, Roschelle, 1997). Even in advanced industrialized nations, the marginalized and poor rely on networks (*e.g.*, Stack, 1974), while around the world network ties help the middle class to gain upward mobility (*e.g.*, Granovetter, 1973, 1982) and the elite to further concentrate their control over strategic resources (*e.g.*, Lomnitz and Perez-Lizaur, 1987).

Different kinds of networks have diverse membership criteria (Foster and Seidman, 1989). While kinship ties may be required to access many networks, relationship webs also link unrelated individuals. Whereas informal networks are elaborated in a largely unconscious way in the course of everyday life, official registries document the relative few who choose to join formal organizations (*e.g.*, Cummings, 1980). Networks are extended by individuals who nurture “weak” ties, which can be activated through a grapevine of intermediaries or via chance encounters at the neighborhood

pool hall, local bus stop, and on the job, and which can be strengthened through formal religious and secular rituals (Wilson, 1998). Strict adherence to the “strong” ties of a closed community can keep a network endogamous, but may render it too isolated or even maladaptive (*e.g.*, Wolf, 1957; Heer, 2002; Gurak and Caces, 1992).

While there is a wide diversity of networks, there are only two ways that networks have been operationalized for research purposes. Most references to networks are metaphorical, amenable to purely descriptive narratives (Mitchell, 1969:2). “The network” as a vague organizational structure has great intuitive appeal, and the concept is frequently employed to discuss general patterns of largely idealized social behavior (Leinhardt, 1977:xiii). The media, for example, has invoked the network concept in this manner to describe terrorist cells, black-market smugglers, internet services, and even the rise of complex societies (*see Los Angeles Times*, “Terrorism: It Takes a Network,” August 25, 2003, “A Theory of World History Based on Our Desire to Network,” April 30, 2003, “The Personal Links of the Social Networking Sites,” December 29, 2003; *New York Times*, “A Georgia Pipeline for Drugs and Immigrants,” November 16, 2002).

Metaphorical networks can be identified by their simple structural hierarchies, within which symmetrical exchanges are assumed to predominate among the participants. Gurak and Caces (1992:161) found that “. . . most scholars of migration networks focus narrowly on encapsulated kinship networks, reciprocal exchange networks, and . . . geographically bounded groups and communities” (*see also* Goss and Lindquist, 1995:330–331). However, the structures of real-life networks and the nature of the exchanges among the members of those networks are not self-evident. Accurate network analyses cannot be derived from metaphors.

Fortunately, a host of interdisciplinary scholars have developed a variety of methods to investigate a wide range of networks during the past five decades (*e.g.*, Scott, 2000; Degenne and Forse, 1999; Rogers and Vertovec, 1995). These efforts are collectively known as “network analysis.” Boyd (1989:654) urged immigration scholars to examine and incorporate relevant aspects of that literature into the then-emerging migrant network concept, but that call has gone unheeded. Although network analysts have studied migration (*e.g.*, Mitchell, 1969; McNamara, 1980; Werbner, 1990), there is a dearth of references to network analysis in the immigration literature (Gurak and Caces, 1992:160). In this article I will compare the distinctive methods and divergent findings of network analysts with those of immigration scholars.

The migrant network concept did not spring from network analysis, but from social adaptation studies that examined the effects of massive population shifts within Third World nations after World War II (Gurak and Caces, 1992:153). Early studies (*e.g.*, Lewis, 1959) argued that rural migrants became anomic loners in urban metropolises, stuck in “cultures of poverty.” Later research (*e.g.*, Arizpe, 1978; Kemper, 1975; Orellana, 1973) countered this view, noting that migrants manage in the cities by adapting the support systems that aided them in their rural hometowns. Thus, this network concept arose from what has evolved into a debate about “agency” (Scott, 1984). While the subjects of these studies were recent arrivals from the rural hinterland, the migratory process was largely incidental to the original discussion. Furthermore, these migrants remained inside their nations of origin. While both internal and international migration are worthy of study, the networks that would facilitate each type of journey are different in their origins, composition, and functions (Gurak and Caces, 1992:152–153, 164–165). Nevertheless, the network concept used to analyze the adaptation of rural migrants to Third World cities was borrowed to analyze the much more complex treks of international migrants.

The case for using the migrant network concept in an international context was laid out in *Return to Aztlan* (Massey *et al.*, 1987; *see* Mines, 1981, for an early attempt to describe these migration networks). This book and its approach have been much lauded elsewhere. I will focus on several shortcomings which have been largely overlooked to the present day, including assumptions about the composition and functions of the networks used by international migrants.

I note at the outset that two of Douglas Massey’s publications examined the roles of employers and government officials in the development of international migratory flows (on employers, *see* Reichert and Massey, 1980; on the State, *see* Mines and Massey, 1985). A recent book discussed labor demand factors such as recruitment (Massey *et al.*, 2002). Socioeconomic exchanges with non-hometown actors were described in another (Massey *et al.*, 1998). However, none of these observations has led to modifications in the migrant network concept nor in the assumptions, hypotheses, methods, or conclusions associated with it. Indeed, I draw here on Massey’s oeuvre, particularly *Return to Aztlan*, to illustrate a paradox deplored by Jon Goss and Bruce Lindquist (1995:337): scholars have failed to systematically tie employers and their recruitment agents to their analyses of international migration even though these actors are well documented. I begin by reviewing the bases upon which the migrant network concept was built.

What I refer to hereafter as the “Massey model” was derived from six principles (Massey *et al.*, 1987:4–6). First, migration abroad began only if a number of complementary structural changes occurred in both the labor-sending and labor-receiving nations. Second, infrastructural support for those migrating from a hometown – *i.e.*, a migrant network – emerged out of the traditional relationships engaged in by that town’s residents.<sup>2</sup> Third, the adaptation of local relations to the requisites of migration prompted more emigration from the hometown. Fourth, migration could become self-sustaining if network resources were widely available, in spite of changes in the structural conditions that triggered out-migration in the first place.<sup>3</sup> Fifth, when some migrants settled in a labor-receiving region, new migrants from their hometown stood to gain more stable network contacts in the diaspora. And sixth, a network could expand still further whenever migrants returned home with new information to share about the migratory process.

I had two initial doubts about this set of migratory principles. My first concern was that the first principle relegated the onset of migration to a “black box” of macro historical and structural conditions.<sup>4</sup> Hidden inside that box are the identities, motivations, and actions of the actors that initiated and perpetuated these conditions. I thought that much about the migratory process could be revealed if these actors were subject to study. Vague macro variables could then be converted into tangible micro units, resolving a conundrum that led scholars to analyze the immigration process with a grab-bag of theories that address the topic at different levels of analysis (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:317–319). Note, too, that many of the preconditions to migration involved actors that are not native to the hometowns from which out-migration occurred. Nonetheless, the next five principles

<sup>2</sup>Examples of traditional hometown relations include labor exchange, mutual aid, fictive kinship, self-help, and the institutionalization of these practices in civil and religious offices (*see, e.g.*, Nutini and Bell, 1980; Dehouve, 1976; Wasserstrom, 1983; Kearney, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>“Over time, the social process of migration acquires its own momentum and becomes increasingly independent of its structural causes” (Massey *et al.*, 1987:302).

<sup>4</sup>Examples in *Return to Aztlan* (1987:4) included labor market segmentation (*e.g.*, jobs reserved for natives versus for immigrants) and the recruitment of immigrants by labor-receiving nations, as well as neoliberal policies (*e.g.*, development projects that benefit a few at the expense of the many, displacement of artisan goods with manufactured products, unequal trade arrangements, etc.) that increased socioeconomic inequalities in the labor-sending nations. In a rare instance, Massey *et al.* (1998:36) referred to some of the actual actors behind a macro force (*i.e.*, the penetration of Third World economies) when they wrote “. . . the *owners and managers* of capitalist firms in core countries . . .” (emphasis added).

shift from macro factors (and many actors that promoted them) to micro factors reflecting the supply-side alone – that is, the people in and from the labor-sending hometowns.

My second concern was that the macro conditions discussed in the first principle are not actually fixed over time. These conditions continue to change, primarily due to the continued activities of the still overlooked “exogenous” actors. Changes in those conditions can and often do continue to dramatically affect the migratory process. Yet the first principle only concerns the period in which migration is first initiated, while principle four argues that migration can become self-sustaining, regardless of any changes in the macro conditions that first sparked it (*see Massey et al.*, 1987:298).

A great deal of evidence suggests otherwise. For example, the immigration policies of a labor-receiving nation can vary dramatically over time, significantly affecting even large-scale migratory flows. The Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907, and the Quota Acts of the 1920s stymied previously well developed flows from China, Japan, and Europe to the United States, although U.S. employers merely recruited their immigrant labor elsewhere. Mexico has been a primary source for an alternative supply for more than a century. But even the Mexican flow has been influenced by recruitment spikes and repatriation campaigns (Kiser, 1973). Vacillating actions by U.S. actors affected the strength (*i.e.*, total numbers) and character (*e.g.*, single males versus family units) of this flow, as documented in *Return to Aztlan* (Massey et al., 1987:4, 41, 54, 157, 167, 288). While this caveat weakens principles one and four somewhat, other countervailing facts presented below will further undermine their efficacy.

These two points led me to ponder the usefulness of the migration principles presented in *Return to Aztlan*. Then I considered two problems with the Massey model itself, which is supposed to be based on these principles (Massey et al., 1987:6). The first problem involves those considered eligible for membership in migration networks, while the second concerns the types of relationships elaborated by those participating in these networks. I found (Krissman, 2002a) that a wide variety of non-hometown actors play major roles, for various reasons and with diverse effects, in the development of international migration networks.

Many non-hometown members of migration networks are involved in the recruitment of new workers from countries like Mexico for jobs in the immigrant-dominated labor markets of nations such as the United States (*see International Migration Review*, 1990). These network participants can be put into two largely distinct sets of actors. While one group recruits new

immigrants through institutional arrangements of various types, the second array does so without the systematic assistance of governmental entities. The two systems of recruitment are “formal” and “informal,” respectively (*i.e.*, Haney, 1979).

The first faction of actors consists primarily of the diverse cogs in a formal recruitment system. Most of these actors work for any of a number of federal, state, or local public agencies (*i.e.*, “the State”) or are contracted from the private sector to recruit immigrants under governmental auspices. State officials in both the labor-sending and labor-receiving nations may be involved in this system. The so-called *bracero* program (Galarza, 1964), which brought 5 million Mexican men to the western United States between 1942 and 1964, was America’s best known formal recruitment operation. The actors that initiated and maintained this program created myriad networks between Mexican hometowns and swathes of the United States where mining, railway, and farm labor markets became dominated by immigrant workers, and they strengthened many other networks that had been created during previous formal and informal recruitment campaigns.

Almost half the *bracero* workers came from only four of Mexico’s 32 states, all in west-central Mexico. Not coincidentally, the four community studies in *Return to Aztlan* are in this now “traditional source region for migration to the United States” (Massey *et al.*, 1987:22). “The institutionalization of the migrant networks during the *bracero* era considerably reduced the costs and risks associated with U.S. migration and made it accessible to everyone, young and old, male and female, poor and rich” from one of the case study towns (Massey *et al.*, 1987:61). This observation about the effects of formal recruitment was generalized to other hometowns, the four-state region as a whole, and even the border zone (Massey *et al.*, 1987:41, 43, 55–56, 74, 76, 91).

Large-scale flows from scores of west-central Mexican communities have been traced to recruitment activities before and during the *bracero* period (Massey *et al.*, 1987:68; Mines, 1981). Farm labor markets as distant as the American Northwest and Midwest (Gamboa, 1990; Haney, 1979: 144) are still supplied by networks established in the *bracero* era. The formal program also stimulated the undocumented migration of 5 million more workers; many former *braceros* stayed on or returned later without new contracts at the request of their employers.

While formal recruitment programs are State-led, the primary goal of most of these campaigns is to provide immigrant workers to private employers. Indeed, employers and their agents actively participate in the cre-



ation and maintenance of State-sponsored programs, often expending a great deal of socioeconomic capital to obtain and retain political support for the formal recruitment of foreign workers (e.g., Craig, 1971; Martin, 2002). Therefore, employers are key actors in the migration networks that develop under formal recruitment regimes.

Many scholars (Zabin *et al.*, 1993:93; Portes and Bach, 1985:5–7; Massey *et al.*, 1987:4–6; 2002:22, 146) have argued that formal recruitment no longer plays a major role in the flow from Mexico. Yet recruitment has persisted, evolved, and expanded. From 1965 to 1987 lax border policing created a *de facto* “guest worker” program (Massey *et al.*, 2002:45); millions of these workers were later “legalized,” including well over a million for the nation’s farm labor markets alone (Fineberg, 1971; Bean *et al.*, 1989). United States employers were effectively exempt from prosecution for violating immigration laws throughout this era. Although employer sanctions finally went into effect in 1988, the few and mild penalties imposed have not deterred employers in immigrant-dominated labor markets. Thus, 8 to 10 million undocumented workers are employed in the United States today, and a variety of new amnesty programs are under consideration.

*De jure* recruitment has continued and expanded as well. The H-1B program has brought in up to 195,000 “high skill” immigrants annually; while only 3,256 came from Mexico under this program for the highly educated in 1994 (Alarcón, 2001:247), new Mexican entrants had quadrupled to 13,507 at the millennium. Meanwhile, Mexico is the largest provider of “low skill” H-2A workers; officials in the state of Zacatecas alone sent 56,000 workers to janitorial and landscape companies in 2001 (*Migration News*, July 2002). Labor demand is such that the annual cap on both formal recruitment programs was reached within the first three months of 2004!

U.S. employers have legally recruited 420,194 Mexican workers and dependents to the United States between 1990 and 2002, about 10 percent of the 4,621,832 recruited from around the world. Many receive three-year visas, which can be renewed for another three years. Employers and others can help these workers shift to permanent status, while many workers “overstay” their visas and become undocumented. The fact is that the State continues to help U.S. employers recruit hundreds of thousands of new immigrants each year, with evermore networks linking Third World towns around the globe to U.S. labor markets. Meanwhile, industry lobbyists push for larger, less regulated programs (Martin, 2002). George W. Bush’s offer of “matching willing workers with willing employers” is but the most recent

example (*New York Times*, “Business Cheers Bush’s Plan to Hire Immigrants More Easily,” January 12, 2004).

The second group of network actors that are not native to the migrants’ hometowns are a more motley crew. These actors recruit new immigrants outside of, and sometimes in opposition to, formal labor systems. Many immigration scholars (Zabin *et al.*, 1993:93; Portes and Bach, 1985:5–7; Massey *et al.*, 1987:4–6, 40–44, 2002:22, 146) thought that only State-run efforts of the past could be construed as recruiting Mexican labor. But other researchers (*e.g.*, Haney, 1979; Mines, 1981:82; Zolberg, 1990:315; Hanson and Pratt, 1992; Lowell and Jing, 1994:432; Goss and Lindquist, 1995) found that employers also actively recruit on an informal basis. Employers can benefit from informal recruitment, which subverts immigration enforcement, workplace regulation, and/or the efforts of workers, unions, and the State to improve living and working conditions (Prothero, 1990; Muller, 1985).

As with formal programs, employers are the principal promoters and beneficiaries of informal recruitment. Indeed, employers must establish the personnel practices in the workplace that facilitate informal recruitment. Other crucial actors in informal systems include the employers’ supervisory staff and various types of intermediaries and other agents that provide specialized services to would-be migrants and new immigrants for fees or sinecures paid for by the immigrants and/or their employers. The use of production subcontractors in textiles is a particularly notorious example (*see* Bonacich and Appelbaum, 2000); the agricultural sector’s preference for farm labor contractors is another (Krissman, 2000). The migration networks that bring Chinese workers to the United States (*e.g.*, Kwong, 1997) demonstrate the fact that systems of informal recruitment can become far more pernicious than those that bring in undocumented Mexicans.

While my first problem with the migrant network concept concerned the limits on network membership, my second doubt regarded the relationships said to occur among network members. The Massey model assumes that relations within migration networks are symmetrical, arguing that these ties are rooted in traditional relations prevailing in the hometowns (Massey *et al.*, 1987:139–140, 316). However, several scholars (*e.g.*, Mahler, 1995; Menjivar, 2000) have found markedly asymmetrical relationships even among close family members, whereas the participation of actors from the larger society almost guarantees unequal exchanges due to the stronger influence of capitalist relations (Griffith and Kissam, 1995; Krissman, 2000).

Many of these asymmetrical exchanges are described in much more detail below.

In sum, various actors (*i.e.*, employers and sundry recruitment agents, including those working for the State) and their relationships within international migration networks are not represented in the Massey model. Instead, *Return to Aztlan* claimed that the social bases of network migration are limited to kinship (real and fictive), friendship, common place of origin (*paisanaje*), and voluntary organizations (1987:139–143), all of which “. . . emanate in the migrants’ home communities” (1987:283, emphasis added). The Massey model is based upon a simple hierarchy of hometown groups presumed to engage in symmetrical exchanges – it is a metaphorical network (Gurak and Caces, 1992:161). Indeed, the model does not feature sets of distinct actors, but is conceptualized as a pyramid of nested groups (see Figure I).

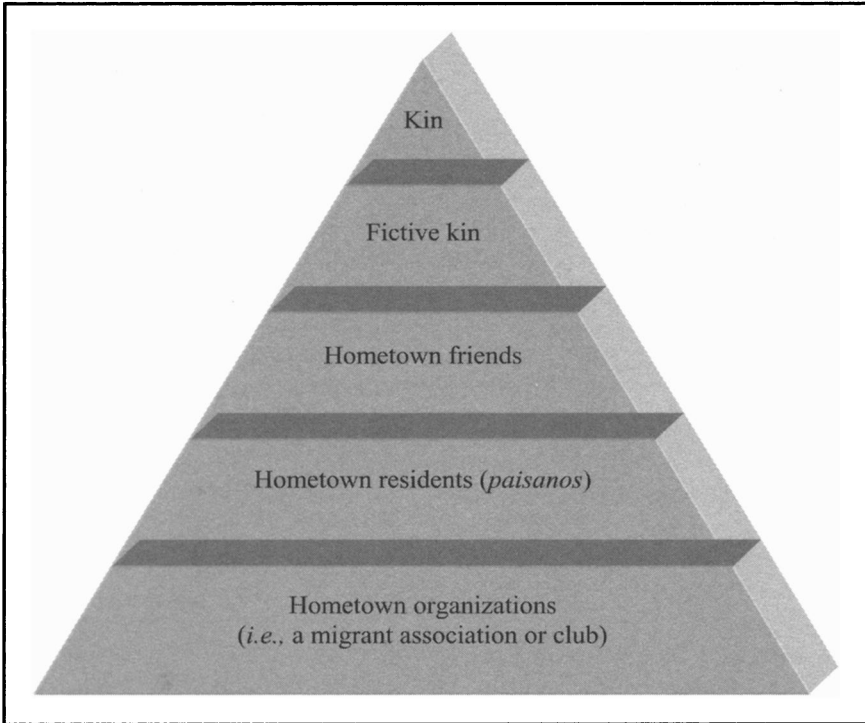
The Massey model is not amenable to the analysis of individual ties, but assumes a generalized pattern of interactions within and between those belonging to one of a few groups based on ideal behavioral norms. Massey and colleagues (1987:140–143, 147–148) depicted the relationships expected of kin (*i.e.*, fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, and among brothers and cousins), between friends, and between *paisanos*. The degree of relatedness alone was assumed to dictate the assistance any two network participants might expect of one another. Note that each group exclusively comprises members of the migrants’ hometowns.

*Return to Aztlan* provides one woefully undeveloped deviation from this endogamous approach. This “exception that proves the rule” (Buchanan, 1980:19) merits reprinting verbatim:

The emergence of daughter communities [where a cluster of migrants from one hometown settle in the United States] also produces a qualitative change in the concept of *paisanaje*. With the emergence of U.S. settlements, [Mexican] men begin to acquire American-born wives and father a generation of sons and daughters born in the United States. The ideal of *paisanaje* must, therefore, be expanded to incorporate a class of people not born in the home community (Massey *et al.*, 1987:162).

Putting aside the assumptions regarding gender, it seems strange to put the spouses and children of migrants into the *paisano* category. First, *paisanaje* – those from one hometown (or, perhaps, region or nation) – was expanded to add people born abroad (mainly in the United States), who are not native to any of these places! Second, *paisanos* are only abstractly related to each other, with a relatively low level of normative obligations. *Return to*

**Figure I.** The “Migrant Network” Concept



Source: Massey et al. (1987: 139–143).

*Aztlan* effectively split spouses and their children into separate, distant social groups. Third, the further implications of adding these non-hometown actors to otherwise endogamous migration networks were not considered. For example, the kindreds created through exogamous marriages must have important effects on *paisanaje*, as well as on the composition and functions of the networks (see Foster and Siedman, 1989). Yet the foreign spouses and children of the migrants were not mentioned as part of the social bases of the Massey model, but in a later elaboration of *paisanaje* (1987:140–142, 162).

Massey and his various coauthors have used the words “nonmigrants” and “friends of migrants” in connection with their network concept. “Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin” (Massey et al., 1993: 448). But the nonmigrants and friends actually discussed always turn out to

be natives of the same migrant hometowns. In actual fact, the Massey model restricts the migrant network to a “shared community of origin.” The only “interpersonal ties . . . in destination areas” that have been systematically analyzed always involve individuals from the same labor-sending hometowns.

A review of Massey’s publications failed to yield one case where someone not born in the migrants’ hometowns was depicted with “. . . the ethnosurvey . . . that . . . provides hard information so that the social process of international migration can be described” (Massey *et al.*, 1987:13).<sup>5</sup> The omission of these actors is documented in “What’s Driving Mexico-U.S. Migration” (Massey and Espinosa, 1997), which claimed to identify the principal causes of cross border migration.

Douglas Massey and Kristin Espinosa (1997:945, 946) wielded 41 variables to test a set of migration theories (in Massey *et al.*, 1993, 1994). Eighty-five percent of these twoscore plus variables utilized their ethnosurvey database; only six variables did not, including the test for Michael Piore’s labor demand theory (1979). In the case of this variable, Massey and Espinosa resorted to macro data from the United States Department of Labor although the “. . . indicator of labor demand is not very good . . .” (1997: 988). They laid the blame for using this poor indicator on a lack of suitable State statistics, which is ironic since “[t]he ethnosurvey design was developed specifically to overcome the weaknesses of federal immigration statistics, and to produce valid, reliable, and interpretable information on the process of immigration to the United States” (Massey, 1987:1503). I argue that the real fault lies with the Massey model; indeed, Massey *et al.*, (1998:57) had to call for new “special surveys” to obtain data about “migrant institutions,” which consist of sundry non-hometown entities, such as foreign employers and their agents. Meanwhile, Massey and Espinosa discounted the efficacy of labor-demand theory; Massey *et al.* (1998:88, 98) repeated this pessimistic assessment without reminding their readers of the suspect indicator on which it was based. The proposal by Massey *et al.* (1998:44–45, 188–192) to couple a theory of migrant institutions with one of migrant networks in

<sup>5</sup>The ethnosurvey includes: “. . . 1) multi-method data collection; 2) representative multi-site sampling; 3) multilevel data compilation; 4) life history collection and, in studies of migration; 5) parallel sampling” (Massey, 1987:1504); the database <[www.lexis.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig](http://www.lexis.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig)> had grown from the 4 towns featured in *Return to Aztlan* to 34 communities by the late 1990s. Massey and Zenteno (1999:770) note that of almost 8,000 surveys completed, less than 600 were “follow-up” interviews conducted in the United States.

an overarching social capital theory is not a parsimonious remedy. Indeed, its application in *Worlds in Motion* (1998) is replete with contradictions and errors, and does not correct the flaws embedded in the Massey model.

In sum, the failure to identify the forces that drive international migration, most apparent in Massey and Espinosa (1997), can be generalized to the immigration literature as a whole. The continuing role of labor demand in the stimulation of migration has been overlooked because most researchers have not collected and/or analyzed the data that might document it. The inability of Massey and Espinosa to adequately test labor demand theory was not due to the difficulty of obtaining such data with ethnosurvey methods. Rather, it was a result of a flawed model, which restricts research of international migration to the reciprocal relations of groups of people from the same migrant hometowns. Ethnographic and survey data can provide these types of information – five immigration studies that included non-hometown actors are reviewed next.

#### *DEVIATING FROM THE MIGRANT NETWORK MODEL*

The strict criteria that the Massey model imposes on membership within migration networks have influenced immigration studies to the present day. Nonetheless, a handful of studies have shown how actors exogenous to labor-sending hometowns can influence the development of migration networks. Each of the five studies discussed here makes a number of important contributions to the literature. However, I will outline only those findings most relevant to a critique of the migrant network concept (see Table 1).

Four general remarks help put the subsequent analysis in the proper context. Two points concern network composition, the third involves network functions, and the last methods. First, each of these studies documented relationships migrants entered into with members of the larger (international) society in order to try to attain the modest goals that new migrants aspire to achieve in the host nation. Second, the Massey model was altered in each case in order to incorporate non-hometown actors into the networks that the researchers were investigating. Third, the migration networks analyzed have multiple functions; reciprocal and asymmetrical relationships – with exchanges of “positive” and “negative” social capital – develop among migrants (including between close kin), as well as between migrants and non-hometown network participants. Fourth, all of these studies involved intensive fieldwork in the diaspora, not mainly in labor-sending hometowns. One was conducted at the international border and four in

**TABLE 1**  
**FIVE STUDIES THAT DEVIATED FROM THE “MIGRANT NETWORK”**

The Study	Network Composition	Network Functions
David Griffith and Ed Kissam (1995)	“artificial networks” are often created by non-hometown intermediaries and their business associates	extremely asymmetrical relations ( <i>negative social capital</i> ) are likely within the artificial networks
Sarah Mahler (1995)	non-hometown immigrants provide services to new migrants from other nations	asymmetrical relations ( <i>negative social capital</i> ) may occur between <u>any</u> network participants, regardless of relatedness
Tamar Wilson (1998)	non-hometown contacts (e.g., coworkers, neighbors, etc.) may have better job tips than paisanos for new migrants	reciprocal relations ( <i>positive social capital</i> ) can occur between migrants and non-hometown contacts
Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001)	separate employer, employee, and labor agency networks, with interactions among them	<i>positive and negative social capital</i> are exchanged within and among these networks
David Spener (2001)	labor smugglers are part of the migration networks that they service	<i>positive and negative social capital</i> are exchanged within these networks

disparate labor-receiving regions in the United States. The siting of these studies undoubtedly helped these scholars notice and report on network actors who are exogenous to the labor-sending hometowns (*see* Ortiz, 2002).

David Griffith and Ed Kissam’s *Working Poor* (1995) is a comparative study of the workforce in six farm labor markets scattered across the United States. The authors found that the labor markets in the midwest and east have become much more like those in the west in recent decades – that is, dominated by new workers from Mexico. Griffith and Kissam also noted that the nation’s farm workforce has shifted from one that was predominately made up of family units to mainly single young men. The researchers argued that the composition and functions of two different types of migration networks fostered these two changes in farm labor markets.

Griffith and Kissam’s “natural” network mirrors the Massey model, both in composition and functions. Many workers “follow the crops,” utilizing the services of hometown relatives and friends who have resettled across the United States. Migrants can obtain room and board, as well as information about jobs, from locally-based relatives. After landing jobs, the migrants may make financial contributions to the families hosting them, adding to their meager incomes. These networks were described as composed entirely of members from the migrants’ hometowns and functioned through reciprocal exchanges viewed as largely “win-win” arrangements.

Griffith and Kissam also found that many migrants enter the United States and find services and job opportunities through “artificial” networks. These networks do not conform with the Massey model in either form or function. The vast majority of the participants within artificial networks are single young men newly arrived in the United States. But these networks are created and perpetuated not by the migrants, but by intermediaries such as farm labor contractors (FLCs) who need a clientele to support various business activities. Aside from arranging jobs for the workers, many FLCs provide additional services, such as cash advances, transportation, housing, food, drink, false documents, and other necessities, including illegal vices (*see* Krissman, 2000).

Most of the services offered within artificial networks are similar to those available in natural networks. Griffith and Kissam (1995:257–260) argued that the primary difference is the highly inflated prices at usurious interest rates charged for services within artificial networks. Indeed, it is the high value that can be extracted from the workers for these services that fosters the ongoing recruitment of new immigrants. While employers in an increasing number of labor-intensive industries use intermediaries to provide them with their workers for a variety of socioeconomic and legal reasons, the fees they are willing to pay are too low to keep the firms afloat (Rosenberg *et al.*, 1992:44; Bonacich and Appelbaum, 2000). Instead of fees from the provision of workers, it is ancillary services to the immigrants that are the sources of much of the income generated by contractor operations. Thus, intermediaries prefer new immigrant workers, who are both more dependent on such services and more likely to tolerate the exorbitant charges.

The FLC supervisors studied by Griffith and Kissam were often not members of the same villages, regions, or even nations as the workers they recruited, smuggled, transported, housed, fed, and employed (*see* Table 1). Many contractors are native to the United States. Thus, artificial networks are often created and perpetuated by entrepreneurs whose socioeconomic ties with growers are at least as close as those they forge with the workers. Instead of bringing would-be migrants up from specific foreign hometowns, many FLCs recruit workers in border towns or anywhere else new immigrants may be struggling to get by without access to natural networks. In sum, two types of networks were found to have largely different sets of actors with diverse purposes and complex exchanges. The disparate characters highlight the issue of network composition, while their varied motivations result in the functional differences operating within the two types of networks.

I found that even FLC staff that recruit workers from their own



hometowns can profit from the provision of services (Krissman, 2000). Such findings call into question the distinction Griffith and Kissam made between relatively benign natural networks and highly exploitative artificial ones. While *Working Poor* argued that the two types of networks have different functions, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993:1345) found that both positive and negative social capital can be generated within one network, including those dominated by immigrants. A study in suburban New York further muddied the distinction between natural and artificial networks, questioned celebratory interpretations of the sponsorship of new migrants, and expanded the membership in migration networks beyond the labor-sending hometowns.

Sarah Mahler's *American Dreaming* revealed that the dark side of migration extends beyond participation in an "artificial" network. Most immigration scholars have assumed that migration networks are undifferentiated sources of positive social capital.<sup>6</sup> The ubiquitous voluntary organizations that some immigrants elaborate have been viewed as formalizing many of these relationships (Cummings, 1980; Massey *et al.*, 1987:145–147; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998:5, 6). That is, migration networks, like the traditional practices in the local hometowns, are assumed to function mainly to provide labor exchange, mutual aid, emergency assistance, self-help, etc. But Mahler demonstrated that abundant levels of negative social capital – that is, any of a number of socioeconomic abuses – also circulate within migration networks.

Mahler agreed with Massey and his colleagues (1993:448) that immigrants already established in a labor-receiving nation are a primary source of social capital for new migrants. However, she realized that this social capital comes in two distinct forms. Assistance is often available only at a very high price. Stuck near the bottom of the nation's labor markets, many immigrants have found that their best opportunities for advancement in the United States are by profiting at the expense of other migrants in their networks.

<sup>6</sup>See Massey *et al.* (1998:42). Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993:1338) suggested "... it is our sociological bias to see good things emerging out of social embeddedness. . . ." But Goss and Lindquist (1995:328) decried an "... ideological tendency in social science to romanticize peasant and community life in the Third World. Somehow, members of Third World households, not burdened by the individualism of Western societies, resolve to cooperate willingly and completely, each according to their capacities, to collectively lift the burden of their poverty."

This common situation suggests that migration networks often function for purposes different than those suggested in much of the literature.

Labor recruiters are only one of many actors who can extract value from new migrants. As seen above, a long list of needed or mandated services can be provided for exorbitant fees. Mahler's most important contribution is an overdue discussion of the bitter surprise of many new migrants when they discover that such assistance – even when provided by close relatives – is often available only if cash or other assets (such as poorly remunerated labor) can be obtained from the recipients. Mahler described this abrupt revelation as a major source of culture shock for new migrants, from which the worst possible lessons about economic survival in the United States are learned. These experiences are often internalized by maltreated newcomers to the detriment of subsequent migrants who seek assistance from them. This is one way that the exploitation of immigrants has become entrenched in First World nations (*e.g.*, Wheeler, 1971; Handlin, 1951).

To gain access to the services they need to improve their chances of persevering in the United States, Mahler also found that migrants from El Salvador have broadened the composition of their networks (*see* Table 1). Many local enterprises on Long Island, New York offer the gamut of services needed by new migrants: smuggling itineraries packaged by travel agents; false work and residency documents assembled by notaries; housing provided by landlords; transportation by coworkers and neighbors; and job placement by intermediaries. Those offering such services on Long Island include immigrants from South America who are not related to their Salvadoran clientele. Although not from the hometowns of these migrants, these entrepreneurs provide services that play crucial roles in expanding this flow from Central America.

The next study explained why so many new migrants need to elaborate ties with non-hometown actors. Tamar Wilson's "Weak Ties, Strong Ties" (1998) examined one way new migrants can obtain the most valuable type of (positive) social capital available within any network. This technique had been noted for sophisticated professionals (Granovetter, 1973, 1982). Wilson found that the "strong" ties of new migrants are with the same actors included in the Massey model, but that "weak" ties may provide the migrants with better economic opportunities. Weak ties are made with unrelated coworkers, neighbors, and friends first met in the United States (*see* Table 1).

David Heer (2002) pointed out that an over reliance on strong ties can undermine "cumulative causation," a theory invoked by proponents of the

Massey model to explain how migration flows can be sustained (Massey *et al.*, 1994:733–738). Heer argued that the migration process from a hometown may stall if all would-be migrants rely on access to a labor market that has become oversupplied. The continued outflow from a labor-sending hometown may require developing ties with unrelated people in the diaspora who have their own network contacts.

Wilson's findings undermined restrictions on network membership even further. She noted that weak ties among people from different nations can be converted into strong ties via transforming rituals such as marriage. The extension of "strong" ties envelops not only the individuals directly involved, but also their extended families. Thus, network ties can expand over the life cycles of the members within them. *Return to Aztlan* attached the U.S.-born spouses and children of migrants to hometown networks via the paisano category; Wilson's broader incorporation of whole non-hometown families into the kindreds of the immigrants is much more accurate, and it has major implications for the universe of potential members in any network.

Finally, in an important endnote, Wilson (1998:401, n. 3) mentioned "... the possible negative effects of network recruitment into work sites. . . ." This comment was a reminder of the potential for retrograde relationships within migration networks. Wilson cited a number of researchers who found that informal recruitment through networks can induce workers to accept exploitative conditions. I have argued (Krissman, 1999) that this is a principal reason growers in the western United States prefer to recruit labor through the networks of their employees. The fourth study found that employers may even elaborate their own networks in order to obtain such workers.

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's *Domestica* (2001) delineated three types of relationships that domestics (*i.e.*, live-in maids and house cleaners) in Los Angeles may use to obtain work. She found that the members of distinct employee and employer networks can and do interact in a complementary fashion, while formal employment agencies – with names like *Malibu Mamas* – assist those that lack access to either of the other networks (*see* Table 1). I derived the notion of three parallel networks from Hondagneu-Sotelo's discussion; she did not present a formal model.

*Domestica* is one of only a handful of studies that have documented employers as actively participating in any network to obtain workers (*see also* Leonard, 1992:Ch. 5; Hanson and Pratt, 1992:386; Grieco, 1987:Ch. 4; Goss and Lindquist, 1995). This important insight demonstrates that even

in advanced capitalist economies employers may prefer to cultivate personal networks to recruit new workers instead of using formal labor market processes such as advertisements in newspapers and notices in unemployment offices. Hondagneu-Sotelo observed this in the course of conducting fieldwork that included in-depth interviews with employers, as well as with workers and other network participants. Too few scholars obtain interviews with the employers of new immigrant workers, and even fewer incorporate such data into their research findings.

*Domestica* argued that both employees and employers simultaneously build their own peer-based networks, while also trying to access the networks of the other group for personal advantage or to assist superiors, friends, and/or clients who lack adequate experience and contacts in the labor market for domestics. Those prospective employers and employees that lack adequate contacts to either type of network may also try private employment agencies.

Hondagneu-Sotelo did not refer to the staff of these employment agencies as network participants. Nor did she argue that these enterprises, often run by U.S. citizens, are institutions that contain social capital, although the agencies that she described bear close similarities to the artificial networks discussed by Griffith and Kissam. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo noted that the would-be domestics and prospective employers who use agencies receive a variety of services from the staff, including interview and job training, as well as placement. Kristin Hill Maher (2002), who has focused on employment agencies in her own research of the domestics industry, explicitly compared them to farm labor contractor firms in the agricultural sector.

All of the non-hometown network actors discussed in the four studies above are based in various labor-receiving regions in the United States. By conducting their studies in the United States, the researchers counterbalanced the usual overemphasis on those in and from the labor-sending hometowns. However, network actors based elsewhere are also helpful to international migrants. The fifth study demonstrated that the geographic spaces between labor-sending and labor-receiving regions also contain non-hometown actors who are key participants in international migration networks.

David Spener's argument is easy to synopsise (*see* Table 1) and is best given verbatim:

... smuggling enterprises do not just feed off or prey upon the migrant stream. Rather, they themselves are an integrated part of it. These enterprises are structured

around tightly bound, transborder networks of trust that link Mexican immigrants in the U.S. interior to friends and kin in the Mexican border cities, the . . . [U.S.] border cities, and the migrant sending regions in Mexico's interior. This does not necessarily mean that migrants being smuggled and their smugglers are linked to one another in the same networks of kinship and *compadrazgo* – although some certainly are – but rather that *the activities of both are structured by similar bonds resulting from the migration process itself* (Spener, 2001:133- 134, emphasis added).

Spener recognized that networks that foster international migration contain actors who participate in other types of social networks, such as those in their labor-sending hometowns. However, he noted that migration networks are distinct from other networks (*see also* Goss and Linqvist, 1995: 319). The purpose of migration networks is to help individuals relocate to the United States; thus coyotes, not usually from the migrants' hometowns, are members of these networks.

In contrast, Audrey Singer and Douglas Massey (1998) tried to describe “the social process of undocumented border crossing among Mexican migrants” without collecting any data from the coyotes themselves. The two researchers noted that novice migrants are very dependent on smugglers to get into the United States, yet they ignored the controversial border-based actors entirely, perhaps because coyotes are not usually from the same hometowns as the migrants they serve. Meanwhile, Spener's inclusive analysis cast a bright light on U.S. border policy – while federal agents try to shift the blame for the mounting border death toll by vilifying smugglers, coyotes are merely responding to Border Patrol tactics to retain their clientele. Coyotes who do not reply in kind are displaced by other smugglers who do use new strategies (San Diego *Union-Tribune*, “Crossing ‘La Linea’: Despite Risks, Hundreds of Thousands Cross Border Illegally,” February 26, 2003).

To summarize the findings of the studies reviewed here, a multitude of non-hometown actors involved in international migration networks has been identified. These actors have diverse motives for their participation, which are reflected in the two distinct types of social capital that circulate through these networks. While many actors may participate in networks for altruistic reasons or to build reciprocal relations with other members, many others use network ties quite overtly to raise their personal socioeconomic statuses within the network and/or in the larger society. Therefore, both positive and negative social capital flow through these networks, just as they do through so many other human institutions, particularly those operating within the capitalist economy. The Massey model cannot capture these aspects of the migration process.

If my critique is accurate, why has the migrant network concept en-

joyed nearly unanimous support in spite of a growing number of studies that violate the precepts of the Massey model? I believe that the vagueness of a network that is a mere metaphor has allowed scholars to misapply the model, with little regard for empirical, methodological, or theoretical rigor. Indeed, as I argued earlier, the Massey model even conflicts with much of the empirical data contained in the book where it was first presented. Since this model does not provide a rigorous research method for studying the real networks used by migrants, researchers have affixed different labels to the networks they studied, used the model in various ways, and derived contradictory and even counterfactual findings. In fact, none of the five studies discussed here noted any discrepancies between their observations and the migrant network concept.

In sum, the totality of relationships that help any migration network develop cannot be examined while adhering to the membership restrictions of the prevailing paradigm. Government officials and their agents, employers and their supervisors, moneylenders, smugglers, landlords, and even many neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances are all exogenous to the Massey model. In addition, many of these actors participate in migration networks for reasons that have nothing to do with altruism; these networks function for more purposes than familial affection or mutual aid. A number of researchers have found that the manufactured endogamy of this model – actually endorsed for its parsimony by Michael Kearney<sup>7</sup> – does not incorporate all of the relationships that help initiate and sustain international migration networks. However, to date no one has proposed another approach that improves upon the migrant network concept.

### *AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL AND RESEARCH METHOD*

The parameters of the Massey model were skirted in a number of immigration studies in order to include all of the data collected during research conducted in various geographic spaces traversed by international migrants. For example, I found that a wide variety of non-hometown actors were

<sup>7</sup>Rather than include all of the individuals participating within migration networks, Kearney (1986:353) argued that ties between migrants and non-hometown actors are evidence of the stage in the life cycle of endogamous migration networks; this approach does not improve on the empirical, analytical, and theoretical problems embedded in the Massey model. Interestingly, Kearney (1996:126), like so many other field researchers, later found himself included as a dues-paying member of a migration network of workers from an indigenous Mexican hometown.

involved in the development of the migration networks I studied. I, too, tried to analyze these networks using a model that excludes so many of the actors that participate in them.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I combined several principles from network analysis with the data from my own field research to devise the “international migration network” (see Figure II).

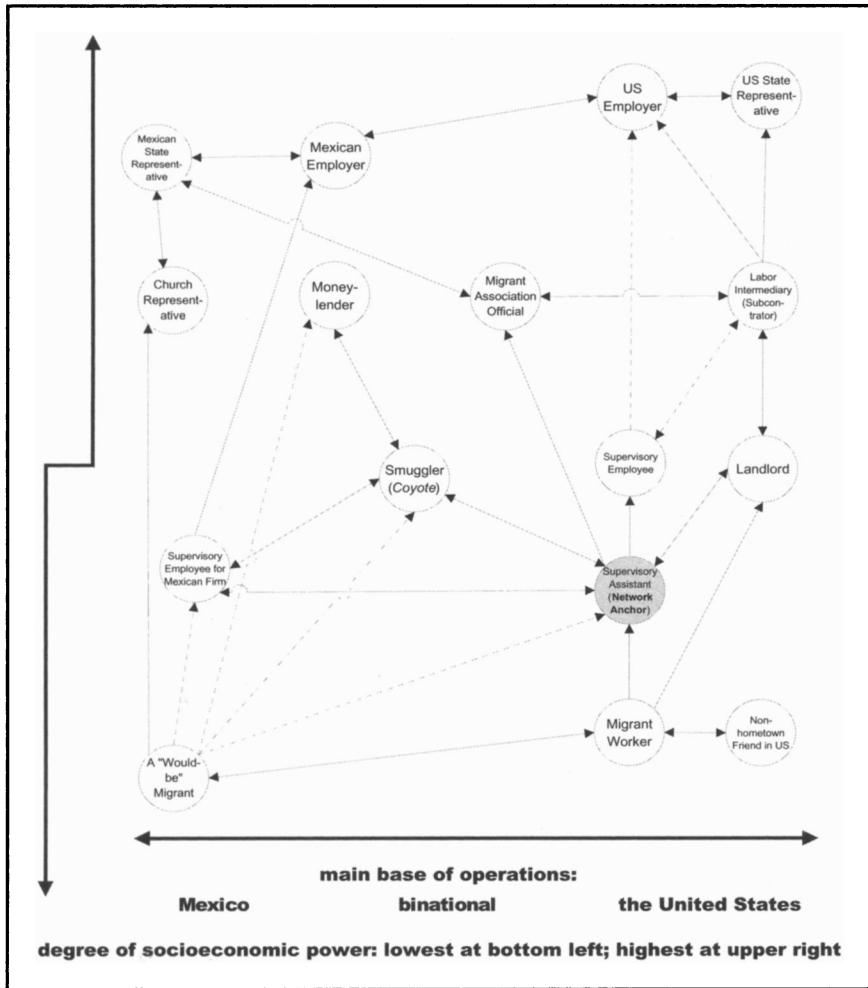
Unlike the migrant network concept (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:319), the international migration network cannot be conflated with other social support systems – kinship (family) networks, personal (friendship) networks, workplace (occupational) networks, hometown (paysanaje) networks, etc. – which have too often been used interchangeably by immigration scholars. Different networks have dissimilar origins, are elaborated by diverse sets of actors, and try to satisfy various human needs. All migration networks are created and sustained by a unique constellation of actors with a variety of motivations, but one common purpose. All of the actors in migration networks (regardless of place of origin, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) are engaged in an effort to help would-be migrants get from isolated hometowns to jobs at far-off work sites. However, international migration networks also vary from the networks used by internal migrants. The geopolitical spaces involved and the socioeconomic resources required mandate that these networks contain more diverse sets of actors with different regional bases of operation.

The potential participants and geographic scope of the international migration network are much more extensive and precise than the migrant network concept. Researchers can add or subtract actors from Figure II, depending on the contacts they identify during their fieldwork. The alternative model offers a concise framework for guiding research in a vast binational landscape. I have found it useful in analyzing why and how growers in major crop industries in the western United States have replaced mestizo workers from central Mexico with indigenous workers from southern Mexico (Krissman, 2002a). A comparative glance at Figures I and II suggests other major differences between the migrant network and the international migration network.

The analysis of real networks requires the in-depth investigation of the most important contacts of key individuals, regardless of where they come from and no matter who they are. All of the actors in Figure II represent real

<sup>8</sup>Like the studies in the previous section, I did not immediately realize the implications of my own research findings for the prevailing network model. Thus, my discussions of the origin, composition, and functions of networks were inadequate.

**Figure II. The “International Migration Network”**



individuals who participate in actually existing networks. The model focuses on network participants (who are “points” on a network “web”), as well as the key role(s) that each one plays in the network. The ties between people, shown by the orientation of the lines that connect them, document the basic nature of each relationship (reciprocal or asymmetrical). While each participates in the facilitation of international migration, these actors have diverse reasons and reap divergent rewards. The hierarchical distribution of these



points along the web alludes to the relative socioeconomic power of each actor. Would-be migrants in their Third World hometowns are at the lower end of a continuum, with a panoply of other actors between them and the State officials and employers who are arrayed along the upper end. The geographic bases of the actors are indicated by their relative position above three general zones of activity: in Mexico, binational, or in the United States. These features are discussed in more detail below.

My approach was derived from methods developed over the past half-century by network analysts who span the social and physical sciences. The lack of references to network analysis in the immigration literature suggests that immigration scholars are unaware of, or antagonistic to, network analysis (Gurak and Caces, 1992:160). Network analysis has been criticized for several shortcomings – a number of “schools” with divergent jargon and research foci, a tendency toward the “mathematization” of human relationships, and the elevation of methods over the social behaviors that the methods are supposed to examine (Scott, 2000; Boissevain, 1979; Sanjek, 1974). But these problems are surmountable, and the potential benefits are multiple.

A variety of methods of varying complexity have been developed to analyze diverse types of networks. I have used methods promoted by the “Manchester school” (Mitchell, 1969; Scott, 2000:26–32) to operationalize the international migration network. Manchester analysts have made migration a principal topic of study. Mastery of a few basic precepts reveals the utility of their methods to the study of international migration. Three principles permit researchers to identify both the major actors and varied functions in a migration network. These principles transform the network concept from metaphor to research method, permitting theories to be constructed that link the development of a network to the socioeconomic behavior of its participants and the larger world in which they all operate (Leinhardt, 1977:xiv).

The first principle – anchorage – helps researchers determine the orientation of a network (Mitchell, 1969:12). The network anchor is the starting point from which all other contacts are traced and the nature of the ties identified (White *et al.*, 1976:735). In Figure II the “supervisory assistant” is the anchor, located at the heart of the network web with direct ties to seven other actors. Typically, the anchor of a migration network is a “pioneer migrant.”

The pioneer migrant was discussed in *Return to Aztlan* (see also Mines, 1984:139, 144). Massey and his colleagues found that a few individuals were

crucial to the development of the networks in all four of their case study hometowns. The pioneers they identified were foremen or other employees favored by the owners of the farms, factories, or restaurants where they worked. In a brief ethnographic synopsis, Massey and colleagues (1987:164–169) noted that migrants become network pioneers when employers use them as labor recruiters. For example:

... a common laborer ... was chosen as a foreman *on the condition* that he gather together a group of workers and take charge of supervising them. ... The [firm] owners arranged legal documentation for him and his family and they all settled in [a U.S.] town. With time, other families [from his Mexican hometown] ... began to settle in the [U.S.] town and the surrounding area, attracted by the employment that this paisano could offer. Today this city has become the most important center of U.S. employment for people from [this foreman's hometown] (Massey *et al.*, 1987:165, emphasis added).

I found such cases to be typical in farm labor markets in the western United States (Krissman, 2000), but *Return to Aztlan* noted such arrangements in an array of immigrant-dominated industries.

Massey and colleagues derived an important observation from data such as these:

Considering the four [hometown] case studies in comparative perspective, most migrant networks can be traced back to the fortuitous employment of some key individual. *All that is necessary for a migrant network to develop is for one person to be in the right place at the right time and obtain a position that allows him to distribute jobs and favors to others from his community* (Massey *et al.*, 1987:169, emphasis added).

This passage is crucial, since it identifies the principal cause for the origin of large-scale migrant flows. The vast majority of Mexicans migrate to the United States for gainful employment or to join family members who have already obtained jobs. Therefore, migration networks are only likely to grow to a large scale when would-be migrants are assured that specific jobs await them – that is, when there is a definite demand for their labor. Of course, it is U.S. employers who create this demand.

Unfortunately, the Massey model does not mandate that the employers of large numbers of immigrant workers be included in the study of migration networks. Indeed, Massey and his colleagues did not provide critical information that can be obtained from employers. Under what circumstances did the employers alluded to in *Return to Aztlan* decide to hire large numbers of workers from the four hometowns the researchers studied? Why and how did these employers alter their personnel practices to convert specific workers into network pioneers?

Only a pioneer could anchor an international migration network; such individuals are the critical link between a reserve supply of desperate workers in a labor-sending hometown and the foreign employers who generate a high demand for immigrant labor. These pioneers, with the aid of other actors, recruit the new workers that their employers demand. (The second-most linked actor in Figure II is the new “migrant worker” who just used a variety of network contacts to get settled in the United States. However, the contacts that new migrants make with many network actors are short-lived, terminated as soon as the services those actors provide have been used to help the new migrant settle here.) Thus, the network anchor is the central actor in international migration networks. Nevertheless, the anchors do not themselves create or perpetuate large-scale migratory flows, although migrant network studies seem to imply this due to a singular focus on those from the migrant hometowns. The next principle helps differentiate the roles that diverse actors play in the development of networks, including network pioneers versus their foreign employers.

The second principle – reachability – measures the number of individuals any given member of a network needs to go through to get in contact with anyone else. While the assistant in Figure II can reach seven network contacts directly, even the anchor has to go through one or more intermediaries to make contact with eight other actors. Most of this anchor’s direct ties are with other agents who provide services to would-be migrants. These ties put the assistant just one contact away from virtually every would-be migrant in his hometown. However, to recruit new workers even more effectively, an anchor may try to establish direct contacts with as many hometown adults as possible. The assistant can extend direct contacts by elaborating ritual ties with, and providing services to, any hometown individual who wishes to migrate to the United States.

The anchors of international migration networks recognize the value of establishing direct ties with other network actors. Nonetheless, their contacts with certain key actors – especially their employers – often remain indirect. While crucial to the operation of any migration network, the pioneer migrants who recruit new workers through these networks are unlikely to wield the socioeconomic power required to dominate all of the social relations within them. While the assistant in Figure II provides jobs to would-be migrants by filling positions available at a work site, this anchor did not create the jobs or determine that new immigrants would fill them. Those who do have the socioeconomic power required to create jobs for new

immigrants usually try to maintain buffers between themselves and those who actually recruit their workers for them.

Employers do not need to be in direct contact with many other members of the networks that provide them with their labor. Instead, employers use their socioeconomic power to get others to recruit for them, whether it be agents of the State, subordinate personnel, or contractor staff. Indeed, many employers have claimed not to know how they obtain their own workers (Krissman, 2000:283), even though they readily admit that access to an ample supply of low cost labor is crucial to the continued viability of their labor-intensive operations. Employers are even less likely to (want to) know their (often undocumented) workers or other actors who use questionable methods to help these workers get from their Third World hometowns to the work sites in a foreign nation. Layers of supervisory personnel and/or the use of labor contractor firms help employers maintain plausible deniability vis-a-vis the situation for the immigrant workers at their work sites. “Unreachability” aids employers in their legal claims of nonresponsibility for health, safety, labor, and/or immigration violations in their workplaces, and generally helps them evade criminal penalties for the illegal activities that they foster (*e.g.*, Bacon, 2003).

Regrettably, many immigration scholars have also acceded to this convenient fiction, overlooking the role of employers at every stage of their research projects. Nevertheless, the personnel practices of employers in immigrant-dominated labor markets have been described by some researchers. Most of these employers use subordinate agents – many of them immigrants themselves – who literally comprise a “middleman minority” (Bonacich, 1973). On the one hand, supervisory and intermediary personnel are indebted to their patrons for the opportunity to achieve upward mobility in labor markets with narrow, short job ladders (Martin, 1988). On the other hand, these agents have a great deal of leverage over the new migrants they have recruited (Krissman, 2000). Preexisting socioeconomic relationships between an agent and the workforce may undergird tolerance of substandard conditions. *Return to Aztlan* suggested as much:

The pay of the foreman depended on the quantity and quality of his team’s work. His preference for paisanos [from his hometown] stemmed not only from his affective ties with friends and former neighbors but also from the greater control he was able to exercise through the ties of kinship, friendship, and paisanaje. Drawing upon these bonds, he could elicit greater speed and quality from his workers without having to resort to coercive methods such as threatening or firing. In this way, a communality of interests between the foreman and workers was established,

one that *primarily benefited the company for whom they all worked* (Massey *et al.*, 1987:165, emphasis added).

Note that in this excerpt the situation was presented from the immigrants' perspective. Massey and colleagues referred only indirectly to the individual(s) responsible for the personnel practices that permit or even encourage some employees to recruit a firm's workforce through their networks. This one-sided viewpoint is a result of the fact that the Massey model focuses solely on the migrants and the labor-sending hometowns. However, "the company" too often merely serves as an ideological fig leaf that camouflages the actions of powerful individuals.

The firm owner (or the executives, board members, and shareholders of a corporation) captures most of the value (*i.e.*, labor power) circulating within a migration network. Yet the activities of the primary beneficiaries of international migration have been obscured behind the facades of institutional entities and relegated to "macro structural" factors, which are exogenous to the Massey model once migration begins. The phrase "the company" is also inaccurate in the quote above – the workforce, also (an important) part of any firm, does not benefit from coercive paternalism. Fortunately, the third principle in the international migration network model allows the researcher to identify and illustrate the network-related activities of the most powerful actors.

The third principle – directedness – signifies the types of ties that network participants have with each other (*i.e.*, reciprocal or asymmetrical). Ideal (and to a much lesser extent, real) relations among family and friends may be considered reciprocal, despite the prerogatives of those with different statuses (*e.g.*, parents over children, males over females, settled immigrants over new migrants, etc.). Relationships that are relatively reciprocal can be contrasted with those that are overtly asymmetrical – such as those linking a politician and a voter, a patron and a client, an employer and an employee, or a master and a slave (Mitchell, 1969:25; Wolf, 1966b; Lomnitz, 1982; Bales, 1999). The degree of reciprocity can be further nuanced by manipulating the symbols used in any real network Figure (*e.g.*, by using bold). Of course, the relative importance of reciprocal kin network ties may decline once individuals leave their hometowns, while asymmetrical ties with unrelated actors are likely to multiply many-fold in the diaspora (*e.g.*, Mitchell, 1969:44).

Network analysts have found that informants often try to conceal asymmetrical ties from other network actors, from researchers, and even from themselves (White *et al.*, 1976:740). Nonetheless, it is crucial to iden-

tify these asymmetries in order to assess the levels and types of resources circulating in the network, analyze the distribution of those resources between each network dyad (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:333), and determine the network's overall hierarchy of actors. The actual relationships among a network's actors are more likely to be revealed if an in-depth ethnographic approach is coupled with the cultivation of multiple network informants.

The nature of socioeconomic exchanges between network actors determines directedness, which is illustrated by the arrows at the end(s) of the lines linking discrete dyads of actors (*see* Figure II).<sup>9</sup> Reciprocal relationships are denoted by arrows at both ends, while asymmetrical ones are indicated by arrows pointing in one direction, toward the individual who gains the most benefit in that dyad. Three of the supervisory assistant's relationships are mutually beneficial business ties with actors who provide services that might be needed by migrants: a coyote, a supervisor in a Mexico-based firm, and a landlord. The would-be migrant and new migrant worker are both subservient to the anchor, but the supervisory assistant, in turn, is a client of a supervisor and the association president, turning over to them portions of the income obtained from new migrants.

The migrant network concept cannot help researchers derive the types of data that have been described above. Anchorage is not tracked systematically, even though pioneer migrants play critical roles in the growth of large-scale migrant flows. Reachability is not tabulated, nor are the types of exchanges dyads engage in examined. Indeed, directedness is ignored, since the migrant network is not seen as manipulable by individuals. The Massey model actually lumps individual informants into the hierarchical groups that comprise the migrant network pyramid (Figure I). It assumes that individuals interact with idealized forms of behavior, with little regard to the statuses and roles that mark the membership of virtually all social institutions. But most problematic, employers and many recruitment agents are exogenous to the Massey model. Non-hometown actors are either ignored completely or referred to only indirectly and abstractly. Thus, many actors have been effectively excluded, even though they have converted much of Mexico and the United States into one integrated unit of production, generating untold billions of dollars in value while transforming the demography of vast and growing expanses within each nation.

<sup>9</sup>The dotted lines trace the various contacts a would-be migrant is likely to make in order to use a migration network, although some of these lines may constitute alternative pathways.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Massey model, which *Return to Aztlan* used to try to analyze “the social process of international migration from western Mexico,” excludes many of the actors who generate and respond to the continuing high demand for immigrant labor. By promoting a model that ignores many of the actors who shaped the historical and structural factors outlined in the book, and by arguing that these factors can be overridden once networks reach a certain stage of development, *Return to Aztlan* provided a skewed view of international migration. A series of collaborations (Massey *et al.*, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2002; Massey and Espinosa, 1997, and Singer and Massey, 1998) that purported to explain principal causes of international flows support this contention. Key assumptions and principal hypotheses are briefly recapitulated and recast below, before I link the Massey model to misguided, counterproductive, and even lethal immigration policies.

First, the inaccurate depiction of migration networks has undergirded a number of false assumptions in the immigration literature (*e.g.*, Portes and Bach, 1985:5–7; Massey *et al.*, 1987:4–6, 2002:22,146; Zabin *et al.*, 1993:93). Three major suppositions are: 1) migration networks originate in and are comprised exclusively of members from the same hometowns; 2) migration can become self-perpetuating, continuing to occur regardless of the actions of actors deemed external to networks; and, 3) recruitment does not sustain large-scale migration flows (from Mexico).

In direct opposition, I argue: 1) international migration networks seldom originate in and are never comprised exclusively of individuals from the same hometowns; 2) migration is not self-perpetuating, but continues to be affected by non-hometown actors in and/or native to the labor-receiving nation; and 3) labor recruitment continues to be a major stimulus to international migration. If I am right, moral and legal responsibility for continued undocumented migration should shift from the Third World “them” to the First World “us,” with corresponding changes in public policy to focus upon those who initiate and perpetuate international migration networks. A review of competing hypotheses suggests how underlying assumptions have helped to influence public policies seeking to “control” international migratory flows.

Massey *et al.* (1993) stated that the migrant network concept is a theory, while I concur with those who have insisted that network analysis consists of methods to test (other) theories about social organization (*e.g.*, Mitchell, 1969:8; Boissevain, 1979:392; Scott, 2000:8–37). That said, Mas-

sey and colleagues (1993:460–461) claimed that their network theory has “. . . a series of eminently testable propositions”: 1) after a person migrates once, they are much more likely to do so again; 2) a person is more likely to migrate if someone they know has migration experience; 3) as the socioeconomic barriers to migration grow, dependence on migration networks increases; 4) a person from a family whose other members have migrated is more likely to migrate; and 5) persons from hometowns where many people have migrated are more likely to migrate. Note that all five of these points are labor “supply-side” propositions.

The methods I presented in the third section can be used to test the supply-side hypotheses. But the international migration network also promotes the collection of data to examine a set of propositions that are the mirror image of those proposed by Massey and his colleagues. These hypotheses can test the other half of the migration equation – labor “demand-side” theory (Piore, 1979). I contend that: 1) after employers use immigrant workers once, they are more likely to do so again; 2) employers are more likely to use immigrant workers if they know other employers use such labor; 3) as socioeconomic barriers to using immigrant workers rise, dependence on intermediaries to obtain that labor increases; 4) employers seeking to maintain substandard labor market conditions are more likely to prefer immigrant workers; and 5) employers in industries and/or regions where immigrant labor is common are more likely to use such workers.

Recall that Massey and Espinosa (1997:988) questioned the efficacy of labor demand theory, although they admitted that their “. . . indicator of labor demand [from the United States Department of Labor] is not very good.” The methods proposed to study international migration networks encourage researchers to obtain the sorts of data that can be used to test a wide variety of hypotheses, including those that evaluate the role of labor demand. If they had used these methods, Massey and Espinosa (1997:989) might not have claimed that most of the forces “driving Mexico-U.S. migration” are supply-side factors.<sup>10</sup> The supply-side hypotheses presented by Massey and colleagues above actually ignore the engine that drives interna-

<sup>10</sup>Massey and Espinosa (1997:989) claimed that the forces “driving Mexico-U.S. migration” are: 1) social capital formation among migrants; 2) human capital formation among migrants; and, 3) market consolidation between the Mexican and U.S. economies. Note that only the third force implies abstractly that non-hometown actors may have an influence on migrant flows. Massey *et al.* (2002:9) added a fourth force, though the balance was still tilted toward the supply-side, the only micro-level actors were members of Mexican hometowns, and the Massey model remained unchanged.



tional migration, while demand-side hypotheses reveal how large-scale flows are both created and sustained.

A careful consideration of all of the actors involved in maintaining large-scale flows becomes more urgent each day. The supply-side Massey model has provided an academic fig leaf, behind which those who decry immigration can hide their nativist sentiments even as they dictate ever more punitive actions against immigrants. The only two supply-side solutions for those demanding that migrant flows must be controlled are: 1) neoliberal schemes to further “develop” the labor-sending nations; and/or 2) increased policing of immigrants, especially at international borders, to make unauthorized entry more costly and risky. These supply-side immigration policies have led to the implementation of programs and practices laden with unintended, counterproductive, and deadly consequences. Among them are asymmetrical “free trade” agreements, the militarization of international borders, and the further diminution of the basic human and labor rights of migrants. While a detailed critique cannot be provided here, I outline two examples I considered more closely elsewhere (*e.g.*, Krissman, 2003, 2002b).

Longtime neoliberal policies have been promoted to develop Mexico’s economy in an effort to lower unemployment, raise living and working standards, and curtail cross-border migration. These projects may be fairly judged failures by each measure, but especially in regard to the issue of international migration. Perhaps the most ambitious and worst case is that of the Border Industrialization Program (*i.e.*, the *maquiladora* assembly plants), inaugurated in 1965 to provide Mexican men an alternative to the terminated *bracero* program. Saskia Sassen (1989) examined such development projects and demonstrated that migration flows between Third and First World nations are actually stimulated by the establishment of such assembly factories.

The BIP case illustrates Sassen’s point. Most of the U.S.-owned factories are at the border, not in interior regions that had high rates of out-migration to the United States. The demographic shift from the interior to the once sparsely populated border created vast new slums almost overnight (Bowden, 1998). Eighty percent of BIP factory jobs have gone to young females between 14 and 20 years of age, while most men remained unemployed (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983). Wages are so substandard that families dependent upon *maquiladora* jobs continue to live in poverty. Finally, since 2000, a quarter million jobs, along with 10 percent of the factories, relocated to nations with even worse wages and working conditions. The net result is that Mexico’s northern border has devolved from a migrant staging area to

yet another labor-sending region. Nevertheless, U.S. policies continue to facilitate unequal development programs.

Meanwhile, the militarization of America's southern border has led to escalating negative outcomes, only the worst of which is at least 3,000 fatalities among would-be migrants (Reyes *et al.*, 2002). Often overlooked is the fact that it was eminent immigration scholars Doris Meisner and Robert Bach, appointed to posts as Commissioner and Associate Commissioner, respectively, at the Immigration and Naturalization Service who greatly accelerated policies that made the border a low-intensity war zone (Dunn, 1996; Cooper, 2003). Policies adopted to make unauthorized entry much more difficult result from two false assumptions: a) migration flows are labor supply-side phenomena; and therefore, b) the United States has the right to do whatever is required to "control its border" from unprovoked immigrant invasions. Based at least in part on presumptions prevailing in the immigration literature, federal resources were shifted to the border and employer sanctions in the interior were virtually abandoned. Thus, ". . . the legal and policy framework within which immigration is presently controlled" was wrongly assumed legitimate (Hathaway, 1994:49).

It is long past time that the formative role of those who generate the high demand for new immigrant workers was acknowledged. Such recognition is the first necessary step to reversing the resource allocations and regulatory activities that are currently being expended in a futile attempt to slow international migration. In order to stabilize and eventually reduce unauthorized entry, all immigrants employed in host nations must have their statuses regularized, while their employers must be forced to bear any financial burdens associated with legitimizing the workers that they have recruited. It is critical to underscore the bald fact that the activities currently undertaken by labor-receiving States actually make immigrant labor even more desirable to many employers. Rather than providing the imprimatur for neoliberal pipe-dreams and xenophobic nightmares, immigration scholars should be at the forefront of those insisting that it is our employers who need to be controlled. Of course, this sea change in academic and public discourse will not occur as long as immigration research continues to be *sin coyote ni patrón*.

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