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Types of Migration Enabled by Maquiladoras in Baja California, Mexico: The Importance of Commuting

Kathryn Kopinak* and Rosa Maria Soriano Miras

Abstract

This article analyzes a relatively new stream of labor migrants from Mexico to the US, those who have worked in export-processing industries, or maquiladoras, in Mexico before or at the same time as crossing the border to work. The focus is on what kind of migrants they are, addressing how those with maquila work experience compare with the traditional migratory stream of agricultural workers. The methodology is Grounded Theory and use is also made of typology theory, showing how the emergence of particular ideal types of migrants are dependent on Mexican job, labor market, place of origin, documents and social and human capital. We find that former and current maquila employees most often begin as a recurrent type of migrant, especially commuters, which is one of its subtypes. Many tend to transform over time into immigrants. Maquila employees are more likely to be commuters than agricultural workers due to differing origins. More skilled maquila employees become immigrants and recurrent migrants through a diaspora process in which the multinational corporation plays a key role, providing an organizational structure through which they move. The return type of migration is not strongly represented due to borderlander identities and less opportunity in Mexico.

Introduction

The early settler economy of the Californias was agriculturally based, with Mexicans immigrating to become farm workers in the US and also commuting daily to work on farms close to the border. As recently as the 1980s, border patrol agents permitted undocumented farm workers to enter the US upon giving their employer's name (Chávez 2011). The community of San Ysidro, home of the most westerly port of entry on the US–Mexico border, was named after the patron saint for farmers, although today it is better known as the world's busiest land border crossing. The vast majority of those crossing here now are urbanites, and most of the cargo which transits the neighboring port of entry, Otay Mesa, is related to the industrial parks which surround it.

Maquiladoras, factories in Mexico that produce for export, are part of a long history of integration at the US–Mexico border. But the growth of maquiladoras starting in 1965 did more than anything previously to promote economic and population growth in northern Mexico. They import most of their supplies duty free, assemble or manufacture them in Mexico, and export them, paying tax only on the value added. These factories are also known as twin plants because they locate operations on both sides of the border, with low wage production in Mexico and administrative and distribution sites in the US. While there has been significant movement of plants to interior Mexican locations, most are still in border cities. Their production is important for the Mexican economy, being responsible in 2006 for 55% of all manufacturing, 45% of all exports, 34% of all imports and 21% of all foreign direct investment in the country (Banco de México 2007).

This paper focuses on why these subcontractors do not necessarily embed employees south of the border and prevent their emigration. It shows how these industries inadvertently support their employees' international migration at the level of production workers and administrators. The research site is the

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western end of the US–Mexico border because it is the part of this international divide where both industrial activity and international migration are heaviest.

The city which has always had the largest number of maquiladora plants and the second largest number of employees is Tijuana, Baja California. The Tijuana metropolitan area is the western anchor of an Asian origin kinescope corridor which stretches eastward, reaching all the way to San Luis Rio Colorado across the state line in Sonora (Kopinak 2003). In 2006, of the 1,202,132 people employed in maquiladoras in Mexico, 254,401 of them (21%) were in the state of Baja California and the *municipio* of San Luis Rio Colorado (INEGI). Of these, over two-thirds (69%) worked in Tijuana and Rosarito maquiladoras, with 49% being women.[1] It is these export processors which, in the last half-century, have made the Tijuana area the economic giant of the north-west and the third most populous Mexican metropolitan area.

One of the purposes of maquiladoras was to provide employment for male agricultural migrants to the US returned with the termination of the Bracero program. Mexican business and government leaders hailed the foreign industries as an economic fence, absorbing Mexican labor by providing jobs at home. Most scholars also agreed in the early years of export production that these factories did not contribute to international migration (Bustamante 1983; Fernández-Kelly 1983; Seligson and Williams 1981). However, Carrillo (1990) found a "two step" or "trampoline" process, with Mexicans first migrating from the interior to the north where they worked in maquiladoras, and then later crossing the border to work in the United States. This body of research is limited by the fact that it was all carried out with data from Mexico, with no observation of people who settled in the US.

More recent literature has reinforced Carrillo's findings. Zabin and Hughes (1994) showed with both Mexican and US data that Baja California maquiladoras did not stop the international migration of substantial numbers of Oaxacans who had come there to work in agriculture. Using the Mexican Migration Project's household survey (1987–1998), Fussell (2004, 963) found a small but steady stream of men from Tijuana, concluding that:

> Although the export-oriented manufacturers that locate in Tijuana are an important source of employment, it seems that manufacturing employment does not deter men from migrating to the U.S. In fact, employment in the border economy does surprising little to diminish the odds of taking a U.S. trip.

She finds that those settled in Tijuana from other parts of Mexico are much more likely than others to cross with documents, but does not explain why. Kopinak (2011) was able to address this in a secondary analysis of data from the *Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México*[Survey of Migration on the Northern Border of Mexico] combined with in-depth interviews conducted with former maquila employees who had come to southern California to work. Maquiladoras are very important in helping people with support for getting documents to enter the US. Looking at the socio-demographic characteristics of potential labor migrants across eight occupational groups, she found the greatest variance between those with agricultural and maquila work experience, with the latter being more likely to be women, less likely to be heads of household, more educated, younger, and more likely to have lived and been born in northern border cities.

The purpose of this paper is to find out more about the new stream of maquila-associated migrants. We find that although maquiladoras do not intentionally encourage international migration, they have become a key part of a border labor migration system in this area. Chávez (2011) found agricultural migrants engaged in such a system in Tijuana. But the urban agglomerations across all of northern Baja California have much more of their labor forces engaged in industry than agriculture, and so it is predicted to be the occupational sector sending more migrants. In the next section we present a typology of different kinds of migrants. Then, after describing the methodology and data, we analyze what role maquiladoras play in this border labor migration system and the types of migrants with work experience in this sector

and in agriculture. Although we will show that there are other important factors in this labor migration system, such as individual or family intention, culture, gender and family status, we will focus mainly on the type of migratory trajectory, taking into account both the concrete routes as well as the subjective experiences which make up migratory histories.

Theory

International migration and employment in transnational companies are both complex phenomena in their own right. We use a typology of migration as a conceptual framework for analyzing them because it seems to "provide a parsimonious framework for describing complex organizational forms and for explaining outcomes such as organizational effectiveness and group think." (Doty and Glick 1994, 230) International businesses are some of the largest organizations in the world, surpassing some nation-states in size. Their workplace culture and practices, carried out in cross-border locations, are a form of "group think." A typology is used in this paper not only to identify and classify migratory patterns but also to theorize migration. Typological theory will identify how variables related to employment and migration come together and under what conditions (George and Bennett 2005, 235).

Pries (2004) has advanced a typology to differentiate types of migrants, building on the work of Wiest (1973) and Portes (2003), and used it to analyze Mexicans travelling from Mexico City to New York to work. It is composed of five ideal types which are based on both subjective and objective criteria, such as "length of stay, frequency of movement, intent, self-perception and perception by others" (Pries 2004, 10). The first type, emigrants or immigrants, make long-term, permanent migration decisions to leave their country of origin and settle elsewhere. Their orientation to the receiving society is one of integration. The second type is the return migrant, who may have intended to be an immigrant but did not fully integrate into the host society. Thirdly is the recurrent migrant, who leaves home only for "seasonal or occasional stays, remaining abroad for less than one year and maintaining strong household ties in the region of origin" (Pries 2004, 11). While in the host society, recurrent migrants often live outside the household structure and do not integrate politically, socially or culturally into the receiving society.

The fourth type is the diaspora migrant who has religious, political or organizational motivations for moving. Pries (2009: 594) stresses "the existence of a shared social space that spreads over different geographical spaces and boundaries of civilizations or nations." Diaspora migrants most often have a common homeland, but the social spaces they occupy are also created by organizations, such as international corporations. People located in the periphery are motivated by economic and political considerations in the center to which they are loyal. Pries (2005) describes General Motors as building a diaspora in the 1990s when the Detroit head office began centralizing its European activities, accentuating a center/periphery configuration.

Finally, the transnational migrant tends to shift between two countries, having ties in both. The transmigrant usually moves for economic reasons, and individual migrants who shift back and forth are considered to constitute transnationalism "from below." But transnationals may also move for organizational reasons, as in the case of managers of multinational corporations or state diplomats, which is considered transnationalism "from above." While the internet allows migrants far from their countries of origin to become transnationals, those located close to their homelands, especially those able to make face-to-face contact, are more likely to become transnationals. Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999, 219) indicate that while all of the other types of migrants occasionally visit, giving money and goods to people in their original countries, transnationals carry out activities or an occupation which "require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation."

Martínez (1996) was one of the first researchers to use the idea of transnationalism on the US–Mexico border. Conceptualizing people who live here as borderlanders, he defines two kinds. Both are subject to foreign economic and cultural influence, but national borderlanders have only minimal contact with the

other side while transnational ones build significant ties. He argues that long-term borderlanders are more likely to have transnational characteristics than those more recently arrived.

These ideal types are not mutually exclusive (Portes 2003). Transnationalism does not replace the other types but can combine with them. As the findings of Portes' study of comparative immigrant entrepreneurship show, those most engaged in transnational activities were educated, well-connected men, firmly established in the host society, i.e. immigrants. One of the difficulties with the literature on transnationalism is that its existence has been assumed without testing for alternative or coexisting types of migration. In order to avoid this problem, the analysis in this article will carefully consider work and life trajectories of migrants to identify which type or types best explains the migrant's motivation and experience and how this came to be. The number of moves from country to country and job changes will be considered an important indicator of migrant type. But there are also other indicators, such as cultural attitudes and identity.

Methodology

Ideally, a random sample of the migrant population under study would be taken so that the representativeness of the findings could be calculated. However, there is no exact information about the population of Mexican migrants, making this impossible. Instead, the methodology used is Grounded Theory, an inductive strategy which builds theory from the data up (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 2010; Trinidad, Carrera, and Soriano 2006). Grounded Theory is compatible with typological theory and its use appropriate in this study because they both facilitate cross-case comparisons and can be used inductively. A limitation of these strategies is that inferences cannot be made to any universe. An advantage is that hypotheses can be deduced from the theory for testing.

Ninety-five in-depth interviews were carried out from 2005 to 2007 with people who had worked in Mexico and the US, most of whom lived in San Diego county. The exceptions were four who lived in Tijuana at the time, and one in each of the California cities of Sacramento and Vasalia. Twelve of those interviewed individually with both maquila and non-maquila work experience were also organized into discussion groups to consider some of the questions collectively (Chávez 2000). The groups were made up of people who worked together in cleaning, cafeterias or landscaping on a university campus. Six other interviews were carried out with people who provided services to Mexican immigrants, such as US consulate personnel, members of maquiladora worker support organizations, representatives of border trade organizations and university administrators, bringing the total number of interviews to 101. The initial selection of interviewees was based on recommendations of those in close contact with Mexican immigrant communities. Then, multiple snowball samples were taken, both simultaneously and sequentially.

The sizes of the sample and subsamples are determined by Grounded Theory's principle of saturation: data collection stops when no new information is gleaned from different kinds of cases, and repetition occurs. Of the 95 interviews carried out with those who had worked in Mexico, 52 were with women. Thirty of the women had maquila work experience and 27 of the men had. Of those with non-maquiladora work experience, 8 men and 5 women had worked in agriculture. A few of the people interviewed had worked in both maquiladoras and agriculture in Mexico, but this was rare, since industries are located in cities with little farm work.

Almost all the interviews were done in the US due to the early literature's reliance on data collected only in Mexico. People were interviewed in the workplace, a community center, their homes, a continuing education center, and coffee shops, amongst others. Former maquila workers were interviewed throughout San Diego county, in San Ysidro, National City, Coronado, Hillcrest, and La Jolla. They were also interviewed in the northern part of the county in Escondido and its environs, although the majority of those interviewed there worked in agriculture. Former maquila administrators and highly skilled technical personnel tended to be interviewed in the Golden Triangle area and in industrial parks in Rancho Bernardo where their companies were located.

The ages of migrants interviewed ranged from 19 to 70, with an average of 40 years. The largest group was born in Baja California (22), with one in Baja California Sur. Ten were born in Jalisco, 9 in Michoacán, 8 in Sinaloa, 7 in Mexico, 6 in Veracruz, 4 in Nayarit, and smaller numbers in other states. At least a dozen of those who were not born in Baja California migrated to cities in the north of that state as children with their families, or had moved there as adults before migrating to the US. No one was born south of Guerrero, Puebla and Veracruz.

In Grounded Theory, theoretical sampling is used to simultaneously collect, code and analyze data, following the direction of the emerging theory (Breckenridge and Jones 2009). As each interview was completed, the content was conceptualized to detect conceptual categories. These conceptualizations influenced where the investigators would look next for a comparison, to find the different values of a category. Both agricultural and maquila employees were motivated by wage differences which were central to their work experiences on either side of the border, making this the core conceptual category. Initial interviewees with past and current maquiladora experience who worked in the US revealed other important conceptual categories in the emerging theory, such as the level of job one had held in Mexico, i.e. being a worker or having a more skilled or professional job. Gender was strongly related to this, since men tended to be much more likely to have had better jobs, reflecting labor force segmentation.

Table 1 organizes the main codes and conceptualizations of the transcripts of interviewees' accounts. Each transcript was read with the previous ones in mind and data were labeled or tentatively coded. As particular labels reoccurred and then became saturated, they were upgraded to substantive codes. The next step is to conceptualize how substantive codes are related. These conceptualizations are then integrated into basic social processes which explain a considerable portion of the data. The basic social process which explains the emerging theory is shown in bold. Finally, the core conceptual category, the substantive code which occurs most often and has the most properties, emerges.

Migratory Trajectories

Farm Workers

Migrants' paths may change over the life course in terms of frequency of movement and jobs taken, so that the ideal type which helps to understand a person's experience can also vary. Agricultural workers were most often undocumented men who began as recurrent migrants, coming seasonally and returning to their families in rural Mexico each year. Their home towns often had high proportions of migratory males and cultures of migration which normalized their behavior. Several single male farm worker interviewees had married US nationals or permanent residents and become immigrants. If those who were married before migrating had families in Mexico that were small enough to support on their US wages, they "crossed" them, as they said, making them also immigrants. Even if they could not get permanent residency, the pressure to become immigrants was great due to the increased cost and danger of coming and going with greater border enforcement starting with Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. Wives who were able to follow farm worker husbands to become immigrants often took agricultural jobs in the US as their children grew. Many agricultural workers expressed a desire to integrate into US society so they could get better jobs that were not as hot, dirty and physically difficult.

Since agricultural workers tended to originate in the interior of Mexico and were not borderlanders, they crossed the border less often and did not stop in border cities, in comparison to former maquila workers who were more likely to live in northern Baja California. When asked about the propensity of maquila workers to migrate, farm workers often said that they did not need to because they had jobs. Where farm workers originated, there was little or no work at all. The following exchange with an agricultural worker evidences their perception that maquila workers were less likely to migrate simply because they had paid work:

Table 1. Coding and Conceptualizing of the Cross-border Labor Migration System. ***Core Category:*** *Wage Differences in Mexico and the U.S.*

Substantive Codes	Conceptualizations	Basic Social Processes
1. Previous employment in Mexico	Emergence of new migration profiles based on work experience and geographic proximity.	Defining the labor migration project and its consequences for life goals
1.1. Maquila at the border (administrators, workers)		
1.2. Agriculture in the interior		
2. Migration decision related to labor market situation		
2.1. Stable and well paid work: A deterrent to permanent migration		
2.2. Unstable work and low pay. Combination of jobs on both sides of the border		
2.3. Differential pay and working conditions at places of origin and destination	Differential pay, working conditions and information: Main explanatory causes in deciding to migrate and where.	
2.4. Relative deprivation: Valuing career advancement and upward mobility		
2.5. The quality, quantity and the ways in which information flows		
3. Gender Differences in Migration Trajectories		
3.1. Male and female employees of maquilas		
3.2. Parental and marital status		***Migration process is articulated through work experience and context. Immigration, recurrent migration, transnational, diaspora.***
3.3. Victims of domestic violence and logic of patriarchal system	New migration routes: Changes in migratory pressure and the gender, kinship and generational system.	
4. The family situation in the migration process		
4.1. Family responsibilities: Economic and symbolic. Remittances		
4.2. Previous and/or post-migration marriage (interethnic or not)		
4.3. Nuclear and extended family at origin and/or destination		
5. The role of institutions in the migration process		
5.1. Civil society: NGOs and churches		
5.2. The State: enforcement of immigration legislation	Meso-level explanations of cross-border migration.	
5.3. Migration Industry: illegal networks and people smugglers		
6. The role of networks. Social and human capital.		
6.1. Solidarity, coordination and conflict: vertically and horizontally in the network		
6.2. Insertion in professional networks	Commuter: Geographic proximity, differential pay and recurrent migration promote permanent migration.	
6.3. Agriculture: spatially extended networks. Maquila: dense, local networks		
6.4. Proximity/geography: Emotional difficulty of "being away from your family"		
7. Migratory trajectory and articulation of fear: Document type, age, geographic proximity, and time spent in the U.S.	Aggregate analysis of the study of career paths: geographic proximity, age, employment type, and length of stay	
7.1. Internal migration, immigration control and difficulty crossing the border		
7.2. Without documentation. Illegal: *Semi-permanent*		
7.3. Commuter. Legal vs illegal *Short term: Hours, week days, weekend…*	Social mobility processes: Work in maquiladoras in order to obtain documentation, benefits or training.	
7.4. Residence and work. Legal: *Semi-permanent, Recurrent, Permanent…*		
8. Globalization: Failure of agricultural regime and connection to emerging transnational capitalist logic		
8.1. Employers: *Better pay vs. better benefits*		
8.2. The maquila as a trampoline in the migratory trajectory	Migration process as discretionary. The migration project is often not planned, but builds on itself.	International migration becomes more complex through the emergence of new economic structures and relationships.
8.2.1. Obtaining documentation		
8.2.2. Upward social mobility and associated expectations		
8.2.3. Experience, training and qualifications key in the migration trajectory		
8.2.4. The bidirectional transfer of skills		
8.2.5. Diaspora of skilled migrants. The importance of multiculturalism		
8.3. From subsidence farming to agribusiness: Job loss	Proximity and identity. Tijuanans who consider themselves borderlanders, not migrants	
8.4. The role of immigration policy (or lack thereof)		
9. The Social Meaning of Return Migration		
9.1. Differences by level of skill and education		
9.2. Experience of social integration in destination. Return on retirement		
9.3. Nostalgia. Targeting of social time in the past	Border culture: An explanatory element in differential migration.	
10. Future expectations associated with the migration project		
10.1. Permanent immigration vs. return migration		
10.2. Transnational experience		
10.3. Recurrent migration		
11. Border and transnational culture	The multidimensional nature of migration in sending societies and the perpetuation of migration.	
11.1. Values migration positively		
11.2. Knowledge of transnational corporate culture		
11.3. Multinationals nourish diaspora and transnational migration		Visualizing the future

> Interviewer: Do you think someone who has worked in a maquiladora is more likely to cross the border than someone who has not?
>
> Interviewee: Well, I think no. It's more likely someone who has not worked in a maquila would cross … If you are making some money, then why are you going to come, right?

Maquila Production Workers

Since production workers comprise approximately three-quarters of maquila labor forces (Hualde 2007), there are more possible migrants among them than the rest who have more skilled positions. Maquila workers most often started off being recurrent migrants, or one of its subtypes, commuters. Agricultural workers could not commute since they originated much further away. The interviews revealed that maquiladoras are a key factor in the acquisition of documents to enter the US legally and, once there, work illegally. The document is the Border Crossing Card, Laser Visa, or Tourist Visa, which is intended to permit Mexican borderlanders to visit and shop in the US. In order to acquire the document and to renew it when expired, Mexicans are required to show that they are sufficiently anchored in their homeland. Having some seniority in a job is essential. Written proof from the employer must be submitted with the application, giving type of job, wages, seniority, etc. Any Mexican employer can provide such a statement. However, in Baja California, as in most northern border states, maquiladoras employ a very large proportion of the labor force. In an article on export manufacturing (*El Sol de Tijuana*, March 13, 2009), Néstor Cruz and Marco Tulio Castro indicated the Mexican Social Security Institute attributes approximately 45% of all Baja California jobs to the manufacturing sector, which is mostly made up of maquiladoras. Moreover, many maquiladoras in Baja California are large and have administrations that can generate such statements, which is less likely in smaller businesses or the informal economy.

People get maquila production jobs with the conscious plan of using their employer to get documents in order to cross and work, or they may only use the employer to get documents to cross to shop, visit, or for entertainment. Support for getting documents is sometimes presented as part of a package of benefits with which companies try to reduce rotation. Because of the boom and bust character of export-processing industries, which makes their jobs unstable, even people who did not intend to use these documents for labor migration often do so when they lose maquila jobs. Sometimes they quit maquila jobs to commute to work in the US.

Maquila workers cross on their days off, during vacation, long weekends, and when companies reduce the working week in order to work cleaning houses and offices, washing cars, in construction and restaurants. A leader of a non-governmental organization (NGO) that supported maquila workers said the maquila was a "backup" for those who did work in the US, since many workers cannot afford to live north of the border with their families, and they need the benefits which their maquila jobs provide to live decently in Mexico (e.g. health care from IMSS, housing from INFONAVIT, credit from FONACOT). Unlike the farm worker quoted above, maquila workers were very clear that their wages had not made migration unnecessary. Juana,[2] a US cafeteria worker previously employed in a Tijuana maquila making TV components said "Many people look for work there in maquilas, but it's not for the money. It's because it's light work and they get services, like a doctor, insurance, free cafeteria, bonuses and coupons for grocery stores." Because maquila wages cannot provide adequately for growing families, they do not embed workers in Mexico, and Mexican pay is supplemented by US earnings. An alternative to commuting to the US for work is getting a second maquila job, which some interviewees had done, but the long hours of work necessary to support a family decently make US work more attractive. It is also difficult to find a second maquila job during the frequently occurring downturns in export industries. Not only are jobs lost during such recessions, but pay and benefits decrease while production quotas increase, rendering the remaining jobs poor ones. After September 11, 2001, border security increased, causing much longer waiting times to cross. All of these factors contributed to the transformation of the recurrent migrant ideal type and commuter subtype into immigrants.

Former maquila workers also become recurrent migrants staying longer than part of a day, remaining in the US from Monday to Friday or for two or three weeks at a time. Interviewees who did this worked as live-in maids, babysitters, carpenters, construction workers, etc. They often sleep in the US workplace and do not go out much, if at all, for fear of being apprehended working illegally. US employers often provided housing, food, and transportation costs which migrants would otherwise have to pay themselves if they were in Mexico. This is viewed as a perk of working in the US, an advantage in addition to higher wages.

While the documents maquilas help their employees acquire enable their migration, there is also pressure for the labor migration of the undocumented. Maquila wages may be sufficient for young people who live with their families and pool income with other household members, but they are too low to support workers once they have their own families. And, as workers age, it is more difficult to keep up with the work pace in export industries. Maquilas, as well as other Mexican employers, discriminate against workers on the basis of age, not hiring those over 35 or 40. Moreover, labor law is not enforced, leading to the frequent unjust firing of workers. These four factors (documents, wages, age discrimination and labor law) make maquilas part of a border migration system because—although they are a main source of employment—the jobs are precarious.

The geography of this particular part of the US–Mexico border makes it possible for people to walk or hike, albeit with difficulty, from Mexico to the US, despite many years of increased enforcement by the border patrol. The fact that this region's population is the largest of all the twin cities along the border means that more jobs are generated here. Together with proximity, this leads to the fact that migrants, with or without documents, are likely to be commuters on a daily, weekly or bi-weekly basis. One can work in the US, and still be in close touch with family in northern Baja California. While the majority of people in many cities in southern San Diego county are Hispanic, making it easy for newcomers to fit in, there are also large pockets of Mexicans in more northerly areas, such as Escondido, where Hispanics are now the largest group. While hiking the 44 miles from Escondido to the border would take several days, public transportation has responded to the market of commuting migrants with a "rapid bus" connecting Escondido and the Old Town terminal in the heart of San Diego. From there, it is a convenient trolley ride to the border.

Gerardo, an undocumented day laborer in Escondido, traveled back to his family in Tijuana every two or three weeks to bring them his earnings, because the Mexican post office had previously "misplaced" the money orders he had sent his wife. From the Nayarit peasantry, he had come to Tijuana and worked in maquilas for two and a half years but quit due to low wages and because "it kills you," as he said. He had been coming to the US for over 20 years at the time of the interview and used to stay for two or three months at a time, but the missing money orders prompted him to return more frequently, bringing his earnings himself. He hikes over the high hills in north-east Tijuana without a coyote, usually with other migrants, even though it is very dangerous due to thieves and wildlife. Because of the topography, fences and roads for border patrol vehicles are scarce.

A regional comparison shows the importance of the character of the Tijuana–San Diego border in this particular labor migration system. Hernández-León (2008, 139) found that in the migratory stream between Monterrey, Nuevo León and Houston, Texas, which are 400 miles apart, the undocumented have become trapped in the US by greater border enforcement and become immigrants. But the experience of Gerardo is instructive because it shows that proximity and geography may be more important than documents in making one into a recurrent migrant. Hernández-León did find documented migrants combining work in Houston with maquila work in Monterrey, but serially instead of simultaneously due to the greater distance involved.

Among former maquila workers, gender and family status were important factors contributing to type of migrant. While women now make up approximately half of the maquila labor force, this is a great reduction from the 80% they constituted in the 1960s and early 1970s, indicating that there are reduced

employment opportunities for them (De la O 2004). Also, many single mothers work in maquilas and have great difficulty supporting children on their wages, incentivizing their labor migration. Women avoided climbing over the hills due to the physical difficulty and danger and tended to cross through ports of entry with their own or borrowed documents. It is hypothesized that female maquila workers tended to become immigrants more often than their male counterparts because they were less likely to leave their families, especially their children, in Mexico.

Women also became immigrants in the US because of greater gender equality. Several former women maquila workers were interviewed who had come to the US with documents that allowed them to enter but not to work. They had married citizens or permanent residents and subsequently found themselves the victims of domestic violence. The Violence Against Women Act, passed in 1994, permits women who were abused by a spouse to apply for permanent residency in the US regardless of how they entered the country. These single mothers had been supported in the regularization of their immigration status by the charitable wing of a large San Diego church. With legal status, they could get much better jobs with which to support their children, and did not intend to return to Mexico except for visits.

Former male and female maquila workers tended to be borderlanders, many of whom were transnational in Martínez's (1996) sense. Those who grew up in northern Mexico have much more extensively developed social networks and thus more job opportunities than agricultural migrants from the interior (Coubès 2001). They often worked in maquilas during their school holidays or at the same time as studying, giving them more human capital than agricultural workers. Maquiladora employment did not embed them in Mexico because they had better job options on both sides of the border than migrants from the interior. Some former maquila workers, who were borderlanders and had migrated to San Diego county, did not even think of themselves as migrants, but maintained their *tijuanense*(Tijuana native) identities even though they lived and worked in San Diego. They could not imagine moving elsewhere, however.

Francisco, for example, was born in Tijuana and had worked full time in maquilas while he attended high school and university. At the time of the interview he crossed daily with a green card to work as a tradesman in construction. He was an apprentice taking sheet metal training and would be a much better paid journeyman in 5 years, when he planned to move with his family to Chula Vista. When asked if he planned to move anywhere else after that, he looked incredulous, saying "I'm *tijuanense*." Chula Vista is nicknamed Chulajuana because high numbers of *tijuanenses* settle there.

This subsection of the paper has shown how maquiladoras, in their construction of an industrial labor force in northern Baja California, have been key in generating new types of migrants which differ greatly from the traditional agricultural migrant. These new migrants fit the recurrent ideal type of migration and are often commuters, with a tendency to then become immigrants. The emergence of the finding of the commuter subtype addresses the need in migration studies expressed recently by Mize and Swords (2011, 186) that "the prevalence of 'commuter' migrants who live in either Mexico or the US and work and shop *en el otro lado* (on the other side) has not been fully examined by researchers."

Highly Skilled Maquila Personnel

At the beginning of maquila industrialization in Mexico, employees at this level were US nationals but, in the 1980s, companies replaced most of them with Mexicans because they could pay them three or four times less. Nevertheless, we interviewed US nationals who commuted daily to Mexico for several years in order to get their first business experience after leaving university. Unlike commuting production workers presented in the previous section, their commuting did not lead to emigration. They quit as soon as they could get better US jobs, sometimes in the same multinational. Unlike those at higher levels, production workers from maquilas never chose to work for the US operations of the same company, even when it was suggested to them by employment agencies. They were far less satisfied, and often overtly negative, with regard to their previous maquila experience.

Mexican maquiladora personnel who are highly skilled administrators also commute but not primarily because they are enabled by their employers' support getting documents, as in the case of workers. Employees at this level commute between the twin plants as part of their jobs and are best understood as diaspora or transnational migrants. Mexican administrators were often bilingual and bicultural borderlanders educated in northern Baja California. Sklair (1992) conceptualized them as a coherent group, part of a transnational capitalist class created by maquilas between 1970 and 1990. Getting a better job in the company often requires moving to the United States and thus becoming an immigrant, since the most advanced administrative tasks are done there. Managers may plan this as they age, since, like workers, they cannot continue the intense work pace forever. Age is also important in that they are attracted by seemingly better US pension benefits.

Even if an administrator does not migrate by moving up within a company, migration is often seen as essential to progress in a professional career. One interviewee attributed this to culture:

> People also want to come to the U.S. to get more training and certification. The supervisors in the maquilas in Mexico think that if we give you more training or permit you to get certified, you're going to take their job, or you're gonna leave. This way of thinking makes it very hard in Latin America; it's like, "we don't want you to grow because we want you to be right there. Because if you learn a lot, you're gonna take my position." That's one of the reasons I came over here. I didn't want to get stuck over there.

He was a transnational, who lived with his wife and children in San Diego and was building a house in Ensenada, his home town. He intended to keep his US job and home, but to consult when in Mexico. At the time of the interview he had a very high-level job in a San Diego communications firm, was completing a doctorate part-time and was a leader in an NGO with professional Mexican American members educated abroad who advised Mexican governments on how to improve.

Multinational companies from which maquilas subcontract invest in personnel above the level of supervisor, and may retain them in the US to build their social capital in order to make use of it later. Large companies have internal labor markets in which skilled employees can engage in exchanges, going to other countries for new training and experience. An engineer who had worked in a Tijuana maquila for almost ten years before getting a better US job described the practice in his former company which is best understood as the creation of the diaspora migrant by the multinational, who in time becomes a return migrant.

> [Maquila X] used to transfer people to Lincoln, Nebraska for about a year. They would stay there … with their room and board expenses covered. If married, their wives would go with them. These were people who were working for the company for a couple years, so it's not like they needed training. The purpose was more cultural training, to get to know the corporation, the contacts over there, how they operate, how they work over there. But it was temporary, they all came back to Mexico to their jobs.

He himself had been sent to Toronto, Canada for three months to dismantle some of the production lines and bring them to Tijuana where they were transformed by flexible production methods, something the Canadians were not amenable to. He had liked multiculturalism there and said he could live there, unlike in La Jolla, California where he said people suspected Mexicans.

A manager in an auto parts multinational from Tijuana commuted between the Mexican and US operations for years before getting a better job in the US via a head-hunting firm and then immigrating. He said his immigration was a "natural evolution" because he "burned out" over time. The transnational and diaspora types best explained his migratory trajectory, since he lived and worked in San Diego, spent

60% of his days working in Tijuana and at least a week per month in Detroit. Along with other interviewees, he described a process whereby the multinational enables temporary diaspora migration in order to benefit from the human capital their maquila employees have acquired in the Mexican operations.

> What I have seen is always the same. You establish a career, learn systems or learn a technique, something that has a lot of value, and that in the United States there might be interest in, an opportunity, a vacancy. In Mexico we have had plants which fire an engineer. They say he is not capable and they give him a check. The corporation in the United States realizes it and asks, "Why are you firing him?" "Because he had this and that problem." Then the corporation speaks to that person and they say to him, "Listen, I have a position in Detroit. Are you interested in moving? And we are going to help you get a visa so that you're legal and you will have a position for two years." … So, like in all organizations, there are problems; in all, there is politics; in all, individuals have behavior problems. So, if the person is not with the right team or does not identify with the team, he simply leaves. There the technical capacity is recognized and they want to bring him. We have three of those in Detroit.

It is noteworthy that he spontaneously described the maquila acting as a trampoline in the permanent transfers which sometimes take place within the multinational and across the border, as Carrillo (1990) did.

This subsection shows how the multinational corporation, of which maquiladoras are a part, has practices and policies included in its organizational structure which promote migration of administrators. In order to interface with other parts of the multinational productively and efficiently, Mexican professionals assimilate corporate culture and engage in social networks with co-employees abroad. Because of its organizational characteristics, the multinational is an important contributor to diaspora and transnational migration. This may be transformed into return migration, or it may not. However, it would not have occurred if Mexico had continued with import substitution and not adopted export-led development. At the subjective level, human agency is also a driver in migration of this kind, with individuals having careerist goals.

Return Migration

Many former maquila workers said that they planned to return to Mexico upon retiring. Some already had houses there, or had purchased land intending to build. Retiring in Mexico was almost never mentioned by those who had worked at higher levels. This difference is partly a function of income, with those at higher levels earning enough to retire comfortably in the US, while those who were workers may not have the same resources, and want to take advantage of lower costs in Mexico. It is also an indicator that those with better jobs become more integrated as immigrants than those who are not so skilled.

As noted above, due to the prevalence of transnational borderlanders in this region, some interviewees did not think of themselves as migrants, but still maintained *tijuanense* or regional identities. This was the case with Federico who worked as a short-order cook in La Jolla. He was born, spent his early years, and had worked in maquilas in Tijuana. His mother had brought him to Oceanside where he attended high school and regularized his immigration status. He returned to Mexico after high school and had two children with a woman in Ensenada, whom he still visited and supported economically. He would not permanently return to Baja California or work in a maquila again because he was ambitious and wanted to get ahead. Nevertheless, he did not think of himself as a migrant. To the extent that people like him do not identify as any type of migrant, the question of return migration is, to some degree, a moot one. Yes, they might go back to Mexico, but they did that on a regular basis anyway. As transmigrants, they feel that they are already deeply involved in Mexico.

As reported above, women maquila workers may be less likely than men to return since they are less likely to leave children and spouses in Mexico. This is also true at the level of former female maquila administrative personnel. However, higher up on the job ladder, women professionals also reported experiencing gender discrimination in their Mexican workplaces. Having then worked in US administrative positions, sometimes in the US branch of the same multinational from which the maquila subcontracted, and experiencing greater regard for their abilities, they would not return to tolerate such working conditions again.

Another reason for the infrequent occurrence of return migration is the fact that job creation in maquiladoras has not compensated for repeated economic crises in Mexico since the late 1970s. Some commuters said they did not want to come to the US to work due to negative experiences (e.g. not getting paid, bad treatment by employers) and fear of harassment by the border patrol, but they did so out of economic need. Interviewees were asked if they had remained north of the border longer than planned, and most said yes, because the economic problems in their places of origin had lasted longer than anticipated.

One of the participants in a discussion group said that Mexicans stayed because they got "stuck" in the US: "It is hard to be an immigrant, but not hard hard like it is in Mexico. People come to the U.S. to work in order to send money home to their families, but if you go back to Mexico, you will no longer be able to financially help your family."

This subsection has shown that in the typological theory formulated by the results of this study, the return ideal type of migrant is not very prevalent except perhaps at retirement. This is because of insufficient job opportunities in Mexico and the location of former maquiladora workers at the border where their frequent crossing in both directions takes the meaning out of the return ideal type.

Typological Theory

The findings presented above are illustrated in Table 2, which highlights the typological theory formed by them. It shows how variables are related to each other and the paths they take together to lead to differing types of migration for men and women. The first column indicates the kind of Mexican work experience and the second key characteristics of the labor markets in which these jobs exist. They are the independent variables in the theory. The next four columns, origin, documents, social and human capital, are intervening variables, mediating the effect the independent variables have on the dependent variable, migration type, which is column seven. The last two columns refer to gender differences in migration outcomes.

Conclusion

This research uses grounded theory and typological theorizing to formulate an explanation of how maquiladora employment leads to different types of migration. The conditions under which such work is an important factor in migration include working conditions which do not support a decent life for families and/or which are perceived as offering inadequate opportunities for getting ahead, at an international border which brings highly unequal standards of living into close proximity and which can be relatively easily traversed. Under such conditions, people use their social capital to migrate and get more for their human capital, the human capital often having been acquired because maquila jobs enabled more education and training. Migration trajectories of maquiladora employees often begin as commuting, an important contribution of the theory since previous researchers argued that commuters in this region were distinct from and would not become immigrants (Ruiz 1996).

Maquiladora workers are more numerous among immigrants than administrators and their migration is assisted with supportive documents. However, those employed at higher levels get much more support in

Table 2. A Typological Theory of the Impact of Selected Work Experience on Migration from Mexico to the U.S.

Mexican Job	Labor Market	Origin	Documents	Social Capital	Human Capital	Migration Type	Men	Women
Farm Worker	No jobs at home	Interior, seldom stopping at border.	No Documents	Social networks embedded in culture of migration	Low	Formerly recurrent migrants. Immigrants after 1994	Males migrate first and remit to family	Families may follow if small
Maquila worker	Maquila jobs precarious and pay less than U.S. jobs	Two step (interior, border, U.S.) Border, as transnationals.	Documents permitting entry but not work acquired via borderlander culture and maquila job	Social networks embedded in borderland culture	Medium to High. Maquila related	Recurrent migrants, especially commuters. Become immigrants. May return when retired.	May transfer maquila skills, but also work in non-industrial U.S. jobs. Benefit from less ageism.	Maquila skills seldom transferred to non- industrial U.S. jobs. Benefit from less ageism, sexism.
Maquila Administrator/ Professional	Maquila jobs pay less than U.S. jobs and afford less upward mobility	Two step (interior, border, U.S.). Border, as transnationals and part of transnational capitalist class.	Documents permitting entry and work acquired through borderlander culture, maquila & U.S. employer	Social networks embedded in borderland culture and international business	High. Maquila related	Recurrent migrants. Commuters. Transnational diaspora embedded in multinational companies. Immigrants	Transfer maquila skills to U.S. job. U.S. work less intense.	Transfer maquila skills to U.S. job. Benefit from less ageism, sexism.

their migration from the multinational companies from which their maquilas subcontract to become diaspora migrants. On-the-job mobility often means emigration for them, whereas there is little on-the-job mobility for workers except within the Mexican factory. Maquiladora workers constitute transnationalism from below, while administrators are examples of transnationalism from above.

This theory might inform ongoing debates in several US states attempting to legislate the enforcement of immigration law at the local level. Such debates tend to stereotype migrants negatively as criminals in order to empower local police to profile and deport them. This rhetoric might be balanced to some extent by the finding that the new stream of migrants with maquiladora work experience are not criminals but often highly accomplished people whose talents are sought after by transnational corporations at the executive level. Also, the finding that commuting is preferred to immigration by many maquila workers, especially if they were not profiled as illegal or detained as security threats, might lead policy makers to regularize them as guest workers. Commuters who were or still are maquila workers often take jobs that US nationals do not find attractive, so they do not compete with them for work. Since they cannot live in the US on the wages such jobs pay, their families remain in Mexico and the costs of reproducing their labor are borne there.

Typologies are evaluated in part by the predictions which can be derived from them (McKinney 1966, 201). The theory constructed here can be used to generate testable hypotheses. For example, in the states of Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Baja California, maquila workers are now hired much more frequently on temporary six- or three-month contracts (Bacon 2011). This is also a major reform suggested for federal labor law. While this gives companies greater flexibility, it adds to the instability of maquila work for personnel. It is predicted that to the extent that this becomes normative, maquiladora workers will be even less embedded in Mexico and more likely to seek work in the US as recurrent migrants, and in the San Diego–Tijuana region, as commuters.

One of the limitations of using Grounded Theory and typological theorizing is that the findings cannot be generalized. We have already shown that the theory constructed here explaining maquila-related migration is not as powerful in understanding the Houston–Monterrey area as the Californias because of the variable called "origin," which refers to the distance to the border and thus the facility in crossing. Thus, Monterrey does not send maquila commuters to Houston who then become immigrants. More comparison in future research undertaken at other borders should help to refine the theory to give it greater predictability. For example, Morocco also hosts maquiladora-like export-processing industries, many of which are owned by Spanish companies. A comparative study of that situation with the one researched here is our next step. It will help us differentiate the influence employment in export processing has on migration, and distinguish it from the impact of the border, as well as other variables in the theory. By deriving hypotheses from the theory formulated here and testing them on other cases, we can determine which parts are generalizable and under what conditions.

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Endnotes

[1] Accurate data are not available at this time in order to update these statistics. The Mexican government agency (INEGI), which had generated and reported data on the maquilas since their inception, ended the practice in 2006. Starting in 2007, the maquilas were included in a new conceptual and statistical category, the IMMEX firms (Cypher and Delagado Wise 2010, ix, 108). It aggregates data for

maquiladoras, submaquiladoras (established under the PITEX program), and firms which remanufacture. In one of its first releases of data for this new category, INEGI (2011) states that "It is important to emphasize that the Monthly Statistics of the IMMEX Program are not comparable with the Statistics of the Maquiladora Export Industry which INEGI generated and published until December, 2006, since … the Maquiladora Export Industry is centered exclusively in production for others destined abroad."

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

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