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

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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 network 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 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.

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; Menjivar, 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. 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-

1Escobar 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 Weintrob (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 merely 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., Cummins, 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, 1977:238). 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, 1995:280–281). 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 anomie 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 deployed 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. 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.

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. 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

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2Examples 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; Wassertrom, 1983; Kearney, 1996).

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

4Examples 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 Aztlán (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 Aztlán. 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 (Kristman, 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 swaths 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 Aztlán* 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 (Gamarra, 1979; 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 (Prothro, 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 sancueries paid for by the immigrants and/or their employers. The use of production subcontractors in textiles is a particularly notorious example (see Bonisch and Applebaum, 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 home town (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 (paisaje), 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 Cazes, 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 paisaje. 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 paisaje 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, paisaje — 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 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 paisaje, 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 paisaje (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 networks 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 ethnorsurvey. . . . that. . . . provides hard information so that the social process of international migration can be described” (Massey et al., 1987:13). 5 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., 1995, 1994). Eighty-five percent of these two score plus variables utilized their ethnorsurvey 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 . . .” (1997:948). They laid the blame for using this poor indicator on a lack of suitable State statistics, which is ironic since “[t]he ethnorsurvey 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

5 The ethnorsurvey 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/memg> had grown from the 4 towns featured in Return to Aztlán to 34 communities by the late 1990s. Massey and Zenteno (1999:779) 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 ethnorsurvey 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