

# The Migration of Urban Mexicans to the United States

*This is the neighborhood of La Fama, an industrial working-class district in the metropolitan area of Monterrey, Mexico's version of Pittsburgh, Detroit, or Chicago (depending on your preference) because of its history of heavy manufacturing. It is the Sunday after New Year's Day, and several families are getting ready to return to the United States after spending the holidays in Monterrey. These families are also celebrating the birthday of a boy in the driveway of one of the homes. As such celebrations often are in Mexico, the party is open to everybody in the neighborhood. After a clown's performance, the children break the piñata and get ready to sit down and eat their tamales. At the same time, on the sidewalk, the adults are exchanging information about la pasada, the crossing into the United States, specifically about conditions on the highway leading to the border and the traffic congestion on the bridges in the Laredo area. The children are being served dinner and are now eating their tamales. As I listen to their conversation, I am able to grasp this snapshot of immigrant life: Just like their parents, some children are also discussing their trip back to the United States. The crux of their exchange is the question of how many tamales they need to take in order to make it to Houston and Chicago without going hungry. It is clear to them that those traveling to Chicago should bring more tamales because of the additional distance to be covered after Houston. Thus, these kids are already aware of the geographical distance separating three different points of the migratory circuit they inhabit. By measuring distance in*

*terms of a culinary and cultural item (the tamale) so familiar to them, they are also establishing links between these distant cities.*

*It is Friday afternoon at a small strip mall in a busy intersection of Houston's Summerland area. One of the businesses at this intersection is a courier service that shuttles between Houston and Monterrey, carrying remittances in cash, parcels with mostly used goods, correspondence, and a handful of passengers. Customers begin to crowd in the small storefront, turning in their remittances. Two women receive the money and count it, placing each customer's cash in a white envelope, writing the Monterrey delivery address on the envelope, and registering all this information in a log book. At the end of each transaction, the women ask the customer to sign the flap of the envelope after it has been sealed. The owner of the courier service supervises the operation, chatting with patrons and quoting them the cost for shipping parcels to Monterrey. A man approaches the owner to inquire about a pickup truck wheel that had not yet been delivered in Mexico, two weeks after he took them to the courier's office. The owner argues that he hasn't had space in his van. The customer reacts angrily, leaving the store at once. The owner responds by saying that he doesn't know why people ship such "crazy stuff" to Mexico. But it is getting late, and he and his employees have to load the van and the trailer with boxes and bags containing an assortment of used goods, foodstuffs, small and large appliances, and electronics. They will drive all night, arriving in Monterrey in the morning to immediately begin deliveries throughout the westernmost neighborhoods of the city.*

*It is a grey and rainy fall day in La Fama. Two new developments are worth noting since my last field visit: the demolition of the textile mill and the celebration of the first La Fama Antigua (Old La Fama) festival. Paradoxically, the festival celebrates the 150 years of the textile mill that gives its name to the neighborhood. It is Sunday and the bulldozers that are razing the mill's buildings have the day off, offering a spectacle of silent destruction. At this point, only the walls of the mill remain standing, surrounded by overgrown bushes and trees. Later in the day, the festival organizers get ready to honor the former mill workers in a union hall located in the heart of the neighborhood. The ceremony begins with an array of Mexican folk dances performed by middle and high school troupes from the surrounding public schools, followed by a few speeches by the organizers and the mayor. The main part of the event is a medal*

*award ceremony for retired mill workers and for those who lost their jobs when the factory closed in 2003. Their names are read from a long list, and, one by one, they go to the podium to receive their medals. The master of ceremonies makes reference to the community contributions of these former workers and states that although the mill is closed now, “we should not be sad,” reminding the participants that the motto of the festival is “la alegría que nos une” (the joy that brings us together). As they continue to receive their medals, I talk to a few former workers. Those who lost their jobs when the factory closed are basically unemployable. They tell me that no company in Monterrey will hire a fifty-plus-year-old worker. If it happens, it will be to sweep floors. One of the workers gives me a long lecture about his skills in industrial welding, providing multiple examples of his technical problem-solving abilities. Another one, an electrician and union leader, mentions that the union hall is up for sale. I ask him if any of his acquaintances from the mill have headed north to work in the United States. He answers, “No. We don’t do that stuff here.” A few moments later he tells me that he just spent three months in the United States painting houses and doing yard work.*

This book is about the migration of urban and, more specifically, metropolitan Mexicans to the United States. Using the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit to observe the causes and social organization of metropolitan emigration, I argue that the restructuring of the Mexican economy—prompted by the transition from a development model of import substitution industrialization (ISI) to a policy of export-oriented industrialization (EOI)—has driven urban households in Monterrey to increasingly deploy the labor of their members internationally. Through the lens of a case study, I show how the migration of skilled working-class *regiomontanos* (the people of Monterrey) to the United States is being sustained not only by strong kinship networks, but also by weak friendship ties established in the context of the urban neighborhood. In Monterrey’s blue-collar districts, the employment and residential stability characteristic of ISI have allowed for these weak ties to be conduits of migratory social capital. Still, migrant networks are not the sole social infrastructure easing international human mobility. Here, I contend that migration is also facilitated by a matrix of migration entrepreneurs—recruiters, smugglers, couriers—who connect “here” and “there” at a profit. Combined, migrant networks and migration entrepreneurs have successfully channeled *regiomontanos* to Houston, a global city for

the oil industry with an increasingly diversified economy, where these Mexican urbanites have formed settlements and occupational niches.

Known as the Chicago (Snodgrass 2003) and the Pittsburgh (Langley 1994) of Mexico, Monterrey boasts a history of early industrialization stimulated by the geopolitical proximity to the American Industrial Revolution. Such history began at the dusk of the nineteenth century, when local merchants and financiers started to invest their fortunes in manufacturing, a move uncommon in Latin America. This experience shaped the city's capitalist future, its labor markets, and its social demographic patterns. Fifty years later, Monterrey had become the country's third-largest metropolitan area, its most important heavy manufacturing industrial center, and a prime destination of internal migratory flows.<sup>1</sup>

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, prompted by Mexico's transition from ISI to EOI, the economic specialization of the Monterrey metropolitan area shifted from production for largely protected internal markets to manufacturing and services in a free-trade environment—developments that forced local firms to engage in various forms of industrial restructuring. Unfolding in a macroeconomic context of recurrent financial crises, restructuring has produced a variety of outcomes, many of which have particular relevance for this book. One notable development was the substantial weakening of a regime of industry-labor relations that afforded male workers in local manufacturing many of the contractual arrangements enjoyed by their peers in developed countries: a family wage, lifelong employment, the passing-down of jobs from fathers to sons, and perquisite packages that included housing and health benefits. The erosion of these labor relations during the past two decades has occurred not only because of the downsizing, closure, merger, and takeover of firms, which in the 1980s translated into massive layoffs, but also because of legal changes in the labor code that together have restricted the access of new generations to stable, formal employment in the large corporations dominating the local labor market (Pozas 2002).

During the 1990s, in the context of the opening of the economy and the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Monterrey reindustrialized: Local manufacturing conglomerates restructured and internationalized their holdings, establishing joint ventures and subcontracting arrangements with foreign companies while foreign direct investment flocked to export-oriented production, including light, assembly-type manufacturing, or *maquiladoras*.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, employment in light manufacturing and services does

not provide the wages, security, and benefits typical of traditional heavy industry jobs. It is in this context of transformation that Monterrey has emerged as a source of migratory flows to the United States and to Texas in particular.

#### EXPLAINING URBAN MEXICANS' MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

In contrast with their rural counterparts, Mexican urbanites have only recently begun migrating across the border in sizable numbers. In the 1980s and early 1990s, researchers started to document, analyze, and debate the causes, consequences, social organization, and actual numbers of urban dwellers in Mexico who were joining the migratory stream across the international border. Still, until the 1990s, scholars of the prolific Mexico-U.S. migration literature were primarily concerned with rural settings, that is, with the villages and towns that, for most of the twentieth century, had been the predominant sites of out-migration. By 1990, only a handful of studies had analyzed the role of cities in connection with the population flows to *el norte* (Massey et al 1987; Verduzco Igartúa 1990; Cornelius 1992). In the past fifteen years, critical knowledge about the specificity, social dynamics, and outcomes of urban-origin migration has begun to emerge (Arias and Woo Morales 2004; Flores, Hernández-León, and Massey 2004; Fussell and Massey 2004; Hernández-León 1999; Lozano Ascencio 2000; Zúñiga 1993). Still, the sizable literature reporting the findings and methods of research conducted in rural areas in central and western Mexico continues to be a necessary reference for the emerging studies of cities as sending areas of international migration.

Why is the study of cities as source areas of sojourning important for the overall investigation of Mexico-U.S. migration? There are two reasons. First, the participation of Mexican cities is part of a series of new developments changing the face of population flows between the two countries in the last twenty-five years. There is a scholarly consensus that in this period Mexican migration to the United States has undergone a great transformation (Durand, Massey, and Parrado 1999; Roberts, Frank, and Lozano-Ascencio 1999), an argument echoed by Martin, who suggests, "Mexico today is on the verge of its *Great Migration*" (1997: 79). Thus, fundamental changes in the characteristics and dynamics of this migration have occurred both at the origin and at the destination. The Mexican population in the United States more

than doubled in the 1990s, growing from 4.3 million in 1990 to 9.2 million in 2000 (Grieco 2003). Mexican migrants have gradually become concentrated in metropolitan labor markets, reflecting the occupational shift from agriculture to services and manufacturing (Waldinger 1989). Urban employment has contributed to the growing pattern of long-term settlement and family migration. The passage and implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which included a comprehensive amnesty program, reinforced these trends. Moreover, the legalization of 2.3 million undocumented Mexicans in the United States allowed for larger numbers of documented migration under family reunification provisions and created conditions for the diversification of areas of destination (Baker 1997; Durand, Massey and Charvet 2000; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000).

In Mexico, the maturation of social networks, the consolidation of immigrant communities abroad, and successive economic crises produced changes in the social and geographical selectivity of U.S.-bound migrants (Cornelius 1992; Roberts and Hamilton 2005). More single and married women and elderly people have joined the international flow (Donato 1993). Furthermore, the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s triggered the migration of middle-class Mexicans. Also, new sending regions have emerged in central and southern Mexico, allowing the participation of indigenous groups and the rise of new migration systems linking internal and international flows (Durand and Massey 2003; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Kearney 1998). Another new development of the past twenty years has been the Mexican government's growing involvement in the affairs of expatriate political and civic associations in the United States in an attempt to control such organizations (Smith 1998). In sum, Mexican cities are part of the profound transformation of Mexico-U.S. migration, participating in the phenomenon in ways they had not in the past.

The second reason why the study of cities as source areas of U.S.-bound sojourning is of significance to the field is that urban environments offer the opportunity to put to the test old and new hypotheses on the causes and social organization of international migration and to verify whether existing explanations are context specific or can cut across different social settings of origin. Leading researchers have long cast doubts about the ready applicability of theories, concepts, and analytical tools developed in rural contexts to urban settings, often characterized by social differentiation, anonymity, and an advanced division of labor. As Massey and his associates argue, "The dynamics of international

migration from large metropolitan areas have not been well studied,” suggesting that “the social dynamics of migration from major cities are sufficiently different from those of smaller towns and cities to warrant separate study” (Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994: 1503, 1506).

This task has been undertaken by scholars of Mexico-U.S. migration since the mid-1990s, and they have posed and reframed questions in ways that point to the distinctive nature of metropolitan settings. What is the relation between the structural transformation of the Mexican economy in the past twenty years and international out-migration from the country’s urban areas? What is the social organization of migration in urban environments? Does migration have a similar capacity to transform urban sending communities the way it changes rural localities? What are the distinct impacts that migration can have on urban contexts (in contrast with rural settings)? An emerging strand of scholarship has sought to respond to these and other questions. Thus, a series of qualitative and quantitative studies have uncovered social networks and a migration industry structuring flows between Mexican cities and the United States yet have also found that the cumulative causation and the motivations associated with rural sending areas and traditional labor migration do not unfold in urban settings exactly as predicted by existing theories. These same studies have identified fundamental differences in the types of social groupings and relations that support migration in cities and in rural contexts (Flores 2001; Flores, Hernández-León, and Massey 2004; Fussell and Massey 2004; Hernández-León 1997, 1999). Other scholars analyzing urban-origin migration have discovered streams that are not necessarily structured by social networks in which people who migrate are relatively isolated and have weak connections to their own places of origin (Roberts, Frank, and Lozano Ascencio 1999; Lozano Ascencio 2000).

The scholarship on Mexican cities as sources areas of U.S.-bound migration has also produced explanations about the causes of the phenomenon. Seeking to explain a changing profile of Mexican immigration, Cornelius argues that “rather than simply absorbing internal migrants from the countryside and provincial cities . . . Mexico’s large urban centers today are serving increasingly as platforms for migration to the United States” (1991: 162). He and others attributed this “urbanization of the flow” to the severe crises that affected the Mexican economy during the 1980s, which provoked a sharp decline in real wages and a saturation of urban labor markets (Cornelius 1992; Roberts and Escobar Latapí 1997). Disputing this interpretation and the factual evi-

dence behind it, Durand, Massey, and Zenteno (2001) countered that rather than a changing profile and urbanization of the social origins of migrants, the broader flow displayed an increasing bifurcation, with towns of fewer than 15,000 people contributing 57 percent of the migration and cities of more than 100,000 making up more than 30 percent of the stream by the late 1980s. In their view, international out-migration from cities was due not to the social impact of the crises as much as to the secular urbanization of Mexican society in general. Echoing an argument made earlier in *Return to Aztlan* (Massey et al. 1987), Durand, Massey, and Zenteno contend that “as Mexico has urbanized, families have brought their migratory experiences and network contacts from the countryside to the city, so that the flow now embraces urban as well as rural workers” (2001: 124).

Lozano (2001) offered yet another explanation of the causes and profile of urban migration from Mexico to the United States. Using data from a national demographic survey on return migrants collected in the late 1990s, Lozano demonstrated that even though migration from places with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants increased in the 1970–97 period, U.S.-bound population movements from cities with more than 100,000 people amplified—reaching a peak in the 1985–89 period when they became more than 40 percent of the total outflow—but then declined in the 1995–97 period to slightly over 28 percent. However, by differentiating between traditional and nontraditional regions of migration in Mexico in his analysis,<sup>3</sup> Lozano also showed that in the nontraditional states, migration from cities remained higher than the outflow from rural localities, with nearly 40 percent and 32 percent, respectively, in 1995–97. Lozano interpreted these fluctuations in the social composition of the stream as the result of patterns of foreign investment in Mexico during the 1990s and as evidence of the intersection between macroeconomic transformation and its uneven impact in the national territory *and* the regional origins of migrants.<sup>4</sup> In their analysis of the 2000 Mexican Census, Roberts and Hamilton (2005) determined that about 29 percent of U.S. migrants in the 1995–2000 period came from cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The authors also analyzed the 2002 fourth quarter Encuesta Nacional de Empleo (National Employment Survey), which collected data on U.S. migration between 1997 and 2002. According to this survey, large- and medium-sized cities accounted for nearly 40 percent of all U.S.-bound trips during the period of reference (Roberts and Hamilton 2005).

In sum, these studies show that there is not linear growth of Mexican

urbanites in the broader flow to the United States and that the relation between crises and other sources of structural change and out-migration is not obvious. At the same time, however, these studies prove that Mexico's urban residents are resorting in significant numbers to U.S. migration and that large cities are already an important and sizable source of population flows between the two countries—one that still has garnered relatively little attention.

Utilizing Monterrey and the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit as what Merton (1987) called strategic research materials, this book raises questions related to the *urban* specificity of urban-origin migration from Mexico to the United States. What are the distinctive causes, dynamics, and outcomes of the international migratory flows that originate in Mexican cities and metropolitan areas? In what respects are the root causes of migration, the social networks, and their social ecology typically urban? How are the types of networks and social capital, household arrangements, experiences of labor market incorporation at the destination, and the overall social process of migration associated with the city origin of migrants? In urban contexts, is international migration an individual or a household strategy? Why and under what circumstances do urban households deploy their labor internationally? Do urban social relations allow for the development of support networks that sustain migration over time? If so, what are the characteristics of the networks that support city-origin migration? How are these networks established, and how are they mapped out on urban space? What forms of social capital arise as such urban networks unfold? Does transnationalism and transnational forms of social organization develop in cities and metropolitan source areas of international migration? What are the settlement experiences of urban-origin migrants? How do the networks these migrants use influence their patterns of incorporation at the destination?

#### IS THE MONTERREY-HOUSTON CONNECTION A 'TRANSNATIONAL' MIGRATORY CIRCUIT?

The chief destination of migrants from Monterrey to the United States is Houston, Texas, a global city for the oil industry and its multiple branches (i.e., management, extraction, tools, and technology).<sup>5</sup> Together, Monterrey and Houston constitute an international migratory circuit. Durand (1988) uses the term *migratory circuit* to refer to a social system of intertwined international and internal population

flows, which generate a “complex ensemble of social and economic relations. . . . including the mobility of information, goods, capital, services. . . . This continuous traffic resembles an integrated circuit of alternate current, through which flows move in multiple directions and with different intensity” (1988: 6, 43). Focusing on the migratory streams from western Mexico to the United States, Durand’s conceptualization provides a comprehensive and systemic view of migration, incorporating historic, geographic, economic, and social dimensions of this border-spanning phenomenon. In so doing, Durand in fact pioneered a perspective applied later on to transnational studies of Mexico-U.S. migration (see Rouse 1989).

However, this early conceptualization of a migratory circuit remained incomplete in one vital way: its political dimension. An *international* migratory circuit—and international migration in general—is fundamentally a sociopolitical phenomenon, ultimately defined by the crossing of borders, the involvement of two or more nation-states, and migrants’ entry into and exit out of distinct and separate polities. This is what in essence differentiates international migratory circuits from domestic ones—regardless of whether they are interconnected. Such a distinction is not just a nominal one. State policies and practices toward emigration and immigration and the relations *between* the states in which a given flow is nested shape much of what is at stake in a migratory circuit. As this book shows, the sending state has played a vital role in the formation of the Monterrey-Houston circuit, because the mix of macroeconomic policies that Mexico has pursued since the mid-1980s have eroded the safety net that its skilled working-class urban residents enjoyed for decades and that turned cities—specially Monterrey—into virtual barriers against cross-border migration. As early as the 1940s, the Mexican government prevented the formation of networks and a culture of migration in cities by excluding Mexico’s urbanites from the recruitment schemes of the Bracero program—the 1942–64 bilateral agreement that funneled millions of guest workers to U.S. agriculture—a move designed to retain its growing, skilled urban-industrial population while channeling rural dwellers to the international labor market, albeit temporarily (Durand 1998; Fitzgerald 2006a).

The United States government, in turn, has been at the center of a scheme to import migrant labor to the Southwest for more than a century, allowing this region to become a source of agricultural products and raw materials for the American Industrial Revolution (Galarza 1964). The relations between the two states have also shaped cross-

border population movements. Clearly, the territorial and economic expansion of the United States during the nineteenth century created the political and geographic conditions that transformed Mexico into a vast labor pool for states like California and Texas. Although less powerful than its U.S. counterpart, the Mexican government has by no means been a passive actor, using legal and undocumented migration to get rid of critics, export excess labor resulting from economic modernization, and finance the direct and indirect costs of development through remittances.

The emphasis placed here on the primacy of states does not dismiss the social and cultural dimensions of international migratory circuits, including the flows of services, information, goods, and capital that follow the trails opened by migrants that are referenced in Durand's (1988) definition. Such dimensions are important in their own right: as part of the lived experience of individuals and families; as dependent and independent variables of migration-induced social change in sending and receiving communities; as part of the types of sociability that infuse network dynamics and motivations for migration; and as social institutions that state actors confront when designing and implementing emigration and immigration policy. But their meaning would ultimately be different if migration were to occur *within* the confines of a single nation-state. Consequently, to talk about the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit is, first and foremost, to talk about a border-spanning process, not a border-blurring phenomenon.

With this revised notion of an international migratory circuit in hand, it is worth asking, Is the Monterrey-Houston connection a transnational migratory circuit? For the last ten years, the transnational perspective has swept international migration research. Thus, scholars have flocked to study and define what has alternatively been called transnational communities (Rodríguez 1996), transnational social spaces (Faist 2000; Pries 2001), transnational life (Smith 2001, 2006), transnational social formations (Guarnizo and Smith 1998) and transnationalism (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). Proponents of transnationalism argue that immigrants keep a continued political and social belonging in their country of origin while asserting rights and making membership claims at their destination (Guarnizo 1998; Levitt 2000). According to this view, immigrants use this dual membership as a strategic resource to confront discrimination and marginalization and to negotiate their incorporation into the host society (Portes 1999). Still other scholars have argued that immigrant

transnationalism sheds light on the limitations of the methodological nationalism that has dominated the study of international migration (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003).

As with other trendy developments in the social sciences, the word *transnational* has been faddishly pegged to almost anything remotely connected with migration, prompting academics to warn, “Transnationalism thus runs the risk of becoming an empty conceptual vessel” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 3). To date, most of the debate between proponents and critics of this approach revolves around the distinctiveness and specificity of transnationalism (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004), the durability of transnational practices beyond the immigrant generation (Smith 2006), the extent of migrants’ participation in transnational activities (Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002), and the newness and contingency of the phenomenon in question (Foner 2000; Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Kivisto 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999). There is no consensus among students of transnationalism about who or what exactly is included in the phenomenon. Scholars researching immigrant transnational entrepreneurship have contended that the proper unit of analysis is the individual and her networks, hence defining transnationalism as the “exchanges, the new modes of transacting, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis” (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999: 219). Others have argued that it is in fact the immigrant’s community or social group of reference that should be considered the fundamental unit of analysis, stating, “Individual actors cannot be viewed in isolation from the transnational social field in which they are embedded” (Levitt 2001: 7; see also Kivisto 2001). These competing definitions illustrate what is one of the most salient shortcomings of the transnational perspective: the lack of a coherent theory of transnational migration, namely, a body of concepts and propositions that describes the phenomenon and differentiates it from other types of migration, establishing the conditions for the emergence, scope, duration, and demise of transnational practices.<sup>6</sup>

As recent critiques have shown (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004), very often studies of immigrant transnationalism are in fact studies of migratory circuits (see Rouse 1989; Levitt 2001; Smith 2006), defined by the orientation to and circulation of migrants between two localities situated in two countries—a brand of research that could be characterized as the bilocal-binational strand of transnationalism. Yet another type of research observes the emergence of transnational migration between postcolonial, quasi-national societies (the island nations of

the Caribbean, for example) and core countries that economically and politically continue to play the role of the old metropolis (see the collections of Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1992 and Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). In both strands of research, the intensity of the social, economic, and political life of the transnational sphere, the presence of weak and failed states in the sending countries, and the constant and often successful efforts of newcomers to surmount the barriers that receiving states continue to build around their borders have provided clues for scholars to see migrants operating in a social field that lies beyond the national.

Still, scholars of transnationalism should be credited with bringing sending states “back in.” Indeed, a more recent wave of studies inspired by the transnationalist framework have shown how the less powerful and economically dependent states of sending countries have promoted the incorporation of expatriate populations into the body politic through diasporic notions of nationhood. Responding to the changing dynamics of national politics, to new regional and international geopolitical realities, and to the growing economic significance of remittance flows, said states often create new institutions, policies, and legal frameworks to incorporate, control, and mobilize migrants on behalf of government interests. As this literature has shown, this is by no means a one-way street: Diasporic or transnational fields, increasingly legitimized in the form of dual nationality, expatriate political rights, and other types of legislation, created opportunities for social movements, organizations, and entrepreneurial migrants to conduct local and cross-border politics (Goldring 2002; Guarnizo 1998; Smith 2003; Smith and Bakker 2005).

Clearly, the social, economic, and political realities of the Monterrey-Houston circuit are firmly embedded in the context of two nation-states. Migrants from Monterrey, and from Mexico in general, come from a fully *nationalized* society (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004) in which individuals’ and households’ social experiences and identities are (and have been over the course of generations) profoundly shaped by multiple and effective state institutions, from public schools to political parties. These institutions’ historical backgrounds and day-to-day operations are fundamentally different from those of the United States. To Houston-bound migrants from Monterrey, the beginning of their migration to the United States is not an entry into a *transnational* realm. On the contrary, their sojourning is the start of a series of constant encounters with the institutions of sending and receiving nation-states, which begin well before the journey commences. Thus, would-be legal entrants need to obtain a

passport and apply for a U.S. visa in the local consulate and then travel to the border, where they will face more paperwork, along with the queries of customs and immigration inspectors. Illegal migrants will most likely require the services of the migration entrepreneurs—smugglers and guides—to circumvent the entrance restrictions established by the state and its border enforcement agencies, such as the Border Patrol (Hernández-León 2005). The ability to evade these restrictions—effectively becoming a clandestine immigrant—is by no means a sign of transnationalism but rather a symptom of how much the state matters in setting the terms of entry and presence of foreigners in the receiving polity.

As a migratory circuit, Monterrey and Houston form a binational social field where border-spanning networks channel migrants from specific urban neighborhoods back home to distinct areas of settlement in Houston and labor market niches in this city's economy. The Monterrey-Houston connection stems from Mexico's process of urban-industrial restructuring of the last twenty years and an even earlier round of recruitment of Monterrey's skilled industrial workers to aerospace and oil industries in the United States. Throughout this period, state policy, informal immigration practices, and the unintended consequences of both have had a profound effect on the circuit, creating not a transnational community, but a highly differentiated population composed of legal residents, U.S. citizens, a resident undocumented population of families and single men and women, and documented and illegal males whose spouses and children remain in Monterrey and who therefore shuttle back and forth between the two cities. A thriving and profitable migration industry (Castles and Miller 1998) facilitates movement and communication of people on both sides of the circuit, bridging the border, time, and distance in multiple ways.

Still, other things take place within the confines of the Monterrey-Houston connection besides labor migration, including the interactions and intense exchanges of individuals and families aimed at social and cultural reproduction, namely binational and bilocal child-rearing strategies and the emergence of a second generation, reciprocity, and solidarity, but also opportunism and breaking of trust in social relations, redefinition of gender and family roles, cultural production and consumption, formation of small-business ventures, and movement of material and cultural remittances. This book explains (1) the structural origins of the Monterrey-Houston connection and the types of migratory patterns that have evolved in this binational intermetropolitan circuit, (2) the nature of networks and social life of households and extended families inhab-

iting this social field, and (3) the migration industry that provides an often-overlooked infrastructure for population mobility, communication, and remittance transactions.

#### THE STRUCTURAL ORIGINS OF MIGRATION IN THE MONTERREY-HOUSTON CIRCUIT

The emphasis of current theories of international migration on social networks has at times obscured the continued significance of historical-structural forces in the initiation of migratory flows. Still, the sea change of Mexico's political economy over the past twenty years has kept the scholarly eye on the relations between structural conditions and international migration, although not necessarily with a focus on urban settings. During the 1990s, the connection between structural economic transformations and out-migration from rural areas attracted new scholarly interest. Researchers suggested an imminent mass rural exodus due to the effects of agricultural reforms—including the privatization of the *ejido* (the system of communal farms enshrined in the Mexican Constitution), the elimination of subsidies and guaranteed prices for foodstuffs, and the liberalization of agricultural imports—coupled with the implementation of the NAFTA.<sup>7</sup> Because of these reforms, redundant labor in the Mexican countryside would be displaced, and many of the 24 to 27 million people making a living from agricultural activities would have to find nonfarm employment, either by commuting to urban jobs in nearby cities or by participating in long-distance internal and cross-border migration (Cornelius and Martin 1993; Harvey 1996; Martin 1993, 1997). As a result of this “agricultural revolution,”<sup>8</sup> it was estimated that as much as 30 percent of the agricultural workforce in Mexico would be displaced (Yúnez-Naude 1991, quoted in Martin and Taylor 1992) and that as many as 3 to 4 million rural households engaged in farming jobs would have to look for nonagricultural occupations (Martin 1997).<sup>9</sup>

Researchers have identified at least two ways in which NAFTA is connected with increasing out-migration from Mexico's countryside. The deregulation of agricultural imports from the United States, a policy that began in the late 1980s, has affected agricultural producers by heightening competition, which lowers the profits that can be obtained from local commodities, thus threatening the viability of Mexican farms and allied industries (Cornelius 1998; Gereffi and Martínez 2005). Another way in which NAFTA may be contributing to cross-border migration is

through the expansion of agro-export production. According to Zabin and Hughes (1995), the NAFTA-induced growth of export agriculture activity fosters international migration by recruiting mostly indigenous laborers in southern states, such as Oaxaca and Guerrero, with little prior tradition of working in the United States. As people migrate to the agro-export zones of northwest Mexico, they are able to accumulate the contacts and knowledge that allows them to move across the border following a two-stage migration strategy. Thus, export-oriented agriculture, boosted under NAFTA, appears to be fostering linkages between internal and external migratory streams, which historically had been differentiated by networks, selectivity, and geographical origins of migrants (Lozano Ascencio, Roberts, and Bean 1997).

In contrast with the plethora of studies focusing on rural economic change and international migration, the linkages between economic transformation and urban U.S.-bound migration have received little attention.<sup>10</sup> The issue is most important because Mexican cities and metropolitan areas have been the setting of fundamental changes in the country's pattern of capitalist development. Forced by the exhaustion of the prior strategy of ISI, the economic and debt crisis of the 1980s, and a changing international context, the Mexican government and the country's economic elites embarked on a new path of EOI. This profound reorientation of the Mexican economy required the restructuring of the country's urban-industrial base, a process that in turn entailed the opening and liberalization of national markets and the modernization of the manufacturing and service sectors. During the 1980s and 1990s, the government took a number of active steps in this direction, including joining the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), closing and selling many state-owned companies, deregulating import and export activities, promoting the growth of export manufacturing, reprivatizing the banking system, liberalizing financial services, and deepening the country's economic integration with the United States through NAFTA (Crandall 2005; Dussel Peters 2000; Pastor and Wise 1998).

In this book I argue that Mexico's twenty-year-long experience of economic restructuring has provoked the incorporation of members of the country's urban-industrial working class into the U.S.-bound migratory stream. Because it forced many public and private companies to shut down, downsize, and modernize by adopting new technologies and methods of production, increasing unemployment in the and degrading the overall occupational structure of Mexico's urban-industrial centers in the long run, restructuring has entailed the uprooting of thousands

of members of the formerly protected skilled and semiskilled working class, prompting them to participate in the international labor market.

#### NETWORKS, SOCIABILITY, AND CUMULATIVE CAUSATION IN URBAN SETTINGS

Studies of Mexican migration to the United States have generated substantial evidence about the significance of networks in the social organization of international migration. Through migrant networks, individuals and families obtain information about and access to work opportunities, lodging, and services that are necessary for either permanent settlement or temporary presence in the country of destination. These social networks are also used to minimize the costs and risks of migration by making available information and material resources, which in turn contribute to the success of the migratory experience (Massey 1987). Network members exchange information, favors, and support following the logic of reciprocity. Reciprocal exchanges maintain and enrich networks because the favors that have been received become obligations and debts, which will be repaid later on with other favors (Mair 1965; Gouldner 1973; Lomnitz 1976).<sup>11</sup>

Because the scholarship on international networks follows studies on the social ties of domestic migrants moving between countryside and cities (Balán, Browning, and Jelin 1973; Lomnitz 1976), researchers have rarely made a concerted effort to distinguish one set of connections from the other, overlooking the question of what happens to the structure, dynamics, and life span of a social network when it crosses a border (see Durand 1988). This old problem took on a new dimension during the 1990s as proponents of transnationalism built an entire research perspective on the border-spanning capacity of social networks. As Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) have noted, the development of a social infrastructure linking “here” and “there” is not exclusive of international networks but an attribute of long-distance migration in general. However, in an era of increasingly stiff restrictions to international migration, cross-border networks may put their members in direct confrontation with the state while domestic migratory networks generally do not (Rodríguez 1996; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004).

Not surprisingly, in the Mexico-U.S. case, most studies on networks and the social context of origin have been conducted in the rural localities of central and western Mexico (Massey et al. 1987; Durand and Massey 1992). In contrast, significantly less has been written about

social migratory networks in urban and metropolitan contexts. The existing knowledge on Mexico-U.S. migration suggests that the flows originating in the cities and metropolitan areas of Mexico are also organized through social networks. Still, it is less clear whether urban-origin migrants develop strong ties similar to those of the international sojourners from the towns and villages of the Mexican countryside. But what is the role of social networks in urban-origin migration? Do urbanites establish the same kind of social infrastructure that their rural counterparts do to support their migration? If not, what types of social ties sustain the sojourning of urban residents? What are the characteristics, dynamics, and social underpinnings of such ties? Do these networks have a distinctively urban contour, or are they interlocked with those stemming from Mexico's rural world?

Prior research provides important clues to these questions. Analyzing the case of a working-class neighborhood in Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest metropolitan area, Massey et al. (1987) showed that the networks utilized by urban dwellers for U.S. migration did not originate in the city. Rather, urbanites resorted to networks that stemmed from rural areas that were home to a long-standing migratory tradition. Rural networks composed of *paisanos* (natives of the same hometown) cut across the city, connecting it with communities and workplaces in the United States. According to Massey and his colleagues, the relationships of *vecinazgo* (ties between neighbors) developed in the city were weaker than those of *paisanaje* (ties between natives of the same town or village), explaining why specifically urban networks in support of international migration could not emerge (Massey et al. 1987).

Thus, Massey and his associates contend, "The city in general, and the barrio of San Marcos [Guadalajara] in particular, do not generate their own social networks. Rather, migrants from the city use the long-established networks of their home communities, which have demonstrated efficacy. People from San Marcos migrate through contacts based in the town of their family's origin" (Massey et al. 1987: 168).

Offering an alternative hypothesis, Roberts (1995) has argued that migrants from urban origins often pursue individualized migratory strategies. According to him, this type of strategy unfolds when "conditions in home communities are heterogeneous, community ties are weak, and people are affected diversely by economic change. This is often the case in urban communities. In towns and cities, size, residential mobility, and a highly differentiated occupational structure are likely to weaken social cohesion" (Roberts 1995: 47).

This contention suggests that the conditions of urban sociability influence the nature of networks. In developing this hypothesis, Roberts and his associates have suggested, for example, that transnational communities formed by migrants of urban origin tend to be weaker than those set up by migrants of rural background because, in contrast with those in rural areas, people living in urban settings rely less on economic cooperation and are more mobile due to work and residential dynamics, making their social relations and networks less stable (Roberts, Frank, and Lozano Ascencio 1999).

The arguments of Massey and Roberts are based not only on empirical observations but also on classical sociological statements about the consequences of urbanization, the nature of urbanism, and the contrasting social relations and forms of solidarity prevailing in rural and urban contexts. Building on Durkheim's work on mechanic and organic solidarity as well as on the studies of the Chicago school (Wirth 1938), sociologists and social anthropologists have long differentiated between the social networks of rural settings and those of urban areas. Thus the former display "*close-knit* social networks in which everybody knows and interacts with everyone else," whereas urban contexts are characterized by "social networks [that] are loose-knit and allow greater anonymity and independence of action" (Scott 1988: 117, in reference to Frankenberg 1966). Gaetz (1992), in turn, has argued that urban spaces (i.e., neighborhoods, districts, boroughs) are heterogeneous and, given that their boundaries are usually arbitrary, might lack social solidarity. Hence, these spaces do not favor the development of social networks, casting doubts on the validity and usefulness of the concept of community in urban settings. Gaetz thus contends that the notion of community, as applied to urban contexts, may serve ideological purposes, such as containing conflict and encouraging cooperation "within geographically-bounded entities rather than within more socially significant collectivities" (1992: 94).

A series of studies using data from the Mexican Migration Project (<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu>) confirm the significance of context of origin in the formation of migratory social networks and migration-relevant social capital and on the overall dynamics of the social process of international migration (Hernández-León 1999; Flores 2001; Flores, Hernández-León, and Massey 2004; Fussell and Massey 2004). Taken together, these studies question the applicability of existing theories of migration to urban settings. Largely developed in the Mexico-U.S. context, the theory of cumulative causation is one such conceptual construct.

This theory posits that, as a social process, migration unfolds in a form that is self-feeding. That is, once it begins, migration creates the conditions for subsequent flows to arise. This occurs because at the core of this process of cumulative causation rests the fact that migration functions and spreads through social networks. It is the first wave of migrants, then, that lays the foundation for an unfolding support network that, in turn, provides the social infrastructure for the continuation of migratory flows (Massey 1990; Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994).

As networks broaden, so does their social base. In the beginning, a migratory flow is usually composed of single men who are members of a community's middle strata and who are able to confront the risks and costs of migration. Over time, as the network unfolds and matures, individuals of lower socioeconomic class join the flow, taking advantage of the infrastructure of contacts and opportunities set in place by fellow migrants. So do women, children, and the elderly, who are also incorporated into the stream as changes in selectivity continue to happen. In communities with long-established flows, mature networks, and an advanced process of cumulative causation, migration tends to be a more prevalent phenomenon. That is, people participate in crossborder movement to a level at which, given a locality's total population, migration becomes a mass social process (Durand and Massey 1992; Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994; Massey et al. 1987; Massey 1990). It is at this point that cumulative causation has the greatest impact on the sending community, producing a culture of migration (Alarcón 1992; Durand 1994; López Castro 1989).<sup>12</sup>

Although proponents of the cumulative causation model were always cautious about the applicability of this theory to urban-origin migration—contending that it is most relevant for “migrant circuits arising in nonmetropolitan locations” (Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994: 1503)—the aforementioned studies have demonstrated empirically that economic and social conditions in cities do not allow for the kind of migratory dynamics long observed in the *ranchos* and small towns of rural Mexico. In large cities, prospective migrants rely on kinship contacts to support U.S.-bound sojourning yet do not resort to friendship and (nonkin) hometown networks, something that their rural counterparts commonly do. Urbanites' choice of social network stems from the anonymity, feeble solidarity, and heterogeneity that prevail in cities (Flores 2001).

Without the strong ties that bind urban residents to each other, migration cannot gain the momentum it normally attains in rural settings,

when U.S. labor market and border-crossing experiences have become a readily available community resource. In other words, urban sociability does not provide the conditions for the accumulation of social capital, therefore preventing the development of the expansive, self-feeding mechanism leading to mass migration (Fussell and Massey 2004). In addition, labor markets and general economic conditions in cities provide low-skill and impoverished urban dwellers with alternatives to migration, which for the most part are absent in rural areas. These alternatives include informal income, credit- and capital-generating opportunities, and more-developed housing markets. Moreover, formal urban employment offers access to Mexico's retirement and pension system, which, despite its underdevelopment, provides workers with some disability and health insurance protection and the elderly with some financial security (Flores, Hernández-León, and Massey 2004; Fussell and Massey 2004).

Contrary to these findings, I argue that for the purpose of U.S.-bound migration, under certain conditions, urbanites may be able to substitute the weak ties that link them to (nonkin) neighbors, coworkers, and schoolmates in the city for the strong (rural-type) ties they lack. For some time now, network theorists have maintained that weak ties play a significant role in the diffusion of information and social behavior (Granovetter 1973). Whereas strong ties often provide redundant information to small numbers of closely interconnected individuals, weak ties function as bridges between groups, extending beyond the reach of people's immediate contacts and therefore diversifying the resources a person is able to access. According to Granovetter, weak ties and the indirect contacts they facilitate "are then of importance in that they are the channels through which ideas, influences, or information socially distant from ego may reach him. The fewer indirect contacts one has the more encapsulated he will be in terms of knowledge of the world beyond his own friendship circle." (1973: 1370-1371).

Conversely, Granovetter continues, "those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive" (1973: 1371). Weak ties effectively extend opportunities generally unavailable to those to whom one is closely connected. From the point of view of their strength, weak ties are an intermediate category between strong ties and the absence of substantive relations. Weak ties are indeed less dense than strong ties but not entirely void of emotion, trust, and reciprocal interactions.

I use these theoretical insights in combination with the findings of a rich, ethnographic, urban sociological and anthropological literature, which cautions about viewing the city as a wasteland for the formation of social ties that can support international migration. These studies, conducted in Mexico and the United States, have shown that working-class and low-income populations use the urban neighborhood as an effective space to establish social ties and to develop support networks and social capital. This tradition of urban ethnography has demonstrated that city residents do not live an anonymous social life in the metropolis. On the contrary, economically disadvantaged urbanites develop connections with fellow neighbors and deploy these links to support social movements, undertake informal economic activities, and form solidarity networks between households (Fernández-Kelly 1994; Gutmann 2002; Lomnitz 1975; Miraftab 1997; Suttles 1968; Vélez-Ibáñez 1988). In this book, I utilize the contributions of these strands of sociological network theory and urban ethnography to inquire: Do urban settings give rise to a social infrastructure supporting migration? Under what conditions does urban sociability engender migratory social capital? What kinds of networks emerge in urban contexts and how do they operate? How do urban contexts limit and shape the ability of networks to be the conduits of such migratory social capital?

The chapters of this book provide answers to these questions and, at the same time, contain a critique of current perspectives on networks, social capital, transnationalism, and international migration. In the Mexico-U.S. case, studies have often focused on the capacity of family and hometown ties to sustain migration and provide the necessary resources for immigrant settlement (i.e., shelter, information, job contacts, and other migration-relevant knowledge; Durand 1994; Durand and Massey 1992; Massey et al. 1987). This emphasis on the positive traits and outcomes of networks has prompted critics to question whether “a network [should] be viewed as a big and happy family” (Escobar Latapí et al. 1998: 229). Thus, Escobar Latapí and his associates have argued that “more refined analyses are needed to determine when and how networks break up; when and how individuals decide to migrate in spite of weak or no links to networks; and when and how a ‘binational community’ reconstitutes itself in the U.S., as when most women and children join men abroad” (Escobar Latapí et al. 1998: 229).

Indeed, scholars have paid little attention to issues of conflict, power, and long-term sustainability of kinship and friendship ties. Specifically, researchers have overlooked intranetwork conflict arising from the

uneven control and distribution of resources among men and women, youths and adults, and legal and illegal immigrants within the same network. Similarly, little is known about the impact that social and economic conditions at origin and destination have on the stability of networks. Even though contributions to the economic sociology of immigration have referred to the issue of freeloaders who use but do not contribute to a group's social capital (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993), little empirical research has been conducted to assess the consequences of opportunism for the social networks established by immigrants.

A new generation of scholarship has begun to present a more nuanced view of immigrant social networks. Such networks are gendered in ways that express the different roles of men and women in key migration-related decisions (i.e., how one, when one, and who gets to migrate), in their ability to tap into social capital and employment opportunities, and in their capacity to control the tangible and symbolic benefits of sojourning (Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992). These studies show that as migration brings about social change affecting the original roles, motivations, and resources available to migrants, tension and conflict arise within networks, families, and households, not only between genders but also between members of different generations (Espinosa 1998; Hirsch 2003). Other studies have demonstrated that networks are neither infallible nor immune to the changing political and socioeconomic contexts they inhabit and that such contexts greatly affect their capacity to deliver valuable resources and useful assistance to members. Thus protracted poverty, violence, and social fragmentation may severely limit the ability of networks to dispense social capital and effectively keep participants connected to each other (Guarnizo and Diaz 1999; Guarnizo, Sánchez, and Roach 1999; Mahler 1995; Menjivar 1997, 2000).

This study shows that despite the predictions of scholars regarding the effect of urbanism on the formation and resilience of social ties, migrants in the Monterrey-Houston circuit make use of their contacts with neighbors, friends, and fellow urbanites to establish networks that are effective conduits of migratory support. However, these networks are not smoothly functioning devices. On the contrary, they are fraught with inequality, conflict, and differing motives for migration among members. Because networks have a structuring capacity—channeling immigrants to alternative destinations, jobs, and housing markets—such dynamics are not anecdotal details but important characteristics that are likely to affect the fate of sojourners and their international migratory circuits.

## THE MIGRATION INDUSTRY

Despite being the focus of much scholarly attention, migrant networks are not the sole social infrastructure connecting home and destination. I contend that the migration industry constitutes an infrastructure separate from networks that facilitates mobility between Monterrey and Houston.<sup>13</sup> Not an industry in the traditional sense of the term, the migration industry consists of a matrix of private and specialized services that facilitate and sustain international human mobility and its related behaviors, including settlement, mobility, communication, and resource transfers. Migration entrepreneurs render these services for a fee, and the main objective is turning a profit. Still, because migration industry services are often embedded in immigrant networks and ethnic economies, the behavior of these entrepreneurs is also mediated by relations of kinship and fictive kinship, bounded trust, patron-client relationships, and coethnicity (Harney 1977; Krissman 2000; Spener 2004).

Migration industry actors make functionally distinct contributions to the process of migration depending on the stage and nature of the migratory regime, “greasing” the system’s engines (Harney 1977). These contributions include (but are not limited to) stimulating, initiating, facilitating, and sustaining human mobility, opening and institutionalizing new destinations for migration, mediating newcomers’ incorporation into host societies, and, in the current regime of heightened restrictions to international migration, bypassing border controls and internal inspections aimed at detecting clandestine entrants and residents. Finally, the migration industry also eases contacts between migrants and stay-at-home individuals in the country of origin by providing communication, transportation, and in-kind and monetary resource transfer services. Migration industry activities and services include trafficking and labor recruitment, lending funds to finance migration, providing passenger transportation and travel agency services, sending monetary and in-kind remittances, applying for and producing authentic and counterfeit documents, legal counseling, and supplying telecommunications services for emigrants and their home communities. Still, the actors and activities integrating the migration industry have varied historically according to emigration and immigration policies, labor demand, social and economic conditions in sending and receiving countries, and the size of the immigrant population at the destination.

Following Froud et al. (1998) and their study of motoring, I contend that the migration industry can be best understood as a sector matrix

of services and activities organized around international mobility and associated behaviors. The case of motoring is useful to the study of the migration industry because, just as buying a car leads the customer to consume bundles of services, such as financing and repair (Froud et al. 1998), the immigrant needs an array of services before, during, and after international mobility takes place. Such services are not organized in a chainlike form, where the consumption of one leads to another, but instead represent a matrix of interrelated services and activities in which providers simultaneously compete, cooperate, and articulate their activities with other actors. Yet another advantage of this matrix perspective is that formal and informal services as well as legal and illegal activities are considered integral components of the overall sector, providing insight into how services evolve or straddle the line of official recognition, how legal and illegal services are used throughout the migratory journey, and how entrepreneurs and services adapt to shifting economic circumstances and larger legal and political realities.

As a matrix of mobility services, the migration industry and its assortment of entrepreneurs do not cease to operate once migratory flows begin and social networks kick-in. On the contrary, I argue that migration industry entrepreneurs are ever present in the social process of international migration, interacting in complex and still largely unexplored ways with sojourners and their support ties, employers of immigrant labor, state institutions, and advocates of migrant workers. In addition to the entrepreneurs facilitating the initiation of migration, such as recruiters and smugglers, a panoply of transportation, communication, and remittance transfer providers work to secure the continuation and long-term reproduction of cross-border mobility in the Monterrey-Houston circuit.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This book is the result of a ten-year study of the causes, social organization, and consequences of international migration in Monterrey—a city long known for anchoring its residents to local industries through lifetime, stable employment instead of channeling them into international labor markets—and Houston, the chief destination of this flow. The chapters, conclusions, and methodological appendix that follow present the findings of three interrelated case studies analyzing the structural causes that gave rise to international migration in the industrial working-class neighborhoods of metropolitan Monterrey; the social networks and

economic incorporation of blue-collar *regiomontanos* in Houston; and the migration service industry that efficiently and effectively connects the two cities.

I begin, in chapter 2, by reviewing Mexico's urban-industrial development from the 1940s to the present. Part 1 of the chapter deals with dominant patterns of economic growth, urbanization, labor market dynamics, and social policy during the period of ISI. Part 2 takes notice of recent changes in urban-industrial development in Mexico, including the transition to a model of EOI, the economic crises, and the structural economic transformations that have fostered the rise of U.S-bound urban migration. In section 3, I outline Monterrey's processes of urbanization and industrialization and discuss in great detail the political, geographic, and social circumstances that led to this city's accumulation of capital and economic development from the nineteenth century to the present.

The empirical core of this book are chapters 3 through 5, each presenting the settings, participants, and findings of the three strategic research sites. Chapter 3 introduces La Fama, an industrial working-class neighborhood located in the Monterrey metropolitan area and proud cradle of this city's industry. In La Fama, I found a fertile environment of blue-collar households making increasing use of migration across the border to confront the effects of industrial restructuring and changing urban labor markets. In this neighborhood, I implemented a survey to a final sample of 168 randomly selected households. The instrument was modeled after the Mexican Migration Project's ethnosurvey (Massey 1987) but included open-ended questions and equally detailed sections on the migratory networks of men and women heads of household. The purpose of the survey was to obtain systematic data on migratory patterns and long-term trends rather than to formally test hypotheses about the phenomenon. I triangulated the results of the survey with Mexican census data, ethnographic (participant and nonparticipant) observations, structured and unstructured interviews, and life histories of the migration pioneers from La Fama. Some U.S. migrants identified in this neighborhood were interviewed multiple times throughout the years in Houston and again in Monterrey.

Chapter 4 deals with two interrelated issues: the role of networks in the social organization of migration and the incorporation of La Fama and *regiomontano* immigrants into Houston's labor market. I begin by showing how in addition to kinship ties, city-origin migrants utilize friendship networks stemming from the social space of the urban neigh-

borhood to support their international mobility. I argue that residential and employment stability and the presence of institutions that provide social cohesion to working-class neighborhoods, such as La Fama, have allowed residents to develop migratory social capital out of the normally weak ties that link them to their neighbors.

This chapter also shows how skilled blue-collar immigrants from La Fama and surrounding neighborhoods have been able to transfer the technical abilities acquired in Monterrey's heavy manufacturing workplaces to the industrial labor markets of Houston, particularly to the petrochemical and oil-technology plants of the Bayou City. However, not all *regiomontano* newcomers have been able to benefit from such skill transfer, as many have become incorporated into low-skill (though not necessarily low wage), high-risk jobs, such as asbestos removal. Finally, engaging the literature on immigrant transnationalism, I ask whether the Monterrey-Houston connection represents a transnational community. By showing how the receiving state and state borders affect mobility and immobility, I demonstrate that despite the relative proximity of Monterrey, Houston-based *regiomontanos*' ability to participate in cross-border activities is largely determined by their legal status in the United States. Needless to say, my aim is not to disprove the main claims of the transnational approach but to argue that immigrant transnationalism is contingent on the policies and practices of states—an argument that resonates with recent scholarship on this topic (see Smith 2003, 2006).

The chapter draws from a snowball sample of forty immigrant households originally from Monterrey settled in new and historic Mexican neighborhoods in the eastern and western sections of Houston and from a small subsample of *regiomontano* cultural activists and small-business entrepreneurs. It is precisely in one of these newer immigrant neighborhoods of the Bayou City where immigrants from La Fama have established a daughter community. As I describe in detail in the methodological appendix, I discovered this daughter community early in my fieldwork in Houston as I searched for contacts with *regiomontano* families. Indeed, in the Summerland district and adjoining neighborhoods of western Houston, I encountered a surprising density of families and single men who were from La Fama and who knew and supported each other, forming a series of interconnected social networks. Although years later some of the single men told me jokingly that they initially thought that I was working for *la migra* (the Border Patrol and, more generally, U.S. immigration enforcement agencies), I managed to gain their trust by deploying my own linguistic, geographic, and cultural

skills as a fellow Mexican and, just as important, as a fellow *regiomontano*. I kept in touch with many of these individuals and families from La Fama throughout the entire study period of ten years and re-interviewed, called, and spent time with them as they moved back and forth between Monterrey and Houston. This was the case with the Gonzalez family I depict in the last section of the chapter.

Chapter 5 analyzes the migration industry that facilitates international human mobility between Monterrey and Houston. Through the lens of a case study, I offer an in-depth ethnographic look into the workings of courier services operating in this circuit. Often seen as either an extension of social networks or as a subsector of the ethnic economy, the migration industry has received little systematic attention in most theorizing about international migration. Here, I claim that the matrix of entrepreneurs and services that make up the migration industry—smugglers, recruiters, transportation operations, remittance companies, lawyers, and others—is at the heart of the social organization of international migration. This ensemble of migration entrepreneurs has a multi-dimensional and fluid relationship with states, advocacy organizations, employers of immigrants, and the immigrants themselves, articulated by their profit-seeking motivation and their interest in the continuation and expansion of cross-border flows.

I explain the place Monterrey and Houston occupy as hubs for migration industry services in the Mexico-U.S. migratory system, a fact that is relatively evident in the case of the Bayou City but remains unknown in the case of La Sultana del Norte (The Sultan of the North, as Monterrey is dubbed in Mexico). The chapter then focuses on the case of a small business established by a *regiomontano* migrant to transport cash and in-kind remittances, correspondence, and people between the two cities. Deeply embedded in the immigrant social networks and operating on both sides of the border, the case of this informal business showcases in great detail the workings and significance of the migration industry in the social organization of this international migratory circuit, easing the movement of resources aimed at household reproduction and facilitating contact between members of *casas divididas* (divided households).

This is the most ethnographic chapter of the larger qualitative study of the Monterrey-Houston circuit. I closely followed the ups and downs of the family-run operation for several years, also tracking the businesses that replaced it after its demise. I established a close relationship with the owner, visiting his “offices” and riding his vans in Monterrey and Houston numerous times to conduct participant interviews and make

unobtrusive observations along delivery routes. Thus, I was able to gain in-depth knowledge not only of the inner workings of the service but also of the cleavages and disputes that existed between the owner and his extended family, his employees, and even his customers. A long-term and intimate connection to the courier service also allowed me to witness the effects that border and customs enforcement (by both U.S. and Mexican authorities) had on the success and survival of this informal migration industry business. Finally, the case study and the chapter as a whole also benefited from my interviews with other courier operators, my observations and informal conversations at bus depots in Monterrey and Houston, and my own experiences as passenger and border-crosser traveling the highways that connect the two cities.

In addition to summarizing the major findings of the book, chapter 6 elaborates on the specificity of metropolitan migration by explicitly comparing rural- and urban-origin migrations in the Mexico-U.S. context. Clearly useful, such comparisons need to be drawn carefully so as not to dwell on stagnant and stereotypical images of one kind of migration in an attempt to shed light on the other. Indeed, just as urban flows have started to attract attention, rural flows have undergone substantial changes of their own. For example, immigration and border enforcement policies of the last twenty years coupled with transformations in Mexican and U.S. agriculture have turned yesterday's "birds of passage" into settled immigrants today (Durand and Massey 2003). Still, it is safe to argue that there are significant differences between urban and rural flows. For instance, urbanites are unlikely to use migration as a risk-management strategy. Instead, work abroad is likely to be utilized as a coping strategy to fully substitute for employment lost at home. Moreover, as I illustrate throughout the book, to the extent that they rely on nonfamilial networks to support their journeys, metropolitan migrants may have to build and resort to the weak ties that connect them to neighbors, friends, and coworkers to support their stints in the United States.

Finally, in the methodological appendix I provide a detailed account of the methods of data collection and analysis and the criteria used to identify and select research sites and subjects. As a multifocal and multisite study of an international migratory circuit, the fieldwork experience entailed my own back-and-forth movement between Monterrey and Houston and between multiple locales in each of those two cities: homes, bus stations, cantinas, street corners, soccer fields, parties and festivals, community centers, churches and plazas, outdoor mar-

kets, commercial strips, and workplaces. The research experience also involved understanding migration from the point of view of numerous diverse actors: skilled industrial male workers at both ends of the migratory stream and their stay-at-home wives in Monterrey; female migrants employed in services and light manufacturing in Houston; and migration entrepreneurs, such as smugglers and courier van operators, and their associates, employees, and clients. Making sense of their experiences, social position, and relations in the process of international migration has required the use of an array of methods, ranging from surveys and focus groups to life histories and ethnographies. For similar reasons, this book actively utilizes and critically engages a diverse group of theories and concepts, including the new economies of migration; structural-historical models; transnationalist, network, and social capital perspectives; and urban and economic sociology approaches. This is less the embracing of eclecticism than the open recognition that migration is a multidimensional social process that precludes either methodological phobias or theoretical dogmatism.