

Editorial: Migration costs

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Much has been written about the costs—and benefits—of migration—in terms of the costs to the US (or receiving regions) and of the benefits to migrants. Massey (2005) concludes that because (Mexican) immigrants pay taxes, they are not a drain on public services. In fact, migrants are less likely to use public services, and pay taxes for services they don't use. Almost two-thirds have Social Security taxes withheld, only 10% have sent a child to public schools, and under 5% or have used food stamps, welfare, or unemployment compensation. They also pay sales taxes. In terms of criminality, Rumbaut and Ewing (2007) refute the myth that migrants bring crime. They find that Mexican immigrant men have a lower rate of incarceration (0.7%) than US born Latinos (5.9%) or for US born males (3.5%). It has often been claimed that immigrants lower wages, but Peri (2007) concludes that this is only the case for workers with less than a high school education. Immigrants mainly lower wages for other immigrants. On the other hand, undocumented immigrants do lower the price of vegetables from 3 to 6% (Huffman and McCunn 1996). In general, then, researchers have found the high cost of undocumented immigration from Mexico is largely a myth. Social scientists who look at migrants, their homes, their families and their stories invert this view of migration as a social problem or transfer of value from employer to worker, without letting migration become a story about individual decisions.

First and foremost is the cost in lives. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that the number of deaths of undocumented migrants along the US/Mexico border has doubled since 1995. But there are other costs, too. In this issue, researchers broaden our concept of the costs of migration, by including not only community and personal costs, but by looking at the conflict(s) that migration causes.

Sirkeci recognizes the connections between sending and receiving regions and the conflicts that cause migration—a search for security and that may be seen as resistance to globalization. Lack of security in food, in gender relations, in community survival and

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other ways contributes to migration. Cohen, Rios and Byars describe the stress on marriage and family life created by migration from Oaxaca, Mexico. Wives must support the household, manage remittances and agricultural production. They may have to pay off loans that cover the costs of migration (up to US \$5000). In addition, migration weakens connections and participation in the origin community – connections that create the safety net that families may need in order to make it through a crisis. Like Cohen, Rios and Byars, Werner and Barcus look both at migrants and those who stay behind; but in this case of Kazakh migrants from a homeland where they are in the minority to a destination where their ethnic group is a majority. They also look at the benefits of not migrating, in a unique twist on migration studies. O'Leary details the very human costs, especially for women, of the often traumatic experience of crossing the US/Mexico border. Thornburg describes how racism and negative stereotypes are reinforced by migrant discourses in Ireland. Finally, Bailey brings us back to the human costs of migration in terms of inequalities, racism and human insecurity, as well as the relation between remittances and membership. These papers illustrate the importance that anthropological perspectives can shed on the issue of migration, by looking at the issue from the perspective of sending communities and families, and migrants themselves.

Outside the special issue, Haapanen and Tervo look at whether migration becomes more likely over time among Finnish graduates whilst Hjort employs logistic regression to find out the marginal importance of rural gentrification in explaining migration patterns in rural Sweden.

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