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I dedicate this book to my father and mother, Guadalupe Rodriguez and Virginia Flynn, two diligent workers in the War on Poverty.

INTRODUCTION
RECONSIDERING MODERN CONTINENTAL MIGRATION, COMMUNITY, AND CITIZENSHIP

Marc S. Rodriguez

Human history is a history of migration. Migration has long connected North America to the wider world and organized the continent into separate peoples, regions, and eventually individual national states. Throughout American history, people have moved around within the boundaries of the United States and across the lines that have separated it from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia. Many historians of immigration and migration have written works that examine individual migrant groups in relative isolation. An important endeavor, this case study approach has broadened our understanding of migrant life. Thanks to the great variety of finely detailed migration studies at the transregional and increasingly at the transnational levels, we know more about the specifics of migration, settlement, and in some cases return migration that we did in past decades. This progress has, however, constructed and maintained a history of migration that often ignores the relationships and parallels between internal and international migration. As this comparative volume demonstrates, bringing together internal and international migration provides us with a great variety of examples that highlight the similarities between migrating people and shows how people on the move have more in common than their separate histories would have us believe. This volume seeks to bridge this scholarly divide between the study of those migrants who have moved across and to the North American continent, and to begin the work of creating space for the expanded analysis of the “swirl of . . . interaction” shared by the continent’s many migrant streams.1

Although more focused than recent global efforts, developments in the field of world migration history, primarily the innovative synthetic work of Dirk Hoerc elder, have inspired this conference volume. Many immigration and
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Internal migration scholars have pointed out that the dialectic of migration and settlement in the history of the United States and North America is a continental and comparative enterprise, yet only a small number have attempted such an endeavor. This is a difficult task, yet historians of North American migration are now beginning to cross the very lines of local, regional, and national demarcation that have separated the study of internal and international migratory movements. World historians, on the other hand, have long considered migration a key component in "world-systems" analysis and have demonstrated that the writing of human history often requires a global outlook.1

The idea of bringing specialists on North American migration together began to percolate as I searched for a method to understand the internal circular migration of a particular community of Tejano farmworkers within the United States. To conceptualize the issue I looked to the impressive work of a small group of scholars who wrote on U.S. internal migration in the fields of African American and U.S. western history. Most of this work focused on the interregional migration of workers, families, and individuals in search of new homes and opportunities. However, the migrants I studied engaged in sustained annual movement of a circular nature. To understand circularity as a process, I looked to revisionist work within immigration history that considered both sending and receiving regions in detailing the history of migrants. Well before the term "transnational" achieved widespread scholarly usage in the 1990s, a small group of historians was writing transnational migration history. By combining these two distinct fields, I discovered useful models for understanding the migratory world of Tejanos. For example, like many transnational migrants, Tejano farmworkers traveled in a circular pattern of labor migration from their homes in the many small cities and towns of South Texas to the agricultural regions of California, the Northwest, the Great Plains, and the Midwest before returning each year to Texas. These translocal connections were, however, quite different from the transnational linkages that provided me with the initial framework for understanding circularity in migration, since this was not a flow between nation-states but a migration of citizens among states within a nation.2

As I continued my own thinking on the subject of the many layers of continental migration, I began to feel that there were commonalities between the works of migration scholars writing on internal flows within the nation and those considering migration across the boundaries of the nation-state. It became possible to recognize that internal and international migration scholars alike had sought to understand sending societies and more fully examine the communities from which the migrants came. This change in approach was not surprising considering developments in the field of immigration history and the expansion of comparative work in U.S. race relations and migrant diasporas. Most writers on migration in the 1980s and 1990s were increasingly aware of the comparative challenges, as others demonstrated the ways international migration operated as a circular or at least two-sided process linking sending and receiving nations, regions, and specific rural and urban areas. Few, however, had considered expanding this comparative frame to apply the insights of immigration history to internal migration or vice versa.3

Migrants, whether they cross a state line, river, mountain range, or international border, share many of the same traits, whether at the community, organizational, or familial level. African American internal migrants who entered the upper Midwest from the South brought and built institutions in the places they moved to that grew out of the communities from which they came. Similarly, Appalachian migrants to the Midwest constructed migrant streams that linked northern Indiana and Chicago to remote local communities in the South through a pattern of labor migration, family settlement, and return migration. These internal migrants, black and white, moved as workers who desired freedom from their past social and economic cases, as they sought their upward mobility and brought with them the essentials of a community life rooted in these homelands. In the receiving societies, migrants changed and remade community, whether in Chicago, Indiana, or California. This shared focus on community and its expansion is common among those entering the United States from other nations, territories, and regions. Whether it is Cuban exiles reconstructing community and building new communities in Miami, or Italians in New York, Poles in the Midwest, or the Québécois in New England, migrants have often sought to maintain core beliefs, institutions, and cultural practices, as they likewise borrowed from available resources in the receiving societies. In the Puerto Rican case, migrant citizens have linked their "foreign" island homes to the cultures of New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago in a web of circular migration. The results in each of these cases was that they changed these communities in the social space of migration in ways that set migrants apart from those that stayed behind. Migrant streams and the associative and personal relationships embedded within them often evolve and grow in analogous ways across both internal and international migration. This volume seeks to begin to explore these similarities, and to consider the possibility of a history no longer focused on immigration or internal migrants but simply on migrant communities.4

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To consider these issues more fully, I convened a conference at Princeton University in 2003 with the goal of exploring the connections between internal and international migration from a continental perspective. Most of those invited to Princeton came as new or established scholars in the distinct fields of immigration or internal migration history, yet all proved willing to read and discuss the work of others from across a variety of specific subdisciplines of immigration, African American, ethnic, gender, legal, and Latino migration history, as we considered the potential of viewing all migrants in a comparative-continental framework. The main question we attempted to answer in our deliberations was quite straightforward: What were some of the things about internal and international migrants upon which we could agree? Most agreed that all migrants were members of specific communities that changed or developed as migrants adjusted to labor markets and other conditions in the places where they arrived, worked, prayed, and sometimes settled permanently. We also sought to uncover the role of the nation-state in setting the boundaries for the persistence, maintenance, and formation of communities. There were many places where people on the move and the authority of the national state or local government came into contact. Some migrants confronted the state at the border between nations, others at the boundaries between regions, and still others sought to define boundaries when making or maintaining older local communities in the whirl of migrant life that paid little attention to the state. There were certainly other issues of concern, but our discussions dealt mainly with the bridgability of the divide between internal and international migration within the framework of North American history. Although most of the work presented here is still operating within either the internal or international framework, the point was to bring this work together to stimulate an ongoing comparative discussion. This is no easy task considering the clear lines that have heretofore separated these two related fields.

The boundaries between these subfields have their roots in the distinct historiography of U.S. immigration research. Beginning with Oscar Handlin's influential Boston's Immigrants (1941) and The Uprooted (1951), most scholars of immigration to the United States focused primarily on the process of settlement and accommodation, borrowing heavily from the earlier sociological work of Robert E. Park and those working within the Chicago School who examined the adaptation of immigrant and racial groups to modern American society. For Handlin, Park's "race relations cycle" served as a model for describing the process immigrants moved through from contact, through adjustment, to assimilation, as they became Americans. As Gary Gerstle has pointed out, Handlin moved the scholarship in important directions by linking the process of adjustment to assimilation, and writing of this and the initial shock of migration as an often complicated and alienating total process. The process of adaptation marked out by the Chicago School and Handlin was certainly evident in the experiences of many North American migrants, but this road was a conflict-ridden one often leading to immigrant community formation in opposition to certain aspects of the host society. Soon after the publication of The Uprooted, John Higham in Strangers in the Land (1955) argued more forcefully that adjustment was fraught with conflict for immigrants who faced a variety of nativist attacks on the road to national integration. Higham's attention to the darker side of nationalism and efforts to restrict community revealed an American society that claimed to serve a set of universalistic democratic philosophies yet was restrictive and even exclusionary in practice. If Higham sought to complicate the ways in which receiving societies embraced or failed to embrace newcomers, then others would soon call for a reevaluation of the role in immigrant life played by the places from which these migrants came.

After Higham, the insider/outsider dialectic would become one of the defining aspects of immigration history, leaving little room for analyzing human mobility or comparing internal and international migrations. Historians shifted emphasis and began to look more closely at the many worlds made by migrants. With the publication of Rudolph Vecoli's "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the Uprooted," immigrants were recast as outward-looking and individualistic people who brought community life with them to America. In the changing environment of American life, these traditions and folkways continued to play an important role in community life. Immigrant history now required that scholars understand the places migrants came from and the ways they maintained or transplanted these societies. However, the process of migration remained only the doorway through which immigrants passed, and as a result, migration did not become the center of study. Because of this bordering within the field, immigration scholars paid limited attention to circular migration since such migrants did not, by definition, "become Americans.

As writing on migrants expanded in the 1970s with the rise of the new social history and its variants, a more sophisticated portrait of migrant life in the United States and the rest of North America developed. Following Vecoli, scholars increasingly considered the persistence of premigration community practices and customs when writing histories of immigrant life. As research in this area has become more refined, scholars trained as U.S.
specialists now often work in several languages as they study the specific regions immigrants came from when writing U.S. immigrant history. This international understanding of the important role played by the particular circumstances of the sending village, city, or region and the migrants from these places led to a consideration of the persistent relationship migrants maintained with their sending regions. As a result, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a series of monographs that detailed the world of migrant life as organized and lived across oceans, regions, and nations. Attentive to the continued and changing relationships between communities and families, as well as to the role of class, race, and gender in shaping the process of migration, these scholars, led by Josef Barton and Donna Gabaccia, quietly remade immigration history.6

On the other hand, those who studied internal migration worked primarily within the fields of African American and rural white labor history. The long shadow of the Chicago School and Oscar Handlin hung over immigration history and the study of internal migration, for the school’s analytical model continued to prove its usefulness to scholars. Oscar Handlin, in addition to his work on immigrants, wrote also of the internal migration of African Americans and Puerto Ricans to Boston. In some ways, over forty years ago Handlin was doing the sort of work the authors of this volume seek to do—studying migrants who cross state lines, as well as those who cross international boundaries. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a new generation of scholars also began to reexamine and expand the Chicago School’s adjustment thesis as they deepened our understanding of the Great Migration of African Americans north in the early decades of the twentieth-century. James Grossman, in a path-breaking history of that migration, portrayed the journey as a personal and community-based movement from the South to the urban North that relied on a variety of community and institutional supports and tensions. This new internal perspective prompted readers to continue to reevaluate the Chicago School understanding of migration and settlement through the lens of internal migration. In a reexamination of the Dust Bowl migration and beyond, James Gregory showed how a complicated pattern and process of migration linked sending and receiving regions through community, culture, and the creation of the “Okie” subgroup in the American West. Expanding these themes to incorporate gender studies, Joe W. Trotter as editor of The Great Migration in Historical Perspective (1991) provided readers with several examples of new scholarship attentive to gender that revealed the complexity of migrant life within the diverse African American migrant communities. Although this scholarship was not presented in comparative context, it was apparent that internal migrants shared many experiences with their international peers.7

Many who were writing internal migration history in the last years of the 1980s and early 1990s had not considered the role of circularity in migration. The established analytic framework of migration scholarship rooted in Chicago School method had not been overturned, and, despite the increasing sophistication of migration research in both the internal and international frameworks, continued to prove useful. Internal migration had entered a period of development as social history and cultural history that provided scholars with the tools to explore many new dimensions of migration without deploying the condensing gaze common in early twentieth-century histories of these mass migrations. There certainly was enough information available by the end of the twentieth century on the rates of return migration, ties to churches, historically black colleges, and family reunions in the American South among black migrants, and on the sending regions of Oklahoma for Dust Bowl migrants, to warrant studies that considered circularity in migration within these communities. Circular migration, however, was not yet part of the study of internal migration, settlement, and adjustment. Although by the end of the twentieth century anthropologists and sociologists were writing histories that considered circularity in migration, many historians of immigration were just catching on and internal migration remained removed from international migration research among American historians.8

Within the field of Latino and Canadian history the examination of the process of migration, community preservation, and adaptation progressed as a whole. Building on nearly two decades of scholarship on Mexican American life on the part of Chicano historians, Sarah Deutsch brought migration into clearer focus when, in her first book, No Separate Refuge (1987), she demonstrated how the process of circular migration was a common aspect of community life for New Mexican migrant families. Deutsch showed how migrants engaged in an adaptive process of linking village life to circular migratory labor as they crossed internal cultural borders between peoples and communities in the American Southwest, in a struggle to maintain aspects of an ever-changing traditional community. In this same year, Robert Alvarez, Jr., in Familia (1987), showed the circular and persistent nature of relationships between families in Mexican Baja and American (Alta) California. As Mexican American and Chicano history matured, David Gutiérrez likewise sounded an alarm similar to Higham’s Strangers in the Land (1955) with the publication forty years later of Walls and Mirrors (1995) which pointed out that citizenship
transregional relationships. In a similar vein, Bruno Ramírez, a leading proponent of transnational migration among the first nations of the United States and the USA, examines the impact of migration pathways on the development of indigenous communities. His work highlights the role of migration in shaping the cultural and political landscapes of these communities.

The introduction sets the stage for the following sections, which delve into the complexities of transnational migration and its impact on indigenous communities. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical and contemporary dimensions of migration and the role of indigenous communities in shaping migration patterns.
interplay between communities—Mexican immigrants and Mexican American—within the context of the coercive institutions of immigration law and modern capitalist development in making and restricting citizenship in the Southwest. Kimberley Phillips demonstrates in her study of African American migrants how the U.S. armed forces were themselves a system of migration, and have become for many of the African American descendants of Great Migration families a key center of human migration within the nation-state and across the world. All of these essays show how migrants found and made spaces for cultural preservation and change as they adapted to the economic, legal, and social worlds of migration.

Another plane for comparison is that of community institutions. Several of the essays specifically explore efforts on the part of communities of migrants to maintain or establish core institutions. Migration across international boundaries and within nation-states appears to rely on a variety of microhistorical components rooted in community. As the environment changed, migrants revised strategies in migration. People on the move responded by altering homeland social institutions as they built new ones. Although the various cultural and racial boundaries and borders played a significant role in the shaping of community, migrants focused their energy on building and making communities wherever they were. Kunal Parker demonstrates that community could also have negative and restrictive connotations. Parker shows how local people, when faced with the inflow of newcomers, sought to preserve community in the New England village in opposition to the “immigration” of other Anglo-Americans. Likewise, Wallace Best, in his examination of African American church building and community formation in Chicago, demonstrates some of the ways in which different religious practices and different times of settlement often define and border the spaces between newcomers and established migrants within religious and racial communities.

My own essay, detailing the establishment of a War on Poverty agency serving Texas-Mexican migrants in Milwaukee, shows how the rising tide of Chicano civil rights activism led migrants to claim preexisting community organizations as their own. Annette Orleck’s essay shows how African American migrants to Las Vegas, in a period of rapid economic expansion in that city, maintained and created a new community of women and workers that transcended sending society boundaries.

Each of these essays shows some of the ways migrants built communities in the receiving zones developing out of the unique labor, religious, and familial networks of the migrant stream. Despite the varied formation of borders and regulatory boundaries, migrants sought out spaces for community maintenance and creation, in the process shaping borders and boundaries within and between nation-states. Often forged in opposition to outsiders, communities—of either migrants or host societies—can be forces for positive change, protection, and the maintenance of folkways, yet may have restrictive and coercive qualities as well.

As migrants build communities and adjust to relationships with other migrants and the mainstream society around them, they also confront the nation and the meaning of citizenship. Immigration and migration scholarship is often tied to the meaning of national identity and civic culture, and the essays here show some of the ways in which citizenship and nation mattered in extremely important ways to particular migrants or groups of migrants, yet at other times were secondary concerns to those that crossed the borders from here to there, from one home to another, or from one work location to another. In many ways citizenship and the power of the local community may define the meaning of place, whether it be the differences between citizen and exile, or the sense that something changed for African Americans as they crossed the Mason Dixon Line, or for Tejanos crossing the Red River and then the Mississippi on their way north. For border dwellers, the border divides nations, yet often has little impact on the changing milieu of cross-border life. For migrants moving across the U.S.-Mexican border in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the border had very little meaning, and migration took place from one community of “Mexicans” to another across Mexico and the Rio Grande. As the twentieth century progressed, however, the border would become a powerful force in the lives of Mexican and Mexican American citizens, as the border regulated and restricted economic opportunity for an almost universally proletarianized “Mexican” case of workers in the United States and Mexico and these groups were defined and defined themselves based on nativity. For internal migrants, operating within the social and political world of U.S. civic nationalism, citizenship and the protections of the law had an often complementary relationship, as Mexican American and African American workers demanded rights as employees in the Southwest and in the places where they settled in the north. As workers moved, they claimed rights that were unavailable in the sending region in the places where they arrived as workers, and in some cases as outsiders or as citizens. As such, internal migrants found that regional differences brought quite noticeable changes in their lives and the claims they made.

Taken together, these essays show some of the ways migration, community, and citizenship share relationships across territory and states of mind.
For most of the authors, the nation remains central to understanding the process of migration and community building. Yet this volume allows for many levels of comparison between the diverse groups of internal and external migrants, adapting to the changing nature of citizenship, the law, and community. Each of the essays explores the relationships that shaped the process of "getting there" and "being there." By bringing together the work of internal and international migration scholars, we present a starting point for the consideration of migrants as more than immigrants, transmigrants, or internal people on the move, by examining how migrants react to the changing demands of the economy, the community, the nation-state, and other factors as they adjust their local worlds to the changing circumstances of migration. As several of the essays show, people now often considered transmigrants can in fact be located within networks of local and regional internal migration, as well as international migrant streams. Translocal internal migrants are likewise often embedded within broader networks of migration in the transnational world, linking them to international and national flows of people. Scholars writing on the meaning of citizenship may also benefit from a consideration of citizenship that functions below the legal institutional level and considers the role of liberty and restriction in structuring the everyday lives of migrants. This volume provides a starting point for the writing of a North American migration history that is continental, yet aware of the many layers that define the history of migration, citizenship, and community.

Notes

1. John Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington, Ind., 1983), p. xii. It seems the same way that this volume seeks to bridge the gap between internal and international migration within a North American framework. Bodnar in this synthetic work, sought to bridge the gap between the various immigrant groups at a critical time in the development of immigration history. Although most often considered a work focused on the differences between the many immigrant groups in the United States, Bodnar also shows some of the key places for comparison among these groups, including family networks, class, and religion.


