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A longitudinal analysis of resource mobilisation among forced and voluntary return migrants in Mexico

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Abstract

The rise in U.S. deportations has resulted in a growing number of studies focused on the reintegration experiences of these migrants in their home communities. Based on interviews with deportees shortly after their arrival home, these studies paint a picture of economic gloom, finding that deportees are too frequently stigmatized by governments and employers and consequently unemployed or working on the margins of their home economies. In contrast, our longitudinal and comparative study, which draws on the findings of 93 deported and voluntary migrants in Leon, Mexico, finds convergence in the labor market trajectories and social mobility outcomes of deportees and non-deportees, which reduces initial labor market disparities over time. We found that deportation can stymie migrants' initial labor market re-entry, often relegating former migrants to undesirable jobs in the informal labor market, while they re-familiarize themselves with their local labor markets and identify promising opportunities. Yet, in the long run, successful reintegration depends primarily on the acquisition and mobilization of human and financial capital across the migratory circuit.

Introduction

In the United States today an average of 400,000 foreign-born persons face deportation proceedings each year, a number that represents nearly a eight-fold increase since the mid-1980s (DHS 2017). This enormous rise in U.S. deportations has resulted in a growing number of studies focused on the origins of mass deportation and the consequences for deportees, their families, and the communities in which they live and work on both sides of the border. Initially, scholars considered only the deportation experience in the United States, examining such factors as the treatment of deportees during arrest and detention or the psychological, social, and economic effects of deportation for families (Capps et al. 2007; Dreby 2012; Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011; Phillips, Hagan, and Rodriguez

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2006; Weissman, Headen, and Parker 2003; Zayas 2015). In recent years, however, years, however, with the decline in remigration among deportees, the post-deportation experience in communities of origin is receiving increased attention. By and large, this scholarship finds that upon return, deportees face numerous psychological, economic, and social hardships, and that their reintegration experiences are largely shaped by the context of reception by host governments, educational institutions, and employer and public perceptions (Golash-Boza 2015; Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodriguez 2008; Hagan et al. 2011; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2016; Medina and Menjívar 2015; Roberts, Menjívar, and Rodríguez 2017; Schuster and Majidi 2015).

In this paper we extend the research on the post-deportation experience by focusing on one dimension of the reintegration process that has gone largely unaddressed in deportation studies: deportees' long-term labor market reintegration. Because existing research on deportees in their home countries generally relies on interviews with deportees conducted at one point in time, often shortly after deportation, these assessments provide an incomplete portrayal of how deportees adjust and adapt to labor markets over time and how they fare compared to return migrants who were not forcibly repatriated. Indeed, implicit in this scholarship is the assumption that the reintegration experience of deportees is static and doomed relative to voluntary returnees who are viewed as dynamic actors capable of innovation and job creation.

We strive to overcome the methodological constraints of earlier studies by drawing on findings from a longitudinal study that includes 19 deportees and 74 voluntary return migrants in Leon, a large industrial city in the Mexican migrant-sending state of Guanajuato. Our analysis focuses on the re-integration and mobility pathways of voluntary returnees and deportees. We rely primarily on labor market trajectories constructed from migrants' self-reported narratives and lengthy interviews conducted with return migrants five years apart (2010 and 2015). In these narratives migrants were asked to describe their work histories across the migratory circuit, family and social contexts of return, and financial and human capital formation across the migratory circuit (before migration, in the United States, and following return). Given the small subsample of deportees, we recognize that our study is exploratory and suggestive. But, it is our goal that it will inspire and guide future research on the post-deportation experience. Our analysis is guided by two broad research questions:

1. How do the long-term labor market reintegration pathways of deportees differ from those of voluntary migrants who planned their returns?
2. What are the economic, social, and cultural challenges deportees face in local labor markets upon return? How do these experiences differ from those of persons who had returned voluntarily?

While most post-deportation studies paint pictures of economic gloom, we find that deportees adapt to economic conditions over time and some even experience modest to substantial labor market mobility. Indeed, we observe convergence in the labor market trajectories and social mobility outcomes of deportees and voluntary returnees. This is not to say that the economic mobility pathways of the two groups are the same over time; upwardly mobile deportees rely heavily on entrepreneurship, while non-deportees more often find

stable hourly and salaried jobs. Our findings suggest that deported migrants are an adaptable and resilient population whose divergent mobility pathways can be largely explained by human agency and the skills and resources acquired abroad and mobilized upon return—processes that are well documented among the larger return migrant population (Hagan, Hernández-León, and Demonsant 2015; Wassink and Hagan 2018). Our research highlights the need to the post- deportation labor market experience as a dynamic social process in which human agency and skill mobilization play a major part.

This paper is organized into five sections. To contextualize our analysis we provide a brief historical overview of mass deportation operations in the United States, with an eye towards explaining the legal and political origins of state deportations efforts. We then turn to the extant research that investigates the effects of U.S. deportation programs for migrants, their families, and the U.S. communities in which they resided and labored. We then survey the literature on return migration to review observed variations in labor market reintegration between forced vs voluntary return migrants. We next describe our site selection, research design, and study sample. In the results section, we first compare the labor market trajectories of deported and never deported migrants, highlighting their labor market position upon return, in 2010, and again in 2015. In the second section of our results we draw on migrants' responses to questions about their major labor market challenges upon return, along with their personal reflections on their migration experiences. Within this account, we assess how these reflections may have been shaped by the deportation experience.

U.S. Deportation Trends and Research on the Post-Deportation Experience

The United States has a long history of mass deportation, and most of these operations of state exclusion have targeted poor working-class migrant groups, especially Mexicans and Central Americans. While we can trace the strengthening of the U.S. deportation regime to the early 1900s, three mass deportations have occurred since World War I (Hagan, Leal, and Rodriguez 2015). The first took place during the Great Depression when Mexicans became the victims of America's economic woes, resulting in more than 400,000 Mexican removals (Hoffman 1974). The second mass deportation occurred in 1954 when the U.S. government removed roughly one million Mexican migrants through 'Operation Wetback' (Lytle Hernández 2006). Since the mid-1990s, broad and sweeping changes in U.S. immigration policy and deportation law have initiated a third prolonged wave of mass deportation. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, expanded the criteria for detaining and deporting migrants, limited the ability of migrants to appeal deportation orders, and restricted immigration judges' power to grant relief to migrants convicted of relatively minor offenses (Aleinikoff, Martin, and Motomura 2014). The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) of 1996 further bolstered the enforcement authority of the federal government by virtually eliminating judicial review for almost all categories of immigrants subject to deportation. In 2001, following 9/11, Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act, which further expanded administrative authority to apprehend, detain and deport migrants who are perceived as threats to national security. The establishment of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 also added to contemporary mass deportations; working with state and local agencies, ICE has implemented several interior enforcement

programs (e.g. 287 (g); Secure Communities) devoted to apprehending, detaining, and deporting “criminal and fugitive” noncitizens long after their arrival (Kanstroom 2007).

How big is the current era of mass deportations? Before the mid-1990s, annual deportations averaged fewer than 50,000. After the passage of IIRIRA, deportations increased sharply: from 1996 to 2005, yearly removals averaged about 180,000; from 2006 onwards they increased further, peaking at 433,034 in 2013, after which they began to decline slightly, dropping to 340,000 in 2016 (DHS 2017). As in earlier periods of mass deportation from the United States, poor Latin American and Black men are the chief targets and regularly portrayed by the U.S. government as criminals to justify their removals (Golash-Boza 2016; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Hagan et al. 2008). In FY 2016, for example, Mexicans comprised almost three-fourths of the 340,000 persons removed from the United States (DHS 2017).

It is unclear how deportation trends will fare under the Trump administration, but given his recent executive orders calling for increased deportations and an increase in the number of enforcement officials to carry out the orders, it is safe to speculate that the trend will be upward.

The dramatic increase in deportations from the United States since the mid-1990s has produced a large scholarship focusing not only on the legal origins and politics of massive deportation but also on the human costs of the current deportation regime. The conditions under which immigrants are arrested and detained often fall short of U.S. and international human rights standards. Detainees spend long periods in detention facilities and are often subject to verbal abuse and excessive use of force (Phillips et al. 2006; Weissman et al. 2003).

Although the targets of deportation are non-citizens, the practice results in collateral damage to immigrant communities more generally (Capps et al. 2011; Zayas 2015). Using census data and figures released by the Pew Hispanic Center, a recent Human Rights Watch report (2009) estimates that more than one million family members have been separated from one another through deportation. According to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) figures, between 1998 and 2007 more than 180,000 persons deported were parents of U.S.-born citizen children (Wessler 2011). Deportation produces emotional and psychological hardship for deportees and traumatic effects among children and spouses in the United States (Capps et al. 2007; Dreby 2012:20; Zayas 2015; Hagan et al. 2011). Not surprisingly, social ties to spouses and children remaining in the United States increase the likelihood that deportees will plan to migrate again (Berger Cardoso et al. 2016; Hagan et al. 2008; Slack et al. 2015).

Yet, recent reports indicate that the revolving door between Mexico and the United States is closing as more and more deportees are staying put in their home communities. According to Mexican government administrative data and the Mexican Northern Border Survey, the share of Mexican deportees saying they would attempt re-entry fell from 95 percent of all deportees in 2005 to 49 percent in 2015 (Schulthies and Ruiz Soto 2017). Given this recent reversal, it is not surprising that return migration and the post-deportation experience in

home countries has become an increasing line of inquiry in the migration and enforcement literatures.

In general, these post-deportation studies highlight the central role that the context of reception plays in the lives of return migrants. Some governments and employers stigmatize and criminalize deportees, while others treat them as they would any other return migrants. Still other governments design specific programs to integrate them into local labor markets. Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador shun deportees, sometimes designing programs to regulate their mobility upon arrival and long afterwards (Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Coutin 2016; Dingeman-Cerda 2018; Golash-Boza 2015; Hagan et al. 2008). In the Dominican Republic, for example, the government singles out deportees who have been returned on criminal grounds and treats them as criminal deportees, booking them upon arrival, requiring them to report on a monthly basis for a six-month period, after which they are issued a carta de buena conducta which they must present to potential employers (Golash-Boza 2015). In 2010, in El Salvador, the government's 2002 welcome program for deportees (Beinvenida a Casa), which initially included assistance locating jobs, was transformed from a reintegration to a regulatory program aimed at monitoring the deportee population (Hagan et al. 2011). More recent research in El Salvador documents segmented post-deportation pathways based on the age of first migration. Katie Dingamen-Cerda (2018) found that persons who were raised in El Salvador were less likely than those who grew up in the United States to face a hostile context of reception by governments, employers, and community members. In this unwelcoming context of reception, it is not surprising that so many Salvadoran deportees express plans to remigrate to the United States (Berger Cardoso et al. 2016; Coutin 2016; Dingeman-Cerda 2018; Hagan et al. 2008).

In contrast, Mexico has a long tradition of sustaining relations with its emigrant population, keeping it linked to home communities (Fitzgerald 2008), but has done little in the way of facilitating the labor market reintegration of return migrants. Since our study was completed in 2015 and in the wake of President's Trump's hostility towards its southern neighbor and the country's 2018 election, Mexico has taken unprecedented steps to embrace returnees. A recent New York Times analysis reports that Mexico City and several established migrant-sending states, are welcoming deportees by easing their entry into social welfare programs and providing small business loans (Malkin 2017).

Overall, however, the picture painted by post-deportation studies is one of economic struggle. Scholarly and news accounts of deportees find that these return migrants are often unemployed, cannot locate employers who will hire them, and often turn to work in call centers, where they are often exploited but can at least use their English language skills and work alongside other persons in exile (Anderson 2015; Dingeman-Cerda 2018; Golash-Boza 2015). Yet, as we will demonstrate, these cross-sectional assessments fall short of understanding the post-deportation process because they do not account for the resources acquired abroad and mobilized *over time* to ease labor market reintegration. Moreover, many post-deportation studies have been undertaken in countries with unfavorable contexts of reception, making it difficult to examine the role that human agency and resource mobilization play in the process of return migration. Because the Mexican state does not

criminalize or stigmatize deportees or return migrants more generally, we can hone in on how migrant resource mobilization influence the labor market reintegration of returnees.

Theorizing Return Migration and Labor Market Reintegration

Theories of international migration are divided in terms of their assessments of voluntary or planned return. Neoclassical approaches, which treat international migration as a response to wage differentials between origin and destination, view return migration as a failure (Todaro 1969). From the neoclassical perspective, return migrants are those who overestimated potential foreign wages or were unable to find work abroad. From this perspective, return is indicative of a failed migration. In direct contrast, the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) framework argues that return migration is part of a well-planned undertaking in which individuals migrate abroad to acquire sufficient savings and experience to facilitate economic advancement or provide security against unforeseen economic shocks upon return home (Stark 1991). As scholars have found, Mexican migrants returning with savings and/or new skills acquired in the U.S. labor market are more likely than migrants returning without skills and savings to succeed in the Mexican labor market, especially via entrepreneurship (Hagan and Wassink 2016; Massey and Parrado 1998).

Although these competing frameworks provide insights into why people migrate and return by arguing that labor migrants actively plan and respond to wage differentials and market uncertainties, their utility for our analysis—comparing and understanding the labor market reintegration process of deported or forced and voluntary returnees in Mexico today—is limited. As Jean-Paul Cassarino (2004) observes in his piece, “Theorizing Return Migration,” both neoclassical and NELM frameworks are only concerned with the economic or financial motivations behind return migration. As such, they do not consider the wide range of reasons for return migration in the contemporary era and how varying structural factors influence labor market reentry. Moreover, neither framework treats return migration as a process, thereby ignoring how migrants navigate local contexts of reception and shape their local labor market reintegration over time.

In the contemporary era, motivations and reasons for return migration have become increasingly diverse, giving rise to new categories of migrants, ranging from labor migrants to highly skilled migrants to refugees to repatriated or deported migrants (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2013; Roberts et al. 2017; Sandoval 2013). The growing heterogeneity of return migration flows necessitates consideration of what Cassarino calls a wide range of “resource mobilization patterns” to explain why some migrants fare better than others upon return. Resource mobilization patterns reflect the accumulation of resources acquired abroad (financial and human capital) and how they respond to institutional, political and economic conditions at home. Moreover, according to Cassarino’s framework, return migrants with higher levels of preparedness and average length of stay abroad are more likely to mobilize resources effectively than those with low levels of preparedness and shorter (not enough time to acquire resources) or lengthier durations of stay (too much time away such that contacts in and knowledge of local labor markets is lost). In other words, returnees differ in terms of their motivations, as well as their levels of preparedness and patterns of resource

mobilization—all of which have a bearing on their labor market reintegration processes (Cassarino 2004).

According to this analytical framework, relative to voluntary returnees, deportees would be less likely to return for economic reasons, have lower levels of preparedness, different patterns of resource mobilization and likely face unfavorable political and economic contexts of reception at home. Thus, we can expect deportees to struggle to reintegrate relative to voluntary return migrants immediately following return, a result documented elsewhere. Cassarino's framework, while helpful, is also constrained because it does not treat return migration as a process, and thus assumes that deportees' economic fate is static and doomed, a finding often reported in post-deportation studies that rely on interviews at one point in time (Golash-Boza 2015; Hagan et al. 2008). While we recognize the importance of these early post-deportation struggles, we also view deportees as capable and motivated individuals with the potential to overcome initial challenges given sufficient time. Drawing on our longitudinal study, we assess the relative importance of life course stage, skills and remittances acquired abroad, levels of preparedness, and employer contexts of reception in explaining the labor market reintegration of both deportees and voluntary returnees.

Site Selection, rResearch Design, and Sample Profile

Research site

We conducted our research in Leon, Guanajuato, a large city of 1.3 million persons. Leon is known for its dynamic manufacturing base and thriving service sector. Figure 1, which compares the industrial location of Leon's labor force with that of Mexico, shows that 35 percent of Leon's workforce is in manufacturing, twice the national average. Leather, shoemaking, and textiles manufacturing are the largest employers in the city, comprising about 20 percent of the labor force (over half of those employed in manufacturing). Leon's manufacturing base has expanded considerably in recent years and now houses a cluster of foreign-owned automotive, chemical, and airplane industries, as well as a rapidly growing retail, service, and hospitality sector, driven by domestic tourism and international commerce. The city's diverse industrial base provides ample opportunities for return migrants to invest remitted financial and human capital in the local economy. We recognize that Leon may not capture the experiences of all deportees. In particular, rural communities with high rates of poverty and a limited manufacturing and service sectors may constrain opportunities for returnees to mobilize and invest resources acquired abroad.

Research design

Our analysis is based on a longitudinal and multi-method study, which included two rounds of semi-structured interviews (5 years apart) with a sample of return migrants in Leon, along with worksite observations of large and medium-sized factories and small family enterprises. In 2010, we conducted a survey with a sample of 200 return migrants.¹ The interviews took

¹Using the 2010 Mexican Census, we identified communities with high densities of return migrants. We visited a total of 77 neighborhoods to obtain a sample of 200 return migrants.

place in the return migrants' homes and worksites. The 2010 interviews, which were conducted in Spanish, averaged about one-and-a-half hours in length. The surveys included 150 close-ended questions which captured migration histories, complete job histories, and the acquisition and transfer of total human capital (including financial remittances and social and technical skills) from the United States to Mexico. The survey also included 30 open-ended questions that probed respondents' migration motivations, job characteristics, human capital formation, and labor market trajectories.

In 2015, we returned to Leon to conduct follow-up interviews with our return migrant respondents. Because of rapid growth and urban reconfiguration in Leon, we were unable to locate one quarter of our respondents' addresses. Among those whose addresses we did locate, not all respondents were available to interview.² From family members, new residents, and neighbors, we learned that of the 150 return migrants whose homes we found, two had died, eleven had moved away, and 37 were unreachable (neighbors and residents could not provide any information). We did not find evidence of substantial bias caused by sample attrition. We compared our longitudinal sample of deportees and non-deportees against the half of the sample that was lost to follow-up using the 2010 survey information. The comparison – shown in Table A1 in Appendix A – revealed strikingly similar profiles between our longitudinal and cross-sectional samples. Thus, we rely on the longitudinal sample of return migrants interviewed in 2010 and 2015, which contains 74 voluntary returnees and 19 deportees.

Sample profile

Table 1 provides a summary profile of the study sample. Focusing just on deportees, we can see that this group of returnees is a relatively homogeneous population when it comes to reasons for removal. All but one of the nineteen deportees were unauthorized migrants formally removed for non - criminal offenses, such as immigration violations, DUI, traffic violations or driving without a license. The one return migrant who was deported for a major criminal offense was a gang member and drug dealer who was removed from prison and deported under the Federal Criminal Alien Program. During the 2001–20012 period, when most of our sample returned, non criminal deportations to Mexico were also high, averaging 61% of deportations to Mexico (DHS 2010).

As Table 1 shows, deportees and voluntary returnees are overwhelmingly male, reflecting the predominance of males in contemporary deportation and return migration flows (Golash-Boza 2016; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Hagan et al. 2008; Masferrer and Roberts 2016; Ruiz-Tagle and Wong 2009). Most of the deportees and non-deportees were married and constitute a relatively older population, perhaps indicative of settled return migrants. On average, both groups possess fairly low levels of formal human capital as measured by their little schooling, a finding consistent with other studies that report Mexican migrants and return migrants as having fewer years of schooling than non-migrants (Campos-Vazquez and Lara 2012; Rendall and Parker 2014). Despite their limited education, our respondents, especially deportees, possess considerable human capital

²When no one answered the doors of respondent addresses, we marked the homes and returned on different days and at different times – e.g., during the week, on the weekend, in the morning, in the evening, etc. – to take into account our respondents varied schedules.

as measured by work experience. Our respondents averaged more than 20 years of work experience if we include jobs held across the migratory circuit.

The migration histories of the two groups are also quite similar. Non-deportees and deportees began their migration careers at an early age, 18 and 16 respectively. Non-deportees were just as likely as deportees to be repeat migrants, but deportees averaged more U.S. trips, owing to several deportees who migrated to and from the United States seasonally for decades. On average, both groups spent the same amount of time in the United States. Non-deportees were slightly more likely to achieve occupational mobility in the United States and to transfer skills to their work in Mexico.

The remittance behavior of the two groups does diverge. Non-deportees were more likely than deportees to remit money back to Mexico. Moreover, as Table 1 highlights, the use of remittances varied across the two groups. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they used remittances specifically for investment (businesses, land, cars) or for savings more generally. Non-deportees were more likely than deportees to exhibit the typical behavior of target migrants with explicit intentions of applying earnings acquired abroad towards investments upon return. With the exception of remittance behavior, however, we did not observe any major differences in the demographic, labor market, and migration profiles of the two groups.

Results

We present our findings in three sections. In the first two sections, we compare and contrast the labor market trajectories of the deportees and those never deported upon return at three points in time: immediately upon return, in 2010, and in 2015. Within this discussion we identify two divergent labor market pathways with varying mobility outcomes: Pathway One, which includes wage work with mixed mobility outcomes; and Pathway Two, which includes self-employment with some transition to successful entrepreneurship. In the third section of our results, we briefly identify our respondents' perceptions about labor market challenges encountered upon return.

Pathway One: Wage Employment with Mixed Mobility Outcomes

Figure 2 presents our respondents' labor market trajectories at the three study points. As the table shows, the majority of deportees and non-deportees entered wage work upon return to Mexico; by 2015, however, over a third of the deported and more than half of those never deported remained employees. Although many of the jobs both groups of respondents first held after returning yielded low wages and few benefits, they required varying levels of skills and some jobs provided opportunities for upward mobility and access to formal sector benefits. For example, in the construction industry both groups of migrants were found working as *chalans* (entry-level laborers) and *abañils* (carpenters or masons or welders). Others returned to their previous jobs in the shoe industry where they labored as entry-level *pespuntadoras* (stitchers) and semi-skilled machinists.

Based on respondents' reports of job satisfaction, wage growth over time, occupational mobility, and access to formal sector benefits, we found that roughly 30 percent of those

never deported and 20 percent of the deportees experienced some mobility via wage or salaried employment. This mobility in wage work resulted less from context of departure (deported or never deported) than from life course stage, time back in Mexico, the ability to mobilize human capital acquired across labor market and migration careers abroad, and sufficient social capital upon return to access stable jobs in home communities. In addition, employer preferences shaped mobility opportunities in a few cases.

Several migrants, including deportees, for example, resumed formal education upon return home and then drew on personal contacts to eventually find mid-level management work and enter professional jobs. Take the case of twenty-year-old Hidalgo who was deported from the United States only a few months after entering the country and taking a job as a dishwasher. When interviewed in 2010, he was not in the labor market. Upon return, Hidalgo finished secondary school and the completed additional vocational training. Through friends he then found an entry-level job in an engineering firm. Through his work, he completed additional technical training and acquired on-the-job skills. When we reinterviewed Hidalgo in 2015, he identified himself as an engineer and boasted about his high-level work responsibilities and increasing salary.

In other cases, human capital acquired abroad and family connections at home eased re-entry and long-term stability in wage work. Take the case of Ezequiel, who worked in the U.S. construction industry for seven years before he was deported in 2010. Upon returning to Mexico, Ezequiel mobilized technical machinist skills learned in his U.S. job as a construction worker and sheetrock and drywall installer (*chirroquero*) and through family connections secured a job as a skilled welder. Over time, he continued to reskill in the Mexican labor market and moved up the ladder to a *maestro albañil* (master mason or carpenter) while his wages increased accordingly.

The migrants in our sample who had not been deported experienced similar economic mobility via wage labor. Take the case of Ricardo who had gained substantial labor market experience across the migratory circuit and was able to mobilize these skills upon return. In Leon, Ricardo worked as an *ayudante* (helper) to a skilled *herreria* or metal worker. In the United States he worked as a welder for six months after successfully demonstrating his skills to an employer. In a subsequent trip to the United States he worked as a gardener and landscaper on an H2B visa, acquiring English through interactions with his employer, co-workers, and clients, and studying English on his own. When he returned to Leon at the age of 39, he used his English language skills and personal contacts to get a well-paying job as a security guard at a Nestle Factory in Leon. Initially, he held odd jobs in construction to supplement his income, but opportunities at Nestle increased and his English skills were valorized by his boss in the firm. Eventually, he was able to give up the side jobs and now works full time with the company where he receives steady pay and Social Security benefits. As his case shows, Ricardo clearly acquired and mobilized skills across his migratory and labor market career which resulted in stable, well-paying employment back in Mexico. Ricardo credits his labor market success in Mexico to skills transferred from the United States.

Not all of our respondents achieved economic mobility after returning to Mexico. Lacking human and social capital, and often advanced in age, a number of migrants in both groups struggled to find steady employment following their return to Mexico. A case in point is Silvio who began his labor market career as a dishwisher before finding an entry-level position as an *ayudante* (helper) in the shoe manufacturing sector of Leon. Seeking adventure and opportunity, he migrated at 25 years of age to the United States. During his eight years in the U.S. labor market, Silvio held a series of entry-level jobs, including time as a house painter and later as an entry-level construction worker. He did not acquire any new skills in his U.S. jobs or experience any occupational mobility within the construction industry. When he was deported home in 2008, without newly acquired skills or savings, he had little choice but to resume the same work he had held before migration, laboring as a *pegador* (the worker who joins the heel to the sole) in a shoe factory in Aguascalientes, a town adjacent to Leon.

In some cases, stagnant or downward mobility was shaped not only by lack of portable skills, but also by employer preferences. Before migrating, Maria had worked as a sales person in a women's clothing store in Leon. Seeking adventure, Maria traveled to the United States in 2002 where she had friends and family. She found an entry-level job as a live-in domestic but was deported within months of her arrival. Upon her return to Leon, Maria working intermittently selling shoes for a wholesaler at the local *tianguis* or flea market. When we interviewed her in 2010, she was married and with child and still had not been able to find steady wage employment. She explained her economic struggles as the result of employers' preferences for younger female workers, a common narrative among our female respondents. When we interviewed her again in 2015, she was divorced and had moved in with her parents who cared for her young daughter while she worked part-time in the shoe industry earning less than when we interviewed her in 2010.

On the other hand, by mobilizing skills acquired abroad other deportees bounced back after experiencing initial marginalization in the home labor market. Francisco became a permanent U.S. resident through his parents adjustment to permanent legal resident status under the Legalization Program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). At the age of 15, he dropped out of school, joined a gang, went underground, started dealing and then also growing and selling hydroponic marijuana to local dealers. By 1995 he was in prison and in 1998, under the federal Criminal Alien Program, he was removed directly from jail, deported to Mexico, and barred for life from re-entry into the United States. When we interviewed Francisco in 2010, his situation seemed desperate and he attributed his marginalization in the Mexican labor market to his deportee status and physical appearance. He had applied for several jobs and been turned down because of his less than perfect Spanish and the tattoos visible from the crown of his shaved head to his exposed arms and legs. Unable to find work due to the stigma of his criminal and gang past, he eked out a living by selling used clothes in the local flea market. Yet, despite his years of struggle, when we returned in 2015, Francisco had found a steady job working for an American-owned restaurant, where he was able to apply the English language skills he had acquired in the United States. He even successfully filed a labor dispute that resulted in the deportation of his U.S. employer for wage theft and Francisco's promotion to kitchen manager, which came with a doubling of his wage.

The cases of Hidalgo, Ezequil, Ricardo, Maria, and Francisco demonstrate several factors about labor market reintegration into wage work among return migrants. First, whether forcibly removed from the United States or voluntarily returned home, return migrants are an adaptable population that when given time can draw on skills and savings acquired across the migratory circuit, along with social networks at home, to secure stable employment. However, in the absence of financial and human capital, and with advanced age, labor market opportunities through wage work are limited for both groups of return migrants. This was especially the case for the female returnees we interviewed, several of whom experienced unfair labor practices, including age discrimination in the local labor market. Deported or not, migrants who returned home without new skills or savings struggled to find stable employment and were often forced into low-paying jobs in the unregulated sector or launched subsistence businesses as a means of survival. Yet, we found little evidence of a direct relationship between deportation and labor market marginalization over time.

Pathway Two: Self Employment with Some Movement into Entrepreneurship

Figure 2 illustrates a second labor market pathway among return migrants: self-employment with some transition to entrepreneurship. Here we distinguish between self-employment with and without employees. The vast literature on self-employment in Latin America finds that the presence of employees is indicative of intentional and prosperous self-employment or entrepreneurship, while the absence of employees signals survivalist self-employment in response to labor market marginalization (Gindling and Newhouse 2014; Mandelman and Montes-Rojas 2009). With this distinction in mind, we can see that the deportees in our sample were much more likely than the voluntary returned migrants to transition from self-employment to entrepreneurship over time. As the middle columns of Figure 2 show, although the deported were almost twice as likely to be self-employed when we first interviewed them in 2010, none of the deportees had businesses with employees at that time. From 2010 to 2015, however, the deportees experienced substantial mobility. As Figure 2 shows, 60 percent of the deported migrants who were self-employed in 2010 expanded their businesses and had hired employees by 2015. Thus, while our 2010 interviews found substantial labor market marginalization among our self-employed deportees, many had become entrepreneurs five years later.

It is difficult to explain why the deportees in our sample were more likely than the voluntarily returned migrants to become entrepreneurs and establish successful businesses. We know that many deportees, including those in our sample, are separated from their families in the United States. Perhaps because their family members are in the United States, access to personal contacts in wage labor employment upon return was limited. Alternatively, because many of the deportees are barred from reentry to the United States, they may be more motivated than other migrants to put down roots through establishing a business. The traumatic and overwhelming experience of deportation -- the loss of control over every aspect of their lives -- may also encourage deported migrants to become self-employed in order to regain control more securely over their lives and futures. These scenarios are guesses at best. Because we identified these divergent pathways inductively, following completion of our interviews, we cannot speak directly to varying job preferences between deportees and non-deportees. However, as the cases below illustrate, the same

resources that have been found to enable mobility among return migrants more generally -- acquisition and transfer of human and financial capital -- contributed to deported migrants' entrepreneurial success (Wassink and Hagan 2018).

Take the case of Ronaldo, who was a target migrant. At the age of 22, he migrated to the United States with the purpose of earning enough money to invest in a business upon return to Mexico. After working two years in the U.S. labor market Ronaldo was apprehended and deported. Upon return to Leon, he invested his U.S. savings in an internet café, a novel enterprise in his small rural community on the fringe of the city. Between 2010 and 2015, Ronaldo expanded his business, hiring several employees and opening an adjacent store that sells construction supplies to community members. The unplanned return and inability to reach his target savings may have delayed his business ambitions until he was able to save enough to expand his business and hire employees.

Self-employed deportees also benefited from new skills learned in the U. S. labor market. Juan migrated to the United States in 2003 at the age of 23. In one of his U.S. jobs he worked as an apprentice to a carpenter where he learned to use advanced machinery and install U.S.-style kitchen cabinetry. After being deported, Juan opened his own carpentry business, installing U.S.-style cabinets using advanced machinery skills learned in the United States to improve the quality – and profitability – of his work.

Technical skills are not the only types of skills that facilitated entrepreneurship upon return home. Ana, who was deported only six months after migrating to the United States, did not have time to acquire new technical skills but she described gaining a powerful sense of self-confidence through the migration experience. Upon return to Leon, she opened a clothing boutique that carries U.S.-style clothing. Five years later, she had expanded her business and hired three employees. Despite being forced home, both Juan and Ana benefitted from their U.S. experiences, mobilizing new found technical and social competences into successful businesses that incorporated U.S. building and clothing styles.

Not all of the deportees opened their businesses initially upon return. Raul, who migrated to the United States when he was 27 years old, was deported after only six months. With no new skills or savings, he found work as a *challan*. Over the next several years, Raul moved up the occupational ladder, from *chalan* to *ayudante* (intermediate helper) to *albanil* (mason). When we interviewed Raul in 2010, he had started his own construction business but had no employees. By 2015, after saving earnings from his work in the Mexican labor market, he had hired four workers.

Or take the case of Geraldo, who had a long history of circular migration to the United States, having migrated there four times. After being deported a second time in 2009, he decided to end his migratory career and remain in Mexico with his wife and three school-age children. Initially, Geraldo tried his hand as an independent contractor but he struggled to find clients among his working-class neighbors. He was barely managing to support his family when we interviewed him in 2010. Over the next several years, however, Geraldo expanded his client base as he rebuilt his social network throughout Leon. By 2015 he had launched a second business—appliance repair—and had hired four employees. Raul and

Geraldo's experiences illustrate the challenges that confront some return migrants – perhaps deportees more so than voluntary returnees. Without savings or a planned return both deported migrants needed time to develop their business ideas, launch enterprises, and grow a client base in the Mexican labor market.

The cases of Ronaldo, Raul, Ana, and Geraldo illustrate the importance of studying return migration as a social process that unfolds over time. Had we completed our analysis in 2010, we might reasonably have classified the self-employed deportees as economically marginalized. In 2010, none of the self-employed deportees had employees and many were struggling to make ends meet. But by harnessing savings and technical and social skills acquired abroad and upon return, these involuntary returnees -- like their never-deported counterparts -- successfully expanded their businesses and achieved economic mobility.

Challenges Upon Return

To further understand our respondents' experiences, we asked them to identify and describe the biggest challenges that they had encountered upon return. In Table 2 we group their responses into six clusters based on themes that emerged from the interview transcripts: no challenges, difficulty finding work in general, difficulty finding work due to a lack of education, low pay, employer preference for young workers, and other. Included in the category of "other" is the sole respondent who attributed his struggle to reintegrate to being stigmatized as a deportee. Overall, as the table shows, the challenges our respondents identified are largely consistent with our findings regarding their labor market trajectories.³ Difficulty finding work, low levels of education, and low paying jobs are all factors that motivate entry into self-employment (Levy 2008). Despite some modest variations in the challenges reported by deportees and non-deportees, we found little evidence that deportation and context of reception directly impacted their labor market re-entry. Indeed, many of the challenges reported by the return migrants that we interviewed are the same ones that originally motivated them to travel to the United States in the first place.

Discussion and Conclusion

As return migration—both forced and voluntary—has emerged as a major demographic phenomenon in the twenty-first century, a rapidly expanding literature examines the labor market reintegration of both deported and voluntary return migrants. Studies focused on deportees paint a picture of economic gloom; scholarly and news accounts find that this uprooted migrant group is all too frequently criminalized and stigmatized by governments and employers and consequently are frequently unemployed or working on the margins of their home economies (Anderson 2015; Brotherton and Barrios 2011; Coutin 2016; Dingeman-Cerda 2018; Golash-Boza 2015; Hagan et al. 2011; Roberts et al. 2017). However, as we demonstrate in this paper, these studies provide an incomplete understanding of the post-deportation experience because in general they take place in

³We conducted each section of the analysis separately. That is, we identified and analyzed the labor market trajectories prior to reading and coding our respondents' open-ended interview responses to ensure an unbiased consideration of their labor market trajectories.

countries with hostile contexts of reception, rely on cross-sectional data, and tend only to sample deportees.

Our longitudinal data and comparative analytical approach allows us to overcome these methodological shortcomings and investigate labor market reintegration as a social process that unfolds over an extended period of time. In doing so, we observe considerable change, adjustment, and adaptability in the labor market behavior of our sample. Overall, we find evidence of long-term mobility for deportees and voluntary returnees alike. While our 2010 findings corroborate research that observes a high rate of survivalist self-employment among recently returned migrants, particularly deportees (Parrado and Gutierrez 2016; Wassink and Hagan 2018), the findings from our 2015 interviews revealed substantial mobility among both groups of return migrants with self-employed deportees engaging in entrepreneurship activities including the hiring of employees, and those never deported transitioning from marginal self-employment to salaried or wage employment with benefits and rising incomes.

Our findings challenge existing models of return migration and labor market reintegration. The neoclassical economics and NELM frameworks assess labor market reintegration as the result of capital acquired abroad. The neoclassical model assumes that return is indicative of a failed migration, suggesting downward or stagnant mobility upon return, while the NELM posits that return migrants who bring back new capital acquired abroad will achieve mobility upon return. Cassarino (2004) critiques these theories, arguing that they must be updated to reflect the increasingly heterogeneous nature of return migration in the contemporary world. According to Cassarino, forced return migrants will struggle to reintegrate into their origin labor markets due to a lack of planning and resource mobilization prior to return. But, missing from all of these models is the element of time. Resource mobilization is a dynamic process that unfolds gradually as return migrants at different stages of their lives respond to institutional, political, and economic conditions at home. In our study of return migration in Leon, Mexico, we found that deportation can stymie migrants' initial labor market re-entry, often relegating former migrants to undesirable jobs in the informal labor market, while they re-familiarize themselves with their local labor markets and identify promising opportunities. Yet, in the long run, successful reintegration depends primarily on the acquisition and mobilization of human and financial capital across the migratory circuit.

We recognize that this study, which took place in Mexico – a country that does not criminalize deportees – cannot represent the experiences of deportees in other countries with hostile contexts of reception. We also recognize that our study, which focused on deportees and voluntary return migrants in a large industrial city, does not represent the experiences of all return migrants within Mexico. We hope that our efforts will inspire similar considerations of labor market reintegration of return migrants in other Mexican communities, especially in rural areas that have historically been the recipients of return flows from the U.S. (Garip 2016). In these settings with high rates of poverty and correspondingly small service and retail sectors, we might expect more limited opportunities for skill transfers and investment. Mexico received the largest number of migrants deported from the United States. As Mexican migrants continue return in unprecedented numbers and disperse throughout the country, it is important to explore whether the labor market convergences that we observe for both deported and return migrants are replicated in other

communities. Our findings and those of other researchers can then serve as important resources for the Mexican government as it expands programs to ease the reentry of migrants into their local communities. Efforts such as initiatives that educate employers about the trials of return migrants and programs to certify migrant skills and provide financial support for small businesses, are increasingly important steps toward recognizing and rewarding the contributions of *all* return migrants, deportees and voluntary returnees alike, to strengthen the Mexican economy and further develop its workforce.

Appendix A

Table A1.

Sociodemographic characteristics and migration experiences among deported and non-deported return migrants in 2010

	Non-deported		Deported	
	2010 only	longitudinal	2010 only	longitudinal
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Average age	39	40	42	41
Percent male	87%	81%	10%	89%
Percent married	85%	88%	67%	79%
<i>Human capital</i>				
Average years of education	8	7	7	7
Average work experience	22	22	26	24
<i>Migration experience</i>				
Average year of first migration	1995	1996	1991	1991
Average age at first migration	18	18	16	16
Percent repeat migrant	41%	48%	47%	47%
Average number of trips	2.3	2.7	2.7	3.8
Percent who experienced U.S. occupational mobility	28%	28%	20%	21%
Average total U.S. experience (months)	49	54	50	54
Average year of last return to Mexico	2002	2003	1999	2001
Percent who plan to re-migrate	50%	46%	60%	53%
Percent who transferred skills back to Mexico	51%	53%	40%	47%
Percent who re-migrated to the United States between interviews	--	10%	--	16%
<i>Reason for deportation</i>				
Percent criminal	--	--	0%	5%
Percent non-criminal	--	--	100%	95%
<i>Remittance behavior</i>				
Percent who remitted money while in United States	76%	86%	100%	67%
Percent who remitted for investment	18%	22%	14%	11%
Percent who remitted for savings	22%	18%	43%	33%

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Figure 1.

Industrial composition in Leon compared to the industrial composition in Mexico

Notes: Authors' calculations based on data from the 2010 Mexican Census of Population and Housing. Estimates were weighted to adjust for the Census's complex design. All differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

^a Includes hotel and restaurant, transportation services, private household services, and other services.

^b Includes financial services, public administration, real estate and business, education, health, and social work.

^c Less than 1% of Mexicans work in mining, electricity, gas, and other utilities.

Figure 2.

Labor market trajectories among deported and non-deported return migrants

Notes: Deported includes 19 deported return migrants who were interviewed in 2010 and 2015. Never deported includes 74 never deported return migrants who were interviewed in 2010 and 2015.

Table 1.

Sociodemographic characteristics and migration experiences among deported and non-deported return migrants in 2015

	Never deported	Deported
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>		
Average age	45	46
Percent male	81%	89%
Percent married	88%	79%
Human capital		
Average years of education	7	7
Average work experience	22	24
<i>Migration experience</i>		
Average year of first migration	1996	1991
Average age at first migration	18	16
Percent repeat migrant	48%	47%
Average number of trips	2.7	3.8
Percent who experienced U.S. occupational mobility	28%	21%
Average total U.S. experience (months)	54	54
Average year of last return to Mexico	2003	2001
Percent who plan to re-migrate	46%	53%
Percent who transferred skills back to Mexico	53%	47%
Percent who re-migrated to the United States between interviews	10%	16%
Reason for deportation		
Percent criminal	--	5%
Percent non-criminal	--	95%
Remittance behavior		
Percent who remitted money while in United States	86%	67%
Percent who remitted for investment	22%	11%
Percent who remitted for savings	18%	33%

Table 2.

Challenges encountered upon return by deported and non-deported return migrants

	Never deported	Deported
None	35%	37%
Difficulty finding work	25%	21%
Lack of education	5%	16%
Low pay	24%	11%
Employer preferences for younger workers	5%	16%
Other	22% ^a	21% ^b
Interviews	74	19

Numbers do not sum to 100 because some respondents identified multiple factors.

^aOther reasons reported by non-deportees: Discrimination because of tattoos, family difficulties, lack of savings, adjusting to life back in Mexico (reported by several non-deportees), the economy, lack of work experience in Mexico, lack of childcare, inability to transfer skills.

^bOther reasons reported by deportees: social isolation after imprisonment in U.S., health, lack of skills and education, poverty (people can't afford to pay for goods/services), stigma associated with deportation.