

Frank D. Bean et al, eds.. *At the Crossroads: Mexico Migration and U.S. Immigration Policy*. New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997. viii + 308 pages \$101.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8476-8391-8.



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This collection of essays on Mexican immigration and related policy issues and options is an important contribution to the growing literature on the subject. Its editors, social scientists at the University of Texas at Austin and experts on issues of Mexican immigration and U.S.-Mexican relations, have compiled ten essays penned mostly by sociologists and political scientists. In the introduction, the editors argue that changes in the volume and character of Mexican immigration in the last two decades, along with the preoccupation of U.S. policymakers and the public in general over undocumented Mexican immigration, have heightened interest in a phenomenon that affects millions of people in both countries. Recent U.S. policy reflects popular concerns: new immigration legislation aims at curbing the flow of undocumented immigrants, and state and federal legislation seeks to limit such immigrants' access to social services. The policy implications of Mexican *legal* immigration are also important, according to Bean, de la Garza, Roberts and Weintraub, but U.S. policymakers have largely ignored this topic. The essays in this anthology address the issue of Mexican immigration in general and its signifi-

cance for U.S.-Mexican relations. They treat the factors accounting for the recent increase in volume of Mexican migration and discuss the reasons for and implications of the more permanent nature (as compared to earlier in the century) of Mexican settlement in this country. The chapters address general themes: the history of U.S. immigration legislation pertaining to Mexico; social and economic factors within Mexico that have shaped emigration patterns (push factors) and U.S. labor market conditions that have acted as pull factors for Mexican immigrants; and the economic and political impact of Mexican immigration. In a final essay the editors summarize key points in the essays and offer policy recommendations.

In the introduction, Bean, de la Garza, Roberts and Weintraub provide a brief overview of Mexican migration to the U.S. since the late 19th century, assess the political and economic conditions in twentieth century Mexico and the U.S. that have acted as both push and pull factors, and describe the response in the U.S. to Mexican immigration over time. Historians may find the

editors' analysis of push factors for Mexican emigration throughout the twentieth century a bit incomplete and simplistic and their overview of Mexican migration over time lacks depth. A rich historical literature on the topic describes the "revolving door" of Mexican migration over the border in the twentieth century, a valuable concept missing from this analysis.

The first chapter helps fill the historical gaps. Gary P. Freeman and Frank D. Bean's "Mexico and U.S. Worldwide Immigration Policy" provides a much more complete and thoughtful examination of the history of Mexican migration to the U.S. and describes the U.S. response in policy terms. Further, the authors attempt to predict the future relations between the two countries in light of the immigration issue. They list "tensions" in U.S. immigration policy in general that have affected Mexican migration: between a belief in the "fundamental equality of persons" and a desire to satisfy regional needs or interest groups in the U.S.; between a growing sentiment to control the flow of people into the U.S. and the economic need for labor in certain industries; and between the desire to view control of flows across national borders as a key element of sovereignty and the recognition that migration is a bilateral issue. The authors emphasize the facts that Mexican immigration policy has tended to be regionally shaped (with economic and political interests in the Southwest having the most clout) and that enforcement of U.S. immigration policy toward Mexico has been arbitrary and inconsistent, characterized by exemptions and non-enforcement. Freeman and Bean's discussion of U.S. immigration law underscores these points. While laws such as the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act and the Immigration Act of 1990 give the appearance of controlling the flow of Mexican immigrants, in reality they are "more symbolic than real in (their) effects" (p. 34). The authors suggest that one possible future is a free flow of laborers between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada similar to agreements in force between Britain and Ireland

and Australia and New Zealand. Freeman and Bean conclude that immigration policy in the U.S. has in the past and will continue to emerge from great complexity.

The next two selections in this volume treat conditions within Mexico that have likely contributed to outmigration. Bryan R. Roberts and Agustin Escobar Latapi examine Mexican socioeconomic policies and conditions as potential factors in Mexican emigration, which, according to most analyses, rose to unprecedented levels in the 1980s and 1990s (in absolute numbers). They conclude that the most significant of these has been the failure of Mexico's cities to accommodate the large numbers of Mexican migrants. They stress that Mexico's education, health, and infrastructure policies and conditions were not factors in Mexican emigration: there was no substantial deterioration in social welfare throughout the country in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the student-teacher ratio improved and illiteracy among those 15 and older dropped between 1980 and 1990. Life expectancy rose in many areas and the percentage of Mexicans living in homes without running water dropped in that same decade. Despite the country's economic problems in the last two decades, real income levels rose in some areas, leading the authors to conclude that this did not act as a significant push factor. Mexico's rural areas saw few of the improvements mentioned above, however, and that fact, combined with federal policies designed to adjust and restructure economic activities, put pressure on Mexico's cities, which proved unable to support the number of migrants that poured into them. The resulting income inequality, unemployment, poor housing conditions, high local taxes, and limited opportunities for increased income, especially in border cities, led to the rise in Mexican emigration. Mexican social policy should, therefore, make its first concern the improvement of conditions in the country's growing cities. Roberts and Latapi's conclusions contradict the 1980s literature which stressed the impact of Mexico's agricultural crisis on emigration.

Their ultimate recommendation that the Mexican government address the "ability of the urban system to absorb Mexico's working population and provide it with long term security" (p. 71) ignores the root of that urban crisis: the fact that Mexicans in rural areas have no recourse except to go to the cities.

The following essay, however, addresses Mexico's agricultural situation and its importance in Mexican emigration. Philip Martin analyzes Mexico's agricultural policies and their role in contributing to the current agricultural crisis. He puts Mexico's agricultural situation within a historical context, which underscores the dramatic nature of the changes that have occurred during the last two decades. The Mexican government has reversed its policy of intensive participation in the agricultural sector in recent years, ending or revising its subsidy programs and dissolving some of the organizations and institutions that have supported Mexican farmers. Further, it has brought about tremendous changes in land tenure and has reduced protective tariffs. Mexican farm output has declined from a high of 6.6 percent average annual growth in the 1950s and 1960s to only 1/3 percent annually in the 1980s and 90s. Today agriculture is in crisis, a factor that will likely drive many in rural Mexico to seek a livelihood elsewhere. Many of them will relocate, at least temporarily, in the U.S.

Meanwhile, U.S. agriculture has relied on Mexican labor. Two-thirds of all farm workers in the United States today are immigrants. Martin provides the history of Mexican labor migration to the U.S., emphasizing the conditions in both the United States and Mexico that led to permanent settlement by some Mexicans. Finally, he offers what he terms policy recommendations, although not all his points fall into that category. They include a call for closer scrutiny of developing countries' agricultural policies which may affect migration to the United States, U.S. assistance in helping Mexico solve its agricultural crisis, a recognition

that the United States is tightening border control efforts while simultaneously legalizing undocumented Mexican immigrants and allowing them to bring their families into the country, and a reduction in demand for agricultural workers in the United States through increased farm mechanization or similar means.

The next portion of this anthology addresses the size, growth rate, and socioeconomic characteristics of the Mexican-origin and Mexican-born populations in the United States. Alene H. Gelbard and Marion Carter, using INS and Census data, also discuss the implications of this growing population cohort on state and local as well as federal policymaking. While the demographic characteristics the authors provide are important to an anthology such as this, most of the broader trends they report are common knowledge to scholars working in this area. Among their findings: the U.S. population is growing more diverse, especially since 1970, predominantly as a result of immigration from Latin America and Asia; the United States is among the most rapidly growing industrialized nations and roughly half of U.S. population growth is due to immigration; the largest percentage of immigrants is Mexican (accounting for roughly 14 percent of legal immigration in 1994 and an estimated 1/3 of undocumented immigrants each year); and the Mexican-origin population is largest in Texas, California, and Illinois, predominantly in urban areas. The sex and age distribution of this population directly affects U.S. public policy in the areas of employment, health and social services, education, and further population growth. In general, Mexican immigrants tend to be younger than the general population, they have higher fertility levels, marry in greater numbers and have lower divorce rates than many other groups, are less educated, and have a higher unemployment rate (about twice the national rate) and higher poverty levels (although that is not the case for second and later generations). Mexican immigrants have historically demonstrated little propensity to become naturalized

U.S. citizens, but the same may be said of Canadian immigrants. Still, the largest number of naturalized citizens in 1994 was from Mexico.

Because of the size of its Mexican-origin population, the authors use California as an example of "how Mexican migration can affect the demographic landscape in the United States at the state and local levels" (p. 133), but other than brief references to labor and education, they do not discuss the broader policy implications of this population cohort. In a section devoted to future trends, Gelbard and Carter predict that the Mexican-origin population in the U.S. will exhibit a more rapid growth rate than the general population, the volume of Mexican immigration will not abate, the impact will be felt most strongly at the state and local levels, and that the Mexican labor force in the U.S. will continue to expand. The authors admit to making only general observations regarding the "links between Mexican immigrant and U.S. population profiles" (p. 139), arguing that the unavailability of data on immigrants prohibits more specific conclusions. In particular, they decry the lack of information on undocumented immigrants and migrants.

Susan Gonzalez Baker, Robert G. Cushing, and Charles W. Haynes assess the methodology and conclusions of fifteen studies completed in the 1990s on the fiscal impact of immigration to the United States. Some of the studies examined local and some the national fiscal results of immigration. With "important exceptions," they reported an overall negative fiscal impact of immigration to this country, but estimates of the extent of that impact vary widely. At one extreme, a 1993 study estimated that immigrants to this country in 1992 resulted in a net annual cost to the U.S. of \$42.5 billion (Huddle, 1993); at the other extreme, a 1994 study estimated a net annual surplus of roughly \$30 billion from immigration (Passel, 1994). None of the studies detail the impact by national origin, but much of the data used is from California and Texas and thus relates mainly to

Mexican migration. The deviation in the studies the authors examined is due to a large extent to lack of consensus as to the proper indicators of public revenues generated by immigrants and to varying estimates of the size of undocumented immigrant populations. The authors criticize some of the methods and conclusions of the national studies, especially that of Huddle (1985, 1993), stating that Huddle's conclusions have nevertheless gained attention from U.S. policy makers and his overstated cost estimates have become "a non-fact" that is now "part of the conventional wisdom" (152). They conclude that the common practice of estimating national costs and revenues by extrapolating from local and state data makes national-level studies unreliable at best. A theme of the state studies as well as the two county/metropolitan studies is that costs of immigration exceed revenues at the local level while the federal government reaps the fiscal benefits, an imbalance that must be redressed. Because of the methodological limitations of the literature examined, the variety in geographical scope, the variety in indicators of costs and benefits and in immigrant populations, the authors deem this literature unsuitable for makers of policy related to Mexican immigration, and in general a bit "unstable." The authors present potential policy choices based on some of the studies' conclusions and offer a concise overview of the current policy situation.

In the following chapter, Michael J. Rosenfeld and Marta Tienda also address the fiscal impact of immigration, but their focus is on the Mexican immigrant only. Based on literature other than that cited in the previous chapter, along with their own research in a Chicago neighborhood, Rosenfeld and Tienda argue that "immigrants in general, and Mexican immigrants in particular, are probably beneficial to the U.S. economy" (p. 181). One reason for the divergence in interpretation of recent literature is that Rosenfeld and Tienda adopt Greenwood's (1994) notion of "separate and distinct channels of influence through which im-

migration affects the economy of the host country" (p. 183). Their focus in this chapter is not the direct fiscal impact, but the "channels of influence that derive from economies of scale" (p. 183). The authors' argument is that Mexican immigrants make a significant contribution to the U.S. economy because of their "economic and cultural innovations" as well as "returns to scale" (p. 195). Further, because Mexican immigrants have tended to settle over the years into Mexican-American communities, they are thus integrated into the U.S. economy. Mexicans come to this country predominantly for economic rather than political reasons, and because they constitute a relatively youthful labor force, their economic contributions include not only Social Security taxes but "talent, motivation and innate skill" (p. 196). Further, they contribute by increasing the consumer market, and by shaping U.S. tastes and needs. As evidence of Mexican immigrants' innovation and entrepreneurship, the authors provide generalizations regarding their Chicago study and three case studies. Rosenfeld and Tienda have based their argument that the net impact of Mexican immigration has "probably" been beneficial on literature that, admittedly, could result in varying interpretations, as well as on very sketchy data from their ongoing research.

The chapter by Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Gabriel Szekely on the relationship between the politics and policies of the Mexican state and Mexican emigration would have made an excellent first chapter in this anthology. The authors discuss the three types of Mexican emigrants-refugees, economic and political migrants--and they link events and official policies over time to the outflow of Mexico's people. The authors also effectively demonstrate the relationship between Mexican political events and official policies and "individual decisions about returning or staying in the United States" (p. 219). They then turn to the issue of policy formation: what can the Mexican government do to shape future emigration? De la Garza and Szekely reject the typical response of

most officials and analysts, who portray the Mexican government as powerless to affect Mexican emigration. An important question is whether or not top Mexican officials see the need to address the issue. The authors make a number of recommendations for policy changes at top, beginning with securing accurate information about the nature and scope of the flow across the border. (They assert that Zedillo relies on misinformation regarding the flow of Mexicans across the border). Secondly, the authors advise sweeping political reform in Mexico, to include a more responsible and responsive government. They also recommend major changes in the official economic program in order to redistribute wealth. For example, the Zedillo government should reject the market-oriented development model, which has worsened inequality and poverty in Mexico and spurred emigration. Further, NAFTA and PRO-CAMPO are contributing to mass exodus from the countryside, increasing the pool of unemployed and enhancing the likelihood of emigration. Finally, De la Garza and Szekely point to U.S. culpability in contributing to official Mexican policies, and recommend a change in U.S. demands on Mexico. The U.S. government should also be willing to cooperate with Mexican attempts at political reform. The benefit to the United States would be a reduction in the flow of immigrants from Mexico. Cooperative efforts between the two governments are essential, the authors argue, if emigration/immigration is to be managed.

Using data secured from U.S. public opinion polls conducted between 1965 and 1995, Thomas J. Espenshade and Maryann Belanger compiled information on U.S. public perceptions regarding immigration in general and Mexican immigration in particular. They draw several conclusions pertaining to immigration in general: that there has been a return in this country to restrictionist attitudes toward immigration, European immigrants are preferred over Asian and Latin American, and that, despite widespread concerns over illegal immigration, few are willing to support stringent

measures to reduce it. The responses also revealed that Mexican immigrants rank among the lowest of preferred immigrants, in part because they and other Latin American immigrants are perceived as more likely to rely on welfare, commit crimes, and forego education. This selection, which includes 28 tables reporting results of major opinion polls over time, could prove useful to those engaged in immigration policy formation.

Peter H. Smith's analysis of the role NAFTA has played in Mexican migration treats one of the most discussed, if not most critical elements in Mexican emigration. His chapter puts the current debate over NAFTA's effects within a historical context of earlier Mexican immigration trends and U.S. immigration policies. He describes some of the political and economic fallout from NAFTA in Mexico, and the U.S. response to those events and issues, and concludes that while the U.S. has been willing to work more closely with the Mexican government to solve some of the economic problems that have arisen, we have simultaneously attempted to reduce the flow of Mexican workers, especially undocumented workers, into this country. Smith describes some of these efforts, including the "malodorous Proposition 187" (p. 272) and similar measures. Assessing the impact of NAFTA on Mexican emigration/immigration is virtually impossible at this point, argues Smith. An important effect of increased border monitoring and of "the contradiction between free-trade policies and immigration control" (p. 277) has been rising political tension along the border, leading to immigration becoming a human-rights concern.

In his analysis of factors that have shaped U.S.-Mexican relations overtime, Sidney Weintraub asserts that "the tension created by migration from Mexico to the United States is perhaps the most intractable theme in the relationship between the two neighbors" (p. 284). He lists several patterns in U.S. immigration policy toward Mexico, most of which, like other foreign policy trends,

relate to economic needs and conditions in this country, and he predicts that such patterns will continue. The Mexican response to U.S. immigration policies has also followed established patterns. Mexican officials have portrayed emigration as a response to U.S. economic need and other than recognizing an obligation to protect Mexican nationals abroad, they have taken a reactive rather than proactive stance on the issue. Officials have agreed to cooperate with U.S. efforts to control migration, but have no programmatic suggestions of ways to do this. Weintraub, like many other analysts, suggests that there is little the Mexican government could do to slow emigration at this point and the problem thus falls into the lap of U.S. policy makers. The immigration issue increased in complexity in the mid-1990s because of economic downturns in some areas and the political reaction to those conditions, which has included ethnic violence. It is also a complex issue because of the nature of relations between the two countries: not only do they have a long history in terms of immigration issues, but their proximity and movement toward economic integration have led to even more complicated relationships. Weintraub offers several observations and recommendations based on his conviction that immigration from Mexico will continue, but he argues that "the tensions can be reduced and the deleterious fallout in bilateral relations minimized" (293). He suggests a variety of ways that policy makers on both sides of the border can improve relations.

Bean, De la Garza, Roberts and Weintraub's concluding chapter in this anthology provides a fairly comprehensive summary of the major issues addressed in the previous chapters. It describes the current state of affairs and offers suggestions for policy reform. Among the most important recommendations are the following: a revision of U.S. immigration policy that is Mexico-specific and would address the incongruence between demand for inexpensive Mexican labor (in part as result of NAFTA) on the one hand and hostility toward undocumented migrant laborers on

the other; improved regulation of immigrant labor markets; and a bilateral approach to migration policy.

Taken as a whole, *At the Crossroads* exhibits many of the problems common to anthologies: the chapters are uneven and information is repeated in several articles. Further, it lacks proper editing, particularly the introduction and concluding chapters. Nevertheless, many of the essays will prove valuable to scholars with an interest in the characteristics and impact of Mexican immigration, and to policy makers willing to base their decisions on fact rather than fiction. A number of the contributions put current issues into a historical context, which is essential to any analysis. Many of them include extensive bibliographies which could serve as a starting point for those interested in issues of immigration and policymaking. This volume would also prove useful in courses where the social, economic and/or political implications of Mexican immigration are addressed. Overall, *At the Crossroads* is a welcome addition to the literature on this timely and increasingly critical issue.

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