Title

Migration and Distributive Politics in an Indigenous Community: Oportunidades, Educational Surveillance and Migration Patterns in La Gloria

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Migration and Distributive Politics in an Indigenous Community: *Oportunidades*, educational surveillance and migration patterns in La Gloria

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Abstract

Conditional Cash Transfers are a type of welfare program in which recipients receive funds contingent on certain actions or involvement in activities. Governments and multilateral banks frame conditional Cash Transfers as an effective poverty alleviation strategy that provokes greater civic engagement in the Global South. Mexico's Conditional Cash Transfer program, *Oportunidades*, includes an educational requirement for children. Studies of *Oportunidades* focus primarily on its impact on student enrollment, but lack research on the quality of education, retention and employment outcomes, and the impact on emigration. Drawing on three years of ethnographic research in a rural indigenous community in the Mexican state of Chiapas, I examine how teachers utilize *Oportunidades* conditional requirements as a form of surveillance in the classroom. My findings reveal how emigration in La Gloria and its impact on student retention increases the vulnerability of teachers' employment. These pressures unintentionally help shape how teachers perceive the program – as an intervention to an ongoing culture of migration. Finally, I discuss the impact that surveillance has in shaping educational and migratory aspirations among students and employment outcomes.

Introduction:

This article examines the political economy of a "conditional cash transfer" program known in Mexico as *Oportunidades*, and focuses on its implementation and impact in the incorporation of La Gloria, an indigenous community of Guatemalan refugees, into the Mexican nation-state. Conditional cash transfers are a recent international trend in policy making, especially evident in Latin America, where social safety nets target the poor. First I will provide information on the foundation of La Gloria, describe the *Oportunidades* program, and identify my theoretical contribution to the migration and globalization literatures, followed by my findings and conclusion.

Background

The Guatemalan refugees who settled La Gloria in the early 1980s[1] fled Guatemala due to decades of military persecution. These indigenous Maya rural agricultural laborers eventually settled in the Mexican states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo (see image 1). As of

[1] I utilize the term "forced migrant," in lieu of the term "refugee." A socio-legal bureaucratic system undergirds the term refugee, which requires significant investment by states and multilateral humanitarian institutions in the

2006, 12,782 Guatemalan refugees live in 62 settlements recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Mexican state of Chiapas (COMAR 2006). La Gloria is the largest of these settlements with 1,874 residents. The majority originate from San Miguel Acatan, Guatemala and self-identify as either *Acateco* or *Migueleños*, both references to their community of origin. Kanjobal is the dominant Mayan indigenous language. Most of the community also speaks Spanish, which is encouraged through the education system.

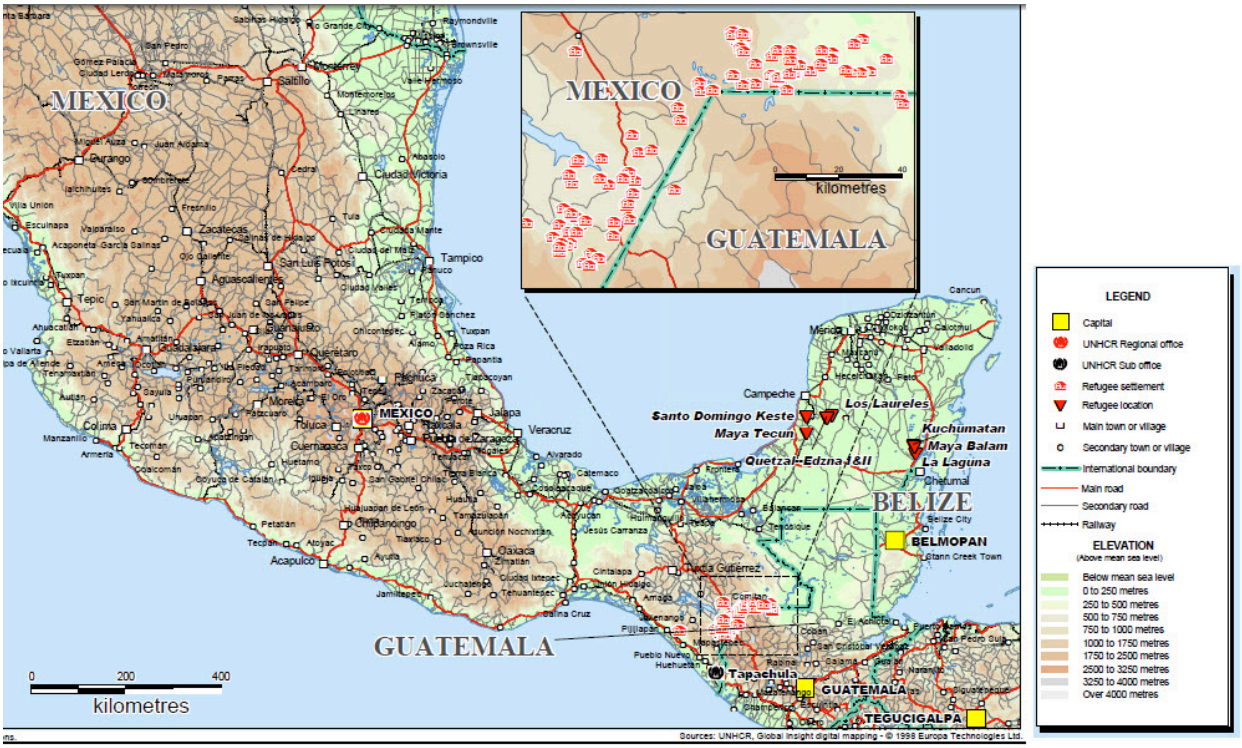

Image 1: 2003 UNHCR map of refugee settlements in the states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, Mexico.

In La Gloria, like much of Mexico, persistent economic inequalities that create income disparities and concentrations of poverty shape who migrates and who does not. Yet, in La Gloria, economic marginality has been compounded by ongoing xenophobia toward Guatemalans who settled in Mexico. For instance, Mexico delayed accession to the UN

Convention relating to the status of refugees until 2000, which effectively denied Guatemalan exiles refugee status. The Mexican state forcefully repatriated Guatemalans while the military conflict was still ongoing (García 2006). Local mobilization by Guatemalan exiles and international allies pressured the Mexican state to provide visas, but afforded temporary residency and denied them the right to work.[2] Travel restrictions imposed by visa requirements, racism, and economic inequality combined to undermine claims for asylum and threatened the social, political, and cultural survival of La Gloria community members.

Anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1995) identifies processes of cultural revival in forced migrant communities, which have lost their territory, and then construct a new community within a new area, reflective of a reterritorialization project. Guatemalan migrants' reterritorialization projects, however, were viewed as threats to the Mexican state (Stepputat and Hansen 2001). For instance, in addition to cultural revival that included the maintenance of indigenous languages, La Gloria organized autonomous projects to promote local development in the areas of health, education, and income. These projects weakened the state's hegemony as sovereign regulator of social life. While I do not have the time to provide details to these locally based projects, which I will be happy to discuss during the question and answer period, these projects aimed to counteract a process of deterritorialization.

Cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai views deterritorialization, as "one of the central forces of the modern world because it brings laboring populations into the lower-class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies" (1996: 37-38). Fieldwork revealed ongoing deterritorialization processes at work in La Gloria. For instance, Mexico's practice of

[2] Mexico ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 2000, which marked the end of the repatriation program, but with reservations with respect to the right to work, free transit and the non-expulsion of asylum seekers. The FM3 visa, however, provided exiles the right to work for a three month period with a specific employer anywhere in the country. See also Americas Watch (1984).

repatriation, relocation and exclusionary visa restrictions that limited employment options weakened La Gloria's economy and increased its dependence on low-skilled labor exportation to the U.S. La Gloria's increased reliance on remittances to sustain its local economy undermined locally based development projects that promoted indigenous autonomy.

La Gloria's weakened economy provided an opportunity for the Mexican state to initiate a naturalization program in 2001 to Guatemalan refugees, which required all refugee settlement communities to relinquish control of schools and clinics. In 2002, the *Oportunidades* program was introduced to La Gloria and structured indigenous citizenship to a subordinate position of need, what Jessica Catelino (2010) calls "need-based sovereignty." How sovereignty is part of the benefits program and its administration is evidenced by the requirement that the community promotes the self-regulation of conditional requirements, which serves to garner local support, but has been criticized for reinforcing care work for mothers who are unpaid for administering the program in local communities (a topic I will return to).

Despite the extension of naturalization, economic and political marginality that fueled international migration continued well after the provision of *Oportunidades* grants. The following chart of 2006 census data shows that girls and women substantially outnumber boys and men in La Gloria, particularly among the working age population.

	Boys/Men	Girls/Women	Total
Less than one year	18	18	36
Age 12 to 14	83	105	188
Age 15 to 19	110	163	273
Age 20 to 24	34	108	142
Age 25 to 29	32	74	106
Age 30 to 34	24	69	93
Age 35 to39	11	30	41
Age 40 to 44	18	69	87
Age 45 a 49	23	35	58
Age 50 to 54	27	38	65
Age 55 to 59	19	17	36
Age 65 and above	40	52	92
Total	713	1094	1807
Women of reproductive age: 653			
Children under age 5: 236			

Image 2: Migration of males in La Gloria accelerates after age 20 and plateaus at age 40. The lack of economic opportunities in La Gloria, has also fueled the emigration of women for these age groups, but less so than men. Source: *Instituto de Salud del Estado de Chiapas Cédula de datos básicos a nivel Microregional*.

As of 2012, a total of 682 children from a total of 375 families received *Oportunidades* grants (Oportunidades 2012). This article explores how the program is implemented on the ground, with a focus on how the education component and the long term impact it may have in the reduction of poverty in a rural setting. The following section provides a description of *Oportunidades* and the conditions required by the program from recipients that are used to determine receipt of grant transfers.

The *Oportunidades* Conditional Cash Transfer Program

PROGRESA (Program for Education, Health and Nutrition) created in 1997 under the Zedillo administration, aimed to address extreme poverty in rural areas.[3] In 2001 the program was renamed *Oportunidades* and expanded to urban and semi-urban areas. It now serves more than five million households (one fifth of the national population) (Peck and Theodore 2008).

3 See Yachine (1999) for historical background on the shift of anti-poverty programs in Mexico.

The *Oportunidades* program requires monthly medical check-ups by the heads of household, but in practice targets mothers who must also attend monthly public-health lectures to receive food and education grants.[4] "[N]onrecipient adults [primarily men] need only be physically present once per year for a health check-up" (Stecklov 2005: 772). In La Gloria, failure of non-recipient adults to attend the yearly health check-up does not result in removal from the program. Once attendance at monthly health and nutrition talks are fulfilled, and "students" meet the 85 percent minimum school attendance requirement (Angelucci 2004), bimonthly payments are made to beneficiary head of households throughout the year (Stecklov et al. 2005, 771; citing Adato Cody and Ruel 2000).

Oportunidades places emphasis on participants' "co-responsibility," "understood as cost-sharing, where beneficiaries contribute their labor for the implementation of projects" (Molyneux 2006, 434; citing Yaschine 1999: 50). While the concept of "co-responsibility" in the areas of health and education has been constructed as a project assumed by the entire community (Rivero 2002), in La Gloria, responsibility has instead devolved to mothers to secure the program's outcomes. Despite public discourse of the programs' effectiveness in targeting of recipient households, much of this research has focused on the programs impact on health (González Montes 2002; *González Montes* and *Mojarro* 2011; Smith-Oka 2009). Studies of the program's educational component have been relatively few and lack a qualitative analysis of how conditionality requirements are met (Behrman and Skoufias 2006; Coady and Parker 2002).[5]

4 Along with an educational scholarship, *Oportunidades* integrates a reproductive health services component and a nutritional grant for children (and mothers, if pregnant or breastfeeding). See Zavala de Cosio (1992) for a review of joint poverty alleviation programs and family planning in Mexico since the 1970s.

5 An exception is Latapi and González de la Rocha's (2003) qualitative study of *Oportunidades*. The study, extensive in its inclusion of 16000 homes (divided by beneficiary and a non-recipient control group) in six urban areas, does not include a rural locale nor does it incorporate an indigenous community. The initiation of the study, six to ten months after the program began in each site, further limits its findings.

A series of short-and-long term quantitative evaluations of *Oportunidades* provide mixed results on the programs impact in improving educational outcomes. For instance, findings from a two year study of *Oportunidades* (1997-1999) in seven rural areas emphasized the program's positive impacts of increased enrollment for girls (7.2 to 9.3 percentage points) and for boys (3.5 to 5.8 percentage points) at the secondary school level (Skoufias and McClafferty 2001). A longer evaluation found that boys (aged 9-10) who participated in the program for five and a half years increased schooling by a year among comparable boys without the program (Behrman et al. 2009, 2011). The study, however, could not explain why a decline in schooling occurred among boys (ages 13-15), or why the program has "no significant impacts for older girls" (2011: 111). In light of these mixed results, the ability of *Oportunidades* stipends to increase educational attainment in the long-term remains unclear.

A careful review of these evaluations reveal that they are based on the first seven states to receive *Oportunidades* grant funds, which did not include Chiapas and Oaxaca, two states with the highest rates of social marginality (2000). Veracruz, the third highest state in the rate of marginality, was included in the above mentioned evaluations, but is excluded without explanation, in the longer term studies (Behrman et al. 2009, Behrman et al., 2011). Coincidentally, these three states also have the highest concentration of indigenous peoples in Mexico (2006a). Despite studies that identify greater social marginalization among indigenous peoples (2006b; Freyermuth and Sesia 2009) short-and-long term evaluations exclude ethnicity and race as variables.[6] The omission of states with the largest percentage of indigenous peoples

[6] Only two studies by Ramírez (2006) and Bando et al. (2005) utilize ethnicity to identify how *Oportunidades* grants disproportionately benefited indigenous peoples who saw a reduction of child labor activity and increased schooling attendance. Yet, the study by Ramírez (2006) only identifies how *Oportunidades* grants "target" indigenous municipalities more than non-indigenous ones, but makes no assessment of the qualitative impact on child labor and schooling. The Bando et al. (2005) study does make such evaluation, but is based on a two-year study of the same seven states mentioned above.

in Mexico conceals the race and gender politics that guide evaluations of the *Oportunidades* program.

Questions also remain on the effect *Oportunidades* has on migration. Some scholars believe cash transfers may reduce the incentive to migrate (Stecklov et al. 2005; see too Harris and Todaro 1970). For instance, recent research found that after a 20-month period of receiving *Oportunidades* transfers the probability of U.S. migration decreased by 40 percent (Stecklov et al. 2005). Another study found that the program reduced both domestic and international migration among male youth by six percent, but had no effect on female migration (Behrman et al. 2005). These studies offer mixed-conclusions on the impact of *Oportunidades* on domestic and international migration.

The Culture of Migration

A central line of international migration research examines how international migration processes reconstitute the cultural, political, and economic contours of sending communities (Durand et al. 1996; Massey 1987; 1999). Focusing on ongoing migration and the increased flow of financial and social capital, Douglass Massey (1987; 1999) found that social networks in places of origin and destination made international migration less costly. This contributes to a "culture of migration" where migratory attitudes are spread through social networks of family, friends and community members. The denser the networks between place of origin and destination the more migration related knowledge and resources are spread, which fuel "cumulative causation." (Massey et al. 1998). Social capital, thus, becomes a driving force in fueling cumulative causation and reducing migration costs (Massey 1987; Massey et al. 1993).

The culture of migration underpins economist Manuela Angelucci's (2011; 2012) hypothesis that the effects of *Oportunidades* on international migration will vary according to the scope of social networks and migration costs. For instance, Angelucci and colleagues (2010) found

that *Oportunidades* raises secondary education enrollment only among eligible households that are embedded in extended family networks. Eligible, but smaller and more isolated households did not increase secondary enrolment. In other words, recipient families with extended kin networks may have one or more family members participating in domestic or international migration. Remittances sent by migrant kin may enable *Oportunidades* recipients to overcome the opportunity costs of enrolling their children beyond elementary school, while those with smaller networks do not.

The value of *Oportunidades* cash transfers in Mexico, equal to one half or two thirds of the full-time child wage (Schultz 2004), may not be enough to induce conditional behavioral changes, but instead diminish the credit constraints and reinforce contemporary migration patterns. For communities that have an established culture of migration, transfers may not be sufficient to compensate for the loss of income earned by heads-of-household and children (particularly males) who typically emigrate for improved labor market outcomes (Kandel and Massey 2002; Palloni et al. 2001).[7] These studies indicate how social networks and gender power relations may determine the impact *Oportunidades* will have on a community's culture of migration.

Contribution & Broader Significance

From a theoretical point of view, my study has relevance for at least two important literatures. In the international migration literature processes of settlement, assimilation, and incorporation focus primarily in the U.S. context. Studying processes of settlement in Mexico – a gateway to ongoing migration to the U.S. – can be useful to identify policies that can help incorporate arrivals as an alternative to ongoing U.S. bound migration.

[7] An earlier study by Angelucci (2004) found a strong gender bias among *Oportunidades* recipients, whereby men are favored over women (29 and 26 percent respectively) for international migration. Similarly, another study revealed how a two percent increase for internal migration among 13 to 21 year olds also favors men over women (Rubalcava and Teruel 2006).

What makes La Gloria unique is that it is both a place of destination for indigenous Guatemalan migration and origin for secondary migration to the U.S., and therefore eschews the sending-and-receiving binary commonly used in the international migration literature. At the forefront of examining communities of origin are ethnographic studies on the role kinship rules and gender play in shaping patterns of migration (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Mahler 2001), more recent work focuses on home-town associations and their impact on political participation (Jones-Correa 1998; Smith 2005), and the role of governments in countries of origin in facilitating international migration (Rodriguez 2008). My study builds on these studies to expose how conditional cash transfer programs like *Oportunidades* legitimates the Mexican state's sovereign nation-building power to provide care for impoverished migrant sending communities.

My research also contributes to the literature on global political economy. Scholars have identified how the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank provided billions in loans and analytic advisory support for conditional cash transfer programs as a form of post-structural adjustment to many national economies in the global south (Peck and Theodore 2010). The restructuring of national economies that favor global capitalism over the welfare of citizen nationals is a constitutive feature of what David Harvey calls the neoliberal state (Harvey 2005). Harvey's definition, however, leaves little room for the neoliberal state to create social welfare programs like *Oportunidades*. Neoliberalism, according to anthropologist Aiwha Ong, is not a fixed set of economic attributes scaled at the level of the state, but a disciplinary logic that unevenly articulates situated political constellations. In line with Ong's definition of neoliberalism, my ethnographic study reveals how *Oportunidades* functions as a technology of

governing that requires recipients to be self-managing in the spheres of health and education that unsettles established practices of citizenship, the family and community in La Gloria.

The broader significance of this research, however, goes well beyond the government program in this region. The expansive scope of conditional cash transfer programs in the global south, which currently includes 16 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lomeli 2008) and 29 total programs throughout developing countries (Fiszbein and Schady 2009), makes it a topic of important anthropological import for the study of social inequality, poverty and mobility.

Methods

This article is based on data obtained between 2006 and 2007 that involved formal interviews with the School Directors and instructors for the elementary, secondary, and high schools in La Gloria. I also engaged in participant observation and attended courses in each educational institution, school assemblies, athletic events, and community wide meetings that involved school related matters.

To complement these data, a convenience sample of 78 students in all three academic grades in La Gloria's high school (El Colegio de Bachilleres de Chiapas, hereafter COBACH) answered a survey questionnaire in 2006. Surveys asked students to provide information on intra-state and international migration of family members.[8]

Between 2007 and 2013 I conducted follow-up interviews with some of the original participants. The question guiding this article is: *Has the Oportunidades program reshaped La Gloria's "culture of migration," which has fueled migration, particularly among men, from La Gloria to the United States and has it helped improve the economic standing of recipients?* To

[8] Additional questions asked in the survey included: education attainment; age at migration; the amount of remittances (if any) and frequency of return-migration.

address this question, I focus on the program's educational component, and the role surveillance plays in the enforcement of conditional attendance and grade requirements by teachers. Additionally, to assess the long-term impact that these surveillance practices have among students, I track the educational and employment outcomes of the first cohort of La Gloria's high school students for six years (from 2007 to 2013).

Enforcement of Conditional Requirements for Receipt of Educational Grants

Under *Oportunidades* educators are provided the authority to enforce disciplinary measures to ensure that students meet the conditionality requirements – which include regular school attendance and a high grade point average. In an interview with La Gloria's high school director, he explains how conditionalities are utilized.

> The students that do not attend school, I dock them less funds under the *Oportunidades* program. For me it is like a *weapon* [emphasis mine] that we have here, because the student that wants to leave, I dock him or her in the program.[9]

Yet despite the availability of *Oportunidades* education stipends, and disciplinary measures utilized by school staff, the director identified an ongoing retention problem in La Gloria.

Emigration from La Gloria is viewed as a problem by school staff. Of all the educational levels in La Gloria, the high school suffers from the lowest matriculation of students. According to the COBACH director, the elementary school has 550 students, but only 90 reach the 6th grade. Student enrollment drops to 50 at the start of the secondary school, and half this number (25 to 30) at the high school.[10] Such low retention rates create pressure on school staff because the national school board can close the school if matriculation is considered too low. High

[9] Interview dated September 7, 2006
[10] Ibid.

emigration and low retention rates in La Gloria shapes the COBACH Director's perception of how families utilize *Oportunidades* education grants.

> Students come to school not so much because they want to further their life chances, but because their parents send them so that they may receive the education grants.[11]

Many instructors in both the secondary and high schools share this perception by the high school Director, which creates a degree of frustration as they struggle to convince students to remain in school and forgo emigration.

To counteract ongoing emigration patterns that negatively impact school retention rates, teachers in La Gloria utilize their authority to provide the following advice to students, that is: *complete high school as a means to improve life-chances as migrant laborers to the U.S.* This message was shared in numerous interviews with directors and instructors. One instructor mentioned how increased education can enable greater opportunities for employment abroad. She states,

> [As teachers] we …inform students that …the more educated Mexicans are the more opportunities they will have to find secure jobs abroad. [In other words] we tell them that obtaining a high school degree is better than emigrating without an education.[12]

While teachers expressed concern regarding the barriers students may face if they pursued migration without completion of a high school degree, they were equally apprehensive about the impact low school retention may have in their own ability to secure a teaching position. As the same instructor confessed "we are quite worried that we will be left without students, or with few matriculated." Such a fear on the part of COBACH instructors informs their pragmatic advice; student completion of high school will improve life-chances upon migration to the US.

The correlative relationship between increased education and earnings is also made when addressing domestic migration. The same instructor adds,

[11] Ibid.
[12] Interview dated September 6, 2006.

> We inform students that if they are caught by immigration officials and are left in the Mexico-U.S. border, their chances of being hired in the *maquiladoras* are improved with a high school degree. So we tell them that it is not necessary to cross the international border to the U.S. [to find work].[13]

Increased education, therefore, is framed by instructors not only as a means to improve earnings abroad, but also as a safety mechanism against immigration enforcement that may result in their repatriation to the U.S-Mexico border. Such advice provided by instructors and the school Director in La Gloria, a community with an entrenched "culture of migration" that favors international migration, may serve to reinforce ongoing emigration to the U.S.

To what extent does the culture of migration continue to shape emigration from La Gloria and in turn negatively impact student retention? Second, of those who remain in the COBACH and receive *Oportunidades* education grants, what are their educational and employment prospects following graduation? A return trip to La Gloria in 2007 and follow up interviews in 2013 provides answers to these questions.

Graduation of La Gloria's First High School Cohort

As earlier mentioned, men outnumber women among international migrants from La Gloria. Of the 78 surveys distributed to students in 2006, a total of 127 women and 188 men were identified as family members who pursued international migration. A smaller number identified family members who pursued internal migration (17 women and 18 men). These figures reveal how the culture of migration in La Gloria compels many (particularly men) to pursue international over internal migration**.** How might the "culture of migration" operate among students who enrolled and completed the COBACH high school?

[13] Ibid.

	Males	Females	Unknown
International migrants	188	127	17
Domestic migrants	18*	17	0
Total	206	144	17

Image 3: International migrants (332) far outnumber domestic migrants (35). Among international migrants, men substantially outnumber women. Domestic migration, however, is nearly equal across gender. *One of the 18 men who pursued domestic migration was enrolled at a university.

In 2007, La Gloria community leaders coordinated a large ceremony for the first graduating class of 21 students (5 men, 16 women) at the COBACH high school. According to the COBACH Director, eight women in the 2007 graduating class registered for university studies, but the attraction of earning higher wages fueled the large desertion of nearly 15 of the original 36 students who migrated to neighboring cities and to the U.S. It appears that a "culture of migration" continues to compel a significant number of students to forgo graduating from high school to participate in both domestic and international migration.[14] Interviews with some of these graduates provide an opportunity to assess the impact *Oportunidades* stipends may have toward reshaping the culture of migration in La Gloria.

A 2013 follow-up interview with key informants provides insight on the educational and labor market outcomes of 18 graduates of the 2007 COBACH cohort. Only four women continued their studies following the COBACH. One woman continues to study medicine in Chiapas and two are now teachers at separate elementary schools in the same state. Of the men who did not continue their studies following the COBACH graduation, three migrated to the U.S. The remaining two men sought domestic migration: one joined the military and relocated to the

[14] Interview dates July 5, 2007. The COBACH high school Director did not have data on the number of men and women who left the school nor information pertaining to former students' place of destination.

U.S.-Mexico border city of Juarez, while another works in the construction industry in the Mayan tourist region of Cancun. Eight women migrated to Cancun and the city of Villa Hermosa, in the state Tabasco, where the majority worked as domestics in the hotel industry. Five women continue to live in La Gloria. All but one who manages a small shop in front of her parent's home, have no reliable sources of income.

While data was unavailable for the remaining three COBACH graduates, it is clear that the majority are either unemployed or work in largely labor-intensive sectors, which minimize the prospect of economic stability. Monica, a key informant, who despite additional schooling and a certificate in accounting, could not find a job and faced the same financial insecurity as those who did not continue their studies. Consequently, she and two relatives attempted to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in 2012, but were apprehended and incarcerated for four days by U.S. border authorities, and have since returned to La Gloria.

Oportunidades conditional requirements, surveillance practices, and advice provided by teachers combined to convince a majority who completed the COBACH to opt for internal over international migration. This finding begins to reveal how an increase in the educational attainment among youth in La Gloria may begin to reshape the "culture of migration" for graduates to opt for internal migration over international migration as a strategy for economic survival.

Conclusion

My research in La Gloria on *Oportunidades* was motivated by an interest on the Mexican nation-state's incorporation of indigenous Guatemalan refugees and its impact on the community's formation. The case of La Gloria provides an opportunity to explore how the

program is implemented and its impact on indigenous youth in Mexico's rural southern region. My findings challenge claims made in previous studies that purport to demonstrate how *Oportunidades* grants increase school attendance (Behrman and Skoufias 2006; Skoufias and McClafferty 2001), but lack a contextual analysis of how conditionality requirements are enforced, their impact on student retention, and educational and employment outcomes following high school completion in communities with an established "culture of migration."

Theoretically, my work builds on the culture of migration and cumulative causation theory, which have been tested in northern Mexico, a region with a long history of migration to the United States (Durand, Massey and Zenteno 2001). Recent studies indicate increased migration from Mexico's rural southern region, particularly among the indigenous population (Marcelli and Cornelius 2001; Weeks, Stoler and Jankowski 2011). These studies, however, have not explored how gender or conditional cash transfers shape the culture of migration in Mexico's southern region.

While my sample prevents generalization, the strength of this study is its ability to focus on a discrete group of indigenous *Oportunidades* recipients who live in a rural setting. Another strength of the study is the ability to conduct follow-up interviews with recipients six years after their participation, which exceeds previous longitudinal studies of the *Oportunidades* program. Two thirds of *Oportunidades* recipients live in rural and semi-rural areas, and 1.3 million of the nearly five million beneficiaries self-identify as indigenous (2009). Despite the sizable number of indigenous recipients, comparisons of how *Oportunidades* education grants fare in indigenous communities, with higher rates of impoverishment than with non-indigenous urban and rural residents, have been conspicuously absent. The results from my study begin to redress this knowledge gap of how the program may impact indigenous rural communities in Mexico.

Oportunidades grants are framed as a viable method to increase the schooling of recipient youth and serve as a mechanism to escape poverty, but stop short of redressing the significant educational inequalities in rural and indigenous communities (Mier, Rocha and Romero 2002),[15] In order to receive bi-monthly funds the *Oportunidades* program requires instructors to apply program conditionalities, which include high grade point averages and attendance. Instructors re-frame the enforcement of conditional requirements in the *Oportunidades* program as a tool to increase student retention. The high rate of international migration, which teachers identify as the cause for low student retention, particularly at the secondary and high schools, fuels their fear that the national school board may fire teachers or close the high school. Therefore, in an effort to prevent ongoing emigration in the short-term, teachers – cognizant that earnings are greater in the U.S. – advise students to complete high school to improve their earnings abroad. Domestic migration is framed as secondary option and a less dangerous alternative than pursuing international migration. Despite their advice and use of *Oportunidades* conditionalities, as many as 15 of the original 36 students left the high school before graduation.

Teacher recommendations that students complete high school for improved earnings, both abroad and domestically, simplify how production arrangements are organized. Feminist scholarship on migration and global political economy provides a framework to understand why these students may face great difficulty finding stable jobs in the formal labor market. For instance, feminist scholars have revealed how skill is socially constructed and naturalized in gendered ways (Baron 1991; Phillips 1983), which is used to legitimate exploitative transnational production arrangements where the majority of new workers are women (Collins

[15] Duarte et al. (2007) reviews 2000 census data and finds that "22.91% of the general population in Chiapas (age 15 years and older) do not know how to read or write. Nearly double the national average (12.6%). Additionally, for every 100 illiterate men, there are 182 women that are unable to communicate through the written word. Of the indigenous population, 42% of the indigenous population (age 15 years and older) is illiterate" [p. 38].

2002). The gendered naturalization of skill underpins what globalization scholar Saskia Sassen (1984) presciently identified as the increased informalization[16] of migrant labor, which creates significant vulnerabilities for immigrant Central American women across many job sectors (Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Menjivar 2003).

Informalization reverses the positive relationship between increased education and improved earnings. Young women from La Gloria, for instance, may have less chances of finding waged work due to recruiting practices in labor intensive sectors that favor those without labor market experience, union representation, or *formal education* (Collins 2002; emphasis mine). Indeed, higher education for men and women may create barriers in Mexico's labor-intensive manufacturing sector, which increasingly naturalizes skill in gendered ways that are used to legitimate transnational production arrangements that exploit women, while increasing the number of under-employed and unemployed men (Collins 2002). The devaluation of increased academic credentials in Mexico's macro-economic climate may help explain why many in La Gloria forgo a high school education, and why a majority halts their education upon graduation from high school.[17]

The impact of *Oportunidades* on domestic and international migration is mixed. Limitations to data collection prohibited information on the precise number of men and women who left high school to pursue domestic or international migration. However, survey data and interviews with teachers and students confirm an ongoing culture of migration that favors international migration among men. International migration is so common in La Gloria that only one of the 76 students surveyed in the high school did not identify a family member in the United

[16] Informal economies, Saskia Sassen argues, are a necessary outgrowth of advanced capitalism that evade state regulation, which must not be viewed as regulatory "violations" but reflective of regulatory "fractures" (1994: 2291).

[17] Ongoing discrimination also explains the higher ratio of impoverishment of the indigenous (irrespective of educational attainment) across all job sectors (Ramírez 2006: 159).

States. As the culture of migration depends on the availability of social networks, it can be inferred that *Oportunidades* grants may help augment migrant related social capital by diminishing credit constraints and reinforce the gendered migration patterns that favor international migration among men and domestic migration for women. Therefore, gender, educational background, and economic conditions all shape how cumulative causation will impact migration patterns in La Gloria.

Data findings reveal that most women of La Gloria's 21 high school graduates pursue domestic migration. Domestic migrants, however, face grim employment prospects in Mexico. The latest national census data on educational and employment outcomes in Mexico reveals that high school graduates face twice the level of unemployment (11.9%) than those who don't complete primary school (5%) (García Vilchis 2010). Women are also overwhelmingly represented in poorly remunerated jobs in Mexico's formal and informal sector (ibid: 61, 64-65). Such is the case for the majority of women who completed high school; eight women migrated to neighboring states to do service-sector work in the Mayan tourist region and five women remained in La Gloria doing informal labor. The macroeconomic conditions, and empirical findings in La Gloria raise questions about the long-term impact of *Oportunidades* in eliminating poverty. More longitudinal research is needed in rural and indigenous communities on how program conditions are enforced, how recipients meet program conditions, and use of grant payments, which will provide empirical data for comparison and verification to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the *Oportunidades* program.

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