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Articles

The new returnees of Yucatec Maya migration in the United States

Los nuevos retornados de la migración maya yucateca en Estados Unidos

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Abstract

In this article we analyze the migration of girls and boys of Maya origin from the state of Yucatan who were born in the United States and who emigrated to Mexico with their families when they were minors between the decades of 1990 and 2010; currently, they are *new returnees* in the United States. Based on the perspective of transnational return, we examine family return to Mexico, return to the United States, and transnational mobility of this generation. We demonstrate that family members and *new returnees* are transnationally connected in the Yucatan-Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit; that family return to Yucatan is due to family, social, and economic reasons and return to the United States happens for economic, educational, and labor motivation. Finally, we argue that the *new returnees* integrate in transnational family dynamics to contribute to generational reproduction and family livelihood in California and Yucatan.

Keywords: return, transnational return, new returnees, emigration, Mayas.

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Resumen:

En este artículo investigamos la migración de retorno de niñas y niños de origen maya del estado de Yucatán que nacieron en Estados Unidos, que emigraron a México con sus familias cuando eran menores de edad entre las décadas de 1990 y 2010, y que en la actualidad (2018) son *nuevos retornados* en Estados Unidos. Con base en la perspectiva del retorno transnacional se analiza el retorno familiar a México, el retorno a Estados Unidos y la movilidad transnacional de esta generación. Se demuestra una gran movilidad familiar en el circuito migratorio península de Yucatán-California-Oregón; el regreso a Yucatán por causas familiares, sociales y económicas; el retorno

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a Estados Unidos por cuestiones económicas, educativas, y laborales; y, la integración de los *nuevos retornados* en las dinámicas familiares transnacionales que posibilitan la reproducción generacional y el sustento familiar en California y Yucatán.

Palabras clave: retorno, retorno transnacional, nuevos retornados, migración, mayas.

Introduction

This study aims to investigate the return migration of children of Mayan origin from the State of Yucatan, who were born in the United States and returned to Mexico with their families when they were minors, between the 1990s and 2010s, and who are currently (2018) *new returnees* to the United States. There are three sections to this article. The first presents the background of the Yucatec Mayan return migration to the United States. The second section analyses the causes of the return to Mexico. Lastly, the third section focuses on the return to the United States. The findings demonstrate great multi-polar family mobility in the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit. The return to Yucatan is due to family, social, and economic reasons, and the return to the United States is due to economic, educational, and employment reasons. Additionally, the findings indicate that the integration of the *new returnees* into transnational family dynamics contributes to generational reproduction and family livelihood in California and Yucatan.

Background of the Yucatan-United States Return Migration

After more than thirty years of Yucatecan migration to the United States, there is now a great migratory circuit that connects three generations of migrants from various localities of Yucatan, from family networks and landscapes in different states of the United States. This international migratory movement started with the internal migration that took place in the Yucatan Peninsula between the 1970s and 1980s, which deterred international migration. The opening of the customs office in Chetumal and the development of the tourism industry in Quintana Roo opened up several job opportunities for the inhabitants of this region.

However, at the start of the 1990s, this internal migration became international. While some Yucatecan people stayed to work in the Yucatan Peninsula, others emigrated to California and Texas motivated by the economic crisis of the time, unemployment in home communities, and the privatization and sale of peasant agricultural lands. Toward the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, international Yucatecan migration was primarily male, economic, undocumented, and circular. Nevertheless, as some studies have illustrated, female migration increased during this time due to marital and family causes (Adler, 2004; Baquedano-López & Borge Janetti, 2017; Barenboim, 2013; Cruz-Manjarrez, 2019; Fortuny Loret de Mola, 2009; Lewin Fischer, 2007; Muse-Orlinof, 2014). The persistence of international migration of young single and married men, as well as the immigration of minors with their parents, and the birth of American children to Yucatecan Mayan parents (Casanova, 2011, 2016) in the Bay Area, California, is documented for the late 1990s and 2000s.

Therefore, the formation of transnational families and the presence of families with mixed legal status[1] (Fix & Zimmermann, 2001) became a reality in the United States during this decade. In this respect, recent studies on this migratory tradition have documented that throughout the 2010s, a type of transnational family and community life has developed (Baquedano-López, 2019; Cornejo Portugal & Fortuny Loret de Mola, 2011; Cruz-Manjarrez, 2018; Lewin Fischer et al., 2012). Furthermore, there is evidence of experiences of return to Yucatan in the migrant generation because of either personal or family decisions (Solis Lizama, 2017, 2018).

This study proposes the concept of *new returnees* to refer to the American minors —the second generation (Portes, 1996)— who grew up or resided in Mexico for at least three years and are now returning to the United States and intend to settle there for a significant period (cf. Faist, 2000, p. 19; Masferrer et al., 2019). Based on the transnational perspective of return (Cassarino, 2004; Cavalcanti & Parella, 2013), the return of the *new returnees* is conceptualized in a "double return" framework, to Yucatan and California, as well as within a multi-polar transnational migratory circuit that enables the *new returnees* to undertake return journeys and to find opportunities for social, educational, and job integration —based on extensive family networks— in Mexico and the United States.

Methodology

This is a qualitative, multi-sited study (Marcus, 1995) with a network of themes regarding human mobility, neoliberal economy, and spatial relocations (Burawoy et al., 2000) that, as a whole, make it possible to examine how migration, return, and family dynamics are constructed in regional, national, and transnational migratory circuits. The multi-sited perspective gives an account of how individual migratory experiences are interwoven with family experiences in different generations, temporal factors, and locations of the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit. The fieldwork took place in three communities in the south of Yucatan and three counties of California. Seven interviews with young people born in the United States who grew up in Yucatan, and who are now back in the United States, were selected from a starting database with 67 interviews at these locations. Below are some sociodemographic data presented in order to situate, in time and space, the mobility experiences of the *new returnees* in the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit between the 1990s and 2010s. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the subjects of study.

Table 1 presents a sample of *new returnees*. Six out of seven were born in Marin County and are back in the same county, with the seventh having been born in Oregon and returned there first but then moved to San Francisco. Five of them are single, one married, and one in a domestic partnership. Six of them are American citizens, one is an American resident and a Mexican citizen, and two report having a Mexican passport. The sample includes the case of Harold in order to question the return

[1] Fix and Zimmermann (2001) used this concept for the first time to describe the diversity of legal status found among the members of migrant families in the United States: American citizens, American residents, undocumented immigrants, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Temporary Protected Status, among others.

processes and the categories that distinguish it. In this case, the father of Harold is an American citizen, and he is requesting permanent residence for his son to create a type of legal family reunion and return to the United States. This is a case that will help in the processes of rethinking and writing about how and from where the return mobility processes are analyzed.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics

Name	Year of birth	Age	Place of birth	Civil status	Citizenship	Sex	Current residence
Teresa	1992	25	Marin	Married	United States (U.S.)	F	Marin, CA
Brenda	1991	26	Marin	Single	U.S.	F	Marin, CA
Harold	1995	23	Peto	Single	Mexican (U.S. Resident)	M	Marin, CA
Dany	1995	23	Portland	Domestic partnership	Binational	M	SF, CA
Oscar	1998	20	Kentfield	Single	Binational	M	Marin, CA
Carmela	2000	17	Greenbrae	Single	U.S.	F	Marin, CA
Doris	2005	12	Greenbrae	Single	U.S.	F	Marin, CA

Source: created by the author.

Table 2 refers to the mobilities within the migratory circuit in a context of family return to Mexico and then a return to the United States. The general characteristics of this group include the first return trip from the United States to Mexico, which takes place between the ages of one and eight. The second return trip is from Yucatan to the United States and takes place between the ages of eight and twenty. All of the *new returnees* grew up in the place of origin of their parents, and in one particular case in regional mobility processes in the Yucatan Peninsula (between Mérida and Peto). In this sample of returned population, six families are from the city of Peto and one from Yotholin, Yucatan. All *new returnees* have an extensive family with migratory experience in California and the Yucatan Peninsula. All of them are part of mixed families with parents and siblings born in Mexico and the United States, who are American citizens, legal American residents, DACA, undocumented, deportees, and returnees to Yucatan. There is experience of parental divorce in three of the seven families of this group (all with second marriages to Yucatecan people), accompanied by a remigration process of the parents to the United States, as well as processes of voluntary return and deportation to Yucatan.

Table 2. Family return to Yucatan and California

Name	Return to Mexico	Where they grew up	Return to the U.S.
Teresa	Baby	Merida, Peto (Urban)	8 years old
Brenda	2 - 3 years old	Peto (Urban)	14 -15 years old
Harold	Born in Mexico	Peto (Urban)	Permanent U.S. Resident (18 years old)
Dany	Baby	Yotholin (Rural)	18 years old
Oscar	Baby	Peto (Urban)	20 years old
Carmela	8 years old	Peto (Urban)	11 years old
Doris	4 years old	Peto (Urban)	9 years old

Source: created by the author.

Table 3 outlines the educational and employment journeys of the *new returnees* in California. The table illustrates that most of them studied preschool and elementary school in Yucatan, with some studying high school. Two were binational students with middle and high school education in Yucatan and the United States. All of the women are bilingual, while two of the men speak Spanish, and one is bilingual in Mayan and Spanish. Two women and three men of the sample have had work experience in California.

Table 3. Educational and employment situation in the transnational migratory circuit

Name	Education (Mexico)	Education (U.S.)	Employment status (U.S.)
Teresa	Elementary	High school	Not working at the moment
Brenda	Preschool, elementary, and middle school	High school and university/ profession certificates	Health clinic manager
Harold	Elementary, middle school, did not finish high school	Not studying or taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes	Construction
Dany	Elementary, middle school, and second semester of high school	Not studying or taking English/ESL classes	Restaurant
Oscar	High school (hygiene and community health)	English/ESL	Restaurant
Carmela	Elementary, middle school	Middle school and high school	Not working
Doris	Elementary	Elementary	Not working

Source: created by the author.

The discussion below focuses on family returns to Yucatan from the United States between 1990 and 2010.

Family Returns to Yucatan

In Mexico, the topic of return migration in the migrant generation has been addressed through the study of the types of return and returnees (Durand, 2004; Espinosa, 1998), the social, economic, and political reasons for the return, the employment and social (re)integration experiences (Gandini et al., 2015; Rivera Sánchez, 2013), and the social and political implications of deportations and removals (García Zamora & Gaspar Olvera, 2017). Regarding family return, some works document the growing number of families with a mixed legal status in Mexico (D'Aubeterre Buznego, 2012), the educational integration of American minors in Mexican public schools (Jensen & Jacobo-Suárez, 2019; Zúñiga, 2013), the complex and sometimes non-existent civil registry processes of American minors in Mexico (Gallo, 2018; Medina & Menjívar, 2015; Jacobo-Suárez, 2017), and the separation of families between Mexico and the United States (Boehm, 2012; Dreby, 2010; Cruz-Manjarrez, 2018; Lewin Fischer et al., 2012) due to the anti-immigrant policies since the administration of George Bush up to the current administration of Donald Trump.

Two recent investigations reveal the presence of American citizen children of Mexican origin —second generation (Portes, 1996) and generation 1.5 who returned to Mexico with their parents since the 2000s. Masferrer et al. (2019) estimate that, between 2000 and 2010, more than half a million American citizen children of Mexican parents emigrated to Mexico with their parents. Most of them arrived and lived with both parents. However, a third that belongs to the group of families separated in Mexico and the United States lived with one or neither of their parents (in the case of the latter, the minors are under the care of their grandparents). In the last 15 years, the figures illustrate significant changes in the number of entries. In the 2000s, 258 000 American minors were living in Mexico. In 2010, there were 570 000, and in 2015 the trend stabilized with an estimated 550 000 minors (Masferrer et al., 2019). In 2015, 47% of the minors had double citizenship: Mexican and American.

Based on data from the 2010 Sample of the Population and Housing Census, García Zamora and Gaspar Olvera (2017) reported that, in 2010, there were "a little more than 607 000" Americans of Mexican origin "of whom 107 000 lived in the United States in 2005, most of them younger than 18 years (96.3%)" (p. 21). The survey also estimated the arrival of 63 000 minors from generation 1.5, who were between five and seven years old, and the entry of 309 000 minors who were American citizens, for a total entry of 372 000 minors (p. 30).

There was no information in this regard for the south-eastern region of Yucatan. The present study documents for the first time the presence of American minors of Mayan origin who spent their childhood and a large part of their adolescence in the birthplace of their parents between the 1990s and 2000s. The experiences of family return from California and Oregon to Peto and Yotholin, Yucatan, are discussed below.

The town of Peto has a long migratory tradition within the Yucatan Peninsula and in Marin County in California. Barenboim (2013) investigated international migration

in at least two generations of migrants. The migratory experience of the inhabitants of Yotholin in the Yucatan Peninsula is similar to that of Peto, but the international experience is more recent. The fieldwork of this study found that, in the 1990s and mid-2000s, the first return of migrant families from these two localities with children born in Yucatan, California, and Oregon took place. This study found that in this phase of the migratory process, following the return to Yucatan, the fathers emigrated once more to the United States to work. At the same time, the mothers stayed in their places of origin to take care of their children. Predominantly masculine, rural, circular, undocumented, and return migration characterize the international Yucatecan migration of this decade, as documented by other studies on Mexican migration to the United States (Massey et al., 2006, in Durand & Arias, 2014).

There are three causes for family return: family, social, and economic. The first concerns family problems with the children left under the care of their grandparents in Yucatan. For example, there is the case of Oscar, a 20-year-old young man born in Marin County, California. He has two brothers born in Peto; one is 23 years old, and the other is eight years old. In 1997, his parents emigrated to California for work in order to build their house in Yucatan. This project came with the difficult decision of leaving their one son under the care of his maternal grandmother, who had emigrated to Merida but was originally from Peto. In the interview carried out in San Rafael, California, Oscar talked about how and when he arrived in Peto.

> Oscar: Yeah, I don't think I was even one year old when I went to Mexico.
> Patricia Baquedano-López (PBL): Ok.
> Oscar: Yeah, the problem was… well, not a problem as such, but my brother was there [Yucatan], right? And my mother didn't like that. At least that's what I was told, I wasn't aware of anything [he was a baby]. But she [his mother] told me she didn't like that he [his brother] was there, practically alone.

Oscar mentioned that his older brother suffered greatly from the absence of his parents to the point of reproaching them today that they abandoned him as a child. As the grandmother said, the brother was not well-behaved: he was rebellious and depressed. For this reason, the parents decided to return. Oscar grew up between Peto and Merida with his two brothers and his mother. When they were in Peto, they stayed with their paternal grandmother. When they were in Merida, they lived with their maternal grandmother because Oscar's parents had not yet built their house. Oscar remembers that when he was a child, his father was always working in California, and he sometimes returned to visit them. In California, his father worked to achieve the family dream: their house in Peto. Oscar mentions that he and his brothers were never in want of anything. His father regularly sent remittances for their care and education. He also mentions that, between the age of eight and nine, he obtained Mexican nationality, which allowed him to enroll in school legally. Oscar concluded high school in Peto with a technical specialty in hygiene and community health.

The family migration experience of Oscar, and that of the other children in this study, is preceded by a family migration experience within the Yucatan Peninsula between the 1970s and 1980s. As previously stated, Oscar's grandmother lived as a migrant in Mérida. During the 1990s, the migrant generation of Oscar's parents changed their migratory destination to California and Oregon. The economic crisis of the times motivated this migration.

The second cause for family return is the culture shock of one of the parents when faced with the American way of life. Brenda is part of a transnational migrant family of mixed status. The first international migrant in Brenda's family was her father, who is now an American citizen. Her father emigrated from Peto to California around 1986, following the birth of his oldest daughter. Following one of his return visits to Peto, her father emigrated once more to California, but this time his wife and oldest daughter accompanied him. Brenda was born in 1991 in Marin County. In 1995, when Brenda was four years old, her parents decided to return to Yucatan. According to Brenda, the return was due to culture shock and the social and linguistic maladjustment of her mother. When inquiring into the family composition while in San Anselmo, California, Brenda was asked how many siblings she had and if she still lived with them:

> Brenda: We're three sisters, and I'm the middle child.
> PBL: Mhm. And you all live here?
> Brenda: No
> PBL: No?
> Brenda: They were born in Mexico. They live there.
> PBL: Ok, so they live there. Ok… So, they have Mexican nationality. Have they come to visit?
> Brenda: My older sister, she was here when she was little. They brought her, she came illegally, and her first language was English. They then took her back to Mexico. Many years later she got a visa and came to visit, [she's come] a few times over the last two years. She [the oldest sister] had one daughter here.

The third cause for family return to Yucatan is financial. Dany's parents are originally from the municipality capital of Ticul and migrated to Yotholin (in the same municipality) after getting married. The low wages in the countryside and the lack of economic resources to build the family house led their father to emigrate to Oregon, subsequently followed by his wife. However, in 1995, after the birth of Dany in Oregon, the economic and family situation became more complicated. The mother had to continue working because the wages her husband received were insufficient to pay the expensive rent, buy food, and, of course, to fulfill the family plan of building their house in Yucatan. Furthermore, taking care of Dany was difficult. Sometimes Dany was left in the care of their father's cousins, or with his godparents when they were resting, or with other "unknown" migrants from Yucatan. This situation marked the first moment of family separation. The following is what Dany had to say in the interview in San Francisco:

> Dany: Yeah, what happened is that my dad came back… no, I don't remember what year it was. Anyhow, after about two years of my dad being here, he brought my mom. She got here, and they worked together for around two years. That was when she got pregnant with me. I was born in Portland, Oregon. In Estacada County. We were there for about seven months, from when I was born to when I was seven months. When I was seven months old, my mom went back to Mexico.
> Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez (ACM): Do you know why she went back?
> Dany: No, but she says that it was because it was already difficult to have me here since she had to work to help my dad pay the rent. And because

> sometimes she didn't have anyone to leave me with and didn't exactly trust the people she did leave with me… sometimes I was good, sometimes not, sometimes they took care of me, other times not. And, well, it was hard for her during those years… the time that she was here. That was 1998 or 99. And that was why she went back to Yucatan, and my dad stayed to continue working here.

Before continuing, it is worth mentioning that in the 1990s family return to Yucatan was taking place during important changes in the Yucatecan migration to the United States: male migration increased (Lewin Fischer et al., 2012), Yucatecan migration was feminized (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2018), and dozens of recently married couples and families with children born in Yucatan integrated themselves into this international migratory flow (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2018, 2019).

The U.S. recession of late 2007 and 2008 is another economic cause of family return to Yucatan. Mela and Doris were born in San Rafael, California. They are granddaughters of the first generation of migrants (the grandparents), and daughters to parents from the second generation of migrants from Peto to California. During the recession, the father of these two children was affected by the U.S. labor and housing crisis, which is why the family embarked on transnational life. In 2008, their mother returned to Peto with Mela, the eldest daughter. Doris, the youngest, stayed in California in the care of her father. In 2009, Doris went to Peto to reunite with her mother and sister because it was difficult for her father to work and take care of her. The objective of this staggered family return was to lessen the economic crisis within the family in California and to conclude the family immigration project in Peto: to build the house. The return was also projected as a good moment for the daughters to adapt to life in Peto and integrate into the school system, and for the mother to prepare for the definitive return of the father. This is how the mother of these two children explains it in the interview that took place in San Rafael, California:

> Well, we went there when they were that old, we went there [Peto] because… we had agreed with my husband. Work wasn't going well for him, so… we decided… to return. Well… we decided. We decided that… that I would go [to Peto] so we could finish the house. So that he would then [catch up] I would get a job there, and he could then go [to Peto], so we could be there together.

These experiences of family return from California to Yucatan are telling. The children born in the United States returned to Yucatan with the mother. The fathers stayed to work in California with the plan of building the family house in Yucatan. Some fathers made sporadic trips to see their family, with other children being born after these visits. The members of these returned families have mixed legal status: children and parents born in Mexico, undocumented parents in the United States, and American children in both countries. Additionally, the return to Yucatan is mainly due to family, social, and economic reasons. The following section focuses on the return of this generation to the United States. They will be henceforth referred to as the *new returnees*.

The Return to the United States

Studies of the return of American children who grew up in Mexico, in this case in Yucatan, and who are now back in the United States, particularly in California, are still scarce (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2016; Cruz-Manjarrez & Baquedano-López, 2019). This study aims to broaden the discussion and contribute to understanding the causes and experiences of the return to the United States. As mentioned at the start, this study proposes the concept of *new returnees* to refer to an emerging migratory return process experienced by the American children —the second generation (Portes, 1996)— who grew up or resided in Mexico for at least three years, and who are now back in the United States intending to settle there for a significant period (cf. Faist, 2000, p. 19; Masferrer et al., 2019).

This study coincides with the transnational perspective of return, which does not consider the return as the endpoint of the migratory cycle, but rather as "part and parcel of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges that facilitate the reintegration of migrants and at the same time communicate knowledge, information, and membership" (Cassarino, 2004, p. 262). Likewise, based on migration and family studies, it is thought that gender is a constitutive and differentiating element of the migration experiences of each member of the (im)migrant families (Arias, 2013; Mummert, 2012; Salazar-Parreñas, 2005). The social construct of sexual difference (Scott, 2013) materializes, in the migratory processes, the ideology and gender norms that model the interactions, ideas, expectations, and gender roles in relation with what men and women must be and do (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in historically and culturally situated contexts (Brettell, 2016).

As previously stated, the "multi-polar" mobility of the migrants (cf. Cassarino, 2004, p. 264) and their children in the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit characterizes the Yucatec Mayan international migration of the last quarter of the 20th century to date. Also distinguishing this migration is the maintenance of transnational and transregional family networks that allow for the social, familial, educational, and job integration of the *new returnees*. For example, Dany returned to the United States at the age of 18 using the same migratory networks and circuits that his parents, other countrymen, and other family members have used to work in California and Oregon. Dany first went to his godparents in Oregon. However, since he did not like the place, he looked for his cousins in San Francisco, California, so they could help him find a job. Since 2013, Dany has rented a room from one of his cousins. He works three shifts a day in the restaurant sector. As with other workers of Yucatecan origin who work in that sector, Dany stated that he began washing dishes, then moved up to cook, and recently commenced working as a sous-chef. Dany mentioned that he works nonstop because he needs to send money to both his mother and his future wife.

Based on the tradition of "elopement" in some Mayan families, or bride kidnapping in other Mesoamerican traditions (Robichaux, 2003), Dany eloped with his bride when he was 16 years old. In accordance with the virilocality in Yucatan, Dany took his bride to live with his parents. When Dany and his bride began to live in a domestic partnership, Dany began planning his return to the United States. After the marriage commitment agreed with his parents and in-laws, Dany took on the responsibility of building his house, supporting his future wife, and paying for the wedding in Yucatan. Dany returned to the United States in 2013. In 2018, he still was not married, but at

23 years old, he had a plot of land he bought from his grandmother and was already building his house. He sent remittances to his mother every 15 days for the health care of his future wife, to help his parents economically, and, of course, to finish his house and for the wedding preparations.

Taking Dany as an example, it can be noted that like the men of the previous and even the current migrant generation (cf. Solis Lizama, 2017), being a *new returnee*, he continued to reproduce the same gender mandates of the Yucatecan men who go to North America to work. Assuming the role of provider for his new family, Dany returned to California to work. During the interview in San Francisco, he mentioned that, before returning to Yotholin, he was planning to start a business and buy himself a car when he returns. He is not planning to stay in the United States for the time being. Unlike the migrant generation which returned to Yucatan, the *new returnees* to the United States have developed a transnational identity. Following the discussion of the second generation (Portes, 1996) and transnational identities (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Kearney, 2000), this study maintains that the *new returnees* have developed a sense of multiple, dynamic, flexible, and fluid identity that connects them with their local-group experiences in Yucatan; with Mexico, given it is the country they grew up in; with their rights as American citizens that allow them to legally live, study, and work in the United States; and with a sense of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identity with the Yucatan Mayan diaspora. Dany, for example, considers himself a "Mayero," that is, a person who speaks Yucatec Mayan as their first language (Armstrong-Fumero, 2009). On the other hand, his discourse on his American citizenship situates him in two national territories, which confronts him with several differences and inequalities with Mexican citizens of Maya origin who work undocumented in California. When asked how he identified in the United States, he answered the following:

> Dany: Yes, well… No, not really. I don't feel all that American. I don't feel I have… I don't feel American. Sometimes I feel bad for my friends. With my friends, I've had to, well, I've always told them that I don't like them mentioning that I'm a citizen. That has always been my rule with them, that I don't like them bringing it up. Because I know… I know what they go through to get here…
> ACM: What differences do you see between them and you?
> Dany: Well, I… I can go now from here to Yucatan, and I can be there tomorrow. Going from there to here, I can be here the day after. They have to wait a lot; people have died at the border, my countrymen. And well… I don't wish that on anyone, right? I wish they could all get here easily. That's why my friends even jokingly tell me, "Ah, you're from here. You come and go whenever you want". I don't like that. I don't like it because it seems like I make them feel less or something, and I don't like it. I don't like them using that word. I tell them, "I'm Mexican like you. I'm Yucatecan like you". I speak more Mayan than… than even English. Yeah, I don't… I know enough English for my work, to get by at work, but I speak more Mayan.

There is another difference between the experiences of migrants returning to Yucatan and the *new returnees* to California. The migrants prepare their return to the Yucatan Peninsula based on family projects and relationships maintained transnationally. On the other hand, the *new returnees* do not maintain family relationships with their relatives in California, but they take advantage of them. Their return is possible thanks to the

relationships their parents maintain with their relations in the United States. Oscar, for example, returned to California when he was 20 years old in order to study and work. He came to live with his maternal uncle and aunt and says that before arriving in the United States, he did not know this part of his family. However, he received a warm welcome, and they let him share the room of his cousins, who were also born in the United States. Oscar stated that he feels treated like "a son of the family," that is, a bit protected because he does not pay rent there and contributes very little to the economy of the household. However, he also feels frustrated and disoriented because his employment and educational integration has not been as expected. Oscar finished high school and has a specialty in hygiene and community health:

> PBL: Ok… And… while you are here, working this job, do you see it as part of achieving your goals?
> Oscar: At first, I saw it like that, but now I feel a bit like I'm in a rut where I'm at, you get me? At first, I saw it as a step forward… to advance, right? But now I see it like I'm stuck, but it's because of me because I don't want to, but…
> PBL: What do you mean stuck? Tell me more about that.
> Oscar: Like I'm not advancing. That is like I'm still there, and I haven't moved forward.
> PBL: How do you think you could advance?
> Oscar: Well, I suppose that getting a better job, and by continuing to go to school. It is a bit complicated right now, but… I don't put in the effort, that's the thing.

Although Oscar is an American citizen, it does not help that he does not speak English, that he did not study there, that he does not know the rules and opportunities he could have in the United States, and that he does not have extensive social networks of his generation. He also considers that, in order to study, he should have a better job, schedule, and salary. For example, he was taking English as a second language, but he had to leave the course due to his job. At the time of the interview, he worked in the kitchen of a restaurant and earned between 300 and 500 dollars a week, a salary he considered insufficient because it was barely enough to pay his expenses.

In this social and job integration process, Oscar certainly shares feelings and experiences similar to those of children of the 1.5 and second generation (Portes, 1996), who migrated from California to Yucatan in a family-type return and who suffer a cultural shock in the birthplace of their parents. However, in the case of Oscar, he experiences culture shock and delocalization when returning to his country of birth: the United States. In his new environment, he interrupted his initial plan of studying in the United States, and, as with other Yucatecan migrants, he is fulfilling the goal of working and sending money to his parents in Yucatan. He also feels "stuck" because, although he is an American citizen, he does not speak the language, that is, English, and as a result, his labor integration is in the lowest strata of the job market. Additionally, he does not go home after work but to the home of his uncle and aunt, and his parents and siblings are not with him. At the time of the interview, Oscar had been living in California for two years. During this time, he had gone on vacation to Yucatan twice, bringing orders and presents for his parents and siblings. Oscar thinks that he will not go back to live in Yucatan and that his family, although still very united, will no longer be together. He is thinking of requesting "papers" (visas and a request for permanent residence) for his parents so that they can visit him and even work in

California. However, he knows that since his father was deported, he will have to wait ten years to come back into the country.

As previously stated, gender models the migratory journeys of the *new returnees*, as well as their employment and educational integration. Oscar, Harold, and Dany, for example, returned to the United States by themselves when they came of age. Their initial plan was to work. According to the family mandate of migration, the men migrate to work and send remittances to Yucatan. From the first month that they arrived in California, the male *new returnees* started working, and their chances of studying were zero. On the other hand, the female *new returnees* were accompanied on their return to the United States by a relative because they were minors and women. Educational reasons explained their return, and the experience was positive. As previously stated, Brenda arrived in Peto when she was four years old. She went to preschool and elementary school there and started her first year of high school but did not complete it. Brenda states that her parents decided to return to the United States because she did not show interest in school and had low grades. Her parents also felt it was necessary to fix her American "papers", that is, reactivate her passport. Brenda returned to San Rafael, California, when she was 14, accompanied by a couple of paternal aunts. She went to live with a paternal aunt and her father. At the time, her father worked in that city and had separated from Brenda's mother. She states that when she arrived in San Rafael, she was only thinking of working and had no plans of going to school. She remembers it as follows:

> I did not like math, my grades were awful, and the teachers did not help me [in Yucatan]. I came with a different idea in mind [to work]. And my dad told me, "No. You're going to school!" I was mad, and… he made me go to school. "Maybe a part-time job but… when you're older. You're only 14. They aren't going to let you work here in the first place". And… he told me, "This isn't like in Peto, you're not back on your farm". As they say (laughs). And… I went to school, and I liked it. I liked it because I looked for more help and… I was in, in… ESL, English as a Second Language. And I had a lot of help. They gave me a lot of help in what I struggled with the most, math. And well, I started to get better grades, and I started to like it more [school].

When interviewed in her San Anselmo office, Brenda spoke with great enthusiasm about her accomplishments at school in California, as well as her regrets. When she arrived in California, she felt very alone because her mother and her sisters were not with her, and because her father worked all day away from home. She describes her first experiences of return as follows:

> Brenda: I came alone. Well, alone in a manner of speaking because my aunts brought me, but I grew up without my mother, my youth. They offered me drugs at school many times, and my dad worked at night, every day. My aunt has her children, and she was busy with them. It never crossed my mind to misbehave even once. My father had a, he got me a credit card in which he would deposit money for me when he could not see me, and it was "up to you, to get your food, go to the bus, go to school", and so on… (laughter).
> ACM: But did you live with your dad?
> Brenda: With my dad and my aunt. My aunt, she had the apartment, and we rented a room in the… in the same apartment.

The extensive family networks formed the basis for Brenda to return. Nevertheless, the first experiences of return to California tended to be difficult for her at the family level: her mother was not there, and her father worked all day. She did, however, indicate that on several occasions, despite the obstacles with the language and school, she found institutional support and, particularly, the help of a Latina student with the English language. Unlike the negative experience in the schools of Peto, Brenda had a positive school experience in California: her teachers and classmates helped her with the language and her classes. She now has a medical assistant certificate and manages a private medical center for Americans outside the Latino community.

The school experience in California tends to produce a positive view of the return to the United States. On the contrary, the school experience in Yucatan is negatively valued based on the quality of teaching and the lack of educational integration policies for U.S.-born children entering schools in Mexico. The following extract demonstrates how the lack of educational integration policies in Yucatan contributes not only to creating contexts of linguistic discrimination and bullying experiences, but also the desire to return to California of the *new returnees*. In San Rafael, Mela narrated, crying, her negative experiences with one of her elementary school teachers in Yucatan:

> And he, he started asking me things, and I would answer in English and everyone… then everyone knew that… I didn't know… And sometimes my teachers told me because there [in Yucatan] it is common to read out loud… And they made me read, and since I didn't know how to read [in Spanish], they would ask if I had never learned how to read. Or why I was even in school (crying) if I didn't know how to read.

When asked what made then return to California, Mela's mother answered the following:

> It was the first year, second year… not that long. I thought, we are doing fine, more or less. During the third year, when she, I began to see things I did not like, that's when I said, "We made a mistake in… in taking her!" Because she… the English she learned went to waste and… she now [just speak] Spanish, then English, then it was Spanish, not English… I stayed two more years; I was waiting to see if I got a job there for him to come back [husband]. But nothing, and I saw that the situation there [Peto] was a bit difficult. I started to see there that if you're not into politics, there is no work, if you're not involved with someone with connections, there is no work… And I said, to my daughters, "what future do you have here even if you finish school?" I have brothers who graduated as computer engineers, things like that, and they're working in something else…That was when he [her husband] said to me, "You know what? It's better if you come back". Five years later, we made the decision of me returning [to California].

This family experience helps indicate that the return to work of the parents and the school life of the children in Yucatan modifies family plans and expectations, not to mention the negative assessment that they indicate due to the lack of social security and social integration programs, as well as access to the health system for returned families. This finding, that the work experiences and, in this case, the educational experiences in Yucatan are determinants for the individual or family return of the *new returnees* to the United States, coincides with the findings of García Zamora and Gaspar Olvera (2017).

It is also worth noting the role *new returnees* acquire in the daily generational reproduction and family support between California and Yucatan. In other words, in the distant family context, *new returnees* integrate into "the transnational family dynamics, that is, new ways to organize the productive and reproductive roles across international borders" (Mummert, 2012, p. 157) when they come of age and have a certain economic solvency. As previously stated, the return to California does not take place in a vacuum. It is preceded by the transgenerational, transregional, and transnational family migratory experience, and the maintenance of family networks of solidarity and mutual support in the multiple poles of the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon migratory circuit. Now that the *new returnees* are adults and are working in California, they contribute materially, economically, morally, and emotionally to the family wellbeing in Yucatan and California. Brenda, for example, spoke of how she helps her family in Yucatan.

> ACM: Yes. I want to ask you: You were saying that sometimes your family comes to you to ask for advice or support. Could you give us an example? What kind of advice do you give, or how do you support them, that is, your sisters and your mother?
>
> Brenda: Financially. Financially… for example, my little sister is studying a beauty course and my dad is paying it for her, but, to be honest, I also [help her]… she sometimes comes to me when she needs something, and my [other] sister also does so when she has gone through… health situations… she has asked for help… and she also asks for advice on what to do.

The following extract also illustrates how the *new returnees* acquire new roles in the transnational family structure, mainly when the family is separated due to the migratory policies that prevent family mobility. Tessa was born in the United States, she is 25 years old, and lives in San Rafael, California, with her husband and two children. As with other *new returnees*, Tessa lived and studied part of her childhood in Peto; however, she lived most of her life with her father in California. Tessa has three siblings. The first is 22 years old, lives in San Rafael, California, and is a beneficiary of the DACA program. The middle brother was born in California and the youngest in Yucatan. The youngest lived in Peto with their mother until Tessa took him to study in California at the behest of their mother. The family decision was based on the same criteria as that of the parents of other *new returnees*: there are "better opportunities" for education and employment in California. Also, Tessa's father was deported in 2014 and was unable to take care of his youngest son. In Peto, the father works in the fields. Since he separated from Tessa's mother, he has no home and therefore lives with his father, that is, Tessa's grandfather. Currently, Tessa is the legal guardian of her younger brother. Under U.S. law, she is the caretaker of her brother: she provides him with food and shelter and monitors his behavior and school performance. Tessa said the following at her grandfather's house in Peto:

> When I arrived [in Yucatan], my mother asked me if I would take my brother with me, she had already asked by phone, and I told her I would. Then when I enrolled him in school [in California], they told me I needed the legal guardianship papers to enroll him. So, I got the papers, and I took my brother to school. I told him it was his responsibility to do well in school and to behave because I'm not his mother…

The interviews indicate that the *new returnees* feel deep gratitude toward their migrant parents for the sacrifices they made for them. In the following extract, Oscar illustrates how family remittances and the gifts he takes or sends to Yucatan are part of the reciprocity and generational reproduction.

> My dad, I've never been good about taking presents or… or things, yeah? I've never been good, it's not for me, I don't think. So, I've never been good at that. So, I've never been good even at showing my affection. So… my dad would sometimes ask me for things, and I buy them for him, and that's that. Well, he says to me, "Son… buy me something, I need a…" He always says it jokingly, but… a wallet or a belt. I buy it for him all the same. It's not a problem because he… always, that is, even when I sometimes send them money because they ask me to, yeah? But they're my parents. And I think they feel bad asking me, but I say to them "How much they have given me!", so can't I give them even a bit? I have always thought that way.

During the interviews, all of the *new returnees* also spoke about the great gift they received from their migrant parents: "papers." That is to say, the American citizenship that allows them to travel back and forth, to study, and to work in California and Yucatan. The experiences of Tessa, Brenda, Dany, Oscar, Mela, Doris, and Harold demonstrate it. They have all studied and even reached higher levels of schooling than their parents and grandparents. Those of legal age are working and help their parents and siblings in Yucatan financially.

Conclusions

This study proposes the concept of *new returnees* to account for the new face of return migration to the United States at the beginning of the 21st century: those born in the United States. That is, the second generation (Portes, 1996), who grew up or resided in Mexico at least three years and who are now the *new returnees* in the United States. This study conceives the return of *new returnees* within the Yucatan Peninsula-California-Oregon transnational and multi-polar migratory circuit from the theoretical perspective of transnational return. The findings indicate that what occurs and what the migrants and their families have experienced in two of the main poles of the circuit —Yucatan and California— have categorically marked the aspirations, motivations, and return journeys to the United States of the *new returnees*. This study documented two temporalities of return within the life cycle of the *new returnees*. The first begins in childhood with a family return to Yucatan, and the second begins in adolescence and upon coming of age: here the return is more individual than familial with California as the destination. The causes for the return to Yucatan are family, the culture shock of one of the parents in American society, and economic difficulties in the United States. On the other hand, the return of the *new returnees* to California is for reasons of education, employment, and family reintegration through kinship networks. The term family reunification is not used because it refers to the legal process of reuniting a family in the United States, a situation not found in this study. It is also worth mentioning that the return to the United States is based on the value that is placed on migrants and their children in this country and Yucatan. The United States continues to be the

benchmark for economic, educational, and employment opportunities, despite the difficulties and obstacles experienced there. On the other hand, the unfavorable view of Yucatan is due to *1*) the lack of employment opportunities for returned parents, *2*) the quality of the educational opportunities offered by the Mexican school system versus the support and treatment that American children have received at schools in California, *3*) the bullying and linguistic discrimination experienced by children in classrooms in Yucatan, and *4*) the lack of social and economic mobility of close relatives with a high cultural capital in Yucatan. Similarly, the desire of the parents for their children to go to university and enter the professional market (something the parents could not do in Yucatan), and transnational family separation, mainly if there are relatives in the United States who cannot travel to Mexico, also feeds the return journeys of the *new returnees*, that is, their life projects.

It is of note that transnational identity is a social construct and, in the experience of the *new returnees*, it materializes with the emergence of a diasporic awareness, a sense of identification with the place, culture, and people who saw them grow up in Yucatan, and with their rights as American citizens that allow them to travel back and forth, and study and integrate into the American labor market. This study argues that the experiences of return and educational and job integration in the United States are structured and modeled by gender. It demonstrates that female *new returnees* move in an educational patter different from those of the migrant women of the previous generation. Unlike their mothers, the female *new returnees* returned to study in California and have higher levels of schooling. The parents want their daughters to aspire to study and break the pattern of the traditional woman who marries, has children, and stays at home. On the other hand, the early integration of the *new returnees* into schools in California has given them the advantage of speaking and writing English. Therefore, *new returnees* now have a wider range of educational and employment opportunities. As for male *new returnees*, they returned to the United States once they came of age and with the male mandate of working. In terms of job integration, the findings indicate that they entered an ethnically, racially, and gendered structured job market. That is, they entered the lowest strata of the American employment structure, which includes male-dominant jobs with little possibility for advancement, performed by Latinos and Mexicans in the restaurant and construction sectors. It is worth noting that one of the *new returnees*, Dany, is still looking to return to Yucatan motivated by the commitment to return to marry, live in the house he is building, and start a business.

As for educational possibilities in the United States, only Oscar wanted to continue studying in California. However, although he wanted to go to university, he was not able to due to several obstacles: he had to support himself financially, learn to navigate the American school system, revalidate his studies, learn to write and speak English, and have the money to pay for school.

Finally, the study has also demonstrated that *new returnees* acquire new roles and positions in the transnational family structure. Once they start working, they participate in the family dynamics that contribute to family sustenance and generational reproduction in California and Yucatan.

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