

MEXICANS IN ALASKA



AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF MOBILITY, PLACE,
AND TRANSNATIONAL LIFE | Sara V. Komarnisky

JULY 2018

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HARDCOVER 978-1-4962-0364-9

~~\$30.00~~ NOW \$21.00 (with discount code)

PAPERBACK 978-1-4962-0563-6

294 pp. • 6 x 9 • 8 photographs, 1 illustration, 3 maps,
3 tables, index

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NEBRASKA PRESS
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MEXICANS IN ALASKA

An Ethnography of Mobility, Place, and Transnational Life

SARA V. KOMARNISKY

“A solid contribution to social science scholarship. Its inclusion of three generations of migrants provides a nice depth of time not often found in ethnographic scholarship, and its focus on Alaska as part of ‘greater Mexico’ is a novel and important contribution to the scholarship on migration in the United States.”

—Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, associate professor of anthropology at Loyola University Chicago

“*Mexicans in Alaska* enriches the study of migration through its lucid ethnography and theorizing. . . . By exploring the different dimensions of mobility across the continent in multigenerational networks, *Mexicans in Alaska* brings a new understanding to the social and material relations that extend between localities, not nations. An engaging ethnography.”—Lynn Stephen, Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences and professor of anthropology at the University of Oregon

Mexicans in Alaska analyzes the mobility and experience of place of three generations of migrants who have been moving between Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, Mexico, and Anchorage, Alaska, since the 1950s. Based on Sara V. Komarnisky’s twelve months of ethnographic research at both sites and on more than ten years of engagement with the people in these locations, this book reveals that over time, Acuitzences have created a comprehensive sense of orientation within a transnational social field. Both locations and the common experience of mobility between them are essential for feeling “at home.” This migrant way of life requires the development of a transnational habitus as well as the skills, statuses, and knowledge required to live in both places. Komarnisky’s work presents a multigenerational and cross-continental understanding of the contemporary transnational experience.

Mexicans in Alaska examines how Acuitzences are living, working, and imagining their futures across North America and suggests that anthropologists look across borders to see how broader structural conditions operate both within and across national boundaries. Understanding the experiences of transnational migrants remains a critical goal of contemporary scholarship, and Komarnisky’s analysis of the complicated lives of three generations of migrants provides depth to the field.

Sara V. Komarnisky is a postdoctoral fellow in history at the University of Alberta, Edmonton.

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