

MIGRATION BETWEEN MEXICO & THE UNITED STATES

**ESTUDIO BINACIONAL**

**BINATIONAL STUDY**

MÉXICO—ESTADOS UNIDOS SOBRE MIGRACIÓN

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Estudio Binacional Mexico-Estados Unidos sobre Migracion

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*A report of the*  
**Binational Study on Migration**



## FOREWORD

The Mexico-U.S. Binational Study on Migration was authorized by our two Governments through the Mexico-United States Binational Commission. The study addresses the issue of migration of Mexican nationals to the United States. Presidents Clinton and Zedillo have committed our Governments to strive to ensure a proper and respectful management of this complex phenomenon of migration, in the Joint Statement on Migration adopted May 6, 1997, in Mexico City.

This study, conducted by a team composed of ten scholars from each country, is the most comprehensive effort of its kind.

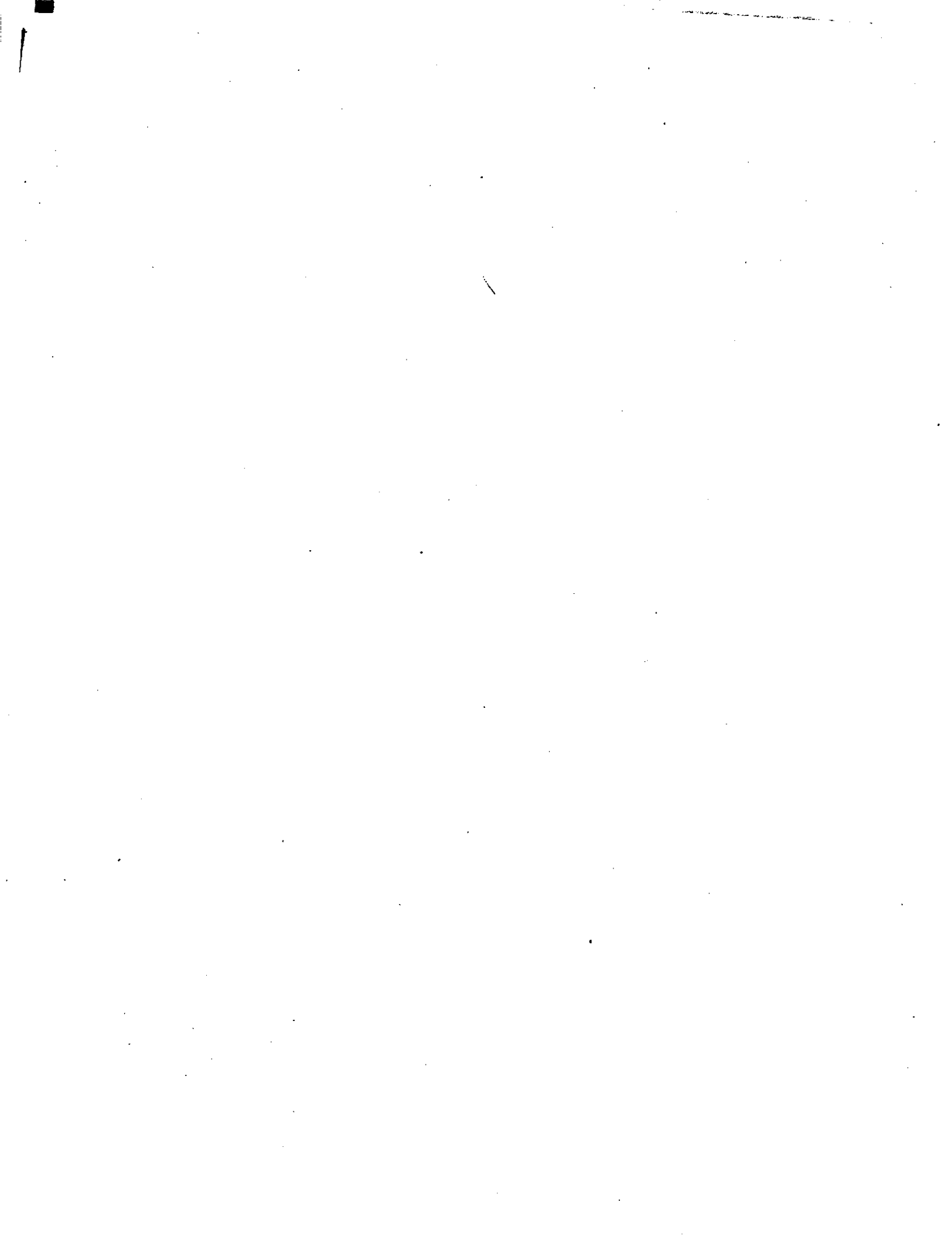
This novel effort was carried out with the intent of reaching a common understanding of the phenomenon of migration to facilitate dialogue between our two countries on this subject. Many previous studies carried out separately on both sides of the border fostered partial and one-sided perceptions. This has made it difficult to achieve a shared understanding of what migration signifies for both societies. The data and analyses contained in this Binational Study were obtained, evaluated and accepted jointly by the participating Mexican and U.S. scholars. Thus, the conclusions reached on migration reflect a truly binational perspective.

The scholars themselves in expressing their satisfaction with the contents of the study, have acknowledged that its completion required hard work and frank debate, a reflection of the existing differences of opinion on migration issues. Nonetheless, the team of scholars achieved consensus and produced an important and valuable study.

The Mexico-U.S. Binational Study on Migration is an important contribution to our efforts to reach a fuller understanding of the complexities of the phenomenon of migration. We hope that this study will contribute significantly to our ability to address this issue in a spirit of cooperation, to the mutual benefit of our peoples.

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United States of America

ÁNGEL GURRÍA  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs  
United Mexican States



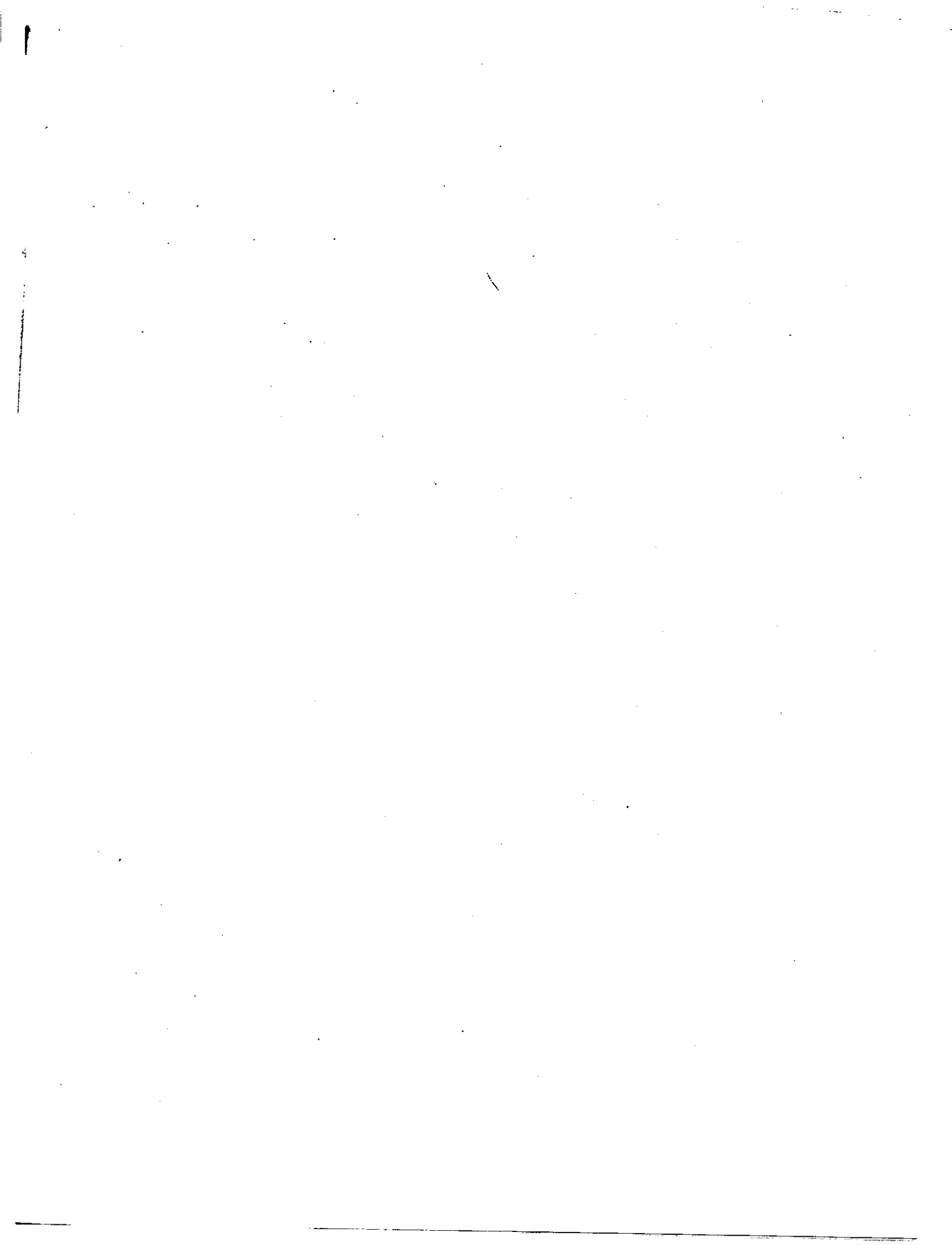
## Acknowledgments

The Mexico/United States Binational Study on Migration was a joint effort undertaken by twenty scholars from both countries who worked together in teams on five separate subject areas and collaborated on the production of this shared report. Their efforts have produced a collective and state-of-the-art assessment of many aspects of Mexico-to-United States migration. We are appreciative of the efforts of the members who, despite their different academic disciplines and subject area expertise, worked in a productive and collegial atmosphere. This report demonstrates the commitment of the Binational members to producing a thorough and groundbreaking document.

The Binational Study was funded by both the Mexican and United States governments in conjunction with private sector funding in both countries. This structure was created to optimize the independence of the research teams and to make the final report immediately available to institutions interested in the critical role of migration in the bilateral relationship. The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the Study and, with the Ministry of Interior, supported the work of this Study. The U.S. Congress appropriated funds coordinated by the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, and both the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of State made contributions. We also acknowledge funding received from the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología and the United States Information Service in Mexico. Private sector funders were very interested in the project. The Fundación Miguel Alemán in Mexico contributed and the Ford and the Hewlett Foundations in the United States also supported the entire project.

We are grateful for the data and information supplied to the Binational Study by government institutions in Mexico and the United States. We also appreciate the commissioned analyses prepared by Mexican and American consultants to the Study.

Finally, we acknowledge the many individuals in both countries who gave of their time and assisted the Study in gaining invaluable insights above and beyond the more mundane aspects of academic research. The Binational Study alternated its meeting sites between Mexico and the United States and visited several communities in both countries. Government officials were forthcoming in sharing information and hosting opportunities to learn in Mexico City, San Diego, Tijuana, Oaxaca, Washington, San Antonio, and Chicago. The members of the Binational Study especially appreciated the frank exchanges with community residents and migrants in Tijuana, Oaxaca, Guadalajara, and Chicago.





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## SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

**M**exican migration to the United States is a complex and dynamic phenomenon with long historical roots. There has been migration northward since the settlement of both countries, across the frontier established in 1848, and especially from the first sizable labor migration flows during the 1870s. Today, much of the migration flow remains economically motivated by wage differences that affect supply and demand, and it is sustained by the family and social networks that connect the two countries.

The two governments have approached this northward migration with unilateral policies, as well as bilaterally negotiated programs, such as the well-known temporary agricultural "Bracero" program that existed from 1942 to 1964. Since then, the major U.S. policies affecting the flow have emanated from the Immigration Act of 1965 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 [IRCA] that legalized some two million Mexicans in the United States under a long-term or "pre-1982 resident" program and a Special Agricultural Worker program [SAW]. IRCA also applied sanctions against employers who knowingly hired unauthorized workers. More recently, the U.S. Congress adopted the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act [IIRIRA] to strengthen border and worksite enforcement, facilitate removals of unauthorized aliens, and deter utilization of public programs.

This new approach occurred simultaneously with a period of heightened Mexico-United States engagement, driven in large measure by the positive bilateral relations promoted through the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA]. In the last five years, there has been an upsurge of initiatives to formalize the bilateral dialogue and consultation on migration, as well as on such other issues as water management and health along the border. The Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs of the Binational Commission has proven an important and effective forum for frank discussion of various migration issues.

This study is both a reflection and manifestation of the new spirit of cooperation. A joint undertaking by the governments of Mexico and the United States, the study's aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the nature, dimensions, and consequences of migration from Mexico to the United States. The research was conducted by a team of twenty independent researchers, ten from each country, who reviewed existing research, generated new data and analyses, and undertook site visits and consulted with migrants and local residents to gain a joint understanding of the issues raised in this study.

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**Assessing  
Mexico-  
United States  
Migration**

**Migration includes residents and sojourners, both legal and unauthorized.** We constructed estimates of the Mexican-born population in the United States using well-known national-level data sources, with special efforts to adjust for undercounts and the number of SAW workers included. Our results suggest that the total size of the resident Mexican-born population in the United States in 1996 was within the following ranges:

Total Mexican-Born Population	7.0 - 7.3 million persons,
Legal Residents	4.7 - 4.9 million persons,
Unauthorized Residents	2.3 - 2.4 million persons.

The numbers of Mexican-born migrants represent approximately 3 percent of the overall United States population, about 40 percent of the U.S. population of Mexican-American ancestry, and are equivalent to 8 percent of the overall national population of Mexico. Approximately 22 percent arrived in the past five years.

About 0.5 million were naturalized U.S. citizens. In recent years, naturalization of legal Mexican-born immigrants has increased dramatically from just over 67,000 in FY 1995 to 233,000 in FY 1996. These figures for the foreign-born population are in addition to the 11 million native-born citizens of Mexican American ancestry as of 1996.

The decade of the 1980s showed a massive increase in Mexican legal immigration, largely because of the legalization program. During the 1990s, legal immigration from Mexico remained sizeable as the family members of legalized Mexicans obtained permanent resident status. In FY 1996 alone, more than 160,000 Mexicans became legal immigrants, all but about 5,300 under family-based admission categories. The future demographic consequences of IRCA could be considerable, with at least an estimated 1 million Mexican family members of legalized persons eligible to apply for U.S. admission.

Legal temporary visits between Mexico and the United States also are substantial. The border crossings between Mexico and the United States are among the busiest in the world. In FY 1996, for example, there were 280 million land crossings through the southwest border. The exact number of unauthorized entries of Mexicans into the United States is unknown, but in FY 1995 more than 1.3 million apprehensions of persons attempting to enter without inspection took place at the Mexico-United States border. These are records of events, however, and not of individuals.

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Mexican census data and indirect measurement methods show that the loss of Mexican population from international migration has been systematic since 1960. According to our best estimates, the migration of persons to the United States who have established permanent residence there has been within the following ranges:

1960-1970	260,000 - 290,000
1970-1980	1,200,000 - 1,550,000
1980-1990	2,100,000 - 2,600,000

For 1990-1995, net outmigration was 1.39 million people, with essentially equal participation by gender, which is equivalent to an annual average of 277,000 for the five-year period. Our estimates based on U.S. data indicate a similar net growth in the size of the Mexican-born population from 1990 to 1996 of approximately 1.9 million persons, or about 315,000 persons per year. Breaking down the 1.9 million figure into components, we estimate that approximately 510,000 were legal immigrants, 630,000 unauthorized migrants, and 760,000 migrants who either were legalized under the SAWs program or legalized as an IRCA family member. Many of SAWs legalizations occurred in the first half of the 1990s; future flows of this type should be negligible.

**The rate of back-and-forth labor movement seems to be slowing.** Mexican border surveys on sojourners show a decrease in the number of persons moving in both directions between 1993 and 1995 (south-north migrants decreasing from 790,000 to 540,000 and north-south migrants decreasing from 624,000 to 433,000). This reduction in the rate of circulation can be explained by several hypotheses, the most likely of which is that many people are deciding to establish residence in the United States or to prolong their stay there. It is possible that, as the Binational Study members heard in their visits to communities in Mexico, the increasing difficulty of crossing the border has led temporary migrants to reduce the number of times they move back and forth between the two countries. New enforcement techniques have caused an increase in the number of times an individual Mexican is apprehended before making a successful entry or determining to return home. Legalization, too, may have permitted Mexican workers to bring their families, thereby reducing their need to return frequently to Mexico. Increasingly, participation of migrants in urban jobs, which are less seasonal than rural jobs, may also contribute to lengthier stays in the United States.

**Characteristics vary by migrant type.** We are able to approximate the characteristics of three "types" of migrants using combinations of several databases:

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*sojourner migrant* (legal or unauthorized whose principal residence is in Mexico); *settled resident* (legal or unauthorized who habitually reside in the U.S.); and *naturalized U.S. citizen* (who have met five-year legal residence and other requirements).

The characteristics of Mexican migrants reflect their "type," gender, the historical patterns of U.S. recruitment for Mexican labor, and the job market in which Mexicans continue to find work. For example, some 73 to 94 percent of sojourners are young men and more than one-half work in agriculture. About 55 percent of settlers are slightly older males, and about 13 percent work in agriculture. Women, who are a smaller proportion of employed migrants, tend to work in the service economy. Naturalized citizens are long-term residents and only 54 percent are males in their early forties on average and less than 10 percent work in agriculture. A greater proportion of sojourners and settlers are employed in certain sectors of construction, manufacturing, and services than are U.S. natives or naturalized Mexican-born citizens.

Clearly, the primary motive for the migrant stream is economic; however, that does not mean Mexican migrants necessarily lack jobs in Mexico. Most migrants had some kind of work in Mexico prior to migrating. Border crossing data with large numbers of unauthorized migrants find that most had work prior to leaving. Nevertheless, the majority migrated with the intention of working in the U.S., mainly to obtain higher wages.

Mexican-born migrants tend to have low skill levels, relative both to the U.S. population at large and to other migrant groups. The sectors employing Mexican-born migrants tend to seek lower-skilled workers. They also pay low wages, accounting for the low incomes and high poverty rates of Mexican-born settlers in the United States. This situation is exacerbated by the unauthorized status of many of these migrants. Less than one-tenth of sojourners complete high school, but just over one-quarter of the settlers and well over one-third of new legal immigrants and naturalized citizens do. More than one-seventh of new legal immigrants are college graduates. About one-half of the families accompanying sojourners in seasonal agriculture live in poverty while in the U.S., but their roughly U.S. \$200 in weekly earnings are substantially higher than wages in Mexico for comparable work. About one-quarter of settler families live on poverty incomes. While the average U.S. household saw income gains between 1990 and 1996, Mexican-born resident households lost income: in 1996, 11 percent of recently arrived households had incomes less than \$5,000, whereas in 1990,



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about 5.5 percent had such low incomes. Unauthorized status is a factor, the annual earnings of legal immigrants in 1996 was more than \$19,000.

**Despite much continuity in origins and characteristics, migration shows increased diversity over time.** Traditionally, migrants have been rural males from a subset of communities in the west central states of Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. The new diversity shows up in changing demography, origins and destinations, and labor force characteristics. Today, Mexican migrants appear to be older, have more education, more are women, and more are coming from "new sending" states and urban areas. In the United States, Mexican migrants are highly concentrated in California, Texas, and Illinois: about 85 percent of all Mexican-born immigrants resided in these three states compared to 45 percent of all immigrants to the U.S. in 1990. At the same time, Mexican-born migrants have become attracted to new geographic destinations. Midwestern, southern and eastern states that have had few Mexican-born workers now are destinations for Mexican-born persons employed in agriculture and food processing, construction, manufacturing, and low-skill service occupations.

**The demand of United States employers and the economic motivation of Mexican migrants is sustained by network and supply factors.** The catalyst for much of unauthorized Mexican migration is better-paying U.S. employment, but over time new factors have created a larger and more complex set of reasons that sustain the flow. Migration is a dynamic process and the factors that drive it change. Today new employers and labor brokers, along with cross-border social networks of relatives and friends, link an expanding list of U.S. industries, occupations, and areas to a lengthening list of Mexican communities that send migrants to the U.S. Push factors that increase the supply of labor seem to have become more important since the mid-1980s as a result of recurring Mexican economic crises and Mexican policies, such as the restructuring of rural Mexico that made small-scale farming less attractive. This means that Mexicans migrate to the U.S. within well-established networks, as well as through new networks that are developing to move migrants to the U.S. from regions without a tradition of migration. One of IRCA's effects was to strengthen such networks and to transform a portion of the flow from sojourner to settler.

**Demographic and economic factors may reduce future migration.** There is reason to believe that currently high levels of migration may represent a "hump" or peak in the volume of Mexico-United States migration. In the U.S., American employers are adjusting to higher minimum wages, to greater global competition,

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and to a likely increased supply of low-skilled U.S. residents shifted out of welfare programs. In the past, employers have adjusted to higher wages and increased competition by switching to means of production that lessen their reliance on low-skilled labor. All of these factors may decrease the availability of jobs for some types of Mexican migrants.

Within the next decade, changes in Mexican demographics and other structural changes should begin to reduce emigration pressures. The net annual increases in the labor force aged 15 to 44, which was 1.24 million in 1996, is projected to decrease to 650,000 in 2010 (Gómez de León and Tuirán, 1996). Mexico has adopted an ambitious restructuring and privatization program in the 1990s that promises to increase economic efficiency and job growth in the medium- to long-term. The International Monetary Fund and Mexico's 1997 development plan both project 5 percent annual economic growth that, if achieved, would soon create sufficient new jobs to match or exceed the growth of the labor force. Analyses done for this study show that even a more modest 3 percent rate of growth could generate just under 800,000 new jobs annually by 2005. Sustained job growth can help Mexico catch up on job creation for currently unemployed and underemployed workers, those displaced from agriculture and other industries, and nonworking women who rejoin the labor force. These changes in Mexico may reduce supply-side pressure, while the changes in the U.S. may lessen the demand for Mexican workers.

**Migration has varied effects, producing both benefits and costs.** It is difficult to establish a balanced evaluation of migration's impacts because of the lack of data and the need for focused research in both countries. We caution against overly simplistic conclusions about costs and benefits and note that the perspectives on the balance differ in each country. In Mexico, those who return most often are the sojourners, many of whom benefit from their U.S. experience. In the U.S., the settler population—often older and sometimes unauthorized, but increasingly with legal status—has relatively low skills that place it at a disadvantage relative to other U.S. residents in an "information age" economy. At the national level, economic impacts are diffuse in both Mexico and the United States. However, strong impacts are found at local and regional levels.

**Remittances play an important role in many Mexican communities, but migration creates costs due to the loss of human capital and social disruption.** The most important direct impact of migration is the income sent home to Mexico by migrants in the United States. Remittances were equivalent to 57

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percent of the foreign exchange available through foreign direct investment in 1995, and 5 percent of the total income supplied by exports. In Mexico, the impacts are concentrated in about 100 municipalities in the west central and northern regions of the country. The average remittances received by migrants' families are equivalent to the household's other earnings. Remittances have financed some productive investments, as well as housing and urban development. Although the direct beneficiaries are households that receive remittances, markets spread some effects to other households and businesses.

Remittances vary widely among migrants depending on their U.S. earnings and the cost of trips back-and-forth. Most migrant earnings do not accrue directly into Mexico's economy as they are spent in the U.S. Migration represents some loss of human capital for Mexico as migrants are mostly a working-age population with education and good health. Other adverse effects in Mexico include the social disruptions that affect the outmigrants' families and communities.

**Migrants themselves, businesses, and consumers benefit most in the United States, with costs incurred by state and local governments and low-skilled workers.** The primary beneficiaries of Mexico-to-United States migration are the migrants themselves and the U.S. owners of capital and some agricultural land, as well as American consumers and the American economy that grows through the employment and the consumption generated by Mexican migration. In the labor market, the costs associated with the migration are primarily to labor "substitutes," i.e., new Mexican migrants compete primarily with other low-skilled workers, especially already resident Mexican migrants.

On the fiscal side, Mexican migrants were not more prone to use welfare than similar natives. A statistical analysis of 1990 Census data finds that, *compared to similar native households*, Mexican-born households with young heads are *less likely* to obtain means-tested benefits. By contrast, those with heads older than 65 years are *more likely* to receive assistance, probably Supplementary Security Income [SSI]. Sojourners and recent migrants pay some taxes yet rely little on government services because they are young and, oftentimes, their unauthorized status makes them ineligible. However, research on settlers finds that many state and local governments pay more in services to Mexican-born households than they receive in taxes, largely because their lower incomes result in lower taxes paid. The single largest fiscal cost is related to education, which can be seen both as a public expenditure and as an investment in the future.

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The Mexican-origin population is projected to be of increasing importance early in the next century. Because of the combination of migration and higher than average fertility rates, the proportion of the U.S. population that is of Mexican origin will grow. Low past rates of naturalization and of voter turnout, coupled with voting districts apportioned according to Hispanic population totals that have few eligible and voting-age persons, have weakened the potential impact of the Mexican migration in the U.S. political system. This could change. In some cases, Mexican-Americans have helped rebuild decaying inner-city neighborhoods.

**Border relations are largely positive, although tensions do erupt.** Migration within the border area is a special case because of the strong family, commercial, and social connections of the residents of many neighboring communities. The vast majority of border crossers go for short visits, often purchasing goods on the other side of the border. The contributions to local economies on both sides of the border that emanate from this cross-border commerce are substantial. Nevertheless, some byproducts of cross-border migration, including petty crime, vandalism, vice, violence, and uncompensated use of health care and other services, can create tensions.

**Violence and human rights abuses of unauthorized migrants are major sources of concern.** Unauthorized migrants are sometimes victims of crimes—from attacks and abandonment by smugglers to theft, rape, and even murder—and suffer the physical consequences of difficult border crossings. Human rights abuses by federal, state, and local officials have been recorded, which is a matter of great concern for both countries. Officials in both countries have been attacked by smugglers as well. Both governments have taken action to curb these various abuses but border violence continues to be a source of tension.

**Policymaking has been episodic in nature.** The political responses of Mexico and the United States to migration have an episodic character; the debate on migration is greatly influenced by the changing economic conditions in both countries. Policymaking also has been reactive with the action of one country leading to the reaction of the other. The pace of the reactive process has accelerated in recent years. Often the U.S. has acted unilaterally. And due to the influence of various interest groups, migration policy at many times has been contradictory and yielded unexpected results. There may be many unanticipated impacts for resident—authorized and unauthorized—populations in the wake of a trilogy of legislation passed in the United States in 1996 (on immigration, terrorism/crime, and welfare).

The Mexican government has shifted from a position of deliberate nonengagement on migration matters, based on the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries, to a stance of increasing dialogue with U.S. counterparts to better address migration issues. The Mexican government also has developed a presence in Mexican communities in United States. In addition, diplomatic and consular protection activities and cultural and business promotion, have increased. The North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] signed in 1993 did not contain major policy on migration; nevertheless, it created new institutional arrangements facilitating political and economic contacts and breathed new life into consultative groups. These developments are of major consequence for the bilateral relationship. However, with the policy of opening the border for commerce and investment but not for people, the potential for bilateral tension remains.

**The study findings argue for increased dialogue and forward-looking consultative mechanisms to facilitate bilateral cooperation in finding mutually beneficial solutions to unauthorized migration between Mexico and the United States.** The Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs of the Binational Commission has been an effective platform for frank discussions on migration issues. However, the Working Group's efforts could be supplemented and enhanced with frequent discussion around an agenda of issues that would be informed by the best possible empirical and policy analyses. At a minimum, the framework for discussion must acknowledge that no single approach will address adequately the issue of unauthorized migration. Demand, supply, and networks all contribute to these movements, and, thus, solutions must be multifaceted and found in both countries. And there must be a careful approach to migration problems that is sensitive to differences in perspectives and build on the joint Mexican-United States commitment to foster human rights.

More specifically, the following issues should be on the agenda for joint discussion:

**Outcomes of 1996 Legislation.** The U.S. adopted a trio of laws affecting migration, including the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, while Mexico adopted a Constitutional amendment that will allow dual nationality for Mexicans who naturalize. Regular, joint monitoring could help identify the intended and unintended results of newly enacted legislation in a more timely fashion.

**Institution-  
alizing  
Cooperative  
& Effective  
Dialogue**

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**Migration Impact Statements.** One way of bringing these issues to discussion would be to formalize them as "impact statements" along the lines of the suggestion in 1990 by the U.S. Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development. These impact statements should assess direct changes in immigration policy as well as changes in economic and other policies that may affect migration patterns.

**Addressing the Demand, Supply, and Network Factors.** On the top of any rolling agenda list should be unauthorized migration that both countries have an express interest in addressing. The governments should assess the effectiveness of strategies to reduce employer demand for unauthorized workers, to provide increased economic opportunities within Mexico, and to reduce the efficacy of formal and informal networks that now link the supply of unauthorized labor in Mexico with U.S. demand for such labor.

**Facilitating Legal Movements between Mexico and the United States.** Economic and social integration means increased need to accommodate, and even to facilitate, mobility of persons between the two countries. Mexico and the United States should engage in systematic analysis of policies that will support trade, investment, and commerce by facilitating legal movements and easing barriers to legal entry.

**Continued Bilateral Research and Data Collection.** The development of a binational policy agenda would be greatly enhanced, as we have learned from the Mexico-United States Binational Study, with the use and analysis of data from both nations. The dynamic process of migration, also documented in this study, calls for building capacity and infrastructure to assess migration's nature, effects, and responses.

**Maximizing Benefits and Minimizing Costs.** It is to the clear benefit of both countries to work towards eliminating unauthorized migration, which creates costs for both countries and makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation. That process should be helped over the long-term by demographic and potential economic trends in Mexico and the United States. In the interim, the two countries should explore ways to capitalize on the economic return to migration (for example, by reducing the cost of transferring remittances and helping families use them towards productive purposes) in order to stimulate economic development in Mexico. Further, ways to enhance labor standards in the United States should be explored to reduce the incentives to employers for hiring unauthorized workers.

A "Guestworker" Program is unlikely to be a Solution to Unauthorized Migration. The United States and Mexico should study carefully the concept of a bilateral foreign worker program, recognizing that such a program is unlikely to be an effective remedy to unauthorized migration or to have sufficient labor standards to protect the rights of workers. A guestworker program could stimulate new migration networks, adding to, rather than substituting for, unauthorized workers. Continued outflow of workers also might make investors reluctant to invest in emigration areas.

**Recognizing and Addressing Social Costs of Migration.** Mexican migration has social costs, particularly the separation and breakup of families. Attention should be given to ways to alleviate the disruption to families and communities. For example, the two governments could explore ways to identify and obtain support for families, mostly female-headed, who have been deserted by migrating husbands/fathers.

## Blossary

**Immigrant.** A person who migrates over international-boundaries into a country of which he or she is not a citizen. In the United States, the legal-technical meaning of "immigrant" is restricted to persons admitted for legal permanent residence. Because international migrants from Mexico sometimes are not legally admitted or are not permanent residents, the text often refers simply to migrants.

**Legal Status in the United States.** There are several major legal status categories (Mexico has a parallel division of legal status as well):

**Unauthorized Migrant.** Person who has entered without inspection [EWI] or overstayed his or her U.S. legal temporary visa. Also a person who works without authorization, regardless of mode of entry. Commonly referred to as "undocumented" or "illegal alien."

**Legal Nonimmigrant [NIV].** Person admitted into the United States legally on a temporary visa for a temporary stay for tourism, study, or work.

**Legal Permanent Resident [LPR].** Most Mexican-born settlers are LPRs and are predominantly sponsored in the family reunification categories of the U.S. admission system.

**Legalized Resident.** The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 granted a one-time amnesty to formerly illegal residents who, after one year, become LPR-eligible (DOL 1996:87).

**Pre-1982 Residents [245A].** 1.09 million Mexican-born were legalized under this program that required continuous five-year residency at the time of application.

**Special Agricultural Workers [SAW].** 877,000 Mexican-born were legalized with the requirement that they had worked at least ninety days in agriculture in the preceding three years.

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**Naturalized Citizen.** Legal permanent residents must wait five years and meet certain qualifications before becoming "naturalized citizens" with the full voting and societal rights of the native-born citizenry (born on U.S. soil).

**Mexican-Born.** Persons born in Mexico and, with few exceptions, originally nationals of Mexico at birth.

**Mexican-Origin.** Residents in the United States, who are Mexican or native born of Mexican ancestry. Includes Mexican Americans.

**Migrant Types.** Persons vary in the time they spend abroad and/or their purpose for migration. Of the many different patterns that exist, we distinguish two broad ones:

**Sojourner.** Includes many different types whose primary residence is in Mexico, the largest subgroup may well be "circular" or "target" migrants who work in the United States for short periods.

**Settler.** Encompasses both unauthorized and legal permanent residents of the United States whose primary residence is in the United States.

**Networks.** The social connections between people that provide information and, often, a way of facilitating migration northward. For example, a "migrant network" might link an aspiring migrant in Oaxaca with a friend or relative in Los Angeles, from whom the aspiring migrant can learn of job and housing possibilities.

**Remittances.** Monies sent by migrants abroad back to their families or friends in their country of origin.

**Stock and Flow.** Migration is measured either as a "stock," or persons who reside in a place, or "flow," persons who have moved in or out of a place within a given period.

**Supply and Demand.** Employers need workers or, as economists say, they demand labor. The supply of labor refers to the number of workers with certain characteristics from whom the employer can choose. Just how many workers employers "demand" or how many workers are "supplied" depends on the wage employers offer and the wage that workers will accept.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Few issues hold greater implications for bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States than does migration. As a member of this team recently wrote, "the tension created by migration from Mexico to the United States is perhaps the most intractable theme in the relationship between the two neighbors, one highly developed, the other less developed. At times, the friction between the two countries over this issue is modest and, at others, incandescent, but it is never absent" (Weintraub 1997:284).

Migration from Mexico to the United States is more than one hundred years old. This history is replete with efforts by one or both countries to regulate the movements northward. Sharing one of the longest land borders between two countries with disparate earnings and income levels, Mexico and the United States have found many ways to address migration concerns. Table I-1 gives a brief summary of policies in the major historical periods of Mexican migration to the United States.

Over the years, when labor shortages have grown as a result of war or other factors, unilateral recruitment and such bilateral agreements as the Bracero Program have resulted in large-scale movements of Mexican workers into the United States. When economic conditions have reduced the need for additional labor, created anxieties among U.S. workers, or made it difficult for migrants to find work, large-scale repatriation has occurred, sometimes by U.S. government action and with Mexican government assistance to returnees.

During the past two decades, unauthorized migration between the two countries has tended to dominate the policy agenda on Mexico to United States migration (Bean et al. 1997). Through much of the period from 1975 to 1986, U.S. authorities debated what would be the best approach to reduce unauthorized migration. Eventually, in 1986, Congress passed IRCA, which adopted a variation of the grand compromise that had been advanced by such bodies as the congressionally-mandated Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy: employer sanctions and mass legalization. Because the largest national group in the unauthorized immigrant population was from Mexico, both of these provisions were seen as having a major impact on Mexicans.

IRCA had significant intended and unintended consequences for Mexico to United States migration. The size of the Mexican population in the United States increased dramatically during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to IRCA's legalization provisions. Starting in 1987, about 1.7 million long-term unauthorized migrants and an additional 1.3 million unauthorized Special Agricultural Workers [SAWs] applied for legalization under the amnesty provisions of IRCA.

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**Table I-I.  
Major  
Historical  
Periods in  
Mexico-to-  
United States  
Migration**

1870-1890	U.S. recruitment for southwestern rails and agriculture, Mexican Consular Law of 1871 provides for protection of Mexicans abroad with respect for local sovereignty;
1891-1917	U.S. laws restrict Mexican (and Canadian) land admissions, U.S. World War I recruitment (including some Canadians and Bahamians), Mexican Consular report of salary abuses of Mexican workers in U.S. (Gomez Arnau 1991);
1920s	U.S. Border Patrol established, undocumented entry considered a misdemeanor with penalties attached, and exclusions of Mexicans on "public charge provisions" are common;
1929-1933	U.S. Depression-times repatriation of Mexicans partly funded by Mexican and private aid groups with frequent promotion by Mexican consulates (Gamio 1930);
1940s	World War II era Bracero agricultural workers program begun, jointly negotiated by both governments (also a smaller railroad program from 1943-1946);
1951-1952	Upon third renewal of Bracero program, Mexico suggests U.S. measures against the employment of unauthorized workers, but U.S. adopts "Texas Proviso" making it a felony to import "illegal aliens" while exempting employers from culpability (García y Griego 1981);
1954	Negotiations for a new Bracero agreement break down though U.S. continues recruitment, Mexican government attempts unsuccessfully to stop outmigration, massive U.S. deportations of unauthorized workers under "Operation Wetback;"
1964	Termination of the Bracero program;
1980s	U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 [IRCA] imposes sanctions on employers who knowingly hire unauthorized workers and legalizes two million unauthorized residents, U.S. Asencio Commission recommends economic development to address unauthorized flow, Mexico reinforces and expands its consular protection of Mexicans abroad;
1990s	Bilateral dialogue on migration increases, North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] signed, U.S. strengthens border control, new U.S. laws expedite removal of unauthorized migrants and restrict welfare benefits to legal immigrants, the Mexico/U.S. Binational Study on Migration is established.

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Most of these persons had already been in the U.S.; during the 1990s, their close family members began to obtain legal status in sizeable numbers. INS reports that nearly 1.6 million Mexicans were admitted as legal U.S. residents between 1981 and 1990; an additional 1.5 million were admitted in Fiscal Years 1991 - 1995. Beginning in 1995, the number of Mexican immigrants becoming citizens also increased substantially, at least in part because those legalizing their status under IRCA became eligible for naturalization.

At the same time, unauthorized migration continued, pointing to weaknesses in IRCA's enforcement approach. A proliferation of fraudulent documents permitted unauthorized workers to obtain jobs despite the requirement that employers check the employment authorization of new hires. After an initial decline in border apprehensions, the number of apprehended migrants began to climb and returned to almost pre-IRCA levels, with 1.3 million apprehensions in 1995.

The continuing unauthorized entries, not only of Mexicans, but also other nationalities, led to passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act [IIRIRA] of 1996. Building in part on IRCA's provisions, the new legislation augmented border controls, required new pilot programs to test more secure forms of employment verification, clarified eligibility for public benefit programs, bars unauthorized residents for three or ten years from legal admission, and made sweeping changes in provisions for the removal of unauthorized migrants. In conjunction with two other new laws —the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 [AEDPA] and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 [Welfare Reform Act]— IIRIRA represents a new phase in recurrent efforts by the U.S. government to address migration issues.

The last two decades also brought different measures on the part of Mexico. Some were internal, such as the border-industry or Maquiladora Program that was intended to absorb workers returning from the Bracero program. Yet, most measures were directed to strengthen and broaden the consular protection of Mexicans in the United States. More Mexican consular offices have been opened in the United States, mobile consulates reach out to Mexicans outside of the major cities, and more personnel have been dedicated to the protection of Mexican nationals. Consular officers have increased their visits to U.S. worksites and Migrant Detention Centers. Hospitals and jails are likewise included in regular visits. These visits provide an opportunity for consular officers to assist migrants in their relations with U.S. authorities and nationals, to advise migrants on U.S. laws, to help recover unpaid salaries or solve other labor-related problems, and to assist migrants to contact their relatives in Mexico or the U.S.

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Despite the continuity reflected in these legislative initiatives and protection policies, the overall context for addressing migration issues between the two countries has shifted markedly. The 1990s brought closer relations and a cooperative economic relationship after the 1993 approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. NAFTA alone will not solve the problems of unauthorized migration although increased trade and economic development continue to pose the best hope for reducing migration pressure in the long run.

The two governments are engaged, as never before, in working together to solve common problems. Binational working groups meet regularly to coordinate and cooperate on issues ranging from facilitating border crossing to antismuggling initiatives. A further measure of these new arrangements can be seen in new responses. In contrast to earlier periods, when the U.S. acted unilaterally and Mexico was largely silent regarding U.S. legislation, both governments promote dialogue through various bilateral groups and mechanisms, including the summit meeting between Presidents Zedillo and Clinton in May 1997.

This study itself derives from the new spirit of cooperation. After a meeting of the Migration and Consular Affairs Group of the Mexican-United States Binational Commission in March 1994, the governments of Mexico and the United States agreed to undertake a joint study of migration between the two countries. The main objective of the Mexico/United States Binational Study (1995-1997) is to contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of the nature, dimensions, and consequences of migration from Mexico to the United States. It also provides an opportunity to identify options to respond to these movements.

This study is the joint effort of a team of twenty researchers, ten from each country. They have worked in five subgroups focusing on distinct elements of the migration phenomenon: quantification of the scale of migration between Mexico and the United States; characteristics of the migrants; the factors that cause, sustain, or hinder migration; the impacts on the two countries; and the responses adopted individually or jointly by Mexico and the United States. The study team reviewed existing research conducted on migration between Mexico and the United States, and it generated new data and analysis conducted by team members and outside consultants to the project. The research team also undertook site visits to Mexican and U.S. communities experiencing the effects of migration in order to gain a joint understanding of the issues raised in this study.

In both Mexico and the United States, questions about both the numbers of migrants from each country residing in the other (the "stock" of migrants) and the size of the migration streams crossing the border (the "flow" of migrants) arise frequently in public debates about migration. Moreover, analyses of the causes and impacts of migration in both countries depend, to a considerable extent, on calculations about the size of the stocks and flows of migration within and between both countries. In assessing and developing estimates of the stocks and flows of migrants between the two countries during the mid-1990s, we build on the approaches and results of earlier assessments as well as on newly available data and research conducted in the 1990s.

## II. THE MEXICAN- BORN POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

### Methodology & Data Sources

The stock of Mexican-born persons refers to the number who have ever come to the United States who reside in the U.S. at any given point in time. The flow refers to the number coming in only within a given period of time, usually expressed as a net figure by subtracting the number leaving within the same period from the number coming in. In developing estimates of stocks and flows, this study bases its conclusions on data collected in both Mexico and the United States. As a result, our confidence in the estimates is considerably enhanced because we are able to assess consistency by comparing information from each country.

**Mexican Data Sources.** The study uses a variety of Mexican data sources. Since the late 1970s, Mexico has carried out various household sample surveys with the goal of directly quantifying how many migrants move to the United States. The 1992 ENADID (National Survey on Demographic Dynamics), the most up-to-date survey developed by INEGI, provides a basis for classifying Mexican residents (who at the time of the interview were living in Mexico) as either sojourners (people who had been in the United States to work but had not intended to stay) or as return migrants (people who had gone to the U.S. to establish residence but eventually returned), or both. This survey also provides estimates of the number of Mexican emigrants who established their residence in the U.S. between 1988 and 1992 and still live there. Other surveys, like EMIF (Survey of Migration to the Northern Border) developed by CONAPO (National Council on Population), COLEF (College of the Northern Border), and the Ministry of Labor, provide additional data to measure the number of persons involved in circular migration. Because direct survey measures of migration to the United States are based on data such as these that are difficult to collect, researchers also apply indirect demographic methodologies to Mexican census data to estimate migration stocks and flows.

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**United States Data Sources.** The study also utilizes a combination of United States data sources, including the U.S. Census, the Current Population Survey, and administrative data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. We develop new information on the survey undercounts of migrants and immigrants and on the relative inclusion of newly-legalized workers to get a balanced sense of the most probable range of legal and unauthorized persons. Rigorous analytic approaches are necessary because, as is well known, early efforts to determine the size of the total unauthorized migrant population produced results that were highly speculative and ranged widely (Bean et al. 1990). Unfortunately, this can be misleading for decisionmakers. Several kinds of estimation difficulties are addressed separately in the cases of the legal and unauthorized populations to reach the soundest possible estimates of these Mexican-born populations in the United States.

## **Migrant Types: Sojourner Settler & Citizen**

In estimating numbers, or discussing characteristics and impacts, it is not possible to talk of a "homogenous" Mexican-born population in the United States. It is highly diverse, varying in terms of permanence of residence, legal status, and education and skills. It is made up of persons who stay from only a few hours to a few days to a few years, to those who reside permanently. It also includes persons with different legal statuses: (1) legal temporary visitors; (2) legal permanent residents, otherwise known as legal immigrants; (3) naturalized United States citizens; and (4) unauthorized migrants, including individuals who enter without permission, through the use of fraudulent documents, or with permission but who violate the terms of their visas. Legal status shapes the environment in which the migrant makes decisions when searching for a job, deciding where to live, and investing in schooling and English language skills. These legal status groups are often dissimilar; yet, occupational backgrounds as different as agricultural worker or skilled operator may be found within any given legal status.

Two major migration patterns, apart from legal status, can be found in the data to distinguish migrants. Sojourners may remain in the United States for anywhere from hours to months but consider Mexico to be their place of principal residence and are mostly "circular" migrants who work short periods in the U.S. (other subtypes of sojourners may include short-term visitor such as shopper, visitor, businessperson, temporary-resident worker, student, family member, vacationer). Settlers consider the U.S. to be their permanent residence even if they return to Mexico for short visits (also known as long-term residents) (Chavez 1988). Mexican-origin persons are found in all combinations of the four legal

statuses and the two migrant patterns. For example, sojourners include unauthorized migrants, legal temporary workers, students (nonimmigrants), persons who become legal permanent residents, and even naturalized citizens. And individuals within a household may differ by legal and migration status, as well as move across legal-status and migration-patterns over their life.

Our estimates are presented first for the stock of Mexican-born population in the United States and then for the flow of Mexicans northward, with distinctions made where possible among the various types of migrants.

**Estimates of Stock.** *Our results indicate that the total size of Mexican-born resident population in the United States in 1996 (both enumerated and unenumerated, legal and unauthorized) was 7.0 - 7.3 million persons. Of this population, legal residents accounted for about 4.7 - 4.9 million persons, about 0.5 million of whom were naturalized United States citizens. Unauthorized migrants accounted for 2.3 - 2.4 million persons (Bean et al. 1997). These estimates are derived from a combination of Mexican and United States data sources. We emphasize that these are estimates. The U.S. Census and other surveys, such as the CPS, do not ask residents about their legal status. However, because the total population is known, and because it is possible to estimate legal residents, residual methods provide an estimate of the part of the unauthorized population that is enumerated (i.e., unauthorized = [total foreign born] - [legal residents]). Each of the components of the residual equation may be too low, primarily because a subpopulation is undercounted or "underenumerated" due to the practical problem of finding all countable persons with survey methods. To address this in our estimates of these populations, we undertook demographic investigations to find plausible levels of undercount. We also addressed the likely number of newly-legalized Special Agricultural Worker [SAW] immigrants in the United States as of 1996, a rather substantial issue in making residual estimates.*

## Population Estimates

Total (in millions)	7.0 - 7.3
Legal Permanent Residents	4.7 - 4.9
Unauthorized Migrants	2.3 - 2.4

**Table II-1. Total Mexican-Born Population in the United States: 1996**

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**The Flow of Migrants Northward.** *Mexican migration to the United States has increased notably since the decade of the 1960s, and it has continued to grow significantly in recent years.*

Direct measures based on Mexican data indicate that 2.6 million persons living in Mexico as of 1992 had migrated to the United States sometime in the past—1.0 million migrated just to work, 1.3 million migrated to work and settle, and 0.3 million migrated to take up residence but not to work. Between 1988 and 1992, approximately 1.1 million Mexicans migrated to the United States, but by 1992 had returned to live in Mexico—250,000 had migrated just to work, 707,000 to work and settle, and 140,000 to settle only. At the same time, another 1.0 million Mexicans entered the United States and were still resident in the U.S. in 1992—their numbers represent a lower limit of the net flow of Mexican migrants during the period.<sup>1</sup>

Estimates from indirect measures using census data from Mexico indicate that the loss of Mexican population from international migration has been systematic since 1960 and that the estimated size of the flow during the past decade was substantial and lowered Mexico's rate of population growth (Corona & Tuirán 1996a).

**Table II-2.  
Growth in  
Permanent  
Mexican  
Migration to  
the United  
States**

Migrants Who Have Established United States Residence			
1960-1970	260,000	-	290,000
1970-1980	1,200,000	-	1,550,000
1980-1990	2,100,000	-	2,600,000

During 1990-1995, total net outmigration was 1.39 million people, with roughly equal shares comprised of males and females, and equivalent to an annual average of 277,000 for the five-year period. This estimate is substantially higher than that observed during the decade 1980-1990. The estimates based on U.S. data (from the 1990 U.S. Census and 1996 U.S. Current Population Survey) indicate a net growth in the size of the Mexican-born population from 1990 to 1996 of approximately 1.9 million persons, or about 315,000 persons per year, a figure somewhat above the figure based on Mexican data. (The U.S. figure is higher because U.S. data sources include both some sojourners and settlers.) Breaking down the 1.9 million net figure into components, we estimate that approximately 510,000 are legal immigrants, 630,000 are unauthorized immigrants, 210,000 are



IRCA family members, and 550,000 are migrants who had legalized under the SAW program.

Subdividing these figures into net annual flows can be misleading because on a yearly basis some flows are so uneven. For example, many of the SAWs probably came in the early 1990s; future flows of this type should be negligible, because of the termination of the SAWs program nearly a decade ago.

In addition to these numbers, data from the EMIF indicate that the number of Mexican sojourner migrants involved in the circular flow (those who live in Mexico and travel periodically to the U.S. to work or look for work) appears to have declined in recent years: the south-north flow (i.e., from Mexico to the U.S.) decreased from 792,000 in 1993 to 543,000 in 1995, and the north-south flow (i.e., from the U.S. to Mexico) also decreased from 624,000 to 433,000 during the same years. This reduction can be explained by any of the following three hypotheses: (1) a growing number of sojourners have decided to establish residence in the U.S. or decided to prolong their stay there; (2) an increasing number of migrants decided to remain in Mexico instead of travelling periodically to the U.S.; (3) a combination of the two previously-mentioned possibilities, although with specific weights yet to be determined by research. The observed increase in the estimated size of the net flow of permanent residents in the U.S. during those years, associated with both unauthorized immigrants and legalized immigrants under the SAWs program, suggest that the reduction in the magnitude of the flow of circular migration is mainly explained by the first hypothesis suggested above.

**Legal Permanent Immigration.** *An upward trend in legal immigration to the United States and, in the case of Mexico, the additional impact of IRCA's amnesty programs, resulted in an increasing presence of legal residents. The decade of the 1980s showed a massive increase in Mexican legal immigration, largely because of the amnesty program. During the 1990s, legal immigration from Mexico remained sizeable as the family members of legalized Mexicans obtained permanent resident status. Table II-3 presents INS data showing the number of Mexicans admitted with legal permanent resident status. In FY 1996 alone, about 160,000 Mexicans became legal immigrants, all but about 5,300 under family-based admission categories. Many of the legal immigrants are believed already to have been living in the United States at the time they gained legal status.*

**Other  
Issues  
& Trends**

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MIGRATION BETWEEN MEXICO & THE UNITED STATES

**Table II-3.**  
**United States Legal Admissions: FY 1996**

CATEGORY	ALL IMMIGRANTS	MEXICAN-BORN IMMIGRANTS	MEXICAN PERCENT OF ALL IMMIGRANTS	PERCENT OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN CATEGORY
FAMILY-BASED				
Immediate relatives	593,692	154,400	26.0	96.7
Preference visas	299,941	55,400	18.5	34.7
	293,751	99,000	33.7	62.0
EMPLOYMENT-BASED	117,300	3,501	3.0	2.2
OTHER	198,927	1,830	0.1	1.1
TOTAL	909,959	159,731	17.6	100.0

Source: Public use admission data, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The exact level of net legal immigration has been difficult to pinpoint because alternative estimates for net legal immigration as of 1990 and 1996 vary as to return migration assumptions, incorporation of agricultural worker beneficiaries as United States residents, and nonspecific sources of net legal immigration. The extent of United States residence among agriculturally-legalized individuals (SAWs) has only recently been approximately estimated in research conducted for this project. The volume of transitions from unauthorized status into lawful permanent residence among family members of legalized immigrants and the timely accounting of nonimmigrants in the United States are not known with certainty. The future demographic consequences of the IRCA legalization programs could be considerable, involving as many as 3 million eventual immigrants, including at least 1 million Mexican relatives.

**Legal Temporary Visitors.** *Legal temporary visits between Mexico and the United States also are substantial. The border crossings between Mexico and the United States are among the busiest in the world. In FY 1996, the Department of State issued 508,400 temporary "nonimmigrant" visas to Mexicans; 38,600 were for business or work in the United States. Additionally, an estimated 500-600 thousand Mexicans living in border areas have border crossing cards that permit them regular entry to the United States. In FY 1996, there were some 280 million land crossings from Mexico through the Southwest border of the U.S. (approximately 70 percent of all land crossings). At the San Ysidro port of entry alone, there were almost 40 million crossings in FY 1996, and in the first sixth months of FY 1997 there already have been almost 25 million. The top five land ports of entry into the U.S. are all on the Southern Border, including San Ysidro,*

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Bridge of the Americas, Caléxico, Juárez-Lincoln Bridge, and Laredo. (When the Detroit Tunnel and Bridge along the United States-Canadian border are combined, however, that will become the third largest port of entry.) Given the increase in crossings for the first half of FY 1997, this year's numbers could be the highest ever.

**Unauthorized Entries.** *The exact number of unauthorized entries of Mexicans into the United States is unknown. Traditionally, these entries have been measured by number of apprehensions; however, apprehensions refer to events, not individuals.* In FY 1995, more than 1.3 million apprehensions of Mexicans attempting to enter without inspection were recorded by U.S. immigration authorities. However, the same individual may be apprehended more than once, and many individuals who cross are never apprehended. Also, many apprehended individuals are local crossers, not migrants per se (Bean et al. 1994). During our site visits to Tijuana and San Diego, the research team learned that new enforcement techniques implemented in that area have caused an increase in the number of times an individual Mexican is apprehended before making a successful entry. Another new enforcement tool, the IDENT system, which stores the fingerprints of apprehended persons, may yield further data to provide an unduplicated count of the number of persons apprehended.

**Trends in Naturalization.** *In recent years, the naturalization of Mexican born immigrants has increased dramatically.* As noted above, recent estimates place the number of Mexican-born naturalized U.S. citizens resident in the United States at about one-half million (Passel & Clark 1997). Traditionally, only a small portion of eligible Mexican-born immigrants become United States citizens. The INS has been tracking the cohorts of legal immigrants admitted in 1977 and 1982 to determine if and when they became naturalized citizens. Overall, 46 percent of the 1977 cohort and 41.5 percent of the 1982 cohort had naturalized as of 1995. For Mexicans, the comparable proportions are 22.2 and 14.4 percent, respectively.

In the period 1961-1995, a total of 470,515 Mexican nationals naturalized, not including children deriving U.S. citizenship from their parents' naturalization. Annual naturalizations hovered between six and ten thousand during the 1960s and 1970s, but in the 1980s they more than tripled. Since then, naturalizations have continued and will continue to increase due to the confluence of several factors (from 39,310 in fiscal 1994, to 67,238 in 1995, and to 233,000 in 1996).

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Interestingly, more women than men have naturalized, almost twenty-thousand more in the 1961-1995 period, and the female was greater than the male proportion in every year since 1966 except 1990-1993.

**Endnote**

<sup>1</sup> This is a lower limit because the figure does not include the emigration of complete families or of migrants who lived in Mexico alone, as there is no reporting of these people in household surveys such as the ENADID (Corona and Turían 1996c).

The demographic, educational, and income characteristics of Mexican-born migrants form a picture of their likely achievement and impact in both countries. These characteristics also mirror the forces driving migration. Unfortunately, no single data set from either side of the border provides information on all the major characteristics or on all of the varied Mexican-born subgroups. Thus, the characteristics of Mexican-born migrants have to be pieced together from a number of data sources in the United States and Mexico. These are examined here to describe how migrant groups have changed over time and how they differ from one another today.

We utilize well-known data sources and only those that reliably reflect the characteristics of the Mexican-born. All provide data on different migrant subpopulations. However, they either do not distinguish legal status or imperfectly capture the varied "types" of migrants (by time spent in the United States). For example, the U.S. Census has excellent information on characteristics, but does not capture legal status perfectly.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Census data do not permit contrasting the characteristics of, for example, legal permanent resident aliens and legal temporary aliens, to say nothing of unauthorized persons.

Analysis of the incomplete yet complex wealth of information available leads to three broad conclusions:

Mexican-born migrants differ systematically along two fundamental dimensions: legal status in the United States (from unauthorized persons to naturalized citizens), and a basic migration pattern or "type" (from short-term visitors to occasional sojourners to settlers).

Mexican-born migrants tend to have low skill levels, relative both to the U.S. population at large and to other migrant groups. These low skill levels reflect the demand for labor in sectors where Mexican-born migrants are employed and, in turn, are reflected in the low incomes and high poverty rates of Mexican-born settlers in the U.S. This situation is exacerbated by the unauthorized status of many of these migrants.

The characteristics of migrants show increased diversity over time, consistent with the increasingly diverse demand, supply, and network factors that are shaping migration flows.

### III. CHARAC- TERISTICS OF MEXICAN- BORN MIGRANTS

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**Characteristics of Migrant Types**

Though data constraints are considerable, we can contrast, with representative and primarily national-level data, the following types of migrants to the United States:<sup>2</sup>

- *Sojourner migrant* (legal or unauthorized whose principal residence is in Mexico);
- *Settled resident* (legal or unauthorized who habitually reside in the U.S.); and
- *Naturalized U.S. citizens* (who have met five-year legal residence and other requirements).

Sojourners may be of any legal status and encompass those who come for short periods of stay for reasons varying from brief family visits and tourism, to work in unauthorized status or with legal visas—although most migrate to work. We draw on several sources to describe these mobile individuals. The primary ones from Mexico are the 1992 national survey (ENADID), surveys at the northern border (EMIF), the Zapata Canyon project, a special survey in the state of Michoacán, and the Mexican Migration Project.

Table III-1.  
Demographics & Education for the United States & Mexican-Born Migrants

CHARACTERISTICS	MEXICO RESIDENT POPULATION (1992) <sup>1</sup>	MEXICAN-BORN SOJOURNER (1992-1994) <sup>2</sup>	U.S. RESIDENT POPULATION (1990) <sup>3</sup>		
			MEXICAN-BORN SETTLERS	NATURALIZED	TOTAL RESIDENTS
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>					
Age (average)	25 YRS	28 - 32 YRS	30 YRS	42 YRS	33 YRS
Male Proportion	49%	73 - 94%	55%	54%	49%
Married <sup>4</sup>					
Men	83%	56 - 85%	59%	76%	56%
Women	72%	43 - 66%	61%	80%	57%
<b>SCHOOLING<sup>4</sup></b>					
Years (average)	5 YRS	6 YRS	8 YRS	— <sup>5</sup>	—
Fewer than 5	46	39%	28%	24%	3%
Fewer than 12	90%	91 - 99%	76%	67%	28%
12 or more	10%	1 - 9%	24%	33%	72%
<b>ENGLISH</b>					
Not speaking well or very well	—	93%	71%	57%	6%

<sup>1</sup>Source: Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica [ENADID].

<sup>2</sup>Multiple sources. See Bustamante et al. 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Source: 1990 United States Census.

<sup>4</sup>Population 25 years and older.

<sup>5</sup>— means data not available.

Settlers establish a usual or permanent residence in the United States, although many return regularly to Mexico and as many as one-half reestablish residence in Mexico after a ten-year stay or longer in the U.S. Eventually, many legal settlers become naturalized citizens, a process that takes time and commitment; they tend to be older and more assimilated. To describe these populations we draw primarily upon the 1990 U.S. Census, the 1996 Current Population Survey [CPS], public and special analyses of INS administrative data, and several other sources.<sup>3</sup>

Selected characteristics are presented in Tables III-1 and III-2 as ranges, when drawn from more than one data source, and are compared with the total or average U.S. population (native *and* foreign-born). The text below summarizes and explains the tabular results and presents additional information.

Mexico to United States migrants have tended to be selected from the middle-to-lower segments of Mexico's socioeconomic hierarchy, a selection process that originated at the start of this century with the recruitment of low-skilled workers by U.S. employers for seasonal jobs, mostly in agriculture (Bustamante et al. 1992). This flow was facilitated by the long and historically porous border that put U.S. labor markets within reach of individuals with limited financial

Table III-2  
Labor Force & Income/Earnings for the United States & Mexican Populations & Mexican-Born Immigrants

CHARACTERISTICS	MEXICO RESIDENT POPULATION (1992) <sup>1</sup>	MEXICAN-BORN SOJOURNER (1992-1994) <sup>2</sup>	U.S. RESIDENT POPULATION (1990) <sup>3</sup>		
			SETTLER	NATURALIZED	TOTAL RESIDENTS
<b>LABOR FORCE<sup>4</sup></b>					
Total Participation	51%	83%	70%	69%	65%
Male	75%	91%	85%	82%	75%
Female	29%	58%	50%	53%	59%
Unemployment Rate <sup>4</sup>	4%	6 - 11%	11%	9%	6%
<b>Employment Sector<sup>5</sup></b>					
Agriculture	22%	47 - 53%	13%	10%	3%
Construction/Manufacturing	28%	25 - 26%	37%	36%	25%
Services	50%	23 - 26%	51%	54%	72%
<b>INCOME &amp; POVERTY</b>					
Individual Earnings U.S. \$ (year)	—	\$185 - 240 (week)	\$14,138 <sup>7</sup>	\$16,553 <sup>7</sup>	\$24,408 <sup>7</sup>
Household Income Mean U.S. \$ (year)	\$8,880 <sup>8</sup>	—	\$27,120	\$28,210	\$38,940
Poverty	36%	—	27%	25%	13%

Source: 1990 Mexican Census, note that these figures reflect the greater enumeration of formal sector activity.  
 Multiple sources. See Bustamante et al. 1997.  
 Source: 1990 United States Census.  
 Source: U.S. population 16 years and older and Mexican population 12 years and older.  
 — means data not available.  
 Source: CEPAL/INEGI. 1993. *La pobreza en México*. Aguascalientes. INEGI.  
 Source: Special tabulations by Jeffrey S. Passel, Urban Institute, persons ages 25 and over.

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resources, by an expanding demand for low-skilled migrant workers in and out of agriculture, particularly in the southwestern United States (Alba 1992), and by extensive migration networks connecting families with low-skill U.S. jobs.

*Sojourner migrants tend to be young males with little schooling who work in agriculture.* Today, more than one-half of the highly mobile sojourners, particularly the seasonal workers captured in the data sources shown in Table III-2, still find employment in agriculture. Their short-term employment, however, is associated with very low earnings of as little as \$185 per week, and more than one-half of their families have incomes below the poverty line.

*Settled or permanent residents tend to look more like the U.S. population as a whole, even though differences between Mexican-born migrants and the total U.S. population remain substantial.* Many, if not most, settlers begin their stay in the United States as circular or sojourner migrants, often as legal entrants (but also in unauthorized status) to work or live with their families. As their time in the U.S. lengthens, they gain in experience. Over time they and their families and households develop greater resources and their ability and willingness to adapt to the economy increases.

The settler population is more equally balanced between the sexes and appears to be better educated than sojourners (Donato 1993). Although, as Table III-1 shows, they generally complete only six years of education and three-fourths of those 25 years and older have not completed high school, 31 percent of those aged 18-24 are high school graduates. Moreover, 6.5 percent of all Mexican-born persons 18 and older were enrolled in college at the time of the 1990 Census. Within the settler population, legal immigrants are better educated. Among 1996 legal immigrants aged 25 and over, 35 percent are high school graduates and 15 percent are college graduates (Jasso et al. 1997). Fewer settlers than sojourners work in agriculture and, with longer-term residence and more resources, their households bring in more income. Nevertheless, as Table III-2 shows, settler household income ranges from two-thirds to about three-quarters that of the average U.S. household and twice as many live below the poverty line.

*The legalization programs of IRCA formalized and speeded the transition from sojourner, to settler, to legal resident, and, finally, to naturalized citizen.* There is limited information on the Mexican SAW workers who, upon legal admission, typified the seasonal agricultural or sojourner type migrant. Primarily males, most were employed in agriculture while many were likely employed in casual urban-based jobs as well. SAWs have little education and income, but with time



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they are moving out of agriculture to potentially more stable households and more secure jobs—they comprised 33 percent of seasonal U.S. farm workers in 1989, but only 19 percent by 1995.

The pre-1982 legalization population typifies a settler population with a relatively balanced proportion of males and with only 7 percent employed in agriculture. Yet even in 1992, five years after legalization, they remained a population with little education; only 45 percent have completed primary education. Research finds that legalization has afforded some modest improvements, partly due to increased use of English and job training: the rate of earnings growth of legalized men 1989-1992 was greater than other U.S. workers. Two-thirds reported that legalization afforded them "easier" advancement at work. Earnings increased from U.S. \$7.14 to U.S. \$9.43 per hour in 1992 (constant dollars). Median family earnings were U.S. \$19,112 (U.S. DOL 1996).

The number of Mexican-born becoming naturalized U.S. citizens is rapidly increasing as shown in Chapter II. Historically, the Mexican-born, along with Canadians, had among the lowest rates of naturalization of any foreign-born group. Proximity to their country of origin is a key factor. Mexican-born migrants who live in the Southwestern United States are even less likely to naturalize than their counterparts who settle in the Midwest or in New York or New Jersey, although there has been a recent surge in naturalizations among the Mexican-born. One of the more important of the many other reasons for recent trends<sup>4</sup> is the legacy of IRCA, those granted legal permanent resident status first became eligible to naturalize starting in 1994. Forty-three percent of legalized Mexican-born adults reported an intention to naturalize as of 1992. The surge in naturalizations, however, is not limited to the IRCA cohorts.

*Longitudinal INS data on naturalization for Mexican-born persons admitted to permanent residence in 1977 and 1982 indicate that those who naturalize are drawn from among the more highly-skilled. They also experience occupational upgrading during the years between admission and naturalization. Moreover, for women, those who report work upon admission are more likely to naturalize, and labor force participation also increases between admission and naturalization. According to the 1990 Census, more than 42 percent of naturalized citizens speak English "very well" compared with 25 percent of those who do not report being naturalized. Similarly, the naturalized citizens are better schooled: 33 percent of those 25 years and older are high school graduates, compared with 24 percent of those not naturalized.*

## Changes in Characteristics over Time

*There are some indications that the characteristics of migrants—in terms of origins and destinations, gender, age, education, and employment—are becoming more diverse over time.* Migration, thus, is a dynamic process: the forces selecting people into and out of migration change over time. Migrant characteristics partly reflect the characteristics of the population-at-large from which migrants are drawn and partly are determined by selective migration forces. For example, if migrants are drawn randomly from a population that becomes increasingly educated over time, the average education of migrants will increase. The spread of migration networks may make migration “less selective” of individual characteristics over time. Increased diversity may also partly reflect changes in the kinds of worker in demand by U.S. employers. Studies document cases in which differences in characteristics between migrants and nonmigrants from specific locales in Mexico, at one time pronounced, have faded or disappeared. They also show increasing diversity of migrant origins, destinations, and demographic characteristics.

**Places of Origin in Mexico.** *The traditional sending states continue to dominate, but Mexican-born migrants increasingly have come from other states in Mexico.* In 1926, more than one-half of all monetary remittances from the United States were directed to the three core states of the west-central region: Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Jalisco. The role of these three has diminished somewhat and today they are joined by Durango, Zacatecas, the state of México, México City, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, and Guerrero: these ten entities represent 49 percent of Mexico’s total population, but more than 70 percent of the migrant total.<sup>5</sup>

A broader picture of migrant sources can be constructed by dividing Mexico into six regions based on the geographic distribution of migrant birthplaces and using 1992 data:

- (1) West-central core states—38 percent of all migrants: Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Colima;
- (2) Northern-border states—21 percent of all migrants: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas (including Baja California Sur);

- (3) States between regions One and Two listed above—22 percent of all migrants: Sinaloa, Durango, Nayarit, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, and Aguascalientes;
- (4) Interior states—9 percent of all migrants: in and surrounding the Valley of México, the Federal District, the state of México, Querétaro, Hidalgo, and Tlaxcala;
- (5) Four southern states—8 percent of all migrants: Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, and Morelos;
- (6) Six southwestern states—2 percent of all migrants: Veracruz, Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo.

In recent years, the share of migrants from rural areas appears to have fallen and a progressively larger share comes from urban areas. Traditionally migrants predominantly originated from rural areas (places with population less than 20,000). As of 1992, 59 percent of the Mexican-born who had lived in the U.S. reported coming from rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, 25 to 31 percent of migrants born in rural areas had changed their homes to urban areas.

**Places of Destination in the United States.** For historical, geographic, and labor-market reasons, Texas was the leading destination for Mexican-born migrants prior to the 1920s, joined much later by California and Illinois. While the southwest remained the core sending area, during the Bracero program Mexican-born migrants fanned out across a broader geographic area from Texas and California to Arizona, Indiana, Delaware, Michigan, Arkansas, Montana, and Washington. The connections to California and Texas are widespread across Mexico, but vary depending on sending traditions and networks: case studies in Michoacán indicate that communities “channel” their migrant streams to particular U.S. destinations.

*Mexican-born migrants in the United States remain concentrated in a few states and localities, but increasingly they are found in new destinations.* Border surveys find that the traditional predominance of Texas, California (70 percent of experienced migrants), and Illinois has continued for sojourner and settler alike. The 1990 U.S. Census indicates that the Mexican-born are highly concentrated in California, Texas, and Illinois: about 85 percent of all Mexican-born immigrants resided in these three states compared to 45 percent of all immigrants

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to the U.S. California is the single major destination with 50 percent of all Mexican migrants.

Los Angeles is the single most important urban destination of all Mexican-born migrants. It is followed by San Antonio, the south Texas Rio Grande Valley, Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, El Paso, Fresno, and Phoenix.

At the same time, Mexican-born migrants have become attracted to new geographic destinations. Midwestern and eastern states with few foreign-born workers have become destinations for thousands of Mexican-born persons employed in agriculture, food processing, construction, and manufacturing operations. Mexican data show sojourners are increasingly headed to Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, and North Carolina. Although the majority of legal immigrants continue to list California, Texas, and Illinois as their selected places of residence, increasingly they go now to destinations such as Florida and Georgia.

**Demographic Profile of Migrants.** Mexico to U.S. migration flows traditionally were dominated by young, solo males. For example, a classic study published in 1975 analyzing apprehended migrants found that more than 90 percent were 40 years of age or younger, 92 percent were males, and 62 percent were single. The Zapata Canyon border survey, dominated by unauthorized circular migrants and sojourners, finds high concentrations of males: 97 percent in 1996.

*The importance of males persists at least among sojourner migrants, although there is a trend toward more female migrants, and women dominate among new legal immigrants.* The 1992 ENADID survey found that 21 percent of the Mexicans had lived or worked in the United States were women.<sup>7</sup> The share of males in Michoacán surveys—a traditional sending area—was 63 percent in 1983 and 56 percent 1993, indicating that more women are joining the migration stream. In contrast, the U.S. Census and other standard surveys, undoubtedly better at capturing settlers, show Mexican-born migration to be much more gender-balanced [see Table III-1]. INS admissions data on legal Mexican immigrants to the United States show that women outnumbered men for eight consecutive years between 1964 and 1971, and they outnumbered men again in 1993 and 1994.

Mexican migrants appear to be a young group, younger than migrants to the U.S. from other countries and than the U.S. population at large [see Table III-1]. This relative youthfulness may partly reflect the presence of young pioneer migrants in early migration streams and children accompanying legal immigrants.<sup>8</sup> The

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INS legal admissions data also show Mexican immigrants to be a young group with a lower mean and median age than other immigrants in the U.S.

*Mexican community surveys and INS data indicate, however, that migrant ages may be increasing.* The average age of Michoacán migrants rose from a mean of 29 in 1983 to 32 years in 1993.<sup>9</sup> Border crossing surveys for 1988 to 1996 reveal sharply rising shares of unauthorized migrants between the ages of 25-29 and decreasing shares of younger migrants. The age of women in U.S. legal admissions increased from 21 to 26 years from 1971 to 1994. Among these legal immigrants, increases in age may reflect longer waits for visa issuance and/or fewer children.

One last demographic characteristic: most migrants are married [see Table III-1]. Among sojourners, men are more likely to be married, while among settlers, women are more likely to be married. Additionally, a substantial proportion of persons who become legal U.S. immigrants do so as the spouses of U.S. citizens. Although the Mexican-born spouse flow has declined, from more than 30,000 per year in 1986-1988 to less than one-half of that in 1995, Mexico remains the leading source country for spouses of U.S. citizens. While most spouse immigrants from other countries are women, a majority of those from Mexico are men.<sup>10</sup>

**Educational Profile.** *Mexican migrants have less schooling relative to the U.S. population and other immigrant groups. Nevertheless, it appears that the average schooling of northbound migrants is increasing over time.* Sojourners average around six years of schooling. In the early 1980s, relatively well-educated villagers were likely to migrate, but their destinations were urban areas of Mexico. Over the decade, several Mexican data sources indicate increases in the schooling of U.S. migrants.<sup>11</sup>

Among migrants in the Michoacán surveys, average schooling increased from 4.1 to 5.8 years between 1983 and 1993. At the same time, average schooling among nonmigrants who remained in Mexico decreased from 4.5 to 4.3 years. These changes reflect shifts in migrant selectivity. During Mexico's crisis years in the mid-1980s, better-educated migrants appear to have shifted destinations to the United States.

The 1990 U.S. Census data present a similar picture of increasing educational levels: recent arrival cohorts have been better schooled. At the upper end of the

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educational spectrum, 4 percent of the 1980-1990 and 6 percent of the 1987-1990 migrants were college graduates. As already noted, 1996 legal immigrant complete college at a rate approaching the native-born and a higher rate of postgraduate school (9 percent compared to 7 percent) (Jasso et al. 1997) Meanwhile, the absolute number of Mexican-born doctorate holders in the U.S. 1990 Census was 3,869 (of which 27 percent were women).<sup>12</sup>

**Labor Force Characteristics.** *Work is the single most important attraction in the U.S.; however that does not mean Mexican migrants lack jobs in Mexico or combine jobs in the U.S. with usual residence there.* Most migrants had some kind of work in Mexico prior to migrating, although the share who were unemployed before migrating may be rising. Border crossing data (which include large numbers of unauthorized migrants) find that while most had work prior to leaving, the majority migrated with the intention of working in the U.S. Data also show that among females, about one-third worked outside the home in Mexico prior to migrating.

Mexican data sources reveal that those who have lived in the United States have worked there. Of course, work experience may include periodic unemployment and U.S. data show Mexican migrants have nearly double U.S. unemployment rates. As of 1992, men are more likely than women to report a habitual residence in the U.S. *and* work experience (92 percent versus 54 percent). Still, the 1992 survey found more than one million Mexican-born migrants who declared having worked in the U.S. *without* having “lived” in or established a usual residence.

*Mexican-born migrants in the United States have, over time, become less likely to be agricultural workers and are found in an increasing diversity of jobs.* From the turn of the century and through the end of the Bracero program, Mexican-born migrants were employed primarily in agriculture. Today [see Table III-2], most settlers and Mexican-born citizens work outside of agriculture. Concurrently, even northward bound sojourners increasingly are found outside of agriculture. Mexican data sources show evidence of an upward trend in U.S. urban-sector employment—particularly in services and construction—for unauthorized migrants [see Appendix B]. Still, Table III-2 shows that Mexican-born workers retain an industrial profile that differs from the U.S. average.

**Income Characteristics.** Mexican-born households are much more likely than all U.S. households to be found at the bottom of the income distribution. The 1990 Census shows that the share of households in the lowest income groups was

greater for the recently arrived 1980-1990 cohort and lower for the pre-1980 cohort. The share in the highest income groups was higher for the earlier cohort. This suggests the possible operation of two mechanisms: experience in the U.S. leads to higher earnings and/or the less successful migrants in the earlier cohorts returned to Mexico, leaving the higher earners.

A 1996 U.S. survey finds that, while the average U.S. household saw income gains between 1990 and 1996, Mexican-born households lost income. On average, all U.S. households brought in \$38,453 in 1990 and \$44,938 by 1996. In contrast, the average U.S. Mexican-born household brought in \$27,122 in 1990, but only \$26,481 in 1996. Comparison of median household income shows the same relative loss in the incomes of Mexican-born households (all figures in current dollars). The 1996 data reveal a concentration of new (1990-1996) migrant households at the bottom of the income spectrum: 11 percent of recently arrived migrant households have incomes less than \$5,000, double the proportion of earlier arrivals. This may reflect differences in the legal status mix, for example, a larger proportion of undocumented among the recent arrivals. It also may reflect the lower earnings at entry among some of the IRCA-legalized aliens. Recent legal immigrants in 1996, for example, have higher earnings. A recent survey indicates earnings of \$19,130 for adult male and \$13,620 for adult women immigrants (Jasso et al. 1997).

Information on the characteristics of citizens is biased because of substantial misreporting of naturalization by noncitizen settlers (special tabulations by Jeffrey Passel, Urban Institute). However, the systematic differences between settlers and citizens appear to be reasonable approximations.

## Endnotes

To obtain a picture of the sojourner, we piece together data from numerous sources: the National Survey of Demographic Indicators [Encuesta Nacional de Indicadores Demográficos, or ENADID], the Survey of Migration at the Northern Border [Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte, or EMIF], the Mexican Migrant Survey undertaken jointly by COLEF and a team of researchers from the University of Southern California [USC], the Mexican Migration Project, the Michoacán Project, INS Data on Nonimmigrants (Temporary Visitors), the UC-EDD Survey of California Farmworkers carried out by the University of California, Davis [UC], the State of California Employment Development Department [EDD], and the National Agricultural Workers Survey [NAWS] conducted by the U.S. Labor Department.

For pictures of the settlers and U.S. citizens, we rely on two main U.S.-side data sources: (1) the decennial censuses, including microdata as well as historical time series published in Historical Statistics of the United States; (2) official government information, including microdata compiled by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], tabulations published by the INS in its Annual Report (published 1943 to 1977) and the successor Statistical Yearbook (published since 1978), tabulations published by the U.S. Department of State in its annual Report of the Visa Office, and a special microdata sample assembled from INS data by the General Accounting Office

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[GAO]. Of these, only INS data provide information on legal status; and measurement of naturalization in the censuses is problematic.

<sup>4</sup>These factors include: visa backlogs for spouses and minor children of permanent resident aliens, largely due to IRCA legalizations; the Green Card Replacement Program, initiated in 1992, which requires that permanent resident alien cards issued before 1978 be replaced and which leads some to naturalize rather than obtain a new green card; initiation of an expiration date, ten years after issuance, on green cards issued since 1988, which may similarly lead some to choose naturalization over green-card renewal; recent U.S. legislation which dramatically reduces the civil rights and social entitlements of nonnaturalized immigrants; and recent amendment of the Mexican Constitution that provides that Mexican nationals who become naturalized citizens of another country do not automatically forfeit Mexican nationality.

<sup>5</sup> The share of migrants in a state's total population varies. It is highest in Zacatecas, where 9.7 percent of the population had lived or worked in the United States. It is 8.3 percent in Durango, 8.2 percent in Michoacán and 6.5 percent in Jalisco. In contrast, the share is only 0.9 percent in México City, and 1 percent in the state of México.

<sup>6</sup> As of 1992, there were marked differences in rural versus urban origins across regions. While the Valley of México and border regions have small shares of rural migrants, 32 percent and 34 percent respectively, in other regions the rural share is more than 60 percent.

<sup>7</sup> The share for those who had lived in the U.S. over the previous five years was 24 percent, suggesting that the female share is increasing slightly.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the nineteen communities studied by Massey and Durand, the average age of migrants in the United States at their most recent trip was 29 years. The average age of unauthorized migrants in the Michoacán surveys, who comprised just over 58 percent of all 1993 migrants, was younger at 28.5 years than legal migrants at 37 years of age.

<sup>9</sup> The 1983 migrants were somewhat younger than nonmigrants, whose average age was 32, but the 1993 migrants were considerably older than nonmigrants, whose average age was 20.

<sup>10</sup> INS public-use data do not include sponsor's nativity, but a special study carried out by the General Accounting Office [GAO] on data from 1985 indicates that almost 78 percent of the U.S. sponsors of Mexican-born spouses were U.S. citizens by birth (worldwide, the rate was 80 percent). In an intergenerational twist on the international character of these couples, among the birth-citizen sponsors in the GAO sample, 4-5 percent were themselves born abroad to U.S. citizen parent(s).

<sup>11</sup> The Mexican Migrant Project show increased schooling and increased schooling is one of the more salient findings of the Zapata Canyon border survey. Mexican data for 1978-1979 found migrants had 4.9 years of schooling on average, slightly greater than the 4.7 years for the Mexican population over 14 years old.

<sup>12</sup> Note that Census data do not reveal whether these are persons undergoing further training or engaged in postdoctoral work with nonimmigrant visas as opposed to permanent residents of the United States.



For most of the twentieth century, the major linkage between the two most populous countries in North America has been the migration of people from Mexico to the United States. "Go north for opportunity," is an idea deeply embedded in Mexican youth, especially in the rural areas of west central Mexico.

#### IV. CAUSES OF THE MIGRATION NORTHWARD

Many factors cause and sustain this movement of Mexicans across the border to work temporarily or to settle in the United States (Massey et al. 1993). We group the factors that sustain Mexico-United States migration into three broad categories: (1) demand-pull factors in the United States; (2) supply-push factors in Mexico; and (3) the networks of human contacts that bridge the border.

Our analysis leads to a simple conclusion: the migration of persons from Mexico to the United States is a dynamic process. What began largely as the U.S.-approved or U.S.-tolerated recruitment of Mexican workers for seasonal U.S. farm jobs has become a far more complex migration flow that is sustained by supply and network factors. Our key findings are that:

The catalyst for much of today's unauthorized Mexican migration for United States employment lies in the United States, but over time new factors have created a larger and more complex set of reasons that sustain the flow;

The same tendencies that currently seem to be increasing and diversifying Mexico-United States migration flows may be dampened or reversed starting in the next fifteen years. These demographic and economic trends, if sustained, could reduce pressure for Mexico-United States migration.

*Mexico-to-United States migration is primarily economically motivated and the initial motivations for the migrant flow lie largely inside the United States—* Mexican workers were recruited by U.S. farmers earlier in the twentieth century, creating linkages between jobs in U.S. agriculture and workers in particular Mexican communities. We find that there is still a demand-pull for Mexican workers in the low-unemployment U.S. labor market in the sense that most recently-arrived legal and unauthorized Mexican migrants can find jobs in high turnover farm, manufacturing, and service jobs. Low-skill Mexican workers are employed both in areas where Mexican-born workers traditionally have played important roles, as in southwestern agriculture, and now in industries in the

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Midwest, the southeast, and east coast, including construction, meatpacking, and services. In some cases, including poultry and meat packing, private labor brokers and recruiters continue to play an active role in moving Mexican workers to jobs in the Midwest and southeast.

*However, the factors that initiated Mexico-United States migration are not necessarily the only ones that sustain the flow.* Today cross-border networks of relatives, friends, and labor brokers and recruiters link an expanding list of U.S. industries, occupations, and areas to a lengthening list of Mexican communities that send migrants to the U.S. In Mexico, residents of some communities have better information about the availability of certain types of U.S. jobs than do nearby U.S. residents.

Supply-push factors in Mexico play as fundamental a role as the availability of U.S. jobs in sustaining Mexico-United States migration. Supply-push factors seem to have become more important since the mid-1980s as a result of rapid population growth in the 1970s, recurring Mexican economic crises, peso devaluations, and Mexican policies aimed at economic modernization, such as the privatization of government-owned industries that resulted in layoffs and the restructuring of rural Mexico that made small-scale farming less profitable (Roberts & Escobar Latapí 1997).

This means that Mexicans migrate to the U.S. (1) within well-established networks, as well as (2) through new networks that are developing to move migrants to the U.S. from regions without a tradition of Mexico-United States migration, such as Mexico's urban areas and the southern states identified in Chapter III. Friends and relatives established in the U.S. often provide financing, advice, shelter, and jobs to newly-arrived unauthorized migrants. Settled family members in the U.S. use family unification policies to have spouses and children join them and eventually to secure legal migrant status.

In some areas of west central Mexico, the data suggest that migration to the U.S. has become a way of life. Based on migration histories collected in thirty-nine communities that have long histories of sending migrants to the U.S., we estimate that by the time they are 40, most of the men in some of these communities have made at least one trip to the U.S. Based on a statistical model that predicts migration to the U.S. on the basis of age and community characteristics, it appears that in some communities the probability that a young man will make a first trip to the U.S. increased after 1992.

## Evolving United States Labor Markets & Legislation

*The United States labor markets where Mexican migrants work are changing and may change even more as a result of technological advances, trade trends, and labor force and legislative changes.* On the demand side of U.S. labor markets, employers are adjusting to higher minimum wages and more global competition. On the supply side, the U.S. retains a sizable low-skilled labor force. Recent welfare reforms may add to the supply of low-skilled U.S. workers seeking employment, most notably in sectors where Mexican-born workers are concentrated (nine of ten Mexican-born workers in the U.S. hold nonfarm jobs, often in low-skill industries). High immigration since the 1980s, legalization in 1987-1988, and changing hiring practices have made Mexican-born workers significant components of the U.S. food processing, construction, service, and manufacturing labor forces.

**Employment Trends.** *It is not clear whether the U.S. labor market will continue to evolve in ways that absorb large numbers of Mexican migrant workers.* On the one hand, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped to its lowest levels in twenty-five years in 1997, and there are reports of labor shortages, especially in low wage labor markets in areas with unemployment rates of less than 2 percent, such as the Midwest. Job growth has been very rapid: between January 1994 and June 1997, the U.S. economy added about 8 million jobs. With Mexican-born workers spreading throughout the U.S. in a period of rapid job growth and low unemployment, networks that bridge the border may be strengthened, increasing the demand for migrant workers and making Mexican migrant workers a permanent feature of more U.S. industries and areas.

On the other hand, the U.S. is committed to implementing more border and interior controls, to moving 2 to 3 million adult welfare recipients into jobs, and to creating jobs for the rapidly growing domestic labor force. The U.S. labor force, which usually expands by about 1 percent per year, has been expanding about twice as fast due to international migration, welfare recipients moving off the rolls, more older men working, and an increase in the percentage of working-age women seeking jobs. In January 1997, a record 67.2 percent of the U.S. population 16 and older was in the labor force, employed, or looking for work, for a total of 136 million persons.

It is hard to project the evolution of labor markets that migrants traditionally enter. In many areas of the U.S., migrant workers, a fear of labor shortages, and high welfare caseloads go together. For example, in the San Joaquin Valley of California, about 85 percent of the 400,000 individuals who work as farm workers sometime during a typical year are foreign-born, including 100,000 or more

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unauthorized migrants. Farmers fearful of labor shortages are calling for modifications of the H-2A program that would make it easier to obtain temporary foreign farm workers (reducing wage and housing protections for both the H-2A and other workers). At the same time, local conditions suggest that workers are available: 25 percent of the 761,000 residents of Fresno county are receiving some form of welfare assistance, and many may soon be seeking employment in a competitive labor market with an unemployment rate of over 14 percent as of April 1997.

**Border Enforcement Strategies.** *The United States border enforcement strategies begun in 1994 are affecting migration patterns, but not preventing unauthorized entry.* The major programs begun since 1994, 1995, and 1996 are "Hold-the-Line" in El Paso, "Gatekeeper" in San Diego, and "Safeguard" in Arizona, respectively. Our research along the border found that migrant smuggling has achieved enough regularity and volume to become an established business with three segments: local agents; local and border smugglers; and border-only smuggling businesses—each with a menu of prices and services. As border control operations were stepped up in 1994, more migrants turned to smugglers or "coyotes," whose services became increasingly diversified. Thus, unauthorized migrants have several available packages of services and several options to pay for the cost of illegally entering the U.S., including working in a coyote-provided or coyote-arranged job in the U.S.

Our survey in Jalisco in January 1996 found that most Mexicans attempting unauthorized entry into the U.S. hire smugglers to help them cross the border. Migrants with the fewest network links to bridge the border are most likely to rely on the smugglers who operate as border-only businesses; one-half of the migrants who have no networks in the U.S. turn to these border-only coyotes. The increased use of coyotes generally, and particularly at the border, helps to explain why most migrants attempting unauthorized entry succeed despite significantly more U.S. Border Patrol agents and technology on the border. It remains to be seen whether or not triple fences, augmented border strategies, and more effective internal employer sanctions enforcement will have deterrent effects over the long run.

**Outlook.** These trends suggest several scenarios. One is that migrant labor markets will segment with different employers /industries pursuing different strategies. Some U.S. employers, reacting to low unemployment and welfare reforms that limit assistance for migrants, may offer English and other services to help their migrant employees become naturalized U.S. citizens. Other U.S. employ-

ers, such as farm labor contractors, may go further into the underground economy to avoid labor law and immigration enforcement, hiring recently arrived migrants despite high unemployment rates that prevail in their regions. Further segmentation of migrant labor markets could mean that networks may become more important, with the ability to get into the upper segment of the unskilled migrant labor market being the key to economic mobility in the U.S.

*We find that there is reason to believe that currently high levels of Mexico-United States migration may represent a "hump" or peak in the volume of Mexico-United States migration. Within the next fifteen years, we think that demographic and economic factors within Mexico are likely to reduce emigration pressures.*

## Migration & the Future

**Structural Changes and People Seeking Work.** *A major long-term supply-push factor explaining the mid-1990s migration hump and the eventual decline in emigration pressure is demography—the number of new job seekers entering the labor force in Mexico has been very high, but will decline. Between 1993 and 1997, Mexican National Employment Surveys indicate that employment increased from 32.4 million to 36.7 million, by about 3 percent per year, adding about 1.1 million paid and unpaid jobs per year.<sup>1</sup>*

A declining birthrate since 1970, when Mexican women averaged nearly seven children each reduces the need to create additional jobs, but Mexican women today average less than three children each, a downward trend that appears to be continuing. The net annual increases in the 15 to 44 age group which was 1.24 million in 1996, is projected to decrease to 650,000 in 2010 (Gómez de León and Tuirán, 1996).

Our longer-term perspective emphasizes that these demographic trends, in combination with other patterns in Mexico and the United States, may reduce Mexico-to-United States migration.<sup>2</sup> Within Mexico, the effect of demographic factors on reducing emigration pressure could be magnified if, for example, more young persons follow the trend of staying longer in Mexican schools. Migration networks are most established in rural areas with long traditions of sending young men to the U.S., including the areas of Mexico currently undergoing structural change. But Mexico's rural restructuring can displace workers from agriculture only once. After the Mexican farm labor force has been reduced from 25 percent of all workers in the mid-1990s to 12 to 15 percent by 2015, supply-push

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emigration pressures from the areas that have some of the best network connections to the U.S. should diminish.

As the number of persons employed in Mexican agriculture shrinks, and some ex-farmers are absorbed into Mexico's service economy, there should be fewer Mexicans with strong network connections ready to migrate to the US. The destabilizing impacts of Mexican institutional and market reforms should run their course. If current and projected moderate economic growth is sustained—both in the rural sector and in the new export-oriented activities in Mexican urban areas—then jobs and upward pressure on wages should encourage many potential migrants to remain in Mexico.

**Projections of Job Growth.** *Mexico adopted an ambitious restructuring and privatization program in the 1990s that promises to increase economic efficiency and job growth in the medium- to long-term (although it will displace workers in the short-term).* If Mexico maintains market-driven economic policies, the International Monetary Fund projects 5 percent annual economic growth and 2.5 percent employment growth for 1997 and thereafter—given this two to one ratio between real GDP growth and employment growth, there would be 750,000 new jobs created each year, based on 30 million employers, self-employed workers, and wage and salary employees. Even if economic growth is less than the IMF forecast, the Mexican economy may be able to generate enough jobs for the smaller entry labor force cohorts projected for the years after 2000.<sup>3</sup> If Mexico is able to generate this additional employment, emigration pressures should diminish. Substantially lower growth rates, however, would slow down this process.

Another promising sign is the recent growth of jobs in the formal economy. The number of permanent workers enrolled in the Mexican Institute for Social Security [IMSS] rose by a record 661,024 in 1996 to 9,163,459, an expansion characterized by the OECD as "strong job creation in the 'formal' economy" (OECD 1997:98). However, interest rates remain high, and the recovery is unequal, accentuating inequality (Escobar Latapí 1996).<sup>4</sup> Mexicans linked to the world economy via exports of manufactured goods are doing much better than those operating only in the domestic economy, such as personal services, traditional manufacturing, construction, and small-scale agriculture. The latter still represents the largest sector for employment.

Differences in the speed of recovery among economic sectors is accompanied by differences among Mexican regions. For supply-side pressures to lessen, eco-

conomic and employment growth should reach those sectors and regions with strong migration networks.

*These medium- to long-term economic and demographic considerations suggest that supply-push emigration pressure should decline from current levels. We emphasize this point because it is easy to focus on recent events that point to increases in emigration pressure, including the peso devaluation and economic crisis of 1995, and the uneven recovery from recession. And, of course, economic factors are less certain: Mexico has experienced uneven economic growth over the past several decades and could experience recessions and crises again.*

Sustained economic growth and the current growth-jobs ratio, plus a projected decline in the number of new job seekers, means that early in the twenty-first century Mexico could be creating enough net new jobs to absorb new labor force entrants. Mexico could then begin to catch up on job creation for currently unemployed and underemployed workers, those displaced from agriculture and other industries, and nonworking women who rejoin the labor force.

We find it useful to think of migration processes between Mexico and the U.S. as being analogous to a river that creates a delta on its way to the ocean. When the Bracero program was in operation, the flow of Mexicans north was largely confined to the channel created by legal recruitment. Blocking that channel by abolishing the Bracero program in 1964 enabled the U.S. to stop the migration flow temporarily. The migration soon resumed, however, with a myriad of small streams becoming the channel for Mexicans migrating north. Visualizing Mexico-United States migration as having evolved from a narrow channel to rivulets meandering through a delta provides insights into a complex and dynamic migration process.

*Both the U.S. and Mexico took steps over the past decade that reinforced the network and supply-push factors that encourage Mexicans to go north for opportunity. As we saw in Chapter II, the U.S. legalized more than 2 million Mexicans in 1987-1988, including almost 1 million farm workers. The long-term (pre-1982 arrival) legalized population is poised to sponsor a large number of legal admissions. The legalized agricultural SAW workers were the equivalent of one-sixth of the adult men with paid jobs in rural Mexico; they also gained the right to settle in the U.S. and petition to bring their families to the U.S. legally. Ironically one U.S. government commission concluded that the SAW farm worker*

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legalization program promoted unauthorized Mexico-United States migration by giving the impression that doing unauthorized farm work in the U.S. was a way to become a legal immigrant (Commission on Agricultural Workers 1992).

In the early 1990s, Mexico undertook measures that may compress into a decade or less what would otherwise have been a slower shrinking of employment in agriculture. Mexico eliminated most input subsidies and price guarantees in agriculture, switched to direct payments to farmers, and eased trade restrictions, signaling the eventual shrinking of the production of many commodities, notably corn, that today absorb a great deal of labor, but in which Mexico does not have a comparative advantage.

Extensive networks of family, community, and private agents have developed to assist Mexicans wishing to migrate legally and illegally to the U.S., including a variety of advisors, smugglers, and transportation agents. The migration infrastructure has become very sophisticated. Migrants have choices in deciding who will help them to cross the border, in choosing how to finance the trip, and in finding U.S. employment.

*If the underlying demand-pull, supply-push, and network factors change in strength and relative importance, policies designed to deal with just one factor at one level of migration may lose their effectiveness over time.* For example, U.S. policies that were based on the assumption that the major factor sustaining Mexico-United States migration was legally-authorized demand-pull U.S. employer recruitment became less effective in the 1970s and 1980s as the key factors sustaining migration shifted to informal U.S. employer recruitment and supply-push and network forces. In such circumstances, simply stopping legally-authorized foreign worker recruitment did not stop migration. There is a need for policymaking that avoids the "law of unintended consequences," that uses a combination of approaches, is effectively implemented, and to the extent possible has the support of both governments.

<sup>1</sup> The 37 million persons currently in the labor force include about 4 million unpaid family workers and 2 million unemployed workers (those classified as employers or wage and salary workers totaled about 30 million in 1997).

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. labor market is expected to absorb a large number of unskilled workers over the next few years, as the normal complement of new job seekers are joined by persons removed from welfare rolls. This increased supply of U.S. workers, as well as even more border and interior enforcement, may reduce the availability of jobs for newly-arrived Mexican workers.



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<sup>3</sup> Mexico's total labor force may grow by more than 800,000 per year, as persons not in the labor force seek work if jobs are available. A "tight" labor market will not ensue immediately because there is a reserve of inactive, unemployed, and underemployed persons that these shifts in supply and demand should gradually accommodate.

<sup>4</sup> All indexes of concentration show a systematic increase from 1984 to 1996.



Migration has repercussions through labor market supply and demand, through fiscal implications for national and local governments, and through political and cultural institutions. Some of the differences in perspectives on migration's impacts—favorable or adverse—come from very real differences observed in the populations in each country. In Mexico, those who return most often are the sojourners who bring some benefits of their U.S. experience back with them and incur few visible costs. In the United States, it is the settler population, often older and sometimes unauthorized, whose relatively low skills place them at a disadvantage in an "information age" economy. Thus, disparate pictures emerge depending upon which end of the telescope one looks through.

Migration has many impacts on Mexican national development, the most studied of which are the economic consequences following from migrant remittances and from the interaction of labor supply and demand in Mexico and the United States. Numerous caveats must accompany any conclusions about the impacts of migration in Mexico, including variations in impacts across regions and through time and national-level versus regional or community-specific effects. Migrants originate from villages, towns, and cities throughout Mexico, but intense migration is most heavily concentrated in just 109 of Mexico's more than 2,400 municipalities (similar to U.S. counties) and in 9 western and northern states. And today's migration, while increasingly of an urban character, remains strongly influenced by rural conditions.

Distinctions also need to be drawn between communities with a "long tradition" of migration and those more recently incorporated into migratory flows, for migration experience shapes impacts. The nature of a community's migrant flows—temporary, recurrent or permanent—will create variations in impacts. Most of the information available to estimate effects of migration comes from community studies, many of which do not cover the full range of possible impacts. Special attention has been given to remittances and their effects on the well-being of migrants, their families and their communities. Most detailed studies to date have focused on rural areas in a few states, and more research clearly remains to be done.

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**Remittances to Mexico and National Multiplier Effects.** Migrant remittances represent the most direct and measurable benefits of international migration on Mexico (Lozano 1993). The benefits received by the communities from remittances depend on: (1) the number of households with migrants employed abroad; (2) the relative importance of remittances as compared with other sources of income (estimates of remittances as a proportion of income from all sources range from 5 to 93 percent); and (3) on whether or not the community is capable of retaining the multiplying effects of remittances. It is common for the important regional cities to concentrate the benefits derived from consumption and investment. The diversion of remittances to these regional centers is a topic that merits special attention.

Remittances of permanent migrants represent about two-thirds of the total, and as these migrants tend to reduce their remittances as time passes, it is anticipated that their contributions will diminish in the future.

Temporary migrants, on the other hand, incur higher costs of mobility (especially if they are unauthorized), lesser residential costs, and lesser costs for the United States due to their limited demands on health, education, and other services.

At the national level, remittances reached a considerable overall figure of between U.S. \$2.5 and U.S. \$3.9 billion in 1995. Remittances are equivalent to more than one-half (57 percent) of the foreign exchange available through foreign direct investment in the same year. This accounts for a little less than 5 percent of the foreign exchange obtained by Mexico for the export of goods.

Remittances are mostly concentrated in the same few states and areas of origin. There the remittances have greater economic importance. For example, in the state of Zacatecas, migrant income was higher than federal revenues in 1988.

The amount remitted per migrant was around U.S. \$700 in 1995, but this figure is very different for permanent and temporary migrants. Alternatively, the net amount of remittances per receiving household is equivalent to one average wage in places of origin. In a context in which 60 percent of households' earnings are below that average, the amount remitted is of great importance.

To gauge the full effect of remittances, one needs to measure more than just the quantity of remittances and how they are spent. Economic simulations of remit-

tances attempt to estimate these complex effects (Taylor 1996). Estimates represent not only the direct effect of migrant remittances on the households that receive them, but also the indirect effects across all households that result from their spending. Remittances produce the largest income multiplier when they flow into Mexico's rural households, whose consumption and expenditure patterns favor goods produced domestically with relatively labor-intensive production technologies and few imported inputs. When migrant remittances go to urban households, more of the money leaks out of the country in the form of import demand. Based on these multiplier estimations, which are partial pictures of a complex reality, it estimated that for every dollar sent or brought into Mexico the gross national product [GNP] increases about U.S. \$2.90. Each dollar in remittances may translate into an increase of U.S. \$0.3 to U.S. \$0.4 in the income of small farmers and rural workers; and U.S. \$1.10 in the income of urban-worker households (although urban households do not receive most remittance dollars).

As the North American economy becomes increasingly integrated, remittance multipliers in Mexico are likely to decrease as production in Mexico responds more to demand in the North American market as a whole and less to demand in Mexico alone. In a North American free trade area, migration may affect production and incomes in Mexico in new ways.

There is a wide variety of migration experiences among the migrants; these differences are reflected in remittances. Frequently, especially now, remittances are limited to covering families' expenditures with nothing going to savings. In such cases, remittances may still have a relatively high impact on those families as this income becomes a sort of survival insurance.

Remittances are also dependent upon circumstances that might reduce their importance. At the extreme, up to one-third of return migrants do not manage to send remittances or take money home with them upon return. In other cases, the earnings that finally reach families are not high, partly because there are considerable losses in the remittances, but above all because migrants have heavy expenses both on the journeys to the U.S. and back and during their working stay in the U.S. These expenses are generally greater for unauthorized migrants than for residents or for temporary migrants with documents. There is some evidence that migrant wages recently have dropped and of labor competition among Mexican migrants themselves. Also, particularly in agriculture, it is common to face

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periods without work and, therefore, without income. For these reasons, remittances for such families are cyclical, unstable, and unequal.

In contrast, some studies suggest that there are workers in more stable work and some who manage to obtain employment more quickly, perhaps because of their previous experience or their contacts through established networks. In such cases, their savings, after deducting expenses, can be anticipated and channeled directly to their families.

**Remittances, Investment, and Development.** Remittances have two types of impact on communities. In most cases remittances become a source of support for family consumption, housing improvement, and basic urban services. Yet, other communities show productive changes in which the remittances play an important role as a source of investment. On occasion that role is complementary to the development process driven by other local and regional forces.

The impacts can be shown by using social accounting matrices. Yunez (1997) constructed those matrixes for a handful of specific communities, estimating different multiplying effects of remittances. These effects vary depending on the degree of development previously reached by the localities, as well as on their economic links with other communities and on the importance of remittances in relation to other income in the community. It is clear that when a sending village does not have an adequate source of income, remittances are of paramount importance.

Other studies we have carried out suggest similar trends with respect to the relationship between "migratory intensity," migratory "trajectory" in time, and the economic performance of communities. In localities where the wage of the formal sector is greater, lower rates of migratory activity are observed. Similarly, higher wages are related to a reduction in migratory intensity over time. Of course, the causality may run in either direction, but it is important to suggest that economic improvement eventually will reduce migration.

According to the literature, most migrant's families invest their remittances primarily in improving their housing and, to a lesser extent, in productive investments. For the ten major sending states, we found that migratory intensity is associated with improved provision of services for housing and a greater use of modern agricultural technology. These are probably the most important effects stemming from remittances we found.

Remittances also enable many communities to overcome capital constraints and to finance public works projects, such as parks, churches, schools, electrification, road construction, and sewers. The impacts and changes reported at the community level are generally in keeping with findings reported in other parts of the world. Our interpretation coincides with others who view remittances as a vehicle for furthering the development of migrant areas. The benefits increase as long as the channeling of remittances goes hand-in-hand with other conditions, such as the concentration of private and public resources in the same areas, notably on infrastructure.

**Possible Productivity Gains from United States Work Experience.** There is evidence that working experience in the United States produces additional benefits to migrants when they return to Mexico. Such a bonus would be realized as improved earnings (Zahniser & Greenwood 1997), if they are able to capitalize on their experience acquired.

It is estimated that 3.5 to 4.0 million Mexicans have become residents in the United States between 1980 and 1995.<sup>1</sup> Although a small figure in comparison with the total Mexican population in 1995 (only 4.2 percent), this represents about 10 percent of the population from the ten core sending states. Most of this loss involves persons in their working ages.

Projections for the major sending states suggest slowing population growth in the next century. Assuming current rates of migration, growth rates would fall from 2.4 percent today to 0.8 percent in 2010. Assuming no migration growth rates would fall from what would otherwise be 3.5 percent today to 1.7 percent in 2010. In these states, the loss of population due to past and ongoing outmigration is projected to reduce the potential growth of the working age population by 46 percent.

**Costs of Migration for Mexico.** The loss of human capital is the most important cost to Mexico. These costs have commonly been estimated to be small by assuming an excess of redundant labor in the developing sending country. However, for Mexico this assumption is questionable because of the selectivity or characteristics of its migrants. Family and community costs have only recently received attention.

The loss of human capital could be estimated by looking at the costs of education, health, and social infrastructure incurred throughout the life of individuals to achieve an economically active person in good working conditions. The cost for Mexico in human capital is the "opportunity cost" represented by having invested in preparing that person and having foregone the value added of the migrant's productive economic activity. The net returns on Mexico's investments in that person are those remittances or savings sent or brought to the country.

There are relative costs or returns. By return we understand the quotient between what is obtained as a wage or added value and what is invested or spent in exchange for that product. For Mexico as a country, the return is small if we consider the quotient between the amount saved from the wage paid to migrants and the costs of education, health, etc., incurred. The return on migrants is only in relation to the net amount in remittances or savings, as approximately 90 percent of what they receive in the United States is consumed there. In this regard, it is incorrect to associate the total U.S. wage with Mexican earnings.

**Family and Community Costs.** Migration is accompanied by significant changes in family organization, such as a necessary additional work effort by families to compensate for the migration of one or several of their members. Similarly, in the communities with the greatest migration, major changes occur in those communities' social and political organizations, which frequently make themselves felt in adverse ways. It is common for the young people with the most initiative to leave, with the result that communities lose their current and potential leaders as well have a weakened capacity for interaction with the exterior. The actual or potential loss of labor to migration may push up wages and create uncertainties that discourage investment and training of workers in places of high out-migration. It is also common for migration to be accompanied by serious problems of family disintegration, as well as by different psychological and social problems that previously were nonexistent in the communities of origin.. Although such social costs are difficult to estimate accurately, observers realize their great importance in the communities of out-migration. Systematic research would be invaluable.



The impacts of Mexican migration in the United States today may differ from those of the past because of changed economic and sociopolitical circumstances. There is extensive evidence that since the mid-1970s the earnings and employment of more educated workers have been improving relative to the less-skilled. This may translate into more limited economic mobility for today's migrants which, coupled with reductions in welfare and health benefits, increases the challenges of integration and adaptation.

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These conditions fuel perceptions that the costs of migration exceed the benefits. Much evidence refutes this view—with the qualification that not all segments of society share equally in the benefits or bear equally the costs. To capture this distributional nature of impacts, we distinguish national, regional, and local impacts. We also separate economic, demographic, sociocultural, and political consequences, although these dimensions are interrelated.

Our major observation is that the failure to recognize distributional issues is an important source of misunderstanding about the benefits and costs of migration in general and of Mexican migration in particular.

Therefore, we take as our point of departure the simple premise that Mexican migration produces economic benefits for the United States, but that these benefits come at a cost for some. Our main task then is to identify the particular benefits and costs of Mexican migration, and to specify which groups gain and which lose.

Such a balanced and nuanced portrait of impacts is crucially important for contemplating policy strategies. Simply stated, most impacts of Mexican migration will be more pronounced in locales and industries where migrants reside and work. However, short- and long-term impacts differ, some impacts are transmitted intergenerationally, and many benefits and costs cannot be quantified.

Most researchers report that industry case studies uncover evidence of competitive effects of migrants. Most national-level analyses, however, typically find that the wage and employment effects of increased migration on native-born groups are not great; rather, the largest impacts are on other foreign-born workers (like the migrants themselves).<sup>2</sup> To evaluate these generalities, we reviewed all of the most recent empirical literature and performed a new econometric analysis.

**Industry Case Studies.** Employment displacement effects of migrant workers are evident in certain industries in regions, such as Los Angeles and New York, where migrants are concentrated. These may occur because the ready supply of migrant workers places downward pressure on industry wage rates. Alternatively, the displacement may occur because employers "prefer" or find it advantageous to hire new migrants even when natives are available at comparable wages. A shortcoming of most case studies is that they do not trace the ultimate outcomes for native workers who presumably find new jobs, but sometimes at a considerable cost.

The favorable aspects of these effects accrue most clearly to the migrant worker and to foreign and native-business owners. It is often observed that immigrants are highly entrepreneurial and that foreign-owned businesses contribute to the U.S.'s legendary job-creating, small business sector. *Some Mexican migrant worker networks have positive effects for small and large foreign- and native-owned businesses.* In many such businesses, migrant workers and employers appear to strike a bargain that benefits both: in exchange for lower starting wages, the migrant gains informal job training from the employer. The efficiency and speed with which networks operate gives employers ready access to a pool of workers vouched for by the employers' current workers. These hiring networks reduce search costs, reduce the likelihood of "problem workers," and provide redundancy during times of peak production or when employees are out sick.<sup>3</sup>

**Impacts on Business and Workers Nationally and Regionally.** Because they are so specific, it is difficult to generalize from case studies. Therefore, we undertook a statistical analysis of 122 metropolitan areas using the 1990 census. We introduced several analyses that permit us to unbundle effects to regions and metropolitan areas. The results of these econometric exercises are discussed below.

*The primary beneficiaries of migration are, of course, the Mexican-born migrant workers.* As discussed earlier in this chapter, migrants and their families consider the opportunity cost of migration; they balance the costs and benefits of working in the United States against their opportunities if they remain in Mexico. With a wage differential of at least five to one, the Mexican-born migrant working in the United States benefits from a higher standard of living.

*Owners of capital, that is business owners and investors, are clear winners. We measure the effect of Mexican-born migrants on the "real rental price of capital."* For example, a positive migrant effect means that an owner of a machine shop is able to charge a higher amount for a tractor or water pump rental. In California's metropolitan areas a 20 percent increase in Mexican-born migrants increases the return to capital by 0.8 percent on average. Agricultural areas benefit more, Merced and Salinas by 1.7 percent each and Visalia-Tulare by 1.4 percent. For Texas, a 20 percent increase in migrants is associated with a 0.3 percent increased return to capital on average. But the returns to border areas are greater: Brownsville 1.4 percent, El Paso 1.6 percent, and McAllen-Endinberg-Mission a 1.8 percent increase.

Shifting to the effects of Mexican-born migrants on the wages of other labor force groups, we find that *the principal adverse impact is on already-resident migrants from Mexico or elsewhere.* In our model, a simulated 20 percent increase in the number of foreign-born, low-skill Mexican workers lowered the average wage of this labor group by 3 percent, but left the wages of other labor categories almost unchanged. Next we simulated the direct wage impacts of Mexican-born labor, on average, for several metropolitan areas within a given region.

*For the average United States region, even relatively large increases in Mexican-born labor have only relatively small impacts on native workers.* Metropolitan areas in California and Texas have relatively heavy concentrations both of Mexican-born persons and of native-born persons of Mexican ancestry. The major impact of a 20 percent increase in foreign-born, low-skill Mexican labor in California is on other foreign-born, low-skilled Mexicans. Their wages fall by 6.9 percent and their employment declines by 1.3 percent. Otherwise, there are only minimal impacts on other skill or immigrant groups. The results for Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado are similar to those for California, but for the most part are more moderate.

*Empirical evidence appears to indicate that in areas where Mexican migrant concentrations are extremely high, such as along the southwestern border, wage depression and job displacement effects are evident.* These impacts are strongest among less-skilled and already-resident Mexican male migrants. Areas of very high concentration of foreign-born, low-skill Mexican workers clearly experience the largest impacts. For thirteen metropolitan areas for which this labor group constitutes 60 percent or more of the foreign-born population, a 20 percent in-

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crease in this group results in wage decline among this same group of 11.4 percent. Employment of the group is reduced by 2.4 percent. Native, low-skill females of Mexican ancestry experience a 1.3 percent wage decline and a 0.4 percent job displacement effect.<sup>4</sup>

**Economic Adaptation and Social Mobility.** Social integration depends crucially on economic advancement. *One quite optimistic analysis favorably compares wage growth for first, second, and third generation Mexican-origin men with that of native whites and blacks.*<sup>5</sup> The findings show improvements, especially by the third generation, in both educational attainment and economic mobility. Nevertheless, the educational attainment of Mexican-origin men remains the lowest of any ethnoracial group. Our above-cited research and a study in Los Angeles, suggest that the wages of Mexican-origin men are dragged down by the combination of the group's low educational levels and competition with others with very low educational levels. These disadvantages are likely to persist and possibly increase as the volume of unskilled, and especially unauthorized, migration from Mexico continues.<sup>6</sup>

**Enclaves and Entrepreneurial Activity.** Mexican-owned businesses exist throughout the southwest and are making a strong showing in southern California. Research is finding successful Mexican enclaves in, for example, Los Angeles fruit markets. In Chicago, our work on "The Little Village Study" shows that dense settlement patterns (economies of scale) are conducive to the emergence of informal, and ultimately, formal, economic activity that caters to the needs of other coethnics. Evidently, economies of scale can have both offsetting and positive effects (Rosenthal & Tienda 1997). Clearly, more research is needed to address the positive attributes of Mexican entrepreneurs and consumers.

Presumably motivated by the belief that legal and unauthorized immigrants participate "too much" in public assistance programs, Congress passed provisions related to immigrants as part of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This Act restricts the access of even legal immigrants to welfare. Accordingly, we performed analyses performed of the public assistance utilization of Mexican-born households.

**Welfare Participation.** *The empirical results indicate that Mexican-born households are no more likely to use welfare than either otherwise comparable native-born households of Mexican ancestry or otherwise comparable native-born house-*

holds in general. They are, however, more likely to participate than native whites, but less likely than native blacks. Moreover, recent cohorts from Mexico are less likely to use welfare than otherwise similar groups, whereas earlier cohorts are more likely users (Davies & Greenwood 1997).

There is a general consensus that relatively young and recently arrived Mexican-born migrants are not more prone to use public assistance than natives of similar socioeconomic characteristics. Yet, migrants' characteristics determine their eligibility for welfare and, to a large extent, their propensity to apply for means-tested income transfers.<sup>7</sup>

**Unauthorized Migrants and Fiscal Costs.** *Most studies agree that immigrants, and especially unauthorized migrants, impose a fiscal burden on state and local governments, but there is considerable disagreement about the magnitude of this burden.* In recent years, states have brought suit against the U.S. federal government to recover the costs of providing services to unauthorized migrants. At the national level, however, there is less consensus on costs that may not be fully resolved for several technical reasons. Despite the limits of fiscal impact studies, we prepared a secondary analysis of unauthorized migrants for California, Texas, and Illinois as an illustration.

Our calculations, using a *best estimate* of the unauthorized alien population, show that unauthorized migrants in California use \$1,124 of state and local services per capita, which is higher than the \$906 per capita used by the rest of the population. Public school expenses account for about two-thirds of these costs. In Texas, the unauthorized and the rest of the population *both* use somewhat more than \$1,000 per capita in services. School costs account for more than 80 percent of these costs. In Illinois, unauthorized migrants use less state and local resources than the rest of the state population because of a comparatively older and smaller school population. The unauthorized in Illinois use relatively little in the way of state and local services.

California's total net fiscal burden of the unauthorized is the heaviest (\$829 million) of all states, Texas's is much smaller (\$194 million), and Illinois's is almost trivial (\$17 million) relative to the state budget. These net figures are smaller than the states' estimates used in claims against the federal government because the states' costs (but not revenues) are based on figures for the unauthorized population that seem to be too high.<sup>8</sup>

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There is no disagreement that California bears the brunt of immigration, including unauthorized migration. The fiscal impact of the state's many migrants is magnified by a relatively large per capita fiscal gap between the unauthorized and the rest of the population. This gap results from the higher rate and more progressive nature of the tax system in California, which leaves the unauthorized paying a smaller share of the total state and local tax burden.

A final caveat to these studies is that the fiscal impacts of migration that should concern us occur over the life span of migrants. In all static models to date, education is a cost. Yet, education is fundamentally an investment in future skills and earnings and we can reasonably expect that its current cost will be recovered in future greater productivity, especially if children complete school and become taxpayers. This expectation is born out by recent work by an expert National Research Council [NRC] (1997) panel.

**Contribution to Population Growth.** Recent trends in immigration have left an indelible demographic imprint. From 1970 to 1990, *total* international migration accounted for 25 to 33 percent of net annual population increase. However, Mexican migration itself is only part of total immigration and contributed less (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996). During the 1960s and 1970s, approximately 14 percent of all legal immigrants admitted were from Mexico. This share rose to 23 percent during the late 1980s owing to the impact of the legalization program. In FYs 1995 and 1996, Mexican-born immigrants were 12 and 18 percent respectively of total U.S. immigration.

Although Mexican migration has been a relatively small component of net aggregate population growth, its impact on the size of the Mexican-origin population is far more substantial. Migration was responsible for less than one-half (and substantially less for legal immigrants) of the growth of the Mexican-origin population between 1970 and 1980. At the latter date, only one in four persons of Mexican origin were foreign-born. By 1990, and in the wake of both the large volume of IRCA legalizations and continued migration from Mexico, more than one in three persons of Mexican origin were foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993:Table 1).

Secondary (or indirect) demographic impacts derive from the fertility of native- and foreign-born women of Mexican origin. In 1990, the average number of children ever born to Mexican origin women aged 25 to 34 were 1.7 and 2.1 for

the native and foreign-born, respectively. Among women aged 35 to 44, the nativity differentials in children ever born were greater still, 2.5 for U.S.-born women compared to 3.3 for Mexican-born women. Current and future demographic impacts, particularly those associated with the school-aged population and future workforce entrants, will be most pronounced in localities where Mexican migrants are concentrated. Female predomination in recent cohorts (with the exception of the IRCA legalizations) has implications for the future demographic impacts of Mexican migration. For example, the median age of legal female Mexican immigrants in 1995 was 25, the peak of women's reproductive years.<sup>9</sup>

**Population Projections.** The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the U.S. population will increase by 50 percent between 1995 and 2050, from 263 million to 394 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996, 1997). Declining overall fertility and increased longevity mean that immigration will be a larger component of future growth. These projections do not separately identify immigrants, but we know that Mexicans comprise slightly more than 60 percent of all Hispanics, a share relatively stable since the early 1970s (Bean & Tienda 1987:Table 2.2). According to the Census Bureau's projections, the Hispanic population will contribute 37 percent of growth from 1995-2000, 44 percent from 2000-2020, and 62 percent thereafter. As a result, the absolute and relative sizes of Asian and Hispanic populations will more than double (3 - rising from 5 to 8 percent of the total population for Asians and from 10 to 26 percent for Hispanics).<sup>10</sup>

The recent National Research Council report (1997:26) made independent projections. It first estimated how large today's population would be in the absence of immigration since 1950. It concluded the U.S. population would have been 14 percent smaller than its 1995 size and would have been considerably older. Projecting forward current levels of immigration for fifty to fifty-five years would increase population by 80 million above what would occur without any immigration. This net increase reflects the direct result of 45 million new immigrants plus the dual indirect effects of higher immigrant fertility and a more youthful first- and second-generation immigrant population. As the single largest national origin group in recent years, Mexicans would account for approximately 10 - 12 percent of the increase at the base year, compounded by their higher fertility and young age structure.

Two important compositional changes follow from the current level and country of origin composition of immigrant streams. First, current immigration levels will increase future enrollments in primary, secondary, and college enrollments

relative to lower immigration levels. Second, the race and ethnic composition of the United States population will change substantially with especially large proportions of Asians and Hispanics.

Social &  
Economic  
Impacts

**Social Relations and Status.** In our study of social impacts, we address social status and the place of the Mexican-origin community relative to other ethnic and racial groups. It appears that Mexican migrants occupy some kind of intermediate social position between native whites and native blacks. Surveys indicate, for example, that all groups, including blacks, rate whites as the most desirable neighbors, blacks as the least desirable, and Hispanics in between. Whites in Los Angeles have been observed to be more opposed to housing integration with blacks than with Hispanics (in Los Angeles, Hispanics are almost entirely of Mexican origin). Other groups, such as Asians, seem to share the same preference for Mexicans over blacks as neighbors.

Let us be clear: Mexican immigrants do not occupy an intermediate social position because they are somehow middle class. On the contrary, that their social position seems higher than their relative socioeconomic status raises interesting questions about the significance of race and national origin, and suggests that Mexicans play a "buffer" role in the U.S. stratification system. And, the positive view of immigrants as neighbors may be explained, in part, by their role in revitalizing communities.<sup>11</sup>

**Migrants and Crime.** Relatively little research addresses the association between crime and migration. According to the 1991 Survey of State Prisons, Mexicans account for nearly half of the foreign born in state prisons. However, their overrepresentation reflects differences in treatment through the criminal justice system. Migrants along the border are more likely to be arrested, detained prior to trial, convicted, and incarcerated (two to four times more likely) as citizens.<sup>12</sup> Unauthorized migrants also are less likely to be released from jail prior to trial.

There is some evidence that high crime rates along the United States-Mexico border are related to unauthorized, but not legal, immigration. However, in recent years crime rates have fallen even though migration from Mexico, including unauthorized migration, has remained high. And crime rates along the border are below those of comparable nonborder cities.<sup>13</sup>



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**Voting and Political Impacts.** Their neighborhood-building role in the inner city accords well with the reality or myth of the hardworking migrant, striving to get ahead. Survey work has shown that very few Mexican Americans or Mexican migrants believe that they have been victimized by racism or discrimination. Mexican Americans seem eager to embrace a meritocratic vision of American society. While Mexican Americans in the U.S. Congress tend to find common ground with black congressional leaders —both groups are predominantly Democratic, mostly urban, and largely progressive on fiscal issues— on the local level such black-Mexican coalitions have proved much harder to create or sustain.

*The various political impacts of Mexican migration are felt primarily in Mexican-American communities.* That most Mexican migrants cannot vote seems to imply that no direct impact exists. Yet, the foreign-born affect electoral politics through census enumerations and decennial redistricting (congressional and state districts are based on all persons, not only adult citizens). Thus, Mexican-American districts have many fewer voters; in the 1992 United States elections, Mexican Americans cast only about 16 votes per hundred persons compared to 50 per hundred for non-Hispanic whites. While Mexican-born migrants increase the population base that creates Mexican-American districts, their disinterest in electoral politics, some argue, may dilute the natural bonds between elected officials and adult citizens.<sup>14</sup>

The Mexican-American community has increased its power in electoral politics since 1970 and the political impacts of Mexican migration —mediated through their relationship with Mexican-American communities— may have indirect effects on elections and legislation. In presidential politics, their concentration in California, Texas, and Illinois could give Mexican-American voters leverage, but only if the state in question were very closely contested. While Mexican-American voters have generally favored Democratic presidential candidates in proportions almost high enough to qualify as “block voting,” their low turnout and fundraising potential means that national candidates have been likely to view them as marginal players. It remains to be seen whether or not the recent surge in the naturalization of Mexican-born adults, coupled with a political climate that might well cause new citizens concern, will affect these dynamics.

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Many of the impacts of Mexico to U.S. migration are experienced at the border itself and thus affect both countries.

*Border communities are binational entities, with many residents on each side of the border having strong family, commercial and social connections to those on the other side.* The volume of movements both ways across the long Mexican-United States border is substantial. The vast majority of border crossers come for short visits, often purchasing goods on the other side of the border. The contributions to local economies emanating from this cross-border commerce are also substantial.

The border relationship is not without its tensions, however. Cross-border petty crime, vandalism, and vice is a continuing source of concern in many border communities. Border cities complain about the fiscal impact when residents of the other country access such public services as health care and education. The growth of poor, unincorporated areas that straddle the border presents challenges to public health and the environment. For the most part, however, the neighboring states, cities and townships have found it mutually beneficial to resolve tensions before they disrupt the important ties that bind the communities.

*Violence en route to, from, and at the border are among the most negative effects of migration between the two countries,* largely but not exclusively related to the unauthorized movements. Migrants are victims of a variety of crimes, from attacks and abandonment by smugglers to theft, rape and even murder. Recorded and unrecorded deaths associated with attempted border crossings are of concern. So, too, are violent attacks by smugglers and others on officials who are responsible for border operations in both countries.

*Incidents of human rights abuses by federal, state, and local officials have been recorded as well.* A well-publicized incident in Riverside, California, when local police were videotaped beating migrants after a high speed chase, highlighted the potential for such abuses. Both governments have taken action to curb the abuse of migrants by both private and official auspices on both sides of the border. Grupo Beta, for example, is a Mexican police unit charged with protecting migrants at the border itself. The recurrent allegations of abuse have led to the establishment of a number of monitoring groups, as well, including the Border Liaison Mechanism.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> According to U.S. data, 85 percent of Mexican-born persons are between 15 and 64 years of age; only 4.6 percent are 65 years and older (CPS 1995).

<sup>2</sup> The research literature repeatedly finds that migrants have only small national-level impacts on U.S. workers. Three reasons have been suggested: migrants are a small fraction of the labor force; offsetting effects occur in labor demand and supply relationships; and efficient U.S. markets may arbitrage the effects across the nation, making them difficult to detect. The first two reasons are most plausible. A large body of research on regional adjustments suggests that effects would not necessarily be rapidly "arbitraged" and large, direct impacts of new arrivals should be measurable.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that new migrants often work at lower than average wages that, in theory, reduce production costs for employers. However, this occurs mainly in labor-intensive, competitive industries with typically low-productivity and low-profit margins overall.

<sup>4</sup> The sectoral distribution of migrant labor ultimately determines the impact of migration on the wage rates of domestic unskilled labor. That dramatic differences exist in the regional concentration of migrants and in the interindustry distribution of migrants implies distinct effects across regions. Because of their sources and border entry points, unauthorized migrants may be even more concentrated than the legal migrants, and their impacts will be concentrated accordingly.

<sup>5</sup> Mexican migrants are disadvantaged relative to native blacks in terms of educational and language skills, yet in most states they have higher rates of labor force participation and lower unemployment rates. That the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups are not immigrants, but rather African-American, Native-American and Puerto Rican, suggests that Mexican migrants have a reasonable chance of adapting to U.S. labor market and society. This research also finds that the intergenerational changes in the wage structure take longer to play out for Mexicans than for other white migrant workers.

<sup>6</sup> This research effort also suggests that wage penalties for lack of fluency in English may have increased during the 1980s when returns to skills rose appreciably. This bodes ill for the pace of integration of Mexican migrants in the future (Trejo 1997). Exposure to other immigrants, not generational status, is the most powerful predictor of language maintenance. The forces for retaining Spanish in public and private settings is particularly high for Mexicans, not only because of the volume and concentration of recent flows, but also because Mexican Americans are less likely to migrate internally and more likely to reside in multigenerational households that include one or more foreign-born persons.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Mexican migrants to the United States are characterized by low levels of educational attainment, large families, and poor English-language abilities. All these factors, among others, are generally found to be positively related with the level of welfare use.

<sup>8</sup> Considering that careful estimates of the unauthorized migrant population vary by as much as 15 percent or more, caution is necessary in drawing conclusions about state level fiscal impacts. The largest cost to the states of unauthorized migrants is primary and secondary education. In our "best estimate" only children who are foreign-born and unauthorized are counted. In our "citizen children" estimate we include the citizen children of unauthorized migrants. This change raises the unauthorized population by only 5 percent, but the unauthorized school-age population rises by 25 percent. In California, this increases the total cost of services by 18 percent and the net fiscal burden from \$829 million to \$1.08 billion. In our "states' estimate" we use the states' own estimates of the unauthorized population, which is considerably higher than the Census Bureau's high-end estimate for 1992. This increases California's unauthorized population by almost 50 percent. Nevertheless, both the "citizen children" and "states' estimate" yield similar aggregate fiscal impacts.

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<sup>9</sup> The larger completed family sizes of Mexican immigrant women result from childbearing *after* migrating to the United States rather than initially entering the United States with larger families. This is contrary to predictions based on assimilation theory and differs from the fertility behavior of other immigrant women.

<sup>10</sup> The growth of the Mexican-origin population is likely to increase far more than the other Hispanic origin groups for several reasons. Mexicans are the largest source country of current immigration. Fertility of both native and foreign-born Mexican-origin women will likely contribute to relatively faster population growth. The 1995 Mexican-origin population is larger and relatively younger than other Hispanic origin groups, providing a bigger base from which to compound future indirect effects. Finally, Mexicans have been and are likely to remain the largest source of unauthorized migration.

<sup>11</sup> Research in Chicago's "Little Village" reveals that Mexican migration either contributes to community revitalization or prevents decaying inner city neighborhoods from becoming underclass neighborhoods. From 1970 to 1990, Chicago experienced a tremendous polarization in neighborhoods inhabited by natives. By 1990, most of the neighborhoods that in 1970 were working class and stable middle class neighborhoods had either gentrified or been absorbed into black ghettos and abandoned by all but the poorest residents. The parts of Chicago in which working-class neighborhoods have grown or even been maintained are those areas settled by migrants—primarily Mexicans.

<sup>12</sup> Gross differences in the incarceration rates of Mexican and U.S. citizens disappear once differences in age structure (because Mexicans are younger and petty crime rates are higher among the young) and especially the differences in treatment in the criminal justice system of Mexicans and Anglos are taken into account (Hagan and Palloni 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Incorrect perceptions about criminality, nevertheless, contribute to what appears to be public misperceptions about immigrants generally. Especially during times of high unemployment and job competition, i.e., the changed climate of California in the late 1980s, public opinion is for reduced immigration. Surveys in 1995 found that Mexican-born migrants were the least preferred of any immigrant group. Several polls conducted during the 1990s found that respondents believed that two-thirds of migrants to the United States were unauthorized, an obvious impossibility, but partly an outcome of public leadership and discourse that continually blurs the line between illegal and legal immigrants.

<sup>14</sup> In turn, Mexican Americans seem to be ambivalent about new migrants from Mexico and, at times, at odds with the views of their leadership. Various surveys have found that Mexican Americans view unauthorized migration in particular very unfavorably (de la Garza, et al. 1992). Perhaps this is associated with various election-day polls that found that as many as 30 percent of Mexican Americans voted for California's 1994 "Proposition 187," arguably one of the most egregious pieces of anti-immigrant legislation in the post-Civil Rights era.

Societal responses on migration matters are manifested in the two countries in many ways. These include: legislation at the federal, state, and local levels; policies implemented at all these levels; decisions by the courts; advocacy from the private sector; and public opinion as reflected in polls and referenda.

## VI. RESPONSES TO MIGRATION ISSUES

To reach our overall conclusions, we draw upon the lengthy history of the two neighbors reaching back to the Bracero period and earlier. From this longer vantage, and with an eye toward today's events, our major conclusions are as follows.

*Episodic nature of U.S. responses.* The debate on immigration into the United States waxes and wanes with the economic cycle. When the U.S. economy falters, restrictionist sentiment grows more intense. When the Mexican economy goes into a slump, this too leads to fear of an emigration push and anti-immigrant concern in the United States.

*Unintended consequences.* Several important U.S. policy changes since 1965 have had unforeseen consequences often at variance with the policy intentions. One recent example is the growing immigrant visa backlog prompted by family unification requests stemming from the IRCA legalization provisions. The disjunction between policy intentions and actual outcomes has been a perennial feature of immigration history.

*Mexican engagement.* The Mexican government has shifted from a position of deliberate nonengagement on migration matters to a stance of increasing dialogue with United States counterparts. The contrast is evident in Mexican unwillingness to comment when IRCA was under consideration compared with the Mexican authorities commentary regarding U.S. immigration and related legislation in 1996. The practical outcome of increased dialogue is still uncertain.

*Interplay between economic integration/political cooperation and immigration control.* The bilateral engagement on migration began before NAFTA went into effect, but cooperation on this issue picked up after NAFTA facilitated a more elaborate framework for economic and political dialogue.

*Border opening for commerce and investment but not people.* The flow of goods, services, capital, and the legal entry of people has been

facilitated by NAFTA and other measures adopted in the 1990s. Simultaneously, the United States is increasing efforts to control unauthorized entries. This has the potential for increasing binational tensions.

- *Official action and ineffectiveness of immigration restriction in practice.* In the past, U.S. responses to deal with illegal immigration were riddled with loopholes or not carried out with vigor. It remains to be seen whether the current efforts will be more durable or will be pursued more seriously.

### Analytical Model

Based on observation of migration responses, the following model was used as a basis of analysis:

- An underlying context, one usually rooted in the U.S. economic situation, triggers a U.S. immigration response;
- This, in turn, leads to a period of debate in the United States and political compromises resolve some differences but leave other issues on the table;
- A Mexican reaction to the U.S. action, and perhaps a U.S. counter-reaction follows;
- A new context for the next series of triggering events is thus born.

U.S. and Mexican responses also have a long-term trend: the intervals between the periodic debates has diminished.

### Responses in the United States

United States responses to immigration are largely unilateral. This suits the U.S. style and had a practical logic when the Mexican authorities preferred not to be involved. This may now be changing, although to what extent is unclear.

**Interest Group Influence.** United States immigration responses usually are directed at immigration generally and sometimes Mexican immigration specifically. The U.S. has a diverse collection of politically active groups seeking to influence many aspects of policy and a long history of admitting large numbers of foreigners as permanent residents. Nongovernmental organizations, both those

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favorable to increased immigration and others that support a more restrictive policy, play a large role in shaping U.S. immigration policies.

The political process translates these conflicting goals into policies that often have unanticipated outcomes. Given public opposition to increased legal immigration, the legalization provisions of IRCA in 1986 and the 1990 Immigration Act (both of which increased substantially the number of permanent legal residents admitted) were surprising. These outcomes stemmed from interest group influence on the legislation. In 1996, an effort to reduce certain categories of legal immigrants was unsuccessful, but new efforts are likely. Federal policy changes in the 1990s have reduced immigration backlogs, handled a quantum increase in naturalizations, and facilitated legal entries at the border through the use of commuter lanes and expedited preauthorized clearances.

**State and Local Reactions.** A less surprising development has been the government response to deter unauthorized immigration as manifested in IRCA and the rise in appropriations for border enforcement. Two other recent developments are the distinctions made between legal immigrants and U.S. citizens in their access to social services contained in the recent welfare legislation (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996), and the expanding role played by state and local governments in (1) restricting services to immigrants (e.g., the passage of Proposition 187 in California) and (2) the discretion given to state governments in welfare payments to legal immigrants. Because migration effects are local, a greater effort to bring states and localities into migration policy discussions would be desirable.

Immigrants are concentrated in a small number of states and metropolitan areas and, consequently, state and local officials differ in their reactions to immigration. States and localities with large numbers of immigrants typically face higher public costs to provide education and other services than those with fewer immigrants. But there have been significant variations in the responses of states and local governments with large immigrant populations. Proposition 187 was actively supported by Governor Pete Wilson and other California public officials. It was promoted with arguments that underscored the view that denying public services to unauthorized immigrants would deter further illegal immigration. State and local officials elsewhere, e.g., the governor of Texas and the mayor of New York City, disagreed sharply with these views and tactics.

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**More on Public Opinion and Interest Groups.** Despite the substantial public support beginning in the 1970s for penalizing employers who "knowingly" hired illegal aliens, employer sanctions were not adopted until 1986. However, the means to identify persons unlawfully in the United States were slipshod and the law, even as written, was not rigorously enforced. These compromises reflected different views of the many interest groups and public officials involved. Public opinion has been less supportive of legal immigration than Congress and more inclined toward strong measures to deter illegal immigration. Public opinion on immigration tracks reasonably well with local economic conditions: restrictionist views rise as the economy worsens. The correlation between growing unemployment and restrictionist sentiment shows up clearly in U.S. data for at least the last fifty years.

Generally, small-and-medium size businesses and fruit and vegetable growers in the southwest, especially California, favor increased immigration. They sought unsuccessfully to obtain a new temporary worker program in the last Congress. (They have not, however, supported an expansion of the existing H-2A program.) Agricultural growers of labor-intensive crops have had much success in the past in achieving their objectives in legislation, as the Special Agricultural Worker [SAW] and Replenishment Agricultural Worker [RAW] provisions of IRCA testify. Labor unions generally oppose substantial immigration. Mexican-origin persons legally resident in the United States are ambivalent and as likely to oppose as to favor large-scale immigration. There is no uniformity in the positions of similarly situated interest groups, but the broad outlines described above tend to prevail. Nongovernmental organizations [NGOs] vary in their views depending on their functions. There are anti-immigrant NGOs, pro-immigrant advocates, and others concerned with related issues, such as the protection of civil and human rights.

Many of the vocal interest groups have an ethnic orientation. At times, the immigration interests of one ethnic group conflict with those of others. For example, there is a large backlog of spouses and minor children of Mexicans legalized under IRCA, whereas the traditional backlog among legal Asian immigrants is more heavily weighted by siblings. Nevertheless, the NGOs of the two groups and their respective congressional caucuses have stuck together to fight against any reforms in legal immigration priorities. They have a common conviction that political empowerment is the best path for achieving their objectives, and this has led to a dramatic increase in citizenship applications of immigrants



legally in the United States. This particularly affects legal Mexican immigrants who, as a group, have heretofore been slow to naturalize.

**The 1996 United States Legislation.** The year 1996 was an active one for legislation concerning immigrants [see table VI.1]. The full extent of the legislation enacted in 1996 will not be apparent for many months. The new immigration legislation should be viewed in combination with two other laws passed in 1996, those dealing with welfare reform and antiterrorism. Some of the significant elements of these three laws (the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, i.e., the Welfare Act), coupled with related policy actions taken by the INS are summarized below in Table VI-1.

U.S. Supreme Court decisions have shifted away from the initial presumption that immigration officers are bound by traditional fourth amendment requirements enunciated in cases such as *Almeida Sánchez v. U.S.* (1973), and *U.S. v. Brignoni Ponce* (1975). These more recent decisions have allowed the INS considerable discretion in the conduct of workplace enforcement activities (*INS v. Delgado*, 1984), and more recently suggested that the fourth amendment may not extend to all unauthorized aliens present in the United States (*U.S. v. Verdugo-Urquidez*, 1990).

Migration is so prominent in Mexico's domestic and foreign affairs that a public stance is unavoidable. This need must be weighed against a long-standing tradition of noninterference in the domestic affairs of other countries. The way out of this dilemma has been to pursue certain objectives related to migration, but not to have a migration policy as such.

**Major Objectives and Strategies.** The Mexican government has pursued three major objectives over the recent decades: historically, and most prominent, the protection of the rights of emigrants; second, avoiding abrupt changes in U.S. immigration policy and in the flow of migrants; lately, in reaction to the recent negative U.S. climate against immigrants, seeking recognition for their contributions to the receiving society.

Until the mid-to-late 1980s, the Mexican government had a policy "to have no policy" on undocumented migration to the United States. This approach was

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**Table VI-1.**  
**1996**  
**Legislation**  
**Affecting**  
**Immigration**

1. Number of border patrol officers increased annually for five years, a provision that has particular effect on illegal immigrants from Mexico.
2. New triple fencing installed between San Diego and Tijuana.
3. At same time, entry of legal immigrants and border crossers from Mexico facilitated.
4. Old border crossing cards removed, to be replaced with new card with a biometric.
5. Expedited removal is carried out without hearing of immigrants illegally in the U.S., unless there is a credible asylum claim or two-year presence.
6. Distinction between exclusion and deportation abolished.
7. New areas created for which administration decisions cannot be reviewed by the courts.
8. This includes lack of judicial review of final orders of deportation for most criminal aliens.
9. In addition, definition of "aggravated felony" is expanded even if imprisonment is suspended.
10. Certain legalization class action suits pending in courts are no longer subject to judicial review.
11. Standards for suspension of deportation (now "cancellation of removal") made more restrictive and burden of hardship increased from extreme to exceptional and extremely unusual hardship and harm must be to a U.S. citizen, legal permanent resident spouse, parent, or child.
12. Criminal penalties for immigration violations enhanced.
13. Legal immigrants barred from usage of supplemental security income [SSI] and food stamps until they obtain citizenship. (Proposals to ease some of these provisions are pending.)
14. Legal immigrants entering after enactment of Welfare Act barred for five years from most federal means-tested programs, including Medicaid.
15. Welfare reform amended to provide certain exemptions for battered spouses and immigrant children abandoned by parents.
16. Immigration affidavits of support raised to 125 percent of poverty level and made binding on sponsors until naturalization or forty quarters of employment by sponsored alien.
17. Aliens made inadmissible as legal immigrants for 3 years if illegally present in U.S. for 180 days to 1 year, for 10 years if present for 1 year or more, permanently if previously convicted of an aggravated felony; plus other grounds for inadmissibility.
18. Pilot programs to verify employment eligibility implemented.
19. Persons unlawfully in U.S. are not eligible for social security benefits or post-secondary education.
20. Attorney General permitted to enter into written agreements with state and local agencies to perform functions previously exclusive to federal immigration agents.

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believed to suit the principle of mutual respect and recognition of both national sovereignties. This approach began to shift when Mexico started to liberalize its economy and play a more active role in world economic affairs, exemplified by entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and closer engagement with the United States in NAFTA. The cooperation and consultation with the Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development (Asencio Commission) was an early signal of increased Mexican engagement with the United States on migration issues.

Mexican authorities now lobby in the United States on political and economic matters, which they did not do prior to the NAFTA negotiating process. The Mexican government no longer operates solely via its Secretariat for Foreign Relations [SRE] communicating with the U.S. Department of State, but rather fans out across the spectrum of U.S. private interest groups, public agencies, and the Congress. The increased closeness of the economic relationship and its salience for Mexican economic recovery and growth also means that it is important to handle other problems in a way that avoids prejudice to economic cooperation. On migration, it is worth noting the participation of the Secretariat for Government Affairs [Gobernación].

**Public Perceptions.** Mexican public opinion and the media have become quite sensitive and critical of the way the two governments respond to migration. U.S. measures tend to be perceived not only as anti-immigration, but also as unfair to immigrants. This perception derives in part from a broad belief that the U.S. benefits even more than Mexico from Mexican migration. [See figure VI-1].

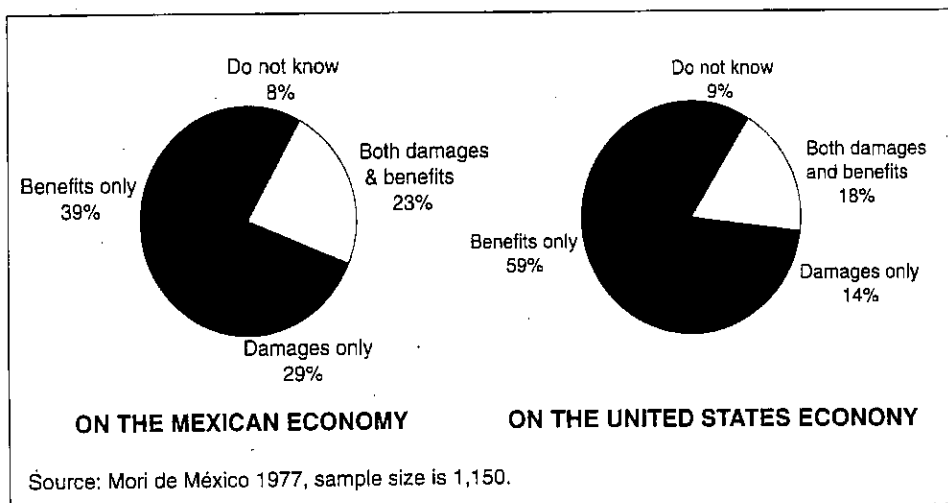


Figure VI-1  
Public Perceptions  
about the  
effects of  
Migration

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**Immigrant and Immigration Legislation.** Immigrants and immigration legislation in Mexico have a radically different significance than in the United States. Immigrants in twentieth century Mexico have been few in number and of marginal demographic significance. Foreigners usually have come to Mexico with capital and skills and, therefore, have had an impact disproportionate to their numbers. At various times, Mexico has received sizeable number of refugees, most recently from Central America. Central Americans also come as temporary workers. Central Americans, among others, also use Mexican territory in their transit to the United States. Immigration legislation emphasizes family connections and employment skills as a basis for admission, but also confers great administrative discretion on Mexican officials.

Mexican law requires that nationals demonstrate at departure that they have permission of the receiving country to enter. This requirement has not been enforced and probably is not enforceable, especially when departures take place away from designated exit points. For several decades, Mexicans have interpreted the constitutional right to free transit within Mexico as extending to the right to leave the country. This interpretation has not been tested by the Mexican judiciary, but there is a national consensus that the Constitution forbids the government from stopping the departure of nationals from its territory.

A feature of Mexican immigration legislation is that it indicates goals and priorities without going into much detail. Mexican immigration law gives great administrative discretion to the executive branch to decide whether particular decisions are consistent with the overall policy goals. However, most recently in 1990, 1992, and 1996, immigration legislation has been modified to liberalize the entry of certain categories of foreigners, particularly to facilitate the entry of business visitors, investors, technicians, professionals, and others to conduct business in Mexico—under NAFTA, special facilities are given to American and Canadian businesspersons—but at the same time to strengthen the criminal penalties for the smuggling of human beings.

**Responses to Mexican Communities Abroad.** Through the years, a sizeable Mexican community—Mexican citizens and Mexican-origin population—has been created in the United States. To strengthen the links between migrants, recent or earlier, and their country of origin, as well as to support some of their demands, the Mexican government has developed various responses for these Mexican communities. Consular, cultural, and business activities have been expanded. One of the most recent responses has been to change the norms regarding Mexi-

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can nationality. In December 1996, constitutional amendments were passed that when implemented will allow Mexicans to naturalize in another country and not automatically lose their Mexican nationality.

The bilateral interaction on migration issues has altered in recent years from a lack of consultation to considerable discussion between the two governments. Negotiating NAFTA required a shift in bilateral political relations. Mexico's earlier reflexive opposition to U.S. international initiatives has given way to a more cooperative relationship. The United States gave political relations with Mexico a higher profile, and showed increased receptivity to Mexican overtures.

Current  
Context

Economic-political contacts have been facilitated by embedding them in institutional arrangements. NAFTA created a number of such institutional arrangements and breathed new life into established consultation groups. The Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs of the Binational Commission is the single most important body for consultation on migration matters. In May 1997, when President Clinton visited Mexico, the Working Group discussion dealt with the exchange of information on migration policies and legislation, consular protection, and increased cooperation at the border. The Joint Statement on Migration adopted by the two Presidents signals a commitment to enhance bilateral cooperation in the management of migration.

The bilateral engagement has led to a number of unilateral and cooperative actions. Fast lanes were set up to facilitate crossing into the United States. The wait to cross at San Ysidro was reduced from two hours to twenty minutes. Cooperation to prevent drug smuggling was increased at the border. Grupo Beta is a Mexican effort to make the border safer. Mexicans participate in the Citizens' Advisory Panel on the U.S. side. There is a joint Border Liaison Mechanism. Both sides took steps to reduce smuggling of immigrants.

Based on the premise that economic development is the best and only long-term strategy to deter mass migrations, NAFTA is seen as a way to stimulate development and thereby slow emigration through enhanced employment and higher wages.

Currently, goods and services can pass more or less freely across the Mexico-United States border, as can capital—but not labor. NAFTA is a free-trade area, not a common market within which all factors can move freely. In the buildup

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to the NAFTA negotiations, Mexico raised labor inclusion, but the U.S. rejected this on the grounds that the Congress would not accept it.

There are proposals from time to time for a U.S. guestworker program with Mexico for the admission of less-skilled workers. A modest temporary worker program exists between Canada and Mexico. Such proposals recently have been suggested by some groups on the Mexican side based on the premise of more equal treatment of all factors —labor as well as capital— on the inability of Mexico to control emigration. They have also been proposed by some groups in the United States based on their inability to seal the border and the desire of some employers to have ready access to legal-temporary workers..

Despite the increased dialogue, disagreement between the two countries on migration issues increased dramatically as a consequence of the 1996 U.S. enactment of legislation on immigration, welfare, and antiterrorism. All these laws will affect Mexican nationals. This increased tension came on top of the U.S. debate on whether to certify Mexico as cooperating with the United States in combating drug trafficking. This combination of problems —drugs on the one hand, migration on the other— set back the cooperative atmosphere that had been developing. Although the Clinton presidential visit sought to mitigate the conflict, it remains under the surface.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

**M**exican migration to the United States is a long-standing phenomenon that remains complex and dynamic. In general terms, Mexicans in the United States fall into one of two migrant categories (sojourners or settlers) and in one of three legal conditions (unauthorized, legal immigrant, and naturalized citizen). Our results suggest that the total size of Mexican-born resident population in the United States in 1996 was 7.0 - 7.3 million persons. Of this population, legal residents accounted for about 4.7 - 4.9 million persons, about 0.5 million of whom were naturalized United States citizens. Unauthorized migrants accounted for 2.3 - 2.4 million persons. Estimates based on Mexican or U.S. data indicate an annual flow from 277,000 to 315,000 persons.

The characteristics of Mexican-born migrants differ systematically by migration pattern and legal status. This study demonstrates that, despite much continuity, the characteristics of migrants show increased diversity over time. Mexican-born migrants tend to have low skill levels, relative both to the U.S. population at large and to other migrant groups, although migration also absorbs a substantial portion of Mexico's skilled population. The low skill levels of most Mexican migrants reflect the demand for labor in sectors where Mexican-born migrants are employed and, in turn, are reflected in the low incomes and high poverty rates of Mexican born settlers in the United States. This situation is exacerbated by the unauthorized status of many of these migrants.

These changing characteristics are consistent with the increasingly diverse demand, supply, and network factors that are shaping migration flows. The catalyst for much of today's unauthorized Mexican migration for United States employment lies in the United States, but over time new factors have created a larger and more complex set of reasons that sustain the flow. The same tendencies that currently seem to be increasing and diversifying Mexico-United States migration flows may be dampened or reversed starting in the next five to fifteen years, reducing Mexico-United States migration.

There is substantial evidence of benefits to both the United States and Mexico from this migration, but the research also reveals costs to local communities and social sectors. Migration has repercussions through the labor market and supply and demand, through fiscal implications for national and local governments, and upon political and social institutions. In Mexico, the distribution of impacts are concentrated in a relatively small number of households, communities, and regions. The most important direct impact of migration is the income sent home

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to Mexico by migrants in the United States (i.e., remittances). In terms of the remittance income they provide, migrants are Mexico's third leading export after oil and tourism and ahead of agriculture. In addition, migrant financing of new investments and reduced pressure for internal migration provide benefits. Given low productivity and low returns to labor in Mexico, migrants are an important source of income, investment capital, and income insurance. The negative impacts take the form of loss of human capital, as well as the social disruption that comes when families are separated.

In the United States, owners of capital, that is business owners and investors, as well as consumers, clearly benefit from Mexican migration. This benefit comes at a cost, however, to certain categories of workers, particularly already-resident migrants whose wages have fallen with the competition of new migrants. In areas where Mexican migrant concentrations are extremely high, such as in certain cities along the southwestern border, wage depression and job displacement effects are evident. For the average United States region, however, even relatively large increases in Mexican-born labor have relatively small impacts on native workers. With regard to fiscal impacts, Mexican migrants do present significant costs to certain states and localities. These costs do not derive from disproportionate use of welfare programs, however. The empirical results indicate that Mexican-born households are no more likely to use welfare than either otherwise comparable native-born households of Mexican ancestry or otherwise comparable native-born households in general. Mexican-born use of education is the greatest cost, but this can also be seen as an investment in the future.

Responses to Mexican migration have evolved over time, often reflecting economic cycles in the two countries. The unintended consequences of policy changes have been significant and often at variance with the intentions of those policies. One recent example is the growing immigrant visa backlog prompted by family unification requests stemming from the legalization provisions of IRCA. In recent years, there has been greater engagement on migration policy. The Mexican government has shifted from a position of deliberate nonengagement on migration matters based upon the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries, to a stance of increasing dialogue with U.S. counterparts on migration issues. The bilateral engagement on migration began before NAFTA went into effect, but cooperation on this issue picked up after NAFTA facilitated a more elaborate framework for economic and political dialogue. Simultaneously, the United States is increasing efforts to control unauthorized entries. This has the potential for increasing binational tensions.



**The study findings support an enhancement of institutionalized and forward looking consultative mechanisms to identify and develop mutually supportive policy options.** Migration between Mexico and the United States is clearly a sensitive topic for both countries. Yet, finding effective ways to curb unauthorized migration that take into account both countries' commitment to foster human rights is essential. This topic requires, therefore, delicate management of the process that takes into account historical, demographic, economic, social, cultural, psychological, and political factors in both countries. Consistent with the greater dialogue and cooperation that has characterized United States-Mexico relations in recent years, and with the spirit of this study, it is important that both countries work together to explore policy options and initiatives that could be jointly undertaken to meet the needs of both countries and increase the information available about the migration phenomenon.

## **Policy Implications**

Although the catalyst for much of today's unauthorized Mexican migration is due to the attraction of United States jobs, demand, supply, and networks are all responsible for the continued migration and, thus, solutions are to be found in both countries. The United States and Mexican governments should jointly address the three factors that influence migration between Mexico and the United States—demand, supply, and networks. We have learned from past experience that a comprehensive approach is needed; addressing one of the factors will not achieve the desired results as long as other factors are present.

In recent years, the Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs of the Binational Commission has proven to be an important and effective forum for frank discussion of various migration issues. These discussions, however, have generally focused on alleviating the effects of policy decisions rather than on potential future policies within each country and their implications on each country's migrant and/or resident populations. We envision that this group's work would be supplemented with more frequent and structured conversations to: explore policy options, scenarios, and alternatives to handle migration; identify prerequisites to change; and determine foreseeable implications of the continuation of the current situation.

More specifically, the study team presents the following agenda of policy issues that should be considered by the Binational Commission Working Group on Migration and Consular Affairs:

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- **Determining the consequences of migration-related legislation adopted by each country.** Regular, joint monitoring programs could help identify the intended and unintended consequences of newly enacted migration legislation in a more timely fashion. In particular, study is needed on the trio of U.S. legislation passed in 1996 related to immigration: the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 [IIRIRA]; the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 [AEDPA]; and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 [Welfare Reform]. IIRIRA augmented border controls, required new pilot programs to test more secure forms of employment verification, clarified eligibility for public benefit programs, bars unauthorized residents from legal admission for three or ten years, and made sweeping changes in provisions for the removal of unauthorized migrants.

Study is also needed on the implications of changes to the Mexican Constitution related to nationality. Constitutional amendments were adopted in December 1996 that will allow Mexicans to naturalize in the United States and other countries and not lose their Mexican nationality. Once implemented, this provision could have notable impacts on naturalization patterns in the United States, as well as on return migration of Mexicans who become U.S. citizens.

- **Determining how best to address the demand, supply, and network factors precipitating continued unauthorized movements.** As research shows that the majority of Mexican migrants are economically motivated, both governments should focus their attention on this issue. For example, the governments should assess the extent to which the demand of U.S. employers can be reduced through enhanced enforcement of labor standards, including wage and hour requirements, child labor prohibitions, sanctions against the knowing recruitment and hire of unauthorized workers, and bars on discrimination based on national origin or citizenship. Also to be assessed would be the extent to which the supply factors motivating Mexican migration can be addressed through enhanced domestic economic development.

Means of reducing the efficacy of networks in promoting unauthorized movements also need attention. Networks have been strengthened in recent years through both the traditional contacts of relatives and co-

workers and new smuggling networks. Recent surveys find that many Mexican migrants attempting unauthorized entry into the United States now pay for "professional" assistance. Continued strong efforts by both governments against the smugglers could reduce these networks as well as the exploitation of the migrants that often occurs with smuggling.

These assessments of ways to address the combined demand, supply and network factors should recognize that dependence on immigration/emigration varies widely. Certain United States industries, occupations, and areas are more reliant on Mexican-born workers than others, just as Mexican regions, states, and communities differ in their dependence on the U.S. labor market. It may make sense to develop different tools in addressing demand in industries in which the employment of Mexican migrants is a long-standing practice versus those that are beginning to hire unauthorized workers. Similarly, different approaches may be justified in traditional versus nontraditional sending and receiving areas.

46 **Developing migration impact statements in both countries.** Migration is affected by more than immigration policy. Although the social and economic policies of the United States and Mexico historically have affected Mexico United States migration patterns, the U.S. and Mexico repeatedly have been surprised by the others' changes in policies that affect migration patterns. There often have been unintended consequences of policy and legislative decisions that potentially could be avoided or lessened through this type of mechanism. Migration impact statements, discussed during annual United States-Mexican consultations and throughout the year, might alleviate some of the impacts of such policies as land reform or trade policies and include some mid-to-long-range perspectives.

This recommendation echoes that of the U.S. Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development in 1990. That Commission called for U.S. government migration impact statements to prevent the shock of unanticipated migration such as the Caribbean migration following U.S. government increase in support for U.S. sugar producers. The feedback on these issues brought back by the delegations to their respective governments could be a useful addition to the debate of each country as it considers changes in immigration laws or policies.

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- **Encouraging and promoting binational research on issues that can best be resolved through joint data collection and analysis.** This study amply demonstrates the benefits of joint data collection and studies on demographics and economic and social impacts. Data limitations often constrained the teams' abilities to draw firm conclusions on many issues. The research findings were strengthened, however, by the ability to work on both sides of the border and compare various data sets. Combining the different techniques and perspectives of researchers from both countries further strengthened the research findings. The very changes in migration trends that this study has documented call for a continuing capacity and infrastructure to examine the issues raised in this report

Many of the most pressing questions about Mexican migrants simply have no adequate answers without data that track the same individuals over time. Without such data we cannot fully answer whether or not, or how, work experience and new skills lead to significantly better earnings either on return to Mexico or in the United States; how English skills at entry and Mexican American communities shape English ability over time; and, importantly, how schooling and parents' status affect the progress of migrant children.

More specifically, joint data collection and analysis would enhance understanding of demographic, economic, social, and political/civic trends in the two countries that affect migration. Cooperative efforts to collect data in a way that enables comparisons between the experiences of migrants and nonmigrants would greatly enhance the ability to report on the changing characteristics and impacts of those who move between the two countries. A fuller research agenda is included in Appendix A.

- **Identifying measures to accommodate, and even to facilitate, the demand for increased mobility between the two countries.** Surely the size of the Mexican born population legally in the U.S. alone creates a need for facilitated flows for family and commercial purposes. The process of deeper economic integration—in trade, finance and investment—also will increase the pressures to deal with the migration consequences of this process. The number of border crossings in the southwest already has grown in the last few years.

One issue for the Binational Commission to consider is the degree to which Mexico should be treated as a special case in U.S. immigration

policy (and vice versa), particularly given the existence of NAFTA and the long-shared border. The U.S. and Mexico already have begun to take measures to facilitate legal entry at the border, such as special lanes for frequent crossers. Prescreening of the applicants permits identification of those who are not likely to abuse the speedier inspection process.

The U.S. and Mexico, with Canada, also negotiated special nonimmigrant categories under NAFTA that allow for eased entry of business visitors, investors, intracompany transferees, and professionals. Canadians and Mexicans with a baccalaureate degree or appropriate professional credentials or experience may enter under the special TN visa rather than the numerically limited H-1B visa used to admit professionals from other countries. A transitional limit of 5,500 TN visas for Mexicans expires in 2003. Thereafter, an unlimited number of professionals who otherwise qualify for entry will be admitted.

The growing economic integration of Mexico and the United States calls for continued, systematic analysis of further arrangements that will facilitate trade, investment, and commerce between the two countries by facilitating the movements of people as well. The various barriers to easing constraints on legal movements also need to be identified and addressed.

- ✦ **Identifying mechanisms that maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of migration between the two countries.** As noted above, the study team recognizes that it is to the benefit of both countries to work towards eliminating unauthorized migration, which creates costs to both countries and makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation. The longer-term trends that suggest that emigration pressures may lessen in the years ahead are encouraging. In the interim, Mexican and U.S. policies should seek to capitalize on the economic return to migration to stimulate economic development. A thorough review of policies to identify how efforts to maximize the short term benefits and minimize their costs could be used to reduce the longer term pressures for migration.

From the sending communities perspective, considerations should be given to how to decrease costs of transferring remittances, encourage their use for productive investments, and help migrants use their U.S. working experience more effectively towards an economic return in Mexico. The cost of transferring remittances is often 20 percent of the amount trans-

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ferred, meaning that as much as \$1 billion is lost to the migrants themselves. Targeting more resources to poorer areas by reducing transfer costs, particularly if combined with new strategies to encourage their most productive use, may be one of the best ways to reduce migration pressures in the long term.

On the United States side, a long-term strategy to reduce unauthorized migration should consider policies that facilitate legal entry for those who are qualified for nonimmigrant and immigrant visas. The U.S. also should assess whether recently adopted policies are undermining the productive value of legal immigrants by withdrawing their eligibility for benefits when they are in need. The U.S. as well should consider how a more vigorous enforcement of labor standards could ensure that workers are paid full wages and work in humane conditions. Further, it should be recognized that excluding unauthorized children from school and basic health care may ultimately create larger costs for the society at large without substantially reducing the unauthorized flows. Both countries also should seek ways to facilitate transfer of school and health records as migrant children move from one country to the other.

- **Analyzing the advisability of a bilateral United States-Mexico foreign worker program, with due recognition that such a program is unlikely to be an effective remedy to unauthorized migration.** Perceptions in the United States and Mexico often differ widely regarding the ability of a temporary worker program to serve as a remedy for unauthorized Mexico-United States migration. We believe that the U.S. and Mexico should study the temporary worker idea very carefully to dispel myths about what might be involved in launching a new temporary worker program. Such a study is likely to puncture the notion that both sides easily could reach agreement on a truly binational program.

While there is still employer demand for Mexican workers, there are few "certifiable" labor shortages in the U.S. industries, occupations, and areas in which Mexican and other nonimmigrant workers are employed. In some of these immigrant labor markets, real wages have declined and work-related benefits have disappeared. Certification of the jobs currently filled by foreign workers is often the subject of litigation, and the use of legal nonimmigrant workers in these jobs may become more contentious as welfare reform augments the supply of unskilled U.S. work-

ers. There also may be less seasonality in many of the labor markets in which Mexican-born workers are employed than is assumed, making it difficult to expect or enforce worker rotation.

Moreover, history has shown that U.S.-sanctioned Bracero recruitment in the 1950s oriented many Mexican workers toward the U.S. labor market instead of toward local jobs and development. This began a tradition of migration, raised expectations, and set into place a baseline of individuals and families who would eventually reside permanently in the U.S. Although meant to be a temporary supply of workers, one unintended consequence was to create a resident population. Many have argued that a "temporary" nonimmigrant program would not be temporary and would lead to an increase in permanent residents. If temporary workers in the United States were to come from nontraditional migration areas in Mexico, new migration streams might be set in motion.

Today, when Mexico is modernizing its economy and promoting export oriented economic development, a Bracero program might make investors reluctant to invest in areas from which migrants leave for the United States, thus reinforcing migrants' dependence on emigration. There is as yet no convincing evidence that U.S. border and interior control efforts have reduced unauthorized Mexico-United States migration, so that opening a legal channel for Mexican temporary workers would probably add to, rather than substitute for, unauthorized workers, perhaps depressing conditions for legal Mexican-born workers in the U.S. labor market. Indeed, the Special Agricultural Worker program [SAW] legislated in IRCA had that effect. Even though hundreds of thousands of farmworkers received legal status, agricultural growers continued to hire unauthorized labor.

Finally, various temporary worker proposals voted upon by Congress in 1996 had little in the way of protections for either United States or Mexican workers. For example, the proposed legislation would have weakened recruitment, wage, and housing requirements in current farmworker programs. Also, 25 percent of the worker's wages would be withheld in a trust fund to be paid upon return—but only to the extent that the funds were not needed to cover health care costs associated with the temporary worker program. Such programs may "substitute legal for

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illegal workers," but it is not in the interest of either country to codify easily exploitable labor exchanges.

- **Addressing the social costs of migration, particularly regarding the separation and breakup of families.** Although there are not a great many studies on this issue, the information that does exist provides sufficient evidence that this is a serious issue needing attention. Migration too frequently has broken up families and left behind women and children and also lead children hoping for success as a migrant to leave their homes at a young age. Attention should be given to ways to alleviate the disruption/separation of families and the local economy and other social costs imposed by the migration. For example, the United States could seek ways to strengthen the family unit by eliminating the backlog of spouses and minor children awaiting family reunification (most of whom are Mexican). Further, the two governments could explore ways to identify and obtain support for families, mostly female headed, who have been deserted by migrating husbands/fathers.



The binational team's agenda for future research includes studies of:

## APPENDICES A. Agenda for Future Research

- **Demographic** issues, including the causes and consequences of differential fertility of Mexican-origin women in the United States and adjustment of their fertility behavior over time; the effects of intermarriage patterns on the assimilation of the Mexican-origin population; and the consequences of differential internal migration patterns by Mexican-born and United States born counterparts. Particular focus also is needed on Mexican immigration trends overall, as well as on: the demographic impacts of the IRCA legalization in both countries; the foreign-born populations' legal composition; modeling transitions among legal statuses; return migration, via surveys of relatives who emigrated from the U.S.; and migration-related interregional demographic changes in Mexico.
  
- **Economic** issues, including: whether capital and labor behave as substitutes and/or as complements; the scale effects resulting from concentrations of Mexican migrants in the United States; the reasons for the negative impacts of recent migrants on employment and earnings of earlier migrants; benefits and costs of migrants to particular industries and sectors of the economy; changes in welfare participation and levels of welfare based on duration of residence; the short and long-run fiscal impacts of legal and undocumented migrants from Mexico at the local, state, and national levels; the effects of NAFTA and other economic developments in Mexico on migration patterns and trends; Mexico's economic absorption of immigrants from other countries, including the degree to which new jobs generated in Mexico are taken by immigrants from other countries; better and more consistent estimates of costs of education, health, and social infrastructure related to migrants; the economic impacts of migration in nontraditional sending communities; the extent to which Mexican migrants working in the United States gain skills and capabilities that produce increasing benefits upon return; the contributions of remittances; the effectiveness of particular economic development strategies and programs on reducing migration pressures; and the relation between intensity of migration flow from communities and their economic and social performances over time.
  
- **Social** issues, including: the educational gains of the Mexican-born and their offspring compared to other immigrant groups; linguistic assimi-

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lation of the Mexican-born population and the implications of Spanish language maintenance; possible bias against female sponsors in the new sponsorship requirements in the U.S.; the impacts and costs of migration to family, culture, and community in Mexico; and Mexico's social absorption of immigrants from other countries.

- **Civic and Legal Rights** issues, including Mexican immigrants' decisions on whether or not to naturalize; human rights violations of Mexican migrants en route and in the United States and of third-country nationals transiting Mexico; the main obstacles to correcting human rights violations in both countries; and the advocacy efforts of industry, agricultural, environmental, human rights, ethic, and other groups on immigration legislation.

### B. Migrant Occupations, United States Labor Demand, & Border Crossers

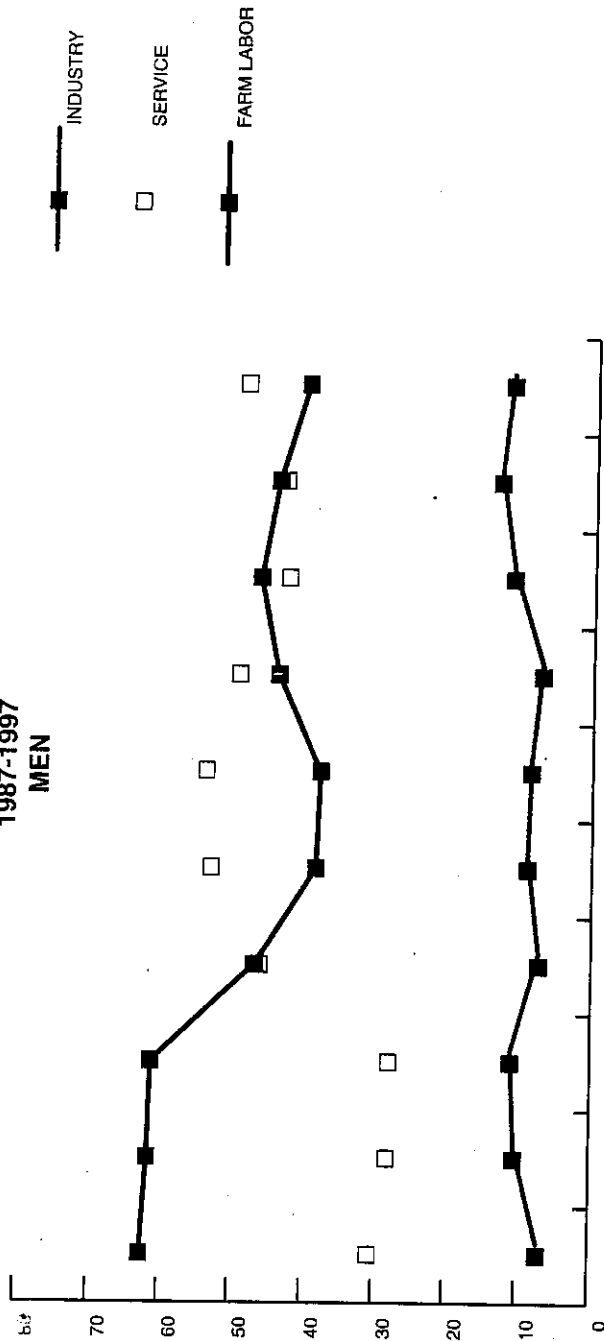
There appear to be substantial changes occurring in the U.S. occupations of migrants since 1988. There are notable gender differences in occupation. For example, Mexican-born male migrants appear to have shifted out of agriculture to some degree from 1988 to 1997 and into manufacturing occupations. Women migrants, however, remain unlikely to have been employed in agriculture and women are more likely than men to work in manufacturing and increasingly likely to find employment in service occupations.

These observations are based on the following graphs that draw upon questionnaires systematically administered from September 1988 to the present. The surveys were done in the cities of Tijuana, Mexicali, Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros. Unauthorized migration through Tijuana alone makes up an estimated 50 percent of the total flow from Mexico to the United States.

To determine the occupations in which migrants worked, the following questions were asked:

- (1) Have you had a job in the United States?
- (2) When did you leave your last job in the United States?
- (3) What type of occupation did your last job involve?

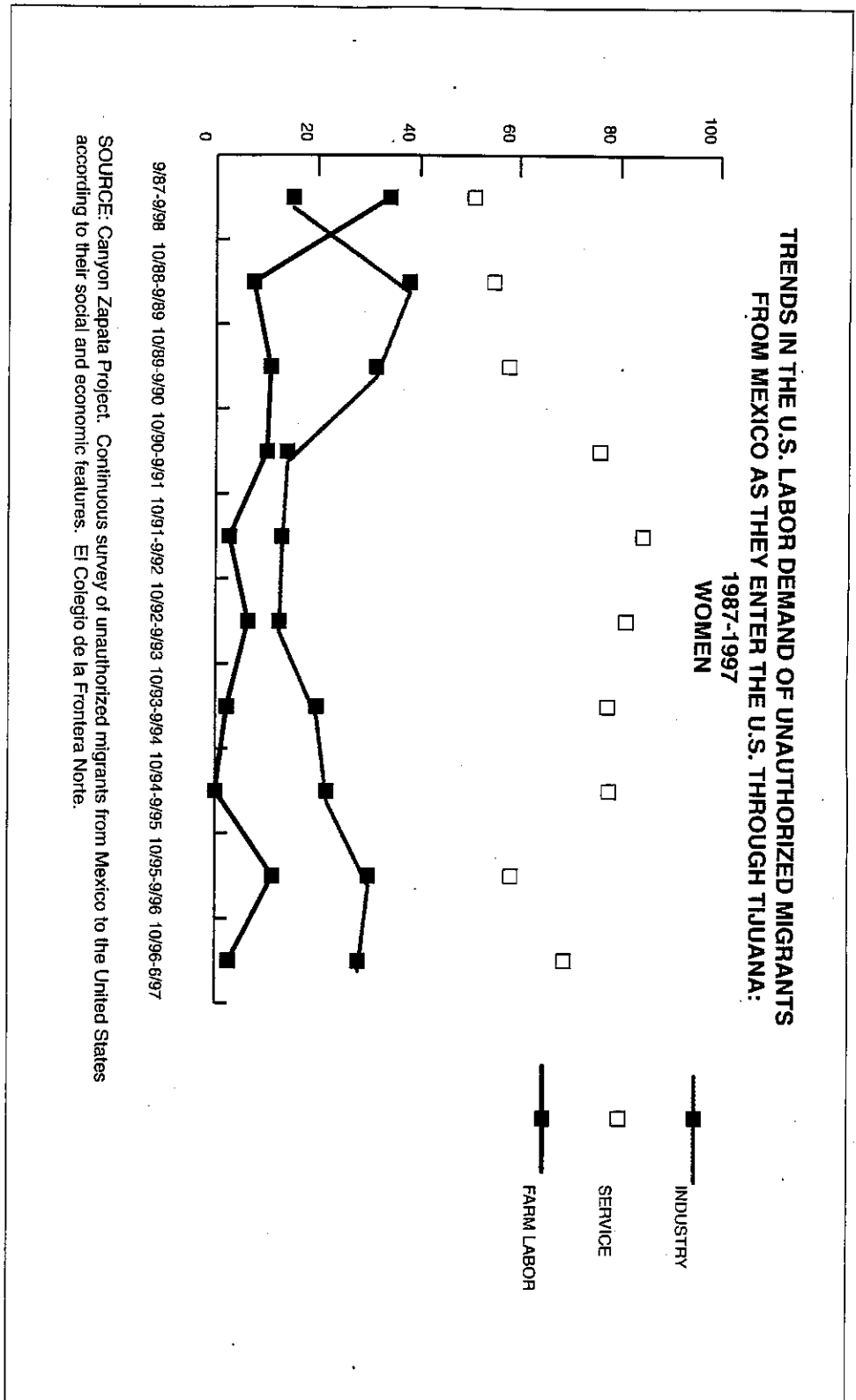
TRENDS IN THE U.S. LABOR DEMAND OF UNAUTHORIZED MIGRANTS FROM MEXICO AS THEY ENTER THE U.S. THROUGH TIJUANA: 1987-1997  
MEN



9/87-9/88 10/88-9/89 10/90-9/91 10/91-9/92 10/92-9/93 10/93-9/94 10/94-9/95 10/95-9/96 10/96-6/97

SOURCE: Canyon Zapata Project. Continuous survey of unauthorized migrants from Mexico to the United States according to their social and economic features. El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

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