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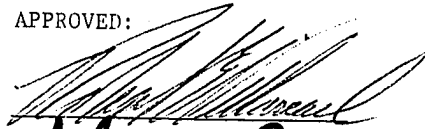
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PREVIEW

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND HISPANIC  
POLITICAL POWER IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND HISPANIC  
POLITICAL POWER IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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INTERN REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

### Scope

Newspaper headlines sensationally editorialize concern for the "invasion" of the United States by hordes of unwanted and illegal aliens.<sup>1</sup> The Los Angeles Times quotes the former Director of the CIA: "Colby Calls Mexico Bigger Threat Than Russia to the U.S." This article deduces that Mexico's population explosion and endemic poverty will force 20 million illegal aliens into the United States.<sup>2</sup> Even newspapers with a reputation for objectivity give way to hysteria over the alien issue. The New York Times recently entitled a Sunday editorial, "We've Lost Control of our Borders."<sup>3</sup>

Anachronistically, in the face of such jingoistic sentiment, scholarly books, journals and even government documents that address immigration issues are fond of quoting Emma Lazarus' sympathetic poem which is enshrined at the base of the Statue of Liberty.<sup>4</sup> Less well known, but more apt to current sentiment, are the defensive lamentations of Thomas Bailey Aldrich in the "Unguarded Gates,"<sup>5</sup>

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates  
And through them presses a wild motley throng

. . . . .

O liberty, white goddess, is it well  
To leave the gates unguarded...?

Have a care

Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn  
And trampled in the dust.

This study considers what many view as the unwelcome growth of the Hispanic minority in American society as a result of the large and continuing immigration of Mexicans and their relatively high fertility. Passing reference is made to Puerto Rican enclaves and to refugees from Cuba and other Latin American countries, but the focus is on Mexican immigration because of its preponderant effect.

In developing this theme, U.S. exclusionary policy is outlined in terms of its design and implementation. It is shown that powerful motivational forces, commonly known as "push" and "pull" factors, overwhelm effective implementation of immigration controls almost to the point of futility with respect to the Mexican-American border.

Despite the exclusionary features of U.S. immigration policy, large-scale immigration of Mexicans into the United States is the means recognized by both Mexico and the United States to defuse the dire consequences of overpopulation-bred unemployment in Mexico. Because of its size and continuing nature, as well as a degree of ethnic hubris, this immigration is not assimilative in terms of previous waves of immigration when the immigrants had little choice but to accept the English language and acculturate into the norms of the majority which displaced their own ethnic heritage.<sup>6</sup>

The Hispanic community is becoming increasingly independent of English language requirements and Anglo cultural norms which were formerly necessary for the economic survival of minority groups. Moreover, governmental recognition of minority rights gives substance to the political franchise and fosters linguistic and cultural independence.<sup>7</sup>

Given the volume, rapidity, and relentlessness of the growth of

the Hispanic minority in the United States, concomitant albeit uneven growth of Hispanic political power seems certain. The question is, upon what terms will this politicization develop, traumatically and confrontationally, peacefully and cooperatively, or somewhere in between these extremes? The potential for societal schism will be addressed. There is the historical memory of the Civil War as a terrifying example. Internal stability is a national imperative in a world of superpower confrontation.

#### Hypothesis

This study conveys an articulated hypothesis: (1) that the great wave of Mexican immigration results primarily from conditions of socioeconomic disparity which does not evidence signs of amelioration: and (2) the increasing size of the Hispanic minority, due largely to this continuing immigration and high fertility, offers the potential for greatly increased political power.

#### Theoretical Perspective

No single theory appears adequate to structure an analytical framework for the diverse issues which are considered in this study without torturous artificiality. An eclectic approach to analytical modeling should be more useful. Thus, a "push-pull-barrier" theory of migration is used to frame the constellation of forces which so powerfully motivates the Mexican migration. U.S. immigration policy, whose prin-

cial objective is regulatory, is subsumed within a theoretical framework of circularity which is characterized by the processes of policy formation, implementation, and evaluation. A variant of exchange theory, known as structural interdependence, fits the tacit understanding between the United States and Mexico with respect to this phenomenon of massive, continuing migration. Finally, the opportunity for increase in Hispanic political power is analyzed through the prism of U.S. politics and the humanist principles upon which they are based.

The theories which structure the analytical framework applicable to the major strands of this study are discussed within the appropriate chapters and in the chapter notes.

## PART I

### MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND THE U.S. RESPONSE

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE MEXICAN EMIGRATION IMPERATIVE

##### Analytical Framework and Setting

##### The Push-Pull-Barrier Theory

This chapter considers the migration of Mexicans into the United States with particular focus on those factors which motivate emigration.

Large-scale migration is a complex phenomenon that involves the motivation or factors within the sending country that "push" its citizens toward the receiving country and the attraction or "pull" of the destination country. There are also both physical and psychological barriers to migration.<sup>1</sup> The principal economic, demographic, political, and psychological push and pull factors and their interrelationships will be described as well as the barriers or obstacles to migration.

By way of further definition, push and pull factors<sup>2</sup> influence an individual's decision to move from one place to another. Push factors are associated with the place of origin. A push factor can be as mild a matter as difficulty in finding a preferred job or it may be as traumatic as necessity to escape persecution.<sup>3</sup>

Pull factors are associated with the place of destination. Kinship in the destination country exemplifies a pull factor. The push

and pull factors of unemployment in Mexico and job opportunity in the United States illustrate the interrelationship between these factors.

Besides push and pull factors, there are barriers or intervening obstacles which act as deterrents to migration: distance, trouble and cost of moving, difficulty in entering the destination country, and problems likely to be encountered on arriving.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Mexican migration to the United States, the distance that must be traveled by Mexicans is a function of their source location in Mexico and their destination in the United States. This varies from a few miles to thousands of miles.<sup>5</sup>

The activities of the U.S. Border Patrol are specifically designed to deny entry to undocumented aliens.<sup>6</sup> However, the relatively small size of its force and the great length of the border lessen the effectiveness of this institutional obstacle to migration.<sup>7</sup>

#### How Many?

The volume of the Mexican migration into the United States is in dispute. The news media in the United States is making the public increasingly aware that this influx is significant. Many of these immigrants do not have visa documents and therefore are classified as illegal or undocumented entrants.<sup>8</sup> Estimates of the numbers involved in this migration vary greatly, depending to an extent on the bias of the analyst or commentator.<sup>9</sup> The former Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), General Leonard Chapman, estimated that there were 16 million Mexican aliens in residence in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, which was appointed by President Carter to study this issue, reported:

The number of undocumented illegal residents in the United States remains uncertain...it is almost certainly below 6 million, and may be substantially less, possibly only 3.5 to 5.0 million...and Mexican nationals account for less than half of the undocumented/illegal population.<sup>11</sup>

Not surprisingly, the number estimated by Mexico's Technico Del Centro Nacional de Informacion is appreciably lower, in the range of 400,000 to 500,000.<sup>12</sup> The number who take up permanent residence is also a matter of contention. The U.S. Justice Department stated that about one-third of the Mexicans who enter illegally take up permanent residence in the United States whereas a noted migration authority, Professor Wayne Cornelius, estimated that less than 12 percent had settled permanently in the United States and fewer than 20 percent would remain in the United States if they could do so legally.<sup>13</sup>

The reality may be less important than the perception. Historically, public awareness and concern with respect to immigration issues have closely mirrored the state of the economy. During periods of high unemployment, such as is currently being experienced, immigrants become scapegoats who are blamed for economic and social ills. When the economy recovers, concern about immigration fades into the background and alien migrants are encouraged to fill gaps in the labor force.<sup>14</sup>

#### Motivation to Emigrate

It is useful to consider that there are a large number of factors which could induce massive migrations. History, including Mexican history and current events outside of Mexico, are replete with examples of such compelling motivating factors as political repression, persecution, famine, disease, war, overpopulation, and poverty.

Sometimes the motivation for migration is relatively identi-



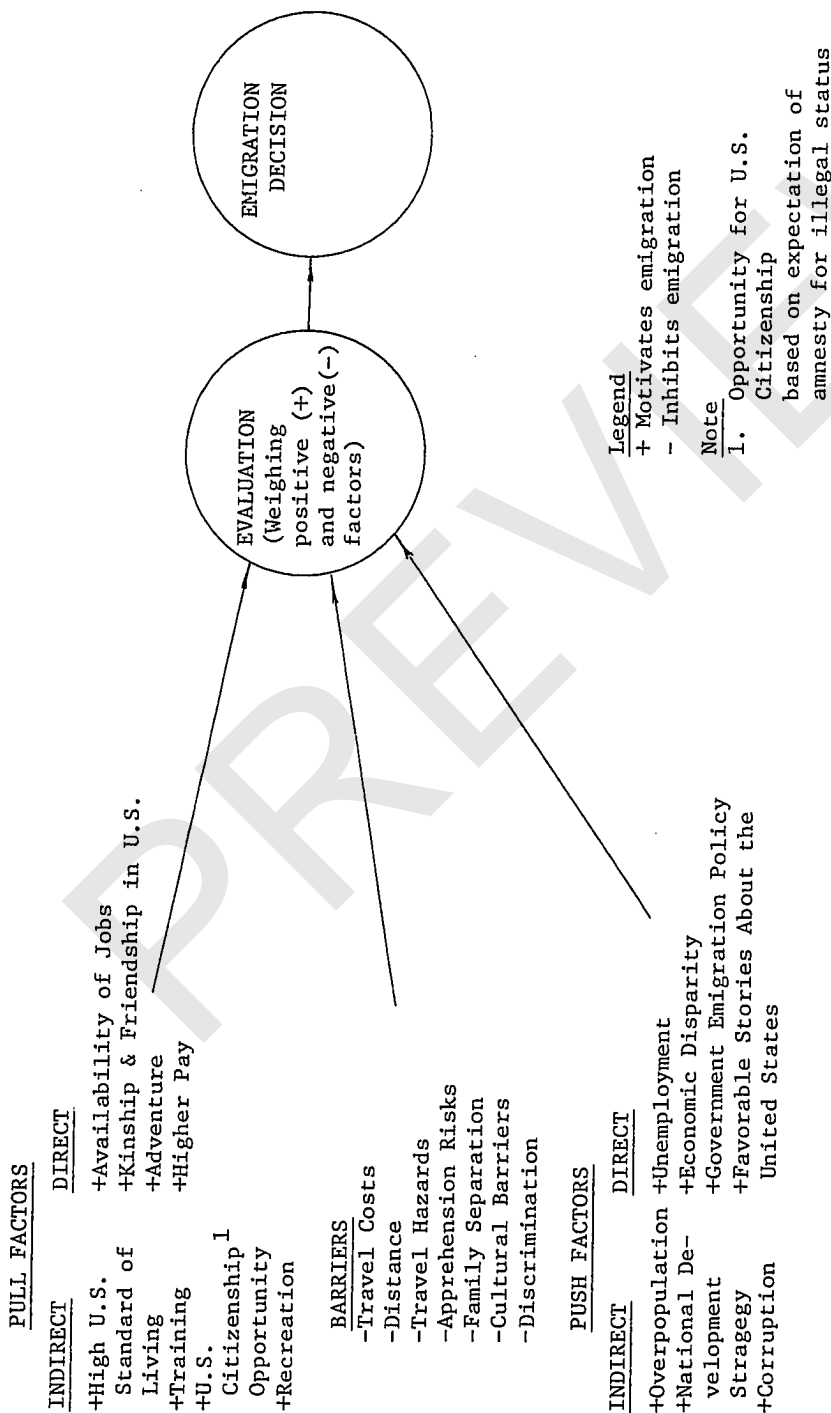
fiable and discrete, as in the case of Cuban refugees from the Castro regime.<sup>15</sup> The impetus for Mexican emigration is much more complex. It is a dynamic which is affected by the vast differential in economic opportunity and mobility available in Mexico and the United States.

The push and pull factors which are central to this chapter are multivariate in nature.<sup>16</sup> They will be presented in a sequence which first distinguishes those factors which bear indirectly on migration. Indirect push factors comprise: (1) Mexico's national development strategy which emphasizes capital-intensive industrialization and large-scale, mechanized farming at the expense of labor intensive means of production; (2) pervasive, institutionalized corruption in government which siphons off funds for private gain which could otherwise be available for economic and social development; and (3) greatly expanding population. These indirect factors intensify the effects of such direct push factors as: (1) large economic disparities between socio-economic classes; (2) high levels of unemployment and underemployment; (3) institutionalization of migratory work habits built on multi-generational experience in the United States; and (4) the Mexican government's policy of tacit encouragement of emigration of the unemployed. Consideration of these factors reveals their predominant economic foundation.

Ultimately, migration is based on individual decisions which weigh the push and pull factors and intervening obstacles.<sup>17</sup> Figure 1 presents a flow chart of how a decision to emigrate from Mexico to the United States may be conceived by the prospective emigrant. This process, in its manifold manifestation, lies at the root of the great influx of Mexicans into the United States.

Figure 1

DECISION FLOW CHART FOR UNDOCUMENTED MEXICAN EMIGRANTS



## Mexico's Development Strategy and Its Legacy of Disparity

### Capital-Intensive Development

The economic development process in Mexico has proceeded on the basis of a model of import-substitution industrialization. In this type of development, the output of goods and services reflects an imitative demand which is dynamic and diversified, but small. Due to the characteristics of the products and technological processes implicit in such demand, the productive structure has become capital-intensive and concentrated. Under these circumstances, the growth and increase in industrialization have fallen short of what is needed to transform the country's economic structure and utilize its vast labor resources.<sup>18</sup>

As a result of underutilization of labor, Mexico's development strategy has greatly increased the poverty of the working class in both urban and rural areas, making their social conditions unstable and unpredictable. Thus, for the greater masses of Mexicans, the "economic miracle," which was so widely acclaimed to describe the increase in gross national product since World War II, has not relieved their poverty. The factor which reveals that the results of greater productivity gained through technology is highly concentrated is the extreme polarization of the society along class lines. With an excess labor supply, wages have remained low, even in the face of inflationary pressures and unemployment has reached a high level.<sup>19</sup>

The Mexican industrialization process reflects stages of development in more advanced economies, coinciding with the freeing of the rural population from the hacienda and the redistribution of farmlands. Thus a large domestic labor pool has been created and, through internal

migration, has become available to the urban labor market. Concurrently, this process has taken place at a time of rapidly increasing population. There is, then, a pronounced trend toward decline in the absorption of the work force by the economy; in a word: unemployment.<sup>20</sup>

Although every process of industrialization is a capital accumulation process, the form and timing that has been adopted for it in Mexico have promoted a seemingly permanent imbalance between the productive structure and the supply of workers. This development strategy emulates the modernization and development patterns followed by the industrialized countries of the West, but for Mexico it has resulted in growing foreign dependence and also marginalization of a significant portion of the population. Moreover, the rigidity of the Mexican economic system, especially with regard to the possibility of employment, prevents satisfaction of newly acquired, modern consumption aspirations. This makes the prospect of emigration an attractive alternative for many Mexicans.<sup>21</sup>

#### Oil's Promise and Disappointment

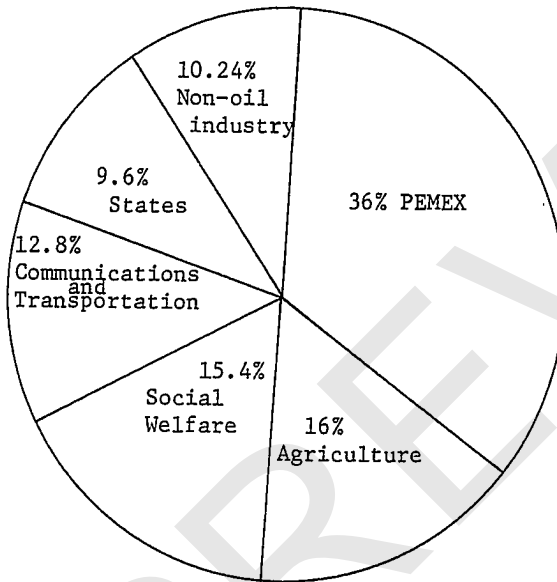
Few nations have experienced mineral booms as numerous or as rich as Mexico's: gold, silver, uranium, and now petroleum in fantastically large deposits.<sup>22</sup> Development, in the sense of creating the economic and social conditions that improve the lives of a nation's people, requires wealth. Mexico's bonanza in hydrocarbons provides the potential for great national wealth. Its use to improve the socioeconomic health of the nation will require more political will and economic acumen than have been demonstrated in the past if presently increasing social and economic ills are to be overcome.<sup>23</sup>

An immediate disappointment with respect to petroleum discovery, extraction, and refinement in developing countries--and Mexico is no exception--is that there is very little requirement for untrained workers in the development of oil fields or in the building and operation of refineries. Once the fields are operating, even fewer workers are needed.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, petroleum development is vastly expensive. In Mexico's case, heavy foreign borrowing has been necessary to finance this development.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 2 illustrates the high cost of equipment and expertise which is required to develop petroleum resources. 36 percent of Mexico's petroleum revenues in 1981 is allocated to the PEMEX investment program while only 15.36 percent is channeled into social welfare. As a result, expectations that petroleum revenues could be used in a substantial fashion to alleviate socioeconomic disparities are frustrated. This provides potential for political stress and thus the petroleum resource, which provides the greatest economic prospect for advancing Mexico's development, is currently a psychological liability of major dimension. The extent to which radical and other opponents of the regime can capitalize on this issue depends in significant measure on the ability of the leadership of the PRI to articulate persuasive explanations of the distribution of petroleum revenues represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

ALLOCATION OF MEXICO'S PETROLEUM REVENUES  
IN 1981



Source: "Economic Policy Guidelines for 1981," Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, Ministry for Programming and Budget, Comercio Exterior de Mexico, English ed., (February 1981), pp. 67-74.

President Lopez Portillo addressed this problem in his Third State of the Nation Report. He noted that the capital for petroleum development had to be borrowed from foreign sources and since these obligations had to be paid back first in order to ensure that more funds would be forthcoming, it may be years before Mexico's internal infrastructure can benefit substantially from its petroleum resources.<sup>26</sup>

Mexico's development strategy is deepening class divisions because of the increasing disparities which are being created between the rich oligarchy (including suitable provision for bureaucratic satraps)

and the poor industrial landless peasants.<sup>27</sup>

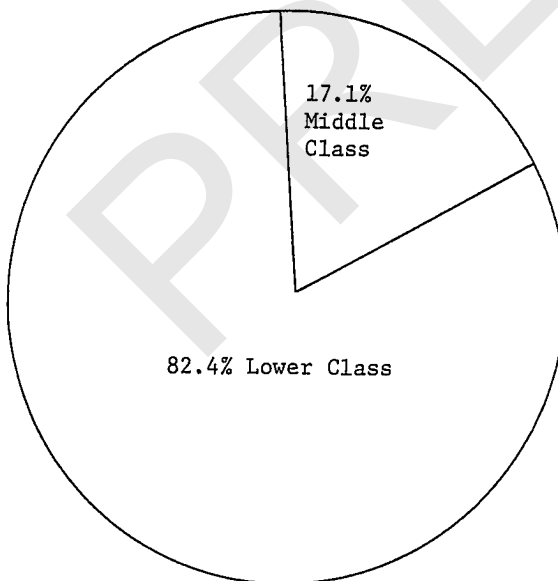
### Economic Disparities

The combined processes of economic growth, industrialization, and demographic change have impacted on Mexico's class structure. As depicted in Figure 3, the upper class is exceedingly small. It comprises only one-half of one percent of the population and it has shifted its locus from the countryside to the city as the traditional hacendado has been transformed into the industrialist and banker.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 3

#### CLASS STRUCTURE IN MEXICO

0.5% Upper Class



Source: Peter H. Smith, Labyrinth of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 39-49.

The middle class increased in size to roughly 17 percent. Most significantly, the middle class has achieved a high state of privilege as a result of its symbiotic relationship with the upper class.<sup>29</sup>

The lower class, consisting of the manual workers and the vast army of the unemployed, comprise over 80 percent of the population. It has become increasingly urbanized and has not shared proportionately in the benefits of economic growth. As the "Mexican miracle" progressed, the share of income accruing to the lower class decreased.<sup>30</sup> This has given rise to a powerful motivation for emigration to the United States to enable the earning of a living wage.<sup>31</sup>

### Institutionalized Corruption

#### Morphology

Corruption can be defined as the illegal use of public power or funds to serve private ends. It constitutes an indirect and insidious push factor for emigration because of its subterranean but no less powerfully destructive effects on the economy through diversion of public funds and services to the privileged at the expense of the lower class.

The Mexican government and its one-party support system<sup>32</sup> are so thoroughly enmeshed in the national economy by means of the comprehensive system of state enterprises (paraestatales) that it is difficult to distinguish between government and private sectors.<sup>33</sup>

Since political processes in Mexico do not produce the effluence of documentation and critical analyses which are evident in the United States and other democracies where these processes are more openly conducted, financial accountability in Mexico is not subject to thorough-