

INSTITUTO TECNOLÓGICO Y DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE MONTERREY

ESCUELA DE GRADUADOS EN ADMINISTRACIÓN PÚBLICA Y
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Gringos in the tropic: a study of Americans in Mexico



Andrew Peter Stiling

CVU

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Asesor: Dr. Lee Sundholm

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Resumen: En esta tesina, voy a discutir la historia de los estadounidenses en México, la situación actual de ellos que residen hoy en día en México, y, en general, la manera en que esta situación es parte de un mundo globalizado. La migración de profesionales no recibe mucha atención en la academia. ¿Por que deciden ellos salir de un país rico a países más pobres? Y, dado su presencia en la historia de México, ¿qué es el futuro de los estadounidenses en México?

Abstract: In this paper, I will discuss the history of American migrants in Mexico, the Americans that are currently residing in Mexico (with a special emphasis on retirees), and, in general, the way that this is part of a more globally connected world. The migration of skilled professionals who leave a country out of free choice is not as commonly discussed. What drives those who are already “comfortable” to pursue life in a developing country? And, given their numerous and historic presence in various times throughout Mexican history, what is the future of Americans in Mexico?

Introduction:

When the topic of migration between the United States and Mexico comes up, the majority of the discussion, understandably, regards migration from Mexico to the United States. According to data from the Pew Center, approximately 150,000 Mexicans migrating annually to the United States. However, a topic that receives much less investigation, but still has a very significant impact in certain communities, is the migration of Americans (those from the United States of America) to Mexico. These migrants have played very significant roles in the history of Mexico at times, and they continue to be a meaningful presence today, including increasingly as retirees. In this paper, I will discuss the history of American migrants in Mexico, the Americans that are currently residing in Mexico (with a special emphasis on retirees), and I will discuss, in general, the important themes that have arisen from this migration. Migration study is often focused on the poor or oppressed. That being said, migration of skilled professionals is not as commonly discussed. What drives those who are already “comfortable” to pursue life in another country? How has inbound migration affected a country that also has had a very high-rate of outbound migration? And, given their numerous and historic presence in various times throughout Mexican history, what is the future of Americans in Mexico?

Through analysis of literature on these topics, as well as interviews I conducted with Americans currently living in Mexico, I hope to enlighten the reader about the small but significant phenomena of “north to south” migration; that is, migration from the United States to Mexico. The primary method of analysis will be a synthesis of the literature on the topic. I have spent a great time searching for primary source documents regarding the topic, and have had some success in finding those. Further success has been achieved through a reading of the literature on the topic. Many scholars have written very insightful books and papers on specific topics in the area. In this paper, I hope to encapsulate what they have written and give a broad overarching story of the American experience in Mexico, from the two nations’ beginnings in the late 18th and early 19th century, up to the modern day. I also have worked hard to do my own primary research on this topic, most notably by interviewing Americans now living in Mexico. Using a cross-section of gender, age, and location, and using my insight as an American who resided in Mexico City from 2009 to

2010, I believe I have discovered some common themes shared by all Americans currently residing in Mexico.

There are a few major themes that I have seen in my research that will be discussed throughout the essay. The first theme is the notion of opportunity. Just as millions of Mexicans have migrated to America in search of opportunity, so too have Americans embarked on their southbound journeys with the same desires. Another major theme is the challenge of integrating in a new culture. This has been a challenging topic for American expatriates in Mexico for hundreds of years. The final theme I've seen is the way in which the American presence in Mexico is related to globalization. I define globalization to be "the shrinking of the world". By that I mean that actions outside one's own national borders are increasingly more important to success inside those borders. It is increasingly more difficult to not be tied into global threats and opportunities. These three themes allow the reader to best understand the experience of the American in Mexico.

Chapter 1: Topic Overview

Issues of Migration:

In their study of international migration, Massey, et al., discuss what drives people to migrate across national borders. The common macroeconomic neoclassical theory states that this phenomenon occurs due to differences in the supply and demand of labor. In other words, they are driven by financial incentives, and the opportunity for a better life. As this continues, differences diminish over time. A microeconomic theory is that people migrate due to the expectation of a “positive net return”; primarily, though not always, monetary. Modern theory discusses the notion of not just individual actors, but households acting collectively. As will be shown later in this paper from the interviews I conducted, one thing that drives migrants from wealthy countries to developing countries is the sense of opportunity, and the sense that, as a result of coming from the wealthy country, they will receive more respect and professional opportunity in the developing country. Additionally, they might feel that the marketplace in their home country is “saturated”, and they feel that greater opportunity exists in less-developed markets.

Migration is often thought of as a phenomenon only done by the poor and downtrodden. However, that is an extremely oversimplified view of many who migrate. Skilled labor often migrates as well, for either professional or personal desires, even when migration is not necessary and suitable employment is already available in their native country. Many Americans moved to Mexico when American companies opened offices in Mexico and these companies needed professionals with knowledge of the company to staff these offices. These expats were enticed by the professional development opportunities and generous salary and benefit packages, as well as the intrigue of living in a new country.

Steven Vertovec wrote a paper on the migration of these skilled laborers. Pre-migration networks are extremely beneficial to these laborers, as they “provide potential migrants with many resources that they use to diminish the risks and costs of migration: information about procedures (technical as well as legal), financial support, job prospects, administrative assistance, physical attendance, emotional solidarity” (Vertovec, 2002, p. 3). These are all quite helpful in ensuring a smooth transition. Just as technology has aided the ease for migrant retirees, so too has it for migrant professionals. Popular programs exist to

ease the transition. In Mexico City, there are numerous clubs to aid expatriates here, including the American Society of Mexico, the Newcomers Club of Mexico City, and Mexpats, a social group dedicated to the expatriate community in Mexico City.

The migration of American professionals abroad has been portrayed in a number of mediums. Two that stand out include Whit Stillman's 1994 film "Barcelona" and "Outsourced," a sitcom that premiered on NBC in the fall of 2010. The former tells the story of an American salesman who is sent to Barcelona to work for an American corporation. The confusion of cross-cultural relationships is a common theme throughout the film, as well as the misunderstanding that can occur when two cultures interact. The latter tells the story of Todd, an American thirty-something that is sent to India to manage a call center. Again, the cultural misunderstandings are a common theme, as is the reception of Todd's parents to his decision to move to India. They can't seem to understand why someone would want to leave America to move to a "developing" country. Among other things, Todd feels content in his decision since he is in a managerial position that he would not have had in America at such a young age.

A final source of popular culture reference on Americans living abroad, and specifically for our study on Americans living in Mexico, can be found in the novel Mexican High by Liza Monroy. The novel tells a story told from the point of view of an American female high school senior who moves to Mexico City for her final year of high school along with her mom, who has been sent to Mexico City to work in the US Embassy. The novel is semiautobiographical, as Monroy herself experienced that exact same situation when her mom was sent to Mexico City to work for the US Embassy. In the novel, the protagonist studies at the American School, a school I will later discuss. The novel shows that this school, while containing some American expat students, is nowadays dominated by wealthy Mexican students. The American students are often treated as outsiders by the Mexican students, and in the modern composition of the American School, the average Mexican students is wealthier than the average American student.

The protagonist, who came from a middle-class background, was stunned to find herself in a world of such wealth, where drugs and partying were widespread and the students would jet off to exotic Mexican beaches on a regular basis. In most instances, American professionals abroad often find themselves surrounded by the wealthy of more

unequal nations, and thus can be very surprised at what they find. For instance, whereas very few families in America have housekeepers, most professional families in Mexico do have housekeepers. Many Americans at time have reported feeling uncomfortable about someone in their house who is providing so many services for them, and yet still receiving a rather low salary (at least in terms of what Americans think of as a fair salary for those services).

Foreigners in Mexico:

The participation of foreigners in Mexico's economy had a significant history before President Díaz. Germans had developed numerous coffee plantations in Mexico as early as the 1840s, barely thirty years into Mexico's existence as an independent country. During the Díaz presidency, finance minister Jose Limantour favored European development; perhaps believing Europeans would be less imperialistic in Mexico than Americans. British magnate Weetman Pearson was given a very lucrative contract to operate a railroad linking the Tehuantepec Isthmus, a strip of land in eastern Mexico that was the shortest passage between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. Later in 1906, he was given access to very valuable oil contracts in Mexico.

Intense activity by British speculators is of particular noteworthiness. This activity was in its peak from the 1820s to 1850s, a time when British merchants "virtually controlled the external and wholesale trade" in Mexico (Heath, 1993, p. 262). Given the lower costs of living and more favorable climate, these merchants lived opulently compared to the life available in London. Seventeen British merchant houses were operating in Mexico by 1826, focusing most intensely on the mining sector but also the textiles industry. By the end of the eighteenth century, Americans would have a more commanding role in Mexico, but Heath does note that "The ability to extend long-term credit was one of the factors that allowed the British to dominate foreign trade, in Mexico and elsewhere, for much of the nineteenth century" (Heath, 1993, p. 272). These credit conditions were much more favorable than those available in America at the time. However, the US did build its strength as an international economic power during this time by, among other things, serving as a "holding station" for goods exported from Mexico and heading to Europe, and vice versa.

Given its strategic geographic location, it would seem inevitable that if the United States' economy were to ever match Britain's economy, it would be the leading foreign player in Mexico, and for that matter, the rest of Latin America. As a precursor to what would be Mexico's dominant political economy theme for the twentieth century, it is also worth mentioning that "the wealthiest of British merchant houses, however, were those that became heavily-but judiciously-involved in government businesses" (Heath, 1993, p. 288). As we have seen, success in Mexico depended quite heavily on approval, both official and implicit, from the governing officials. The final verdict of these merchant houses seems to go along with the prevailing anti-colonial sentiment: "The record of the British commercial houses over roughly four decades of operations shows little significant contribution to Mexico's economic development" (Heath, 1993, p. 289). Fraud was widespread, hurting local businessmen and depriving the still-nascent country of much needed government revenues, and the merchants' use of government funds to finance their operations often left Mexico's public finances in precarious states.

The Mexican government, perhaps purposely or not, was not able to harness the skills that foreign entrepreneurs had (primarily technological and financial) in order to develop the country through better infrastructure, fairer regulations, using their capital to diversify the economy, greater opportunity for Mexicans, and so on. For a relatively large country with a plethora of natural resources, Mexico in the 1860s (and most would argue today as well) was still a country that severely was unable to reach its productive capacity. These circumstances raise a valuable question for those looking for optimal economic policy for a developing economy.

On the one hand, the ultimate failure of Mexico's Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) program by the 1980s showed that attempting to close an economy and have it be state-directed was an experiment that was eventually bound to fail.¹ But we also see that in many cases, foreign enterprises and investors, who generally arrive focusing only on immediate profits with little to no regard for long-term development throughout the economy as a whole, can destabilize a still-developing economy. Any government faces the

¹ ISI is an economic policy with the notion that countries should reduce their dependence on other countries by erecting barriers and attempting to develop domestic industries. ISI began in Mexico in the 1930s, and was in place during the economic success in the postwar era. In the 1970s, the government greatly increased public spending, fueled primarily by growing oil revenues. However, this source of funding fell greatly in the 1980s, and the country was in great debt. The industrial sector by that point was quite uncompetitive.

difficult problem of protecting its nation from reckless foreign investors while also maintaining its attractiveness to said group in order to use these foreigners' talent and resources to achieve sustainable and meaningful development of the domestic economy.

It is worth contrasting the British experience in Mexico with the American experience in America. For the British, Mexico was simply another outpost in their dominant 19th Century empire. They did not have any particular affinity for Mexico, and even though Mexico was never under British rule, commercially, Mexico was simply another link in their global quest for wealth.

When the British Empire was declining, the number of Brits declined as well, and by the 20th Century, Americans were the dominant foreign presence in Mexico. Americans held a much more personal connection, and eventually came to view Mexico as part of a greater America. Many American states were previously under Mexico control, and even one American state has Mexico's name in it. With the approval of NAFTA in the 1990s, the US, Mexico, and Canada, in economic terms at least, basically become one zone. This has certainly been accentuated by the millions of Mexican migrants who have moved to America. Scores of them have stayed, and many of them feel fully Mexican, and fully American. These second and third-generation Americans love their trips back to their native regions of Mexico, but still consider themselves fully American, and plan to make their life, and their childrens' lives, in America. More and more, America and Mexico, at least in economic terms, are on a shared path.

A Brief History of Mexican-American Relations:

The first noteworthy presence of Americans in Mexico came from American diplomatic officials, shortly after Mexico's 1810 independence, following the 1776 independence of the US. Later on the essay, I will talk about the increasingly shared path that the two nations are now embarking on, but it is worth remembering that, in a relatively small window, both countries gained their independence from European colonial powers. American diplomatic relations with Mexico begin in 1823, and Joel R. Poinsett was the first Envoy to Mexico, starting his service in 1825. The title was formally raised to Ambassador in 1898. Certainly the most historic event in the relationship between the two countries was the war fought between them from 1846 to 1848. This war resulted in

Mexico being forced to cede approximately half of its territory to the United States. American citizens returned to Mexico later in the 1800s for business purposes, and despite leaving in large numbers after the Mexican Revolution of 1910, Americans continued to return once the chaos had settled down.

Mexican pilots flew combat missions alongside American pilots in the Philippines during World War II. American corporations opened more and more operations in Mexico in the second half of the twentieth century, as the Mexican market became too large to ignore. The 1994 implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States, Canada, and Mexico resulted in a virtually free market between the three countries.² Many American companies opened factories in northern Mexico after the agreement was approved. Prior to the 2003 Iraq War, Mexico was the home of America's largest embassy, and Mexico's Embassy in Washington, D.C. is that country's largest, complimented by extensive networks of consultants in both countries. Andrew Selee provides a very concise and insightful overview of the relations between the two countries. He is prescient in noting that while "Mexicans are apt to worry about the United States' role in their country, Americans frequently forget about their neighbor to the south" (Selee, 2010, p. iii). Having said that, a recent positive trend in the relationship between the two countries has been seen in the improved coordinated efforts to fight drug trafficking. The relationship between the two governments as of the end of 2010 can be described as warm. Additionally, the United States government gives great financial support to the Fulbright Program. This program sends numerous recent American college graduates around the world for a year to study and work, and a large portion of graduates in this program head to Mexico. The experience of this group is generally positive, based on my observations, and they appreciate the opportunity to immerse themselves in Mexican culture. Based on casual conversations with these students over the past two years, it is clear that what most drew them to Mexico was the importance of having a meaningful international economic experience. These young twentysomethings recognized the changing paradigm before them. The economy was becoming increasingly globalized, and

² Negotiations for NAFTA began in 1986, and were negotiated by American presidents from both parties. The leaders of the three nations ceremonially signed NAFTA in 1992, but the approval still needed to be approved by each country's legislature. The US legislature approved the agreement in December of 1993, after much contentious debate.

the workplace would require those with skill sets who could succeed in this increasingly globalized world.

Though most Americans I have talked to were happy with their decision to move to Mexico, they still admitted frustration with the cultural differences. In general, they did feel like outsiders, and found frustrations with attempts to make friends with other Mexicans their age. Language generally wasn't a barrier; it was more of a case of cultural differences. In light of this, I think that it is worth taking a moment to consider the work of Geert Hofstede, a researcher who studied the dimensions of national cultures.³ In 1980, he released a book comparing different national cultures. There are four key dimensions to a national culture. The first dimension is power distance, a measure of inequality that gages the way that both leaders and followers accept and distribute power. The second dimension is uncertainty avoidance, and it deals with how much a society tolerates ambiguity. The third dimension is individualism, the notion to which individuals either focus on themselves, or focus on the society at large. The fourth dimension is the amount of masculinity in a culture.

In the first instance, compared to America, Mexico is a society that has much greater power distance. Of course the level of income inequality is much higher in Mexico, and in this measurement, Mexico is one of the most unequal countries on Earth. And historically, Mexican governments have had a much more powerful role in society. Additionally however, in the workplace, the Mexican boss has a much stronger authority. Compared to the United States, Mexico has much more of a top-down hierarchal workplace. Employees are discouraged from questioning their superiors.

In the second instance, uncertainty avoidance, Mexicans are much more ambiguous about details and planning than Americans. An extremely common word in Mexico is *ahorita*, which means in a little bit. However, this word could mean "in five minutes", "in an hour", or, if the responder is trying to avoid the subject, it could mean "never". Americans in Mexico often find themselves frustrated by the vagueness of scheduling and planning.

In general, Mexico is much less of an individualist country. The family itself is much more important, with a very high percentage of Mexicans living with their parents

³ Hofstede himself was an expat that had worked for a multinational corporation (in this case, IBM).

well into their twenties and thirties. And Mexican society sees itself as a common people in a common struggle. The political and economic policies of the 20th Century greatly reflected this, as the government dominated the business sector.

Finally, masculinity is certainly higher in Mexico than in the US, but that is definitely changing. The gender income gap is still definitely higher in Mexico, and women generally receive less education, especially in rural areas. Sexual harassment laws are still not as strong as they are in the US, and women in Mexico often do not have many outlets to raise issues. However, at least in terms of my educational experience in Mexico (albeit at an elite private university), gender discrimination was not an issue. Hopefully Mexican society at large can continue to increase gender equality in all areas.

The American Embassy in Mexico continues to be one of the most important American embassies in the world. Given the heightened concern about drug trafficking between the two countries, it is vital that the two countries continue their strong relationship. American President Barack Obama and Mexican President Felipe Calderon maintain a strong relationship, as do their respective first ladies. Visits between the two heads of state have been very meaningful, and President Obama's first official State Dinner was held for President Calderon. In the spring of 2010 American First Lady Michelle Obama visited Mexico by herself, her first solo travel abroad as first lady, and was warmly received. While here, among other things, she gave a speech at one of Mexico's leading private universities. Currently, there are American consulates in Ciudad Juarez (the epicenter of the current wave of violence in northern Mexico), Guadalajara (Mexico's second largest city), Monterrey (Mexico's third largest city and a leading industrial city), and six other cities in Mexico.

Chapter 2: Americans in Mexico

Review of Available Data:

Before proceeding any further, I think it is worthwhile to present some valuable census data that I have collected from past Mexican censuses based on the number of Americans residing in Mexico. This data does not always coincide with other sources, a point that I will discuss in a moment.

Table 1

Year	Number of Americans in Mexico (Mexican Census Data)
1895	12,268
1900	15,266
1910	29,541
1921	11,090
1930	12,396
1940	9,585
1950	30,454
1960	97,902
1970	97,246
1980	157,117
1990	170,000
2000	358,614

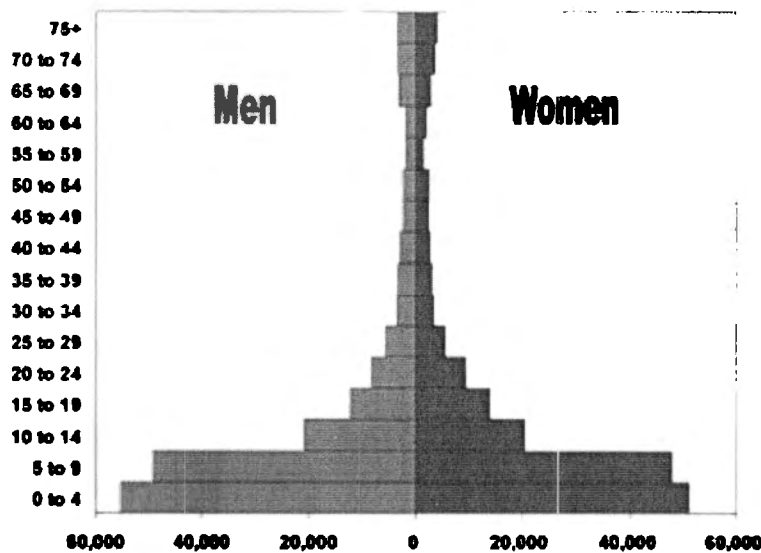
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Many of these numbers do not coincide with data collected from other sources. In some cases there are vast differences. This is simply due to counting and gathering errors throughout the years presented. The different organizations collected the data in different ways, and reached different results. Of course we would prefer to have consistent data, but that is simply unavailable. Having said that, I think this is still valuable to have, as it tells us the data that the Mexican government is working with when it is considering the number of

⁴ I created this table based on data available on the website of the Mexican census bureau.

Americans that are in Mexico. As we will see below, the age and gender statistics are quite interesting. Though this is merely speculative, I do have one insight to explain the large number of children in this graph. I believe that this accounts for many children of Mexican parents who were born in the United States, who then moved back to Mexico.

Graph 1



Source: IPUMS International data derived from the 10.6 percent sample of the XII General Census of Population and Housing of Mexico, 2000.

5

The table presented below offers some contrast from the census data presented above, but none of it is too large. For instance, in 1990, they have relatively similar counts of the number of Americans living, with the above table claiming approximately 170,000, and the below table claiming 190,000. It is also quite fascinating to see from the table below that the number of Americans in Mexico tripled from 1970 to 2000. We can assume this is due both to the increased interconnectedness between the countries as a result of NAFTA, as well as the surge in American retirees moving to Mexico.

⁵ This table was reproduced from “America’s Emigrants”, from the MPI.

Table 2

Country and year	Total population	Foreign-born	US-born
Panama			
1970	1,352,344	57,275	6,894
1980	1,824,796	47,722	4,293
1990	2,329,329	61,394	3,241
2000	2,839,177	82,097	5,113
Mexico			
1970	48,225,238	191,159	97,229
1980	66,846,833	268,900	157,117
1990	81,249,645	340,824	194,619
2000	97,014,732	519,707	358,614

Source: 2000 counts for Mexico are from IPUMS; counts for Panama are from CELADE.

6

The first table shows the foreign population in Mexico. We see from this that Americans are the leading group of foreigners in Mexico, and that Spaniards are a close second. These two countries account for nearly half of all foreigners in Mexico, as of 1996, and this data is based on those holding Mexican visas.

The data on the number of Americans living in Mexico has unfortunately been a source of dramatic inconsistency. Moreno notes that “The 1970 U.S. Census indicated that 11,296 Americans lived in Mexico ... the 1970 Mexican Census indicated that this number was 97,246 ... the U.S. Department of State had also estimated 98,000 in 1970 ... the Mexican Department of Tourism had estimated around 30,000 Americans living in Mexico” (Moreno, 2007, p. 12). He goes on to say that in 1991, the U.S. State Department estimated that there were around 400,000 Americans living in Mexico. Writing in 2000, Moreno estimates that around 20,000 Americans a year were moving to Mexico, that the American population in Mexico is approximately one million, and that the migration rate was rising.

⁶ “America’s Emigrants”, MPI

Table 3

	<i>Temporary migrants*</i>	<i>Permanent immigrants**</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
United States	43,412	21,159	64,571	24.7
Spain	27,564	33,478	61,042	23.3
Germany	8,713	4,637	13,350	5.1
Canada	3,870	5,279	9,149	3.5
China	2,556	6,158	8,714	3.3
France	5,727	2,951	8,678	3.3
Japan	4,988	2,084	7,072	2.7
Argentina	5,051	1,863	6,914	2.6
Italy	4,057	2,780	6,837	2.6
Great Britain	3,534	1,986	5,520	2.1
Cuba	3,291	2,209	5,500	2.1
Colombia	3,195	899	4,094	1.6
Lebanon	1,703	2,370	4,073	1.6
Guatemala	2,359	1,318	3,677	1.4
Chile	2,428	1,129	3,557	1.4
El Salvador	2,479	821	3,300	1.3
Switzerland	2,139	986	3,125	1.2
Venezuela	2,347	630	2,977	1.1
Peru	2,382	565	2,947	1.1
Nicaragua	1,913	680	2,593	1.0
Other	21,744	12,012	33,756	12.9
TOTAL	155,452	105,994	261,446	100.0

* FM-2 permit holders. Migrants with at least five years of residence in the country or married to a Mexican national. This permit has to be renewed annually. The data do not include the foreigners on FM-3 permits, who are considered temporary legally residents in the country.

** FM-1 permit holders. Permanent immigrants must renew their permits every five years.

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The data from the above table shows a very different number of Americans residing in Mexico, a difference of almost 4 times. The biggest likelihood for the disparity is that many in the second series have dual citizenship (U.S. born Mexican citizens who would not need foreign visas), or are foreigners living in Mexico either illegally or simply on tourist visas. The true number of Americans living in Mexico clearly is, and has been, a source of much confusion.

American Professionals in Mexico:

While dealing with the American Civil War, American President Abraham Lincoln also provided supplies and aid to Mexican President Benito Juarez in his attempt to keep foreign occupiers from taking control of Mexico. After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, a group of newly-defeated Confederate soldiers headed south to Mexico in an

⁷ Reproduced from "Spanish Professionals in Mexico City", Mendoza and Ortiz

attempt to make a new life. At this time, Mexico was being ruled by an emperor from France, and he received these men warmly. The government gave these men money to start an English-language newspaper for the already established and growing American presence in Mexico. In the Gulf Coast state of Veracruz, the soldiers established a colony and named it Carlota, in honor of the wife of the emperor. The group intended on being farmers and attempted to promote their products throughout the United States, as well as advertising the availability of land.

In Empire and revolution: the Americans in Mexico since the Civil War, John Mason Hart offers a look at this community. Hart sees the interaction between the two countries' citizens as being "marked not only by intervention and revolution, but by accommodation and cooperation as well" (Hart, 2002, p. 1). In a brilliant insight, Hart believes that "the study of Americans in Mexico explains much about the origins of globalization" (Hart, 2002, p. 5). This insight is extremely prescient for our understanding world where the interdependence between nations is as strong as iron. As I mentioned earlier, American entrepreneurs do not see Mexico is a mysterious foreign outpost. They increasingly see it as vital to their own success, and a place where they could export not just products and services, but values: "increased social mobility, Protestant values, a capitalist free market, a consumer culture, and a democracy of elected representation" (Hart, 2002, p. 2). Most of these values have been imported by modern-day Mexico.

Hart is correct in his recognition of the American/Mexican relationship as a springboard for globalization, and he points out one of its unfortunate consequences: grain and corn. As American products under NAFTA became more available in Mexico, the labor-intensive Mexican family firms could not compete with the technologically advanced American firms. So far, Mexican social policies have not adequately addressed these concerns. In the conclusion, Hart also wisely addresses the changing dynamic of American interest in Mexico. In the 1800s, American interest in Mexico focused more on territorial expansion, and this was the key cause of the Mexican-American War of the 1840s. Americans in that area felt that territorial control of Mexico would increase their ability to dominate affairs in the Americas. By the 1900s, and into the present day, territorial expansion into Mexico was no longer such an interest. A secondary interest in Mexico through the postwar era was to use Mexico to monitor Russian activity in Latin America.

And today a strong interest in Mexico comes from trying to limit the spillover of Mexican violence into the United States.

But in the 20th Century the primary interest was, and today still is, economic opportunity. That was the driving force behind NAFTA, and Hart correctly points this out. American and Canadian producers knew that they needed a much cheaper labor source if they were going to continue to compete globally, and the passage of NAFTA allowed them to access this cheap labor pool. For a significant portion of Mexicans, the opportunities to work in foreign factories have provided them with an invaluable escape from extreme poverty. Still, an underlying sentiment among many Mexicans is that Mexico has been on the losing end of NAFTA. The data on the falls in poverty since NAFTA passage would indicate otherwise, but public opinion often trumps facts. I believe that the most significant contribution of NAFTA is that it has forced Mexico to enter the contemporary era. Throughout much of the 20th Century, aided by a closed economy and great oil wealth, Mexico was able to subsidize a lifestyle for many that did not match up with its limited economic competitiveness and productivity. As that system failed, and with future oil revenues looking bleak, it was inevitable that Mexico would be thrust into the globalized world. The old collectivist system simply was not sustainable. As painful as NAFTA has been for many Mexicans, it was a necessary contract for Mexico to agree to should it have any hope of achieving sustainable higher living standards in the 21st Century.

Americans saw global economic dominance as necessary to increasing their standard of living. In order to achieve their global goals, American firms were willing to adopt local customs and practices, obviously as a tool for profitability and not out of any meaningful interest in preserving local customs. Based on its successes in Europe and America, Mexican government officials turned to the new industry of advertising in order to strengthen the commercial and industrial development of Mexico. The notion of “Dollar Diplomacy” was an alternative version of foreign policy, where bullets would be substituted for dollars. President Díaz encouraged an economic system where “American capital, technology, and markets would be used to build Mexico's economy and to strengthen national sovereignty” (Schell, 1990, p. 219).

William Schell Jr.'s book Integral Outsiders provides a fascinating look at Americans living in Mexico City in the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of

the twentieth century. Americans were coming to Mexico at consistent rates in search primarily of new business opportunities. A similar wave exists today, as American entrepreneurs continue to come to Mexico in search of business success. The American community in Mexico was close-knit and included businessmen, educators, and missionaries. Protestant missionaries were a common presence in Mexico, and conflicts with this fiercely Catholic country often occurred. In this era approximately seventy Protestants were martyred for their beliefs in Mexico (Schell, 1990, p. 61). Conversely, and especially before the community was significantly large, many American Protestants converted to Catholicism for either marriage or business reasons, which were “often one and the same”. (Schell, 1990, 61). The American Club was a social club that served to unite the community and “systematize the delivery of American capital” (Schell, 1990, p. 75). Rival clubs were soon formed by other American expatriates. In terms of cultural immersion, these American centric clubs likely limited the American interaction with Mexican society. However, they are hardly unique among migrant communities.

A walk around a major global city such as New York City will see many of these clubs in existence, entire neighborhoods where only one foreign country is represented, where the foreign, instead of the local, language is spoken, and where outsiders, if not expressly prohibited, are not received with open arms. However, these clubs might have unduly increased the American influence in Mexico, by allowing the community to unite when dealing with key Mexican governmental and business officials. It is without a doubt that many these foreigners got a much greater share of government attention than the overwhelming majority of the citizens in general. The Mexican government knew that the business of these foreign would aid government coffers, and for that reason, they were willing to show them great interest.

The American community at this time numbered approximately 20,000 in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1901, the community held its first massive Fourth of July celebration, an extravaganza attended by, among others, Mexico’s President Porforio Díaz. The American community had strong ties with Mexican governmental leaders. Not only did President Díaz participate in the Fourth of July celebrations, but the *New York Times* reported in 1902 that the American colony hosted a Thanksgiving dinner attended by Díaz and numerous other Mexican elites. In most cases for immigrants, they are forced to

quickly adapt to the prevailing norms of their new country. However, given the elite social status of most Americans in Mexico at the time, it seems that they were able to live life as they chose, and many Mexicans were willing to adapt cultural practices for them.

Though Díaz was dictatorial in terms of his control of political power, he does deserve credit for fostering liberal economic policies which lead to the strong economic growth during his approximately forty years in power. He understood the benefits that foreign capital could bring to Mexico, and he valued maintaining relationships with American business executives in order to aid in Mexico's continued growth. American-run banks were very important to the development of the financial sector in Mexico: "They supported investment in industry, commerce, and export agriculture, and their growth paralleled the rise of *sociedades anónimas* (limited liability corporations)" (Schell, 1990, p. 91). A Chicago brokerage firm, George Cook and Company, opened an office led by the founder's brother in Mexico City, specializing in private bond issuances. As the violent (and generally unsuccessful) Revolution gain steamed in the 1910s, American railroad workers in Mexico used the occasion, like their local counterparts, to strike and try to gain better salaries and working conditions (Schell, 1990, p. 190). Many of those soon returned home, some forced home by government decree, others by choice.

It is clear that Americans played a significant role in the development of the Mexican economy under Díaz. Unfortunately, the ensuing tumult of the 1910 Mexican Revolution wiped out most of the economic improvements of the Díaz administration, and the Mexican economy would not have any sustained meaningful growth until the "Mexican Miracle" of the late 1940s to the early 1970s.

From 1880 to 1930, Enrique Creel, the Mexican-born son of an American immigrant, was one of, if not *the*, richest person in Mexico, and an elite politician as well. His story, though taking place south of the border, was something of an American dream. Though relatively impoverished in his youth, he took over his father's store at the age of 17 and by 25 was one of the wealthiest merchants in the northern state of Chihuahua. Marrying into one of the wealthier families in the state certainly propelled his rise. As Mark Wasserman notes in his analysis of Creel, "Elite families regularly injected 'new blood'-- often that of foreigners in northern Mexico--to run their businesses and used their sons and daughters to establish new alliances or deepen old ties with other elite families"

(Wasserman, 1985, p. 647). Creel, like most successful entrepreneurs historically, found the right combination of luck, talent, and hard work in his rise to become one of Mexico's elites, eventually serving "as a Mexican J.P. Morgan" (Wasserman, 1990, p. 648).

Many of the foreigners who came to try to strike it rich in Mexico were financed by Creel-run banks. These people were primarily seduced by the financial gains that they could reap if their endeavors were successful. Creel was looked upon quite favorably by both foreigners looking for representation in Mexico and by President Díaz as well. Creel himself took on a variety of risky investments, including assuming control of a mining company in the last decade of the nineteenth century and transforming it into one of the largest metal-fabrication factories in Mexico. His political power and good standing with the government allowed him to operate near-monopolies in a variety of industries, including flour milling. To fully understand Creel's success, one must realize that "Creel operated in an environment where business and politics were all but inseparable"; still, it's vital to also realize that "Creel understood the system better than anyone else" (Wasserman, 1990, p. 655). His success ultimately led to him being appointed as the ambassador to the United States in 1906. After the early tumults of the Revolution, Creel was exiled to the US in 1912, was re-welcomed to Mexico in 1920, and died quite wealthy in Mexico in 1931.

The Mexican Revolution greatly strained relations between Mexico and its neighbor to the north. The country was in nearly total chaos from 1910 to 1920, and very little economic progress occurred. Once Alvaro Obregón was established as president in 1920, it was not until 1923 that the American government officially recognized him. To further their personal interests, a variety of American businessmen sought to have the recognition earlier, but Kane shows decisively that their capacities as makers of foreign policy was weak at best. During this post-Revolution era, many American businessmen were quite optimistic about the increased stability and future prospects of the Mexican economy. For them, recognition of the newly established government was vital to their commercial success. In particular, after the chaos of the Revolution, there was a great demand in Mexico to replenish stocks of imported products.

Samuel Vauclain, an American locomotive executive, was quite aware of Mexico's extensive need to recreate its debilitated rail sector, and in 1921 the government of President Alvaro Obregón signed a \$2.5 million construction contract with Vauclain (Kane,

1975, p. 301). The opportunity available to foreign businessmen in Mexico at this time was quite clear. In general, businessmen were not especially worried about the newly established regime inhibiting their operations, and they certainly valued the newfound stability after ten years of civil war. The general disorder in the Mexican society, as it struggled to establish clarity after the Revolution, was of little interest to them. They simply tried to make as much money as possible while doing so as quickly as possible.

One of the most successful Americans to operate in Mexico was William O. Jenkins. After arriving in Mexico at the beginning of the 1900s without any money, by 1960 Jenkins had amassed a fortune of anywhere from \$200 to \$300 million dollars (in 1960 prices). In particular, his fortune had one extremely significant lasting effect, as the donation of his estate allowed for the establishment of the University of the Americas in Puebla, a university now considered to be one of Mexico's leading institutions. Jenkins came to Mexico in the early 1900s in a manner similar to many other Americans, working as a mechanic on a railway. After getting some start-up money to open a haberdashery, he founded a few other businesses, served as a US Consul, and then started making significant amounts of money in the alcohol and sugar business. He lent the Mexican government millions of dollars in the middle of the century for infrastructure projects, and he was also a significant owner of movie theatres in the country, profoundly altering the course of the Mexican film industry, as noted in Paxman (2009). Some have criticized Jenkins for using anti-competitive practices in expanding his movie-theater business, and overtly favoring Hollywood films in doing so, a claim that does have some merit. Here we see one of the primary factors of the increasingly globalized world that we are live in: entertainment. The American empire does owe a lot of its commercial success to the consumption of its entertainment (primarily movies) throughout the world. In many cases, these films portray America in a positive light, and have increased foreign nations' interest in all things America. Jenkins' entrepreneurial successes continued, and in 1950, he acquired a majority stake in Bancomer, one of the leading banks in Mexico.

In a book titled Yankee Don't Go Home, Julio Moreno studies the role of Americans in Mexico from 1920-1950. Sears opened their first store in Mexico City in 1947. The store was instantly a huge success, with Moreno noting that 100,000 people visited the store in its first three days. The post-revolution era was a frightening time for

foreign investors. In an attempt to encourage nationalism, Mexican politicians strongly discouraged the purchase of foreign goods. After the 1938 nationalization of British and American oil companies, many foreign investors were quite reluctant to come to Mexico. The key factor in foreigners returning to Mexico, Moreno notes, is that Mexicans welcomed foreign (primary American) businesses that “supported industrial and commercial growth” (Moreno, 2007, p. 2). He immediately follows that Mexicans did not like the “imperialist attitude” of many foreign investors, but would be open to them if they were willing to adapt to the prevailing nationalist and revolutionary sentiments of the times.

Central to this was the fact that as the 1930s and '40s rolled along, Mexican leaders felt that commercial and industrial development was vital for the Revolution to have any permanency. The biggest difference between “The America Dream” and the repackaged *Sueno Americano* was that Mexican leaders in the 1940s promoted subordination to authorities as a vital part of achieving individual prosperity. Whereas American capitalism was driven by the captains of industry, Mexican capitalism throughout the 20th century would be driven by the captains of government. A new revolution was beginning to take place in Mexico: the consumer revolution. Both Mexican and American leaders tried to play off this industrial capitalism as a natural evolution of the Revolution. The American mindset of capitalism was a mindset of the hard-working Protestant. It was free of an overwhelming governmental influence, and its purpose was for his personal well-being. Even to the pre-Columbian era, those living in present-day Mexico were directed by strong central figure. The arrival of Catholic missionaries, with their hierarchal culture, further strengthened. And finally, with the rule of the PRI party for nearly the entire 20th Century, the prevailing mindset in Mexico was that the purpose of economic achievement was for the glory of the state. The engineered domination of government businesses in the marketplace prevented most would-be entrepreneurs from having a chance at any modicum of success. Even though the one-party rule of the PRI has ended, Mexico society is still struggling to decide whether it wants to return to the collectivist model that was the dominant model of the 1900s, or if it wants to embrace free market principles. This uncertainty is one of the key problems holding back Mexico.

America gains in Mexico were not only seen in the commercial world. At this same time, an American scientist was doing work in Mexico that would have enormously

positive effects on the world. Norman Borlaug was a pathologist and an expert on plant diseases. As part of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Borlaug moved to Mexico in 1944 with the goal of developing rust-resistant wheat. Rust was a serious problem for wheat around the globe, and it severely hampered the ability of nations to be self-sufficient in their agriculture. Through over thirteen years of work in Mexico, Borlaug created numerous experimental farms in Mexico, and he was able to develop stronger strains of wheat that were completely rust-resistant; these techniques would later be duplicated around the globe. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Mexican wheat production increased six-fold. His work was so significant that it led to him receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970. Though he came with altruistic motives, Borlaug still, like scores of other Americans in Mexico, found himself there because a unique opportunity presented itself.

Carlos Anderson is another story of a very successful American expat in Mexico. Anderson is most famous as the eponymous owner of Carlos 'N Charlie's, a popular restaurant chain located throughout Mexico. Carlos came from California and opened his first restaurant on the campus of the Mexico City College, an English-speaking institution. In 1968 he returned to Mexico City after success at with restaurants in tourist destinations. There he opened a restaurant right in the center of town, on the principal street of Mexico City, Avenida Reforma, and he called it "Anderson's". That same restaurant is still open today. The restaurant was Anderson's attempt at showing up the prevailing stuffiness of the restaurants on the city. After this success, he opened the first location of his most famous chain, Carlos 'N Charlie's, in Acapulco. That proved to be a big success, and, according to an article by Jim Budd from a few years ago, the restaurant group he started, Grupo Anderson, now has 18 different restaurant brands located through Mexico, the US, South America, and Europe. Given the vast importance of tourism to the Mexican economy, Anderson was wise to understand the opportunity there, as well as the core clientele. The American presence in Mexico is often seen in the form tourists. Nearly 80% of all visitors to Mexico are Americans, and tourism represents approximately 13% of Mexico's GDP. Most of that tourism goes to beach resorts such as Cancun, Acapulco, and Puerto Vallarta, all areas where Anderson found great success.

So often the relationship between Mexico and the United States can be contentious, with citizens of both countries blaming the other country for its problems. In that sense, one

of the persons who have done the most to bridge the cultural gap is Rick Bayless. Bayless is one of the top chefs in America and is famous for his Mexican restaurants in Chicago. Growing up as the son of a restaurateur in Oklahoma, Bayless had a strong interest in Latin America, and after university studies, he lived in Mexico for six years with his wife, where he intensely studied the nation's cuisine. His resulting cookbook, published in 1987, was a smashing success, and to this day he remains one of America's most admired chefs. Bayless' lasting accomplishment will be to show Americans that Mexican food can be exquisite gourmet food, not just greasy junk food. Recently, Barack Obama invited Felipe Calderon to the White House for a State Dinner, Bayless was the chef selected to cook the dinner.

Rick Bayless spent an enormous amount of time in Mexico City, just as countless other Americans have done their work in Mexico's chaotic capital. The historical American community in Mexico has been centered in the nation's capital. Additionally, as one of the world's largest cities, Mexico City has been home to a variety of historic events, including the 1968 Summer Olympics, an event where the actions of two Americans away from the playing fields became an international news sensation. Coming off the heels of global student protests, and in particular, a Mexican government crackdown on student protestors that resulted in forty four students being assassinated, tension was high as Olympics in Mexico City began on October 12th. The men's 200 meter race was won by African-American Tommie Smith, with white Australian Peter Norman finishing in second and fellow African-American John Carlos finishing in third. On the medal stand, all three athletes wore badges supporting the Olympic Project for Human Rights, an organization formed to fight racism. This was not merely an American problem, as Norman was disgusted by the treatment and policies of the Australian government towards Australia's aboriginal people. As the American national anthem began to play in honor of Smith's gold-medal winning performance, Smith and Carlos each raised a fist with a black glove on it, the intent and message clear, a universally understood sign of protest by black Americans. Smith and Carlos' "Black Power" statement instantly became leading news around the world. The three men were ostracized severely afterwards, but this clearly is one of the most historic actions by an American in Mexico.

Also noteworthy from an athletic standpoint at those games was American Bob Beamon's remarkable performance in the long jump on October 18th. Aided by Mexico's elevation of approximately 2,240 meters (or 7349 feet), which, all else equal, leads to lengthier jumps, Beamon broke the world long jump record by more than 55 centimeters (21 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches) with a jump of 8.90 meters (29 feet, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches), a truly astonishing achievement. One website named that jump the sixth most impressive performance sports moment *of all time*, and venerated sports journalist Dick Schaap wrote an entire book about it titled The Perfect Jump. That so many memorable sporting events would take place in Mexico is hardly a surprise. Despite the many negative perceptions Mexico receives, it is still one of the biggest economies in the world, and Mexico City is clearly the biggest city in the Americas.

Again, a common theme of American migration to Mexico was the notion of preferable treatment. These baseball players did not have a fair opportunity in America, and so they went to where that fair opportunity existed.⁸ Until 1947, baseball, "America's Pastime", was closed off to those people of color. Shut out by the racist policies of American baseball leagues, several African-American stars played baseball in Mexico during the middle of the twentieth century. These included Hall of Famers such as the sure-handed shortstop Willie Wells, centerfielder Cool Papa Bell (perhaps the fastest man to ever play the game), Josh Gibson, perhaps the best catcher in the history of baseball, and the legendary pitcher Satchel Paige. These stars were received warmly in Mexico and were able to avoid the racial hostility they had been receiving in America. White ballplayers, like American entrepreneurs and laborers in a variety of fields, were lured as well to the Mexican leagues by wild promises, which rarely matched the financial reality. Author Mark Winegardner successfully captures the spirit of the 1946 Mexican League season in his novel Veracruz Blues. To continue briefly on the topic of sports, nearly all the top golf courses in Mexico were designed by Americans (most notably Jack Nicklaus), who spend significant time onsite during the design and construction phase. And finally, if the United States men's soccer team ever is able to defeat Mexico at their famed Estadio Azteca in Mexico City, anecdotal evidence suggests that one in Mexico should put their affairs in

⁸ Further study is definitely warranted on the notion of race in Mexico. Television commercials and popular programs feature overwhelmingly white-skinned actors, something that is very out of line with the racial makeup of Mexico.

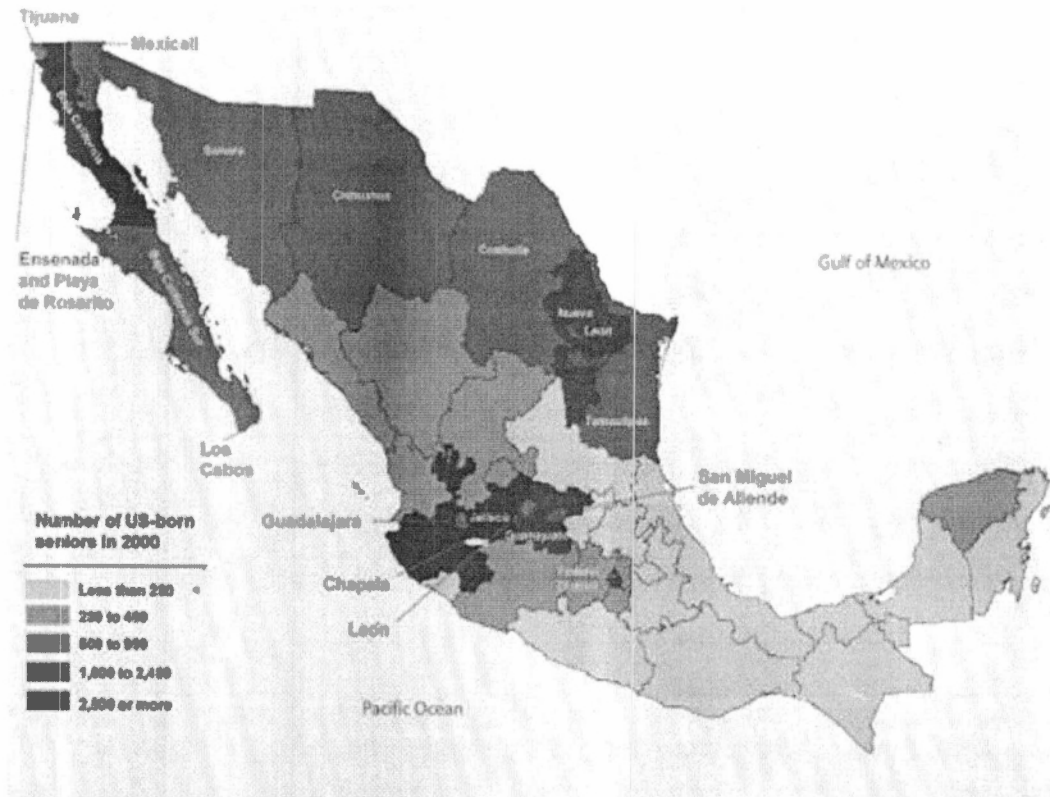
order, as most Mexicans at that point would be convinced that the world was coming to an end.

American Retirees in Mexico:

The most significant trend of American migration to Mexico recently has been the migration of retirees. There are currently a considerable amount of American (and Canadian) retirees living in Mexico. Most of them live in areas west of Mexico City. These residents were for the most part middle-income citizens; retiring to Mexico is hardly a fancy of just the rich.

Popular areas include Lake Chapala (a lake in the mountains of western Mexico), San Miguel de Allende (a colonial city several hours north of Mexico City), and Guadalajara (located in the western part of the country, it is Mexico's second largest city). The following map gives us a better understanding of where U.S.-born seniors in Mexico are residing. They are notably absent from the poorer southern states, but they do have a significant presence in the Baja California Region, the city of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico City, and the Puerto Vallarta region. The proceeding map breaks down this group by Mexican state of residence and gender.

Map 1



Source: IPUMS International data derived from the 10.6 percent sample of the XII General Census of Population and Housing of Mexico, 2000.

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This map does a good job of highlighting key areas, including San Miguel de Allende, Guadalajara, and Lake Chapala. Not surprisingly, given the much greater distance from the border, very few American retirees reside in southern Mexico.

One retiree group called the Lake Chapala Society claims to have 3,800 members from 24 countries. Many of these “new” migrants don’t have a high degree of interest in the local culture, and move primarily for the benefits of a better climate, as well as the perceived lower costs of living as compared to the United States and an interesting cultural experience. The fact that return travel to the US is quick and easy is also a benefit of Mexico over other countries as a retirement destination. A significant challenge for these seniors is the fact that Medicare, the free health care program available to all American citizens over the age of 65, does not cover medical treatment outside of the United States. Given the extremely lower cost of a variety of health services in Mexico, it makes no

⁹ “America’s Emigrants”, MPI

financial sense for Medicare to not extend benefits in Mexico. Whereas Medicare might have to pay a worker in America \$120 a day for basic home health care for seniors (assisting with daily tasks such as bathing, taking medication, etc.), these services cost anywhere from \$15 to \$20 a day. The potential cost savings for the Medicare program are enormous. Many retirees leave Mexico and return to the United States when they need coverage that they could only afford with the assistance of Medicare. These seniors are allowed to participate in the Mexican government-run health care program, but the data remains unclear as to how many choose to do this.

Many American seniors in Mexico feel they have significant challenges accessing health care (Amin & Ingman, 2010, p. 4). This prompts many of them to spend money on trips back or forth, or to decide to stop living in Mexico. The previously mentioned retiree group, The Lake Chapala Society, saw surveys completed by 80 of their retirees. The results of this survey were reported in Amin & Ingman. Nearly 80% of American respondents were married, and they were predominantly whites. Of this group, 70% had been in Mexico for at least five years, and more than 30% of all respondents had been there for at least 10 years. More than 90% of respondents planned to stay in Mexico permanently, and more than 96% felt that their decision to move to Mexico was the right decision. As mentioned before, lower cost of living was a positive benefit. For instance, a surgery such as a knee-replacement could be had at a fifth of the cost in Mexico as compared to the US.

Additionally, the retirees perceive their above-average incomes (in Mexico terms) result in them receiving better care when necessary. A common frustration of these retirees is the corruption in Mexico, difficulty of accessing emergency medical care, and missing family living who are still living in the US. The respondents all considered themselves to be in good health. 27% of respondents use only private insurance to pay for their medical care. 11% don't have health insurance, and pay out of pocket when necessary. 6% use only the insurance available from the Mexican government. The rest use a combination of these sources. However, half of respondents travel to the US for certain medical care when necessary. Most are limited in their Spanish, and find this an obstacle to obtaining sufficient medical care. Additionally, most feel that Medicare should cover treatment in Mexico. Given the lower treatment costs, this would seem like a wise policy step for the US government to take.

Santiago Moreno discusses the real-estate implications of American retirees in Mexico. The author makes a very significant point. Although in overall numbers the migration from Mexico to America is much larger than the migration of Americans to Mexico, in many cases, the American migration occurs with great concentration in a small number of communities. So, for those specific Mexican communities that receive Americans, the impact of the phenomenon can be quite substantial. In addition to the aforementioned hotspots for American retirees, newer retirement communities are sprouting along Mexico's vast coastlines.

It is undeniable that the average American retiree lives on an income higher than the average Mexican. At the time of his writing, Moreno noted that the average American retiree had a purchasing power at least three times higher than the average Mexican. For the towns where many American retirees live, the economic impact can be substantial. Furthermore, the number of American seniors is exploding. The first group of retirees from the 1946-1964 Baby Boom will be eligible starting next year to receive Social Security benefits. The size of the elderly community will increase dramatically over the next decade and on. Compared to previous generation of retirees, this generation of retirees is "much better educated, has better health, and thus will live independently longer; they are wealthier, more active, and have traveled more than their parents" (García Moreno, 2000, p. 15). One would think that the number of Americans deciding to retire in Mexico would increase; however, given the uncertainty of the violence related to the drug cartels, the migration of American retirees could slow down dramatically. The effect on retirees is just one example of the economic loss caused by the rising violence in certain parts of Mexico over the past five years, in particular in the northern part of the country.

Moreno studies one specific community called Bucerías, a village on the Pacific Coast. The author predicts that as the baby boomers start to retire, many now-quiet coastal towns will receive large amounts of American and Canadian migrants. He does note that Bucería's population as a tourist destination has led to significant improvements in infrastructure, compared to nearby inland towns. Many American retirees will be choosing to live very close to the various coasts, either on the Pacific, in the Gulf of Mexico, or in the Sea of Cortes, located between Baja California and the Mexican mainland. Bucería has a population of 10,000, but anywhere from 10% to 30% of its residents are American or

Canadian retirees (García Moreno, 2000, p. 27). The most common factor among the retirees for the decision to live in Bucería was the weather and the much lower cost of living there versus coastal areas in America such as California, Florida, or Hawaii. All this development does come at a price, both to the Mexicans and American retirees. New buildings can displace older, cheaper ones, and make rent higher. New, expensive restaurants displace older, more economical restaurants. Higher rents lead to higher transportation costs, higher medical costs, and so forth.

The three main concerns mentioned that the subjects said they had before moving were crime and security, health care access, and distance from friends and family (García Moreno, 2000, p. 35). Upon living in Bucería, none reported crime or security to be a notable concern. The town has sufficient facilities and one English-speaking doctor, and nearby Puerto Vallarta has full-service hospitals, and somewhat nearby Guadalajara has high-quality medical facilities found in any major world city. Most chose private health care over the government facilities. Finally, after living in Mexico, the respondents did not report the distance to be a significant issue. The year-round residents considered themselves and others to be part of the middle or upper-middle class in America, but none were considered “rich”. There was a notable gap between regarding knowledge of Spanish, or the desire to learn it. Those who knew it, or had an interest in learning it, generally had a strong interest in being an active part of both the local and expatriate communities, while those who did not know Spanish and did not have a desire to learn it generally expressed a stronger preference for keeping to themselves. This is also a considerable issue among the professional American community in Mexico City. Most Americans working in Mexico work for large multinationals in offices where nearly all the other employees speak English. In a technical sense, for many Americans in Mexico, it is not a requirement to speak Spanish in order to be successful in their jobs. However, in general, both groups reported being treated well by the locals, and having a strong fondness for the beaches and surrounding area.¹⁰

A common desire for those abroad is an “authentic experience.” Each has their own definition of what it means. Contemporary Mexicans constantly flock to the American

¹⁰ Apart from some occasional violence in Acapulco, the majority of coastal communities in Mexico have not been seriously affected by the ongoing violence related to the drug cartels. This is an issue that primarily affects cities along Mexico’s northern border.

coffee-chain Starbucks. Has Starbucks now become an authentic part of Mexican culture? In this author's opinion, someone who has made some good friendships with Mexicans while watching NFL games at various establishments, yes, it is. The culture is how the people act, what they do, and where they go on a regular basis. In this notion, despite their own enjoyment of living along the Mexican Pacific Coast, many Americans express annoyance at the increasing number of Americans in their community, and many are considering moving to "more authentic" parts of Mexico. A reporter for a foreigner-dedicated newspaper in the area sees three types of foreigners that live in the area. The first come for business opportunities, the second group is rather small and consists of those who come to avoid problems they faced in the United States, and the third is the largest group, retirees who come primarily for the lower costs of retirement (García Moreno, 2000, p. 41).

The reporter sees overlap between the first and third group. In general, the retirees are becoming younger and younger. Many who retired to Bucerías did not plan to do so at first, but found it after spending time in Puerto Vallarta, or receive advice from real estate advisors. Linguistic and cultural barriers were a nearly universal stressor to the retirees, especially in the first year in Mexico. Finally, a common thread among many was the notion of American culture as "greedy" and "materialistic" compared to some sense of "purity" among the people in Mexico (García Moreno, 2000, p. 43). However, it's fairly easy to not be "greedy" when very little economic opportunity exists. Any notion that Mexicans are inherently less materialistic cannot be easily verified, considering the vast gulf in economic realities confronting the average citizen in the two countries north and south of the Rio Grande.

The U.S. Consular office in 2000 estimated approximately 8,000 Americans who had registered that they were living in the extended Puerto Vallarta area, which includes Bucerías (García Moreno, 2000, p. 49). Moreno goes on to note that the foreign population of Bucerías increased by 222% from 1990 to 1995. These retirees often bring strong economic benefits to the places where they reside, including employing construction workers to build new residences, and employing those who work in services (such as waiters and housekeepers). The year-round residents also serve as a hedge against the economic cycles that can occur during the low tourist season, which in Mexico is during the summer months. Studies done by the Mexican government have also shown that tourist

hotspots have fared better in a variety of economic indicators than towns that did not experience a meaningful growth in tourism.

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) prepared a lengthy report on American immigrants to Mexico. According to this study, between 1990 and 2000, the U.S. senior population in Mexico grew 17%; the Chapala region alone saw a growth of 581% (MPI, 2006, p. 1). Not surprisingly, real estate prices in this region rose quite significantly as well. The report notes of “four trends towards the growing importance of American retirees abroad”: the demographic implication of retiring Baby Boomers, differences in health care costs between countries, advances in communication technology and ease of travel, and economic impact on the chosen foreign communities. The way they live is obviously different from the way locals live. The MPI uses the term “integration” to describe the evolving engagement between host country and immigrant, in which both sides make adjustments to accommodate the other.

The MPI report provides some extremely relevant statistics on the interdependencies of the two nations. Currently five million Mexican-born residents reside in the United States legally, and another six million Mexicans reside in the United States illegally. The US is Mexico’s largest trading partner, and Mexico is America’s second largest trading partner. According to the US Census Bureau, trade between the two nations was \$290 billion in 2005. Additionally, US Foreign Direct Investment accounted for 40% to 80% of Mexican FDI over the past several years, and the \$20 billion in remittances sent home by Mexicans migrant workers is far larger than the total FDI that Mexico receives. Mexico has a fairly simple visa program available specifically to foreign retirees who want to reside in Mexico.

The data is fairly imprecise regarding the exact number of US-born persons residing in Mexico. Some US State Department estimates have this number slightly above one million. Additionally, one must take in mind that a significant number of persons that would qualify as US-born persons residing in Mexico” are those born in the United States to Mexican parents, who then spend the majority of their lives growing up and living in Mexico. Two notable examples of this are Grammy-award winning pop singer Julieta Venegas and former world-champion boxer Antonio Margarito. The MPI report notes that the 2000 Mexican Census recorded 358,614 Americans residing in Mexican (MPI, 2006, p.

26). The prototypical American retirement city in Mexico is San Miguel de Allende, a colonial town a few hours north of Mexico City that has had a significant American presence since the 1950s. The estimated population of U.S. retirees there is 4,000 to 5,000. The retirees also saw NAFTA as a benefit to their living comfort, as they now had more access to American products and stores that they were familiar with. Again, the lower medical costs were certainly a positive factor for many retirees. Visits to doctors could cost an eighth of what they did in the United States. A sense of adventure was a common theme for those Americans moving to Mexico; one woman in particular felt the desire to do so after her husband passed away. Technology has greatly eased the moving process, as those interested now found it very easy to connect with those already living in Mexico.

To help us better understand the personal stories of American retirees living in Mexico, Stephen Banks studied their identity narratives in a 2004 article. He mentions the restrictions on activities they can participate in; for instance, in Mexico, there are strict laws banning non-citizens from participating in political activities. Additionally, any minor crime can bring the potential for deportation. Further restrictions exist on things such as land and property ownership. As also happens for non-English speakers in the United States, language barriers are mentioned as a “wall” from full participation in the local community (Banks, 2004, p. 363). An early study found that only 12% of residents spoke Spanish fluently. Again, as mentioned in a different article earlier, Banks found many retirees looked highly on Mexican culture as less materialistic and more prone to “enjoy life”. What is noteworthy is that these comments were all made by retirees, people generally financially comfortable and with lots of time on their hand. This author’s interaction with American businessmen here generally told a different story. Many were frustrated by the unreliability of Mexican culture, where timeliness is not often practiced and many meetings start hours late.

Compared to American culture, many businessmen said people in Mexico have difficulty saying “no,” so instead they would promise to do it “in a bit” (*ahorita*) or tomorrow (*manana*). One American middle-manager at the Mexico City office of an international candy company went as far as to ban his workers from using the word *ahorita*, instead requiring exact answers on when they expected to finish their work. All the retirees spoke of Mexicans as being friendly. The retirees did describe something that many

Americans living in Mexico have described. Mexicans are initially much friendlier and hospitable, but rarely follow-up after meeting people. In general, Mexicans are perceived to be more “closed-off” and not as interested in making new friendships as in America. Americans in general relocate much more often than most Mexicans and frequently have to develop new relationships; the Mexican norm tends more towards keeping the same relationships throughout an entire lifetime and being more closed-off to developing new friendships.

In an attempt to ease land-ownership issues for foreigners wishing to purchase lawn, the Mexican government in 1973 passed a law that allowed for *Fideicomisos*, a legal entity which allows for a bank to own land in previously “restricted” areas near coastlines and borders. These financial institutions serve as a fiduciary for the exclusive benefit of a non-Mexican. The banks legally own the property, but the foreigner can make all improvements on it that they desire and can collect rent. Americans wishing to own land in Mexico must agree to dispute all legal issues in Mexican courts, and they do not have the permission to attempt to litigate their case in the United States. Additionally, should Americans make income from renting properties in Mexico, they must report this income to the IRS. The IRS is now aggressively attempting to keep track of real estate purchases by Americans in Mexico.

American Students in Mexico:

American students in Mexico have historically been a significant population of the American community in Mexico. One of the cornerstones of this community in Mexico City is the American School. This school serves students from the lower levels through high school. This English-language institute is the school of choice for the children of American diplomats in Mexico City, the children of American entrepreneurs, children of expatriates from other countries, and also wealthy Mexicans. The population of the school peaked at around 3000 students in the 1960s, and still has over 2500 students. A history on the school’s website notes that it was opened in 1888 by a group of American industrialists, and nine children were enrolled in the first class, a kindergarten class, that year. By 1902 455 students were enrolled in the school, and teachers were being recruited from the US to teach at the school. Remarkably, the school has not had any closures since its opening in

1888 and continues to serve as a cornerstone of American expatriates in Mexico.

Interestingly, a casual conversation I once had with an American parent of a student at this school proved that the previously mentioned novel was fairly accurate. This man, who was middle class and had been sent to work for a MNC in Mexico City, had a 15-year old daughter enrolled at this school. He found that the wealthy Mexicans looked down on the American students that were there, and referred to them as “Embassy Trash”. In the views of these students, since the American students generally weren’t as wealthy, they were less sophisticated and not as “cool”.

In a similar vein as the American School, the Mexico City College (MCC) served Americans living in Mexico. The school was founded by people involved with the American School, and was fully accredited by a leading accreditation organization in the United States. This was a major plus for students, as it allowed for students to transfer coursework completed at MCC back to universities in the States. It went on to be split into two universities, one of which is one of Mexico’s leading universities (and perhaps the only to offer a dormitory-centered American style university experience), that being the University of the Americas, Puebla (UDLAP). The MCC was founded in 1940. In 1946 the school received its first exchange students from the US, and the school was accredited to receive recent veterans studying under the GI Bill. The school defined itself as a broadly liberal arts institution, and was featured in Jack Kerouac’s legendary travelogue On The Road; Kerouac had lived in Mexico City in 1950. The campus was located outside of the city, on the road to Toluca (a city northwest of the capital), but all students lived in the heart of historic Mexico City and took the school’s bus to the campus. It was located on the grounds of a former country club and was located on a beautiful campus.

More than six thousand students attending this two-year junior college in its first twelve years of existence. Fascinatingly, many of those teaching at the American School and Mexico City College during the 1950s were those who were forced to leave the US under the “Red Scare” communist suspicion of the time. One of the school’s most impressive achievements was the completion, for the first time, of a grammar-dictionary of the Nahuatl language, an indigenous language spoken by more than two million in Mexico, as well as publishing a newspaper for these speakers. Nearly two hundred professors and

students a year came from a variety of prestigious universities in America for the college's short summer and winter programs.

By 1946, the school was a full Bachelors of Arts degree granting institution. In 1947, the school began offering Masters degrees. The school participated in playing other top universities in American football (a sport that is surprisingly popular in Mexico). The school was renowned for its extensive research in pre-Colombian history. Not surprisingly given the tenor of the era, spies from both America and Russia enrolled as "students", given that Mexico City was perhaps the most spy-filled city in the world, a place where the Soviet Union maintained an enormous embassy, despite the extremely minimal amount of Russians living in Mexico and the limited official economic and diplomatic contact between the two countries. Several times, I've had the opportunity to converse with a former CIA spy who worked in Mexico City, and the accounts he has given coincide with recorded histories.

Sadly, the school had a significant amount of its finances stolen by an administrator in 1961, and the "golden age" for American students there soon declined. By 1963, with the school struggling to attract Americans, a name change happened, and it became more of a home to Mexican students instead of American students. Still, the remarkable accomplishments of the American-centered school for the roughly twenty year period are quite notable.¹¹

Richard Wilkie wrote a fascinating article detailing the lives of American students at the Mexico City College. He describes the experience of American students coming to the school in 1956. He describes the life for these students as "of constant excitement in a multi-dimensional world of cultural diversity, an ambiance of sights, sounds and color, and most of all opportunities for adventure" (Wilkie, 2006). Coming off both World War II and the Korean War, and unknowingly about to delve into the Vietnam era, it was an ever too brief respite for those born in the Depression era. Wilkie notes that many ex-GIs were drawn to Mexico City College as an alternative to the American universities, where the average student was roughly ten years younger than they were. Fascinatingly, the author recounts how the apartment he lived it was on the same block where Che Guevara was

¹¹ As a personal aside, among both American and Mexican students nowadays, there does not exist a large interest to study abroad in each other's countries. The primary interest of study abroad programs for students in both countries continues to be Europe.

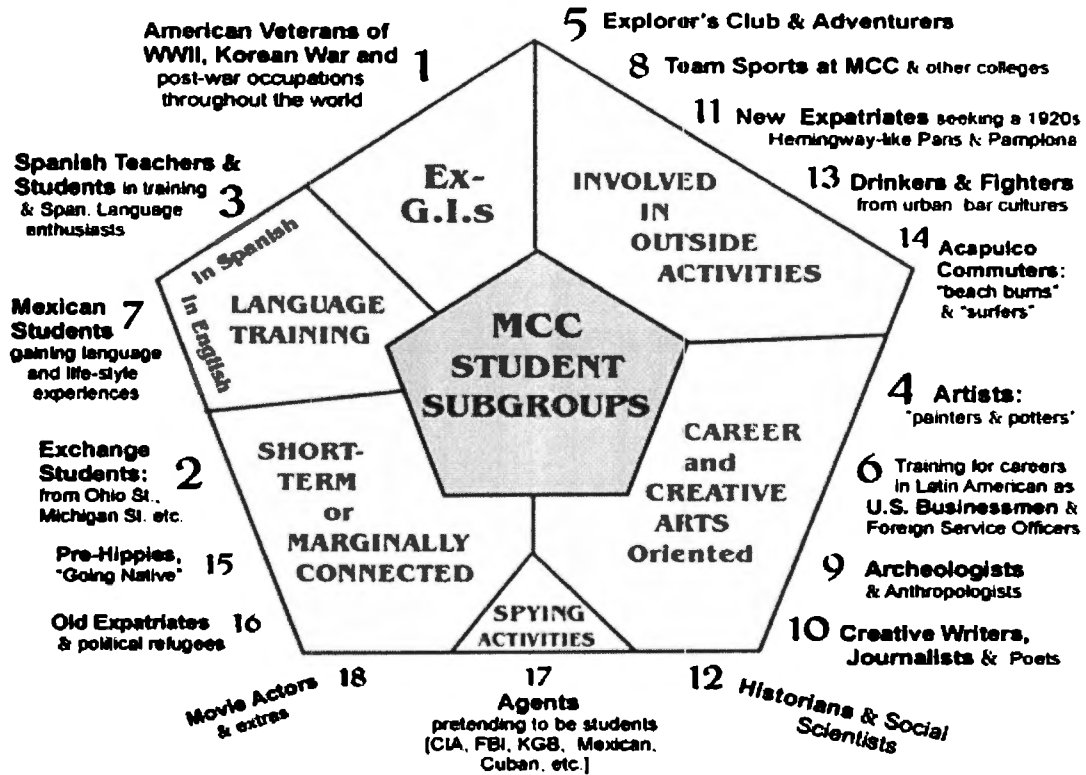
living at the time, preparing, along with Fidel Castro, the invasion of Cuba. From the end of the Mexican Revolution, and until 1997, Mexico was a one-party country, and freedom of speech was often limited. Perhaps this added to the underground intellectual fervor of the time. As the author sees it, there were four primary types of students at the MCC during that time: those looking to turn Mexico City into what Paris had been for someone like Ernest Hemingway, those interested in playing sports at the university, beach bums, and drinkers.

Wilkie discusses the experience of Pete Hamill, an American alumnus of the school who is now a famous journalist. In Hamill's book *A Drinking Life*, his time at the MCC was remembered quite vividly: "There was drinking everywhere ... Everyone was far from home ... These were 1950s parties, young men and women packing the chosen apartment, dancing, as said, teeth to teeth ... I was happier than I'd ever been" (Wilkie, 2006). Here we see one thing that commonly has drawn, and will draw, Americans to Mexico: a sense of excitement and wonder at being away from your home country, in a "tropical" land full of beautiful beaches, mountains, food and people. Songs like "Tijuana Jail" by the enormously influential 1960s San Francisco folk group The Kingston Trio give light to the sense of adventure, both good and bad, available to *Yanquis* upon crossing the border. The MCC students scrounged money to survive, and some were paid money to play on the football teams of various universities. Many appeared as actors in movies and commercials when a role of an American was needed, the same thing sixty years later that I did in a commercial for a major Mexican bank. The common theme is that the students saw MCC as an opportunity to escape from their "real-world" responsibilities in America, and these students generally wished to stay in Mexico as long as they had the financial resources to do so. Below is a table that Wilkie created that shows a general description of the staff and students at the MCC.

Figure 1

**STUDENT SUBGROUPS AT MEXICO CITY COLLEGE
1954-1962**

BASED UPON:



12

As mentioned before, veterans of World War II and the Korean War were a strong faction. These ex-GIs had broad worldviews and financing for their studies, and were strongly interested in the opportunities at MCC. The next group was generally locals who were active in MCC, both teaching Spanish and learning English. Many short-term exchange students made up the student body at the MCC. Apart from the few who were spies, the final two groups were those who were not primarily in Mexico to be part of MCC and had other primary interests in Mexico, but were tangentially involved in the MCC, other with the occasional course, or to use it as a hub to connect with other Americans in Mexico. Despite the melting pot of backgrounds found at the college, or perhaps due to it, the MCC was a great success for those who were there in its heyday.

¹² Reproduced from "Dangerous Journeys", by Richard Wilkie.

Chapter 3: Interviews of Americans Living in Mexico

Background on Research Conducted:

As part of my research for this paper, I conducted interviews with a number of Americans currently living in Mexico. These subjects were Americans that I had met while living in Mexico in 2009 and 2010. The summary of these interviews follows.

Female professional in her twenties:

The first participant is in her twenties and is from Vermont. She is working as the Communications and Quality Control Coordinator at a Mexican nonprofit organization based in the capital that works for sustainable human and community development. The organization works to give people in Mexico the tools to improve their health, education, and economic situation. She has been in Mexico for slightly more than two years and said that she loves living in Latin America and accepted a full-time offer with this NPO after briefly working for them during a summer. Apart from enjoying the company of good friends and enjoying the culture and neighborhood she lives in, she most appreciates the professional opportunity she has been given, and she feels she could not obtain a similar position in the United States. Many American professionals feel that their American upbringing and education give them an advantage in the Mexican labor market. Like most expats around the world, she misses her family. In particular, she noted the “merry go round” aspect of the expat community in Mexico City. Many foreigners are here for only approximately a year, and then leave the city, and that means that she frequently has to develop new friendships. She describes herself as a very driven person and feels that the workplace generally moves slower. For her, it seems that she is often feeling like she is “pulling, dragging, [her] colleagues, rather than being part of a team that is working together to push forward”. In general, Mexican culture is more hierarchical than American culture, and, compared to their American counterparts, Mexican employees are much more reluctant to question the actions or decisions of their superiors.

Going alongside with this, rather than doing things and making decisions through their own initiative that could affect the status quo; they prefer to wait for specific instructions on what needs to be done. Finally, despite being fluent in Spanish, the language

barrier does provide challenges from time to time, especially in the “culture of the language”. American English speakers are much more direct, whereas Mexican Spanish speakers often use more “flowery” language before reaching a point. This can be seen in the difference in ending phone calls; a simple and direct process in American English can turn into a never-ending round of goodbyes in Mexican Spanish, as both speakers are afraid to offend the other by being the first to hang up. In this same notion, even with perfect grammar and an easily understandable accent, an American speaking Spanish in Mexico often “gets to the point” rather quickly, which on times can lead the Mexican receiver to consider that American rude, impersonal, and bossy. Finally, she describes herself as constantly aware of perceived “cultural imperialism”, especially coming from a country that many Mexicans feel “stole” half of their land. Though close friends with many Americans here, she lives with two well-educated Mexicans, and the relationships that she has formed with them are her most powerful link into Mexican society. She is very grateful for the welcoming way in which those Mexican families have treated her.

In general, many Americans find their best friends to be among the higher classes of Mexican society, those that are well-educated, have studied and/or lived abroad, and are fluent in English. This is generally done not for a discontent towards those in lower classes, but the honest reality that American expats are likely to have more in common with those from Mexico’s upper classes than with those with less education. She encourages Americans in Mexico to learn Spanish if they move here, and she notes that the Americans she knows look down on other Americans who aren’t at least attempting to learn and speak Spanish. Longer lunches are part of the culture, and she encourages Americans here to understand Mexico’s greater importance on small cordialities, to be more flexible with their time and realize things don’t always run as scheduled here and not get upset when things such as this happen. Though petty crime is a problem, she does not currently feel “unsafe” in Mexico City. In the fall of 2011 she plans to return to the US to enroll in graduate school.

Female small-business owner in her thirties:

The next interviewee is a woman from California in her thirties who owns her own business in Mexico and lives in Guadalajara. She is working as an international

manufacturer's representative in Mexico and is soon launching an online store to sell imported products in Mexico. She has been living in Mexico for seven years, with the majority of her time being in Mexico City before moving to Guadalajara last year. As the result of growing up in San Diego, Mexico was constantly an important part of her life. She sees Mexico as ripe for opportunity for entrepreneurs as compared to the already well-saturated American market. She plans to stay in Mexico for a long time, and her major complaints are common of many foreigners here: frustrating bureaucracy and missing family. For American businesspeople considering the move to Mexico, she advises patience and taking time to learn the culture. Mexicans are not as direct in their answers as Americans. Often a "maybe" from a Mexican means "absolutely not", and she advises those to attempt to understand how best to decipher what a Mexican's answer really means. She also notes that Mexicans are generally more conservative in their business affairs, and not as much of risk-takers as Americans.

For this reason, Americans here must have more patience with their businesses and be willing to wait longer for a business to grow. She notes that being a foreigner often makes it easy to get a foot in a door, something echoed by many Americans, myself included. She finds customer service to be generally lower in Mexico, and finds Mexico to be an easier market to compete in. By having different nationality and behavioral traits, she finds it easier to be recognized by potential vendors and clients. She finds that the key to integrating into Mexican culture is speaking the language. Many Mexicans, she notes, appreciate those who at least attempt to speak Spanish, and are offended by those who do not even try. In a fascinating turn, she sees a growing number of small-business American entrepreneurs in Mexico. Whereas the American community that peaked in the 1960s was generally sent by large corporations, she views future professionals coming to Mexico to be primarily small-business owners looking for new markets. In the past, large corporations would send Americans here for one or two years, and then they would return home. She sees the new wave of American professional expatriates as committed to running their businesses in Mexico for the long-term. She advises Americans that are considering moving to Mexico to reach out to those Americans already living here before making the move permanently. She credits Mexico for less bureaucracy than in the past, but she does worry about the effect of the drug violence on important business cities such as Monterrey.

Male small-business owner in his forties:

The next participant is a small-business owner from Texas who is in his forties and has been in Mexico for sixteen years. He owns a distributorship for a major international tire company, and his business focuses on selling truck tires and maintaining and repairing these tires. An American company first sent him here to open their Mexican operations, and he later started his own business. The main motivating factor for him staying here is his business, which is doing well but also has no presence in the US. Were he to return home, he would either have to find a job at a company or start up a new business from the beginning. He has been challenged by a culture where illegal activities are not as commonly prosecuted, and at his business, which employs approximately one hundred workers, employee theft is a common problem for him. Additionally, he worries about the threat as violence, as his wealth and nationality do make him a possible target.

Like the others, he feels that Americans receive preferential treatment here, and are perceived as “experts” simply as a result of their nationality. His wife is from Central America, and he sees his children as fully bicultural. His main interaction with Americans nowadays is at his English-speaking church, and with other parents at his children’s English speaking school. Compared to his arrival sixteen years, he feels that there are much fewer Americans now in Mexico City, which he feels is due to the very high cost of a multinational corporation sending an expat from America to Mexico. As has been discussed before, Mexicans are much more likely nowadays to lead the Mexican offices of large MNCs, and additionally, he has seen an increase in professional expatriates from other Latin American countries, including Brazil. He feels confident about Mexico’s economy for the next five years, and he feels if Americans are willing to put in the effort and long-term commitment to open their own businesses here, he feels now is a good time to do so.

Again, he advises Americans on the importance of learning the language and the culture, and of being patient at the generally slower moving aspect of professional and personal life in Mexico. Over his time here, he has seen less corruption in business and in government, but obviously is worried about the rise in violence. Though he plans to stay in Mexico for a long time, the most significant factor that could result in him leaving Mexico would be if the violence spread from its epicenter in northern Mexico and were to become an issue in Mexico City. All in all, he is happy with this path his life has taken in Mexico,

and he has found his sixteen years to be an enjoyable experience filled with lots of valuable learning experiences.

Male professional in his fifties:

The next interviewee is in his 50s, and works for a large international commercial real estate firm, where he works as a commissioned broker. He has been in Mexico City for over 20 years. He was intrigued by the increased capitalist opportunities that President Carlos Salinas was pushing at the end of the 1980s, and “saw an opportunity to apply my profession and knowledge in an emerging market, especially by helping the newly legal multinational companies navigate a foreign business environment”. Like many other Americans here, he was looking for an adventure. Additionally, he was fleeing the deep real estate recession in Texas at this time. Here, it is fascinating to see that a factor in his decision to move to Mexico was similar to international migrants throughout history: improved economic opportunity in a new country.

He has felt appreciated as an American in Mexico, a theme others have said as well. Additionally, he has grown fond of the country, and, politicians aside, the people as well. Furthermore, in another theme shared by migrants, as he is now starting in his fourth decade in Mexico and is nearing retirement, he feels he would have a hard time finding suitable work in the United States. Many immigrants throughout the world grow so accustomed to their new country that they feel they would not do as well in the career path in their home countries, if they were to return. He does feel that the Mexican authorities have little interest in helping ordinary citizens; not just in personal safety, but also in fraud and bureaucracy. He is troubled by the relative lack of meritocracy in Mexico. Naturally, he misses families, as well as a more peaceful day to day life, and certain amenities in the United States, such as low-cost public golf courses and tennis courts (as compared to the private, few and expensive golf courses and tennis courts in Mexico).

While doing business here, he has been frustrated by a preference for businessmen to prefer to do business with friends and family, rather than choose the wisest deal financially. Like others, he feels that being an American he garners him more respect naturally than it would in the United States. The diminished presence of Americans has been noticed by him as well, as multinational corporations in Mexico are much more likely to staff domestically

than rely on expats, as compared to times past. By not having family here, he does feel that he misses out on many social activities that would otherwise be a factor in his life. Over the past twenty years, he has been most impressed with the emergence of a true democracy and a true free enterprise system in Mexico. It is noteworthy that he feels Mexico needs to attempt to improve its image in the United States. He sees Mexico as America's most reliable ally in the world, and believes it would be wiser for American firms to do business with Mexican firms, as opposed to Chinese firms, who he views as an emerging rival. Though he has enjoyed his experience in Mexico, he is hoping to return to the United States soon.

Male professional in his sixties:

I next interviewed a man in his sixties who has been in Mexico since 1979. He was sent here by a major international accounting and auditing firm to participate in a project, and has decided to stay in Mexico since then. He is now working for an organization that sets accounting standards in Mexico. He enjoys the challenge and excitement of working in a bicultural setting, and has found his skills to be appreciated by Mexican counterparts. A challenge he sees in the Mexican business culture is the idea that Mexicans will often "tell you what you want to hear," even if they cannot complete the task. They do not see this as lying, and simply see it as a way off pushing off the problem onto someone else. As has been mentioned before, punctuality is another concern in Mexico. Finally, he sees Mexican managers as having a strong need to approve every decision, even if a subordinate is capable of approving a decision.

Fascinatingly, like every other subject, he feels that, all else equal, an American in Mexico earns more respect and opportunity than if they were in the United States. He has maintained his ties to Americans in Mexico through organizations such as his church, and also when dealing with clients from the United States. Rather than trying to change Mexican society, he believes he has been happy here by simply adapting to it. He encourages humility among Americans living here, and again, the utmost importance of taking the effort to learn Spanish. One of the things he most enjoys about Mexico is the amazing travel opportunities available in the country. Since his time here over the past thirty-one years, he is concerned about the growing violence and growing congestion of the

city, but he has been impressed with the improved selection and prices of products in the country, the greater self-confidence among Mexican workers, and most notably, improvements in work ethics and commitment. As one other American manager who has been here for a long time has noted, perhaps the greatest intangible benefit of NAFTA has been a drastic improvement in the conduct of Mexican professionals. Forced to compete with skilled and competent professionals from Canada and the United States after the passage of NAFTA, professionals in Mexico over the last sixteen years have markedly improved their level of professionalism.

Commentary on Research:

The interviews of the American professionals in Mexico reveal a few common themes. A first was that, despite the many negative conceptions that Americans have about Mexico, the American expats were generally quite happy with their experiences. They appreciated the life they had, and they appreciated the accomplishments that they were making in their careers. A second theme noticed was the importance of learning Spanish. A common perception around the globe is that Americans have no interest in learning foreign languages, and automatically assume that their culture, and their language, is always superior. The expats interviewed feel that by attempting to learn and speak Spanish, they receive a much warmer welcome in to Mexican society. A final major theme seen was the importance of accepting many parts of Mexican culture, even if they are a source of constant frustration. As shown throughout this paper, in particular in discussing the work of Hofstede, American and Mexican cultures are quite different. Rather than constantly complaining about their frustrations, they've found that simply working their hardest in spite of the challenges is the best way to enjoy life and thrive in Mexico. The mindsets of those I interviewed are in striking contrast to the mindsets of the early American migrants to Mexico in the late 1800s. Swept up into the newly rising American empire and the notion of Manifest Destiny, those people saw themselves as sellers of American values.

Today's American migrants don't have such quixotic goals. But perhaps the explanation for why they don't is simple: the historic American values of a consumer culture, elected democracy, and a capitalist free market have been, by and large, accepted by Mexican society. Perhaps today's Americans in Mexico don't have such an evangelical

vision for their presence because there is simply no need to. Increasingly, the life they enjoyed in America is combined with the best of Mexican culture to create a rather comfortable lifestyle. Unlike the millions of Mexicans in extreme poverty, for these Americans in Mexico, the nation is simply a country of delectable tacos, warm weather, great beaches, affordable personal services, and Starbucks.

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Conclusion:

These migrants have played very significant roles in the history of Mexico at times, and they continue to be a meaningful presence today, including increasingly as retirees. In this paper, I have discussed the history of American migrants in Mexico, the Americans that are currently residing in Mexico (with a special emphasis on retirees), and I have discussed, in general, the important themes that have arisen from this migration. Migration study is often focused on the poor or oppressed. That being said, migration of skilled professionals is not as commonly discussed. In this paper, we have given both a historical overview and contemporary analysis of American migrants, the majority of which are skilled professionals, and studied that group's experiences in Mexico.

The future of Americans in Mexico is certainly going to be different than the arrival of Americans in the past. For starters, multinational corporations are much less likely to send large numbers of Americans to Mexico. And, the growing violence in Mexico has left many Americans deciding not to work, study, or retire in Mexico. The rates of American immigration to Mexico are definitely unclear until that violence subsides. However, the future American presence will be dominated more by two groups: retirees, and short-term business trips. I've already discussed retirees, so let me briefly comment on the short-term trips. With communication available, it is no longer necessary for foreigners to live in Mexico. They can monitor their business operations quite sufficiently with the help of Mexican managers on the ground. And, given the great increase in flight availability from Mexico to the rest of the world, it is now much easier to come to Mexico for a short business trip, and then leave quickly. Mexico is still the second largest economy in Latin America, and will continue to be a vital player in the global economy. Foreign businesspeople will continue to flock to Mexico, though if only for short trips in this case, in much the same way that they have for hundreds of years.

With much fewer expat arrivals, the American community in Mexico is not nearly as large and identifiable as it had been before. Union Church, a nondenominational, Protestant, English speaking church in Mexico City founded by Americans in the 1800s, it currently has less than a third of the attendance that it did in the 1960s; although some of this can be contributed to changes in church attendance, a significant factor is due to the much smaller American and British communities in the capital. As another anecdote, the

American Society of Mexico, a long-existing social club for Americans in the capital, is, for all intents and purposes, defunct. That being said, the American embassy in Mexico City still employs a large number of American employees, as does the American School. An English language newspaper, *The News*, is still published every weekday in Mexico City. And although the presence and impact of a unified American community in Mexico City is much smaller than in times past, the American presence in the *provincia* of Mexico still is quite noticeable among a few retirement communities, a trend that seems quite likely to continue growing over the next twenty-plus years.

Compared to times past, the American community in Mexico nowadays is noticeably different. For starters, it is not nearly the “unified” community that it once was, particularly in Mexico City. The American community in Mexico City was very tightly-knit from the end of the 1800s through the 1960s. As more American corporations opened offices in Mexico City, they would send Americans to Mexico City to direct these offices. This was an expensive undertaking for these companies, as they had to pay these expats American salaries (which were above the market wage in Mexico), and also generally had to provide stipends for housing, travel, education for the children, and other things. However, after World War II, Mexico’s economy grew quite well in the 1950s and 1960s, and among other things, the quality of business education improved. As the twentieth century continued, American corporations in Mexico found that there were more capable Mexicans that they could hire instead of continuing to send American expatriates in numbers. In addition to the much lower labor costs of hiring locally, they could likely also expect more of a long-term commitment, as compared to many expats who only stayed in Mexico for a few years.

It is not at all an exaggeration to say that Mexico City is one of the most chaotic cities in world. With over twenty million people in the metropolitan area, traffic that never ceases, crime, pollution. And yet in the midst of this all, a walk down Jules Verne Street in the posh Polanco neighborhood can provide relief and inspiration. As you cross through a park, a large statue of Abraham Lincoln will remind you that you are in Parque Lincoln, Lincoln Park. That such a historical American figure receives the significant honor of having a park named after him in Mexico’s capital is a testament to Lincoln’s greatness, as well as to the positive and mutually respectful relationship that these two neighbors have

enjoyed at times, and hopefully will enjoy in times to come. Just as John Powell and Tommie Smith had used Mexico City to strengthen global movement for civil rights, the statue across the street from Abraham Lincoln's statue is that of one of America's most respected citizens ever, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That these two icons of liberty should receive such prominent recognition in foreign country serves as a reminder of our future world, the duties that we will have, and the exciting possibilities that exist when true collaboration occurs. More than ever before, in order to thrive, all nations, both rich and poor, must be open to the ideas, products, and physical presence of those from beyond their borders. Those nations that successfully do so will be the nations that thrive.

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