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978-1-107-01126-7 - Mexico and Its Diaspora in the United States: Policies of Emigration Since 1848

Alexandra Délano

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Mexico and Its Diaspora in the United States

Policies of Emigration since 1848

In the past two decades, changes in the Mexican government's policies toward the 30 million Mexican migrants living in the United States highlight the importance of the Mexican diaspora in both countries, given its size, its economic power, and its growing political participation across borders. This work examines how the Mexican government's assessment of the possibilities and consequences of implementing emigration policies to protect and promote the rights of this population, and engage migrant organizations from 1848 to 2010, has been tied to changes in the bilateral relationship. Understanding this dynamic gives an insight into the stated and unstated objectives of Mexico's recent activism in defending migrants' rights and engaging the diaspora, the continuing linkage between Mexican migration policies and shifts in the United States–Mexico relationship, and the limits and possibilities for expanding shared mechanisms for the management of migration within the framework of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Dr. Alexandra Délano is Assistant Professor of Global Studies at The New School in New York City. Her research focuses on Mexican migration, immigrant integration in the United States, and diaspora engagement policies. She received her doctorate in International Relations from Oxford University and has been a Post-Doctoral Fellow in Politics at The New School for Social Research and a Fellow at Yale University. Her articles have appeared in *International Migration Review*, *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *International Migration*, *Social Research*, *Foro Internacional*, *Americas Quarterly*, and *Migración y Desarrollo*.

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ALEXANDRA DÉLANO

The New School, New York



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*To all those who work to promote and protect the rights of
Mexican migrants, aquí y allá*

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Acknowledgments

This journey began in the summer of 2000 when I first witnessed the realities of the Mexico–United States border in field trips to Calexico and multiple crossings of *la línea* as part of the Summer Seminar in U.S. Studies at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). As a Mexican citizen standing on the U.S. side of the border, smelling the New River and the stinking waters that the Border Patrol will not touch for fear of infections but that migrants submerge themselves in, and talking to migrants who had been detained, my indignation was mostly about what was happening on the other side. What made these men and women so desperate to try to cross again and again even if this meant undergoing painful and humiliating experiences? Why were they more afraid of the Mexican police waiting for them on the other side than of the U.S. Border Patrol as they munched through the snacks they were given at the detention center? How could the Mexican government and so many Mexican citizens remain passive and continue to see this process and its consequences as a “natural phenomenon,” a “rite of passage,” a “necessary evil?”

Much has been written about U.S. immigration policy, its contradictions, and its unintended consequences. Similarly, there is a wide bibliography on Mexican migration, its history and, more recently, Mexico’s policies. However, few studies look at both policies side by side and at the ways in which migration flows and policies are linked to variations in the United States–Mexico relationship. This became the focus of my work, first because I wanted to understand the evolution of both countries’ policies and the ways in which they have influenced each other. Second, and

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most importantly, I wanted to uncover the generally unchallenged acceptance of Mexico as the weaker actor in this relationship and its implications in terms of the government's "inability" to control migration flows and address their causes and effects. This view was greatly influenced by my studies in International Relations at El Colegio de México and the work of many of my professors there who have disputed the assumption of Mexico as a defenseless actor vis-à-vis the United States. I am forever indebted to El Colegio for the opportunity to be a part of such a rich community of scholars and students; this community largely shaped my views not just on the issues that we studied but on education and the role of academia in policy and advocacy. I am particularly grateful to Ana Covarrubias Jorge Domínguez and Sergio Aguayo for their mentorship and support.

Throughout these ten years of work on Mexico–United States migration, I have been privileged to have the opportunity to learn from and have the support of experts in the field. Gilbert Joseph and Patricia Pessar at Yale University helped me gain confidence in the work I was doing and provided the unforgettable opportunity to give my first lecture. Andrew Hurrell, my advisor at Oxford University, has taught me as much about the ways to unpack and make a compelling argument as he has about the importance and value of having a mentor; he has been an example to follow as a scholar, a professor, and a friend. His support and his belief in this project from its early stages have been essential and have motivated me to continue challenging myself in this field.

My arrival at The New School has been one of the most important steps in my professional life and I am deeply grateful to Vicky Hattam, David Plotke, Jonathan Bach, and Ary Zolberg for trusting me and giving me a place as a colleague. Teaching at The New School is a unique experience, every day, and I thank every single one of my students for all that I have learned from them and with them.

Los caminos de la vida have brought me to live in New York City for almost five years now, but a part of me is and always will be on the other side of the border and I would not be able to be at peace "here" if I weren't somehow connected to "there." Thanks to Carlos González Gutiérrez, former Executive Director of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), I have had invaluable opportunities to work on a number of projects related to research about the institute and to teach a course about Mexican communities abroad through the diplomatic academy, *Instituto Matías Romero*. This connection to members of the Mexican foreign service, and the people who work for the IME in Mexico, the

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United States, and Canada, inspires me to continue working in this field and focus on projects that may help create awareness and inform better policies in Mexico and the United States.

The field research that I refer to in this work would not have been possible without Carlos's support as Executive Director of the IME and his staff. I also thank Arturo Sarukhan for the opportunity to work and do research at the Mexican Consulate in New York. This experience was definitive in helping me develop a better understanding of the work that is done through the consulates, and it also provided access to primary sources that are quoted in this work. Many current and former Mexican government officials and specialists on migration issues were also kind to offer their time for interviews that were of great value for my research.

As part of this research, I had the unique opportunity to meet and formally or informally interview a number of people who work with the Mexican communities in the United States and Canada, either as consular employees, community leaders, teachers, or advocates, and to personally interview more than 400 Mexican migrants at five Mexican consulates. Each one of their experiences and stories moves me; even though their names are not quoted here, they are the voices that need to be heard and that I hope to reflect in some form through my continuing work on migration.

A number of people have been kind readers of my work and have helped me improve it through their constructive criticism and suggestions. I am deeply grateful to the two anonymous readers selected by Cambridge University Press for their insightful and detailed comments, which were incredibly helpful in my process of rethinking, revising, and improving the manuscript. Stephen Castles, Julián Escutia, Alan Gamlen, Carlos González Gutiérrez, Andrew Hurrell, Kevin Middlebrook, Vicky Hattam, and David Plotke also provided helpful comments on previous versions of this manuscript or parts of it. I also thank my editor, Eric Crahan, for supporting this project and for making the editorial process an enjoyable experience with his patience, precision, and good nature. The book would not have been possible without his effort, or the careful work of Susan Zininger, copyeditor, and Peter Katsirubas, project manager.

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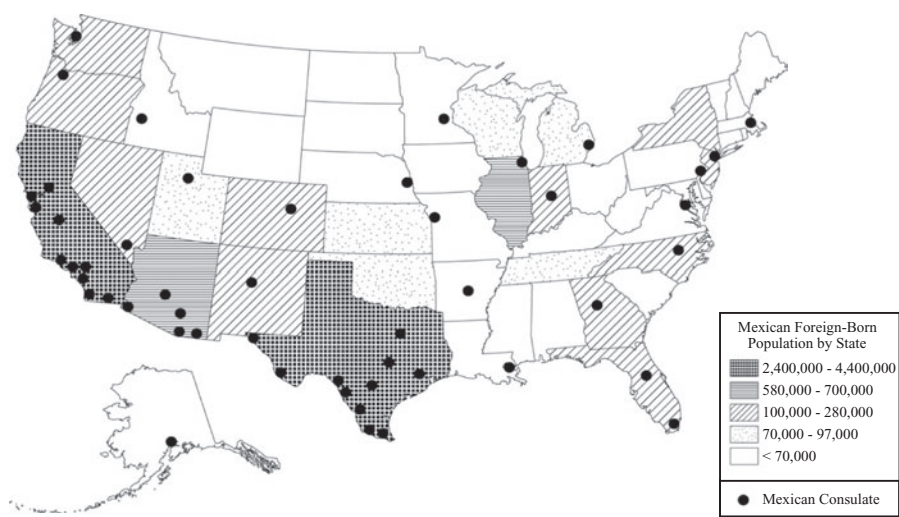
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pp. 764–814); “From ‘Shared Responsibility’ to a Migration Agreement? The Limits for Cooperation in the Mexico–United States Case (2000–2008),” *International Migration* (September 2009); and “The Mexican Government and Organised Mexican Immigrants in The United States: A Historical Analysis of Political Transnationalism (1848–2005),” co-authored with Gustavo Cano, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Vol. 33, No. 5, July 2007, pp. 695–725).

This work has been part of a process of crossing many borders, both physical and personal. It would not have been possible without my partner on this journey, my best friend, and greatest motivation every day, Paul. Thank you.

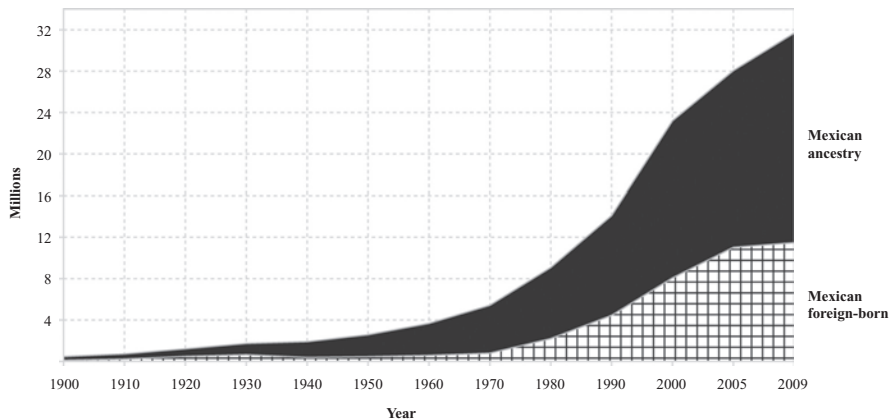
New York, April 2011

Mexican Foreign-Born Population and Mexican Consulates by State



Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009; Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2010

Mexican-origin population in the United States 1900–2009



	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2009
Mexican foreign-born	0.10	0.22	0.48	0.64	0.38	0.45	0.58	0.79	2.20	4.45	8.07	11.48
Mexican ancestry	0.36	0.50	0.73	1.09	1.52	2.12	3.10	4.63	6.87	9.65	14.43	20.21
TOTAL Mexican-origin	0.46	0.72	1.21	1.73	1.90	2.57	3.68	5.42	9.07	14.09	23.20	31.69

Source: CONAPO (2008), “Población de origen mexicano residente en Estados Unidos, 1900-2007”; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009.