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WHY THEY IMMIGRATE:  
PERUVIANS TO CHILE AND MEXICANS TO THE UNITED STATES

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## **ABSTRACT**

This honors thesis will examine and compare the cases of Peruvians immigrating to Chile and Mexicans immigrating to the United States for the purpose of work. I will observe the political, economic and social factors that drive each out of their respective native countries, and the political, economic and social factors that draw them to immigrate to their new country in which they work and live. In this thesis, I will argue that Peruvians and Mexicans have been driven out of their countries because of political, economic and cultural reasons and have fled to other countries, Chile and the United States respectively, in order to live under better circumstances and to lead more fruitful lives. I then explore my argument using data from the Migration Policy institute, Pew Hispanic Research Center, the US Census Bureau and the Census Bureau of Chile. Finally, I will summarize how their situations can compare.

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## INTRODUCTION

On one side of the world a man wakes up before dawn to make his way out to the fields to pick strawberries; on the other side of the world, a woman arises around the same time to prepare and send off three young children for school. These two situations are common realities for migrant workers living in a foreign country. This thesis seeks to examine the conditions under which Mexicans immigrate to work in the United States, and under which Peruvians immigrate to work in Chile.

The two cases are relatable because of similar economic situations in the country that citizens emigrate from, where people are finding it difficult to work and survive, supporting either themselves and in many cases supporting a family as well. Each case presents with different push and pull factors – those factors that both drive Peruvians out of Peru and that drive Mexicans out of Mexico, but also those factors that pull Peruvians to Chile and that pull Mexicans to the United States. In each case there is a trend of migration that directly correlates to the political and economic situations of the specific time period.

Both cases can also be compared because of the ease, or difficulty, in entering the country, and staying for extended periods of time to work. Borders are heavily monitored both from Mexico to the United States and from Peru to Chile, however the ability for foreigners to enter the country of Chile is much easier than what the process looks like for Mexicans entering the United States. The process of naturalization, once the immigrant arrives, can also be extensive and grueling, and relies heavily on whether or not that immigrant has found a steady job or an employer who may sponsor them.

After spending a semester studying in Chile and experiencing first-hand the tension between Peruvians and Chileans, I seek to understand where some of the conflict may arise from. I analyze the United States and Mexico example as well in order to compare the situation south of the equator to one that is near home.

## **PERU AND CHILE**

## CHAPTER 1: THE PUSH FACTORS

### 1.1 Political Strife in Peru

One of the primary factors that caused for many Peruvians to flee the country, including their immigration to Chile, involves the recent political situation of Peru. From 1945 to 1990 Peru saw a variety of governments under an array of rulers, where the politics shifted from being civilian-led governments to being led by military governments who overthrew whichever government was in place beforehand via a military coup. There was almost one coup d'état every decade for nearly fifty years, until July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1990 when independent, center-right Alberto Fujimori was elected President of Peru on an anti-corruption platform (Timeline: Peru, 2012). Although Fujimori was a minority himself, hailing from Japan and supporting the large indigenous minority of Peru who are often exploited, on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1992 he led a military backed self-coup d'état in which he closed the Congress, suspended the Constitution and purged the judiciary. Tanks drove into Lima on that day as legislators, journalists and members of opposing political parties were arrested by soldiers – all of this occurred because of an inner contempt Fujimori had for opposing lawmakers and corrupt judges, but most importantly, to curb the merciless advance of *Sendero Luminoso*, the guerrilla group leading the opposition and responsible for intense violence across the previous decade (Lane, 1992). The government went on to rule by decree for several months, after which in November of that year Fujimori held elections for a constituent assembly. In 1993 this assembly, via referendum, gained the approval of a new constitution. Fujimori changed the Constitution so that he would be able to run for another term. At elections two years later Fujimori was reelected once again, reminding the rest

of the word that Peru was operating on a democracy, although some people referred to their system as a “delegative democratic” (Levitsky, 1999). Peru was in danger at the time of being characterized as a fully-powered authoritarian regime, and the elections and restoration of a formal constitutional rule helped to divert the attention away from the possibility of a dangerous government; however, there were still many issues that arose through what Peru seemed to showcase to the world as a democratic style government.

The government during that time committed many crimes and the President himself has gone through trial for some of the human rights violations that he allowed to occur under his very administration’s power. There was censorship occurring within the media, where phone lines were disconnected and many were being tapped by the government in order to discover if the media was acting against them in an undercover means. Journalists were stalked, harassed, intimidated, sent death threats and some were even forced to leave the country.

The Law of Authentic Interpretation, which was a controversial legislation that allowed Fujimori to run once again for term as President in 2000, allowed for there to be an absence in democratic checks on executive power. Independent bodies of power were weakened and the judicial branch was eroded, and essentially stacked into a single branch of the government in order to not face legal or constitutional challenges. In its worst years, the Congress was failing to check abuses of power by the executive branch, and not only that but was also an accomplice to some of those abuses and took part in weakening some of the independent branches.

In 2009, former President Fujimori was found guilty of severe human rights violations and sentenced to 25 years in prison, which was the maximum penalty permitted by Peruvian law (Burt, 2009). This trial was a monumental occasion in the modern world because it was the first time any democratically elected head of state was extradited to his own country, put on trial for

human rights violations and, in the end, convicted. Not only this, but additionally there were dozens of human rights trials that were occurring in Peru along with the rest of Latin America for other political and human rights atrocities that had occurred. Peru set an example for the rest of the world that no head of state is above the law, and that all presidents and political leaders must be held accountable for their actions in a court of law.

Fujimori seemed to be a promising leader for the country of Peru during a time of uncertainty and fear that many civilians lived in. The two previous governments of Peru, both democratic, led by Fernando Belaúnde from 1980 to 1985 and Alan García from 1985 to 1990, failed to protect its people and stop advancements of *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path), an insurgent group leading a struggle to conquer state power during the decade of the 1980s (Timeline: Peru, 2012). The group was known for its terrorist tactics which unfortunately included assaults on unarmed citizens. Peru, in a state of panic, responded to these tactics with violent tactics of their own which included rampant massacres, contrived disappearances and the widespread use of sexual violence and torture (Burt, 2009). These events resulted in a Peru stuck in a never-ending cycle of violence and fear.

Fujimori promised “honesty, technology and work” if he was elected to the presidency (Burt, 2009: 386). He appealed to the rural and urban poor through his strategies of economic populism; additionally, he was of Japanese ancestry, which gave him a greater advantage against his opponent, world-renowned writer and novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, when it came to indigenous and mestizo support.

Although many Peruvians remember that it was President Fujimori who arrested and locked up the leader of *Sendero Luminoso*, the support he maintained throughout his presidency of other massacres, led especially by the Colina Group, was what caused him to be a great

violator of human rights. During elections he had done everything in his power to appeal to the minorities of the country, the groups that were discriminated against the most and those who received the lowest treatment - the indigenous population. These people often receive lower pay because of their indigenous background and most often live in poor, rural settings. Fujimori appealed to them during his elections only to turn his back on them once he came to power by allowing for disappearances, murders, sexual and other torture to occur under his own administration.

## **1.2 Economic Hardships**

Although Peru's economy may be classified as an upper-middle economy, the majority of the groups who benefit from the economic growth are big businesses and corporations – not the workers. Peru's economy relies heavily on commodity exports, specifically copper and gold mining. At one point Peru was exporting primarily to China, who needed those products to accommodate their rapidly expanding country; however, soon China's demand decreased drastically and Peru was left in economic decline. Since Peru's exports fell, foreign investors no longer interested in Peru fled, putting more pressure on the economy by decreasing the value of their currency, the sol, which led to inflation. The country itself halved its poverty rate in the past ten years, although Peruvians who escaped poverty are still living dangerously close to the poverty line. Crushing economic situations in Peru left families struggling to survive, with lack of employment and low wages.

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the mid-1990s, a large majority of the Peruvian population lived in the countryside and depended on agriculture. Peru adopted an economic style up until the 1930s that was similar to other countries in Latin America in that it

was an open system with very little government intervention and few restrictions on both imports and foreign investments.

Just like other Latin American countries, Peru took a hard hit during the Great Depression of the United States. Peru continued with its open economic policy which ended up hurting the country's economy in the long run by putting Peru behind when other countries of Latin American were industrializing and inciting notable economic change. By the 1960s the Peruvian government finally intervened to place new restrictions on foreign investment. Also during this time period many Peruvians were leaving their homes in the countryside to move to more urban areas, namely Lima, where industrialization was rolling and the labor market was growing with better opportunities (Levitsky, 1999).

The population of Peru was growing rapidly, and it was becoming more and more of a burden for the Peruvian economy since a large majority of the agricultural sector was being sold and consumed internally, with less of an emphasis on exports. Although many Peruvians had been migrating down from the mountains into the big cities, they were not seeing the results they would have wanted, and therefore a shift towards industrialization was both inevitable and necessary. During the 1960s Peru began to nationalize many of its large firms to convert to a more restrictive legislation (Hudson, 1992). By 1969, Peru had implemented a militaristic enforcing of an agrarian land reform that would cause many Peruvians to become upset with the way it was carried out. The purpose of this new land reform, attempting to model those agrarian land reforms implemented by various Latin American countries previously, was to modernize the traditional agrarian structure through the creation of a market-oriented, rural middle class that would be economically and politically capable of creating an indigenous industrialization by moving land-based agrarian capital to the industrial sectors of Peru (Saleth, 1991). By 1975, it

was clear that the government was failing to support its people through this militaristic agrarian reform, and the economy was beginning to deteriorate because of a lack of investment from other countries and from Peru itself.

### **1.3 Daily Life: Living in Poverty and Fear**

The Peruvian people lived through decades of fear during the 1980s and 1990s with *Sendero Luminoso* responsible for very intense human rights violations and Fujimori's government not doing much better. Many Latin American countries were going through similar political strife during the same time period of the 1980s, where the government was allowing for opposing party members to be interrogated, tortured, disappeared or murdered. While most other countries, such as Chile and Argentina, ended these trends by the early 1990s, Peru was still suffering from a torturous and unsupportive government; for this political reason many Peruvians chose to flee to other countries where they might be able to feel safe and away from the harm that people living in Peru were enduring.

*Sendero Luminoso* (SL) was ruthless in their tactics of torture. They aligned themselves ideologically with Marx, Lenin and Mao, and many were indigenous and celebrated their native heritage by way of shaming and crucifying mestizo descendants of Spanish conquerors. SL would burn ballot boxes in order to instill fear and would hold public executions of moderate local leaders, including nuns and priests, because they were seen as aligning with the enemy and helping the poor. It is said that these acts of extreme, savage violence were used intentionally to provoke the Peruvian government and to egg them onto responding with more violence, so that SL could in turn put the blame back on the government (Hudson, 1992). The group sustained

themselves financially from the narcotics trade, by which means they were able to further instill fear in the people of Peru because of their power (Hudson, 1992).

During the 1990s in Peru the military was very overwhelming and had a significant presence in the daily lives of civilians. The armed forces were not fully subordinated to civilian authorities, and would regularly issue their own political proclamations. There were several instances in which military forces sent tanks into the streets of Lima, its capital, to reinforce its positions and remind people of their power. From 1980 to 1990 approximately 200,000 Peruvians fled their homes with about 18,000 people killed at the hands of Sendero Luminoso, most of which were from residential areas where village populations were slashed by two thirds. As a result, many migrated to Lima, Ica and Huancayo, where these farm people were either turned away or given little help; in some cases police attacked these peasants, accusing them of being suspected Senderistas (Hudson, 1992). With such intense violence coming from the government itself along with the opposition, it was clear that there were few places for Peruvians to turn. Immigration skyrocketed during this time for this reason.

Other human rights violations occurred at the hands of the Colina Group, a paramilitary organization that was linked to both the army and to President Fujimori's top advisor, Vladimiro Montesinos. The Colina Group was linked to the massacre of 15 people at Barrios Altos in November of 1991, along with the massacre of 10 other students at La Cantuta University in July 1992, just months after the self-coup in which the President shut off the government. Additionally, the Colina Group is said to be responsible for the torture and murder of an intelligence agent believed to have leaked information about La Cantuta to the press (Levitsky, 1999). The media had a great influence over Peru which is why the government was so involved in censoring the media, only allowing what they wanted to be spread to the public, and silencing

any person who said otherwise. For this reason, many Peruvians lived in fear. The government was extremely corrupt during that time, considering civilian courts were blocked from investigating any of the previous stated cases, and higher-level authorities that are believed to have played a role in each massacre, including Montesinos, were not investigated either (Levitsky, 1999).

#### 1.4 Discussion

While there are many reasons for Peruvians to have been pushed out of their country and into others, there are statistics that prove this point as well. Table 1 shows the number of emigrants from the country of Peru itself during time spans of 5 years at a time:

**Table 1 Number of Estimated Emigrants from Peru, 1975-2000**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>1975-1980</b>	36,000	24,660	11,340
<b>1980-1985</b>	80,000	38,400	41,600
<b>1985-1990</b>	180,000	86,400	93,600
<b>1990-1995</b>	450,000	216,000	234,000
<b>1995-2000</b>	350,000	168,000	182,000

\*information from Demographic Analysis of Peru (Davila, 2001)

As seen in the figure, the number of estimated Peruvians to be leaving the country increases sharply with each passing block of five years. In the first block we see the effects of the agrarian land reforms in 1969, that caused many workers, especially from rural areas, to be unhappy with the way the country was being run at the time and unsatisfied with the way in which their land was being distributed and taken care of. This can be proven by the fact that the

number of men leaving the country was over double the number of women leaving the country; the men were fleeing in order to find better jobs elsewhere, that would pay better wages and in which they could be working under governments that might better respect their boundaries as agricultural workers. From 1980-1985 another sharp increase in emigration occurs, and an even greater one occurs from 1985-1990. During the 1980s, SL was picking up speed in its violence against everyday civilians and was spreading into the lives of peasants, especially in rural areas. Many people were bullied into joining the guerrilla force, or threatened into becoming a part of it, but those who did often paid the price when the government sent out troops to find, interrogate and detain suspected members of SL. It was a lose-lose situation for many Peruvians – to join SL and take part in violent acts of war and risk being tortured by the government of Peru, or to not join, and to risk being tortured or killed for not becoming a part of the group. Since many people were living in fear, it is logical for the number of emigrants to rise sharply during the decade of the 1980s, where many people were fleeing the country.

It was not until 1990 that Fujimori came into power, and just two years later that Fujimori's office was able to find, arrest and sentence to a lifetime in prison the leader of SL, Abimael Guzman (Timeline: Peru, 2012). Up until that time Peruvians were feeling the heat coming from both sides of the political spectrum, but even after the leader of SL had been locked up the government continued to overstep its boundaries by terrorizing its people, even through the decade of the 1990s. As discussed earlier, Fujimori was put on trial during the new century for various human rights violations that occurred during his presidency. The second wave of a sharp increase in emigration from Peru from 1990-1995 is directly correlated to the election of Fujimori and his overwhelming government that committed abuses against its people and failed to protect them. Workers had to bear the brunt of Fujimori's new party politics that involved

stabilization and adjustment measures. In the year 1991, wages for Peruvian workers declined to 38.7% of what they had been in 1980; on top of that, just 47.3% of the population was economically active and formally employed (Rice, 2012). Since over half of the country was not living off a formal wage, it was only inevitable that Peruvians would flee in order to seek work elsewhere. It was not until almost the turn of the next century that emigration slowed.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE PULL FACTORS**

### **2.1 Chile's Attractive Economy**

A report from the year 2011 by the IOM, the International Organization for Migrations based out of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was compiled by Carolina Stefoni and presents a great deal of insight into the economic background behind Chile and the causes for immigration and emigration (Stefoni, 2011).

Immigration from neighboring countries to Chile began in the late 19th and 20th centuries when people were attracted to mining opportunities in northern Chile. Late 19th and early 20th century immigrants were attracted to mining opportunities in northern Chile, most hailing from the bordering countries with 20% coming from Peru and 16% from Bolivia. Several decades after the mining boom subsided, a coup d'etat took place in Santiago de Chile, the capital, in which the current president of Chile, Salvador Allende, who was the first democratically elected socialist president, was overthrown by a military regime led by Augusto Pinochet on September 11th of 1973. Pinochet's dictatorship, which accounted for the torture, exile, murder and disappearances of hundreds of thousands of Chileans, would last until 1990 when the people at last were allowed to vote to have democracy reinstalled to their government. During Pinochet's reigning period, specifically during the 1980s economic crisis caused by international debt, a banking crisis and unemployment led to masses of Chileans leaving the country, moving to places such as Canada, France, Switzerland, Germany and Ecuador.

Once democracy began its reestablishment in the year 1990, going forward the Chilean economy began to be restored, which led immigrants and natives of other countries to be more

attracted to Chile. Over the last 20 years, the average rate of increase in the Chilean economy was 4.1%, which caused Chile's gross domestic product to triple (Stefoni, 2011). Chile's sudden boom in economic capabilities was a result of the country's capacity to maintain relative stability when faced with other international economic crises. There was a flexible exchange rate and a wide, diverse financial system that helped the nation to stay afloat on an international scale. Chile's framework of regulation and supervision of commerce and economics have allowed the country to properly address and handle the economic crises that have arisen on the international scale over the past two decades.

Equilibrium between social investment programs and fiscal discipline have also continued to contribute to Chile's standing as an emerging country, with one of the best economic growth indexes in the world. Additionally, the privatization of certain public industries in Chile such as gas, electricity and water, among others, has directly benefitted the growth and stabilization of the economy. Their export-led growth model post military dictatorship was another factor leading to the rise of Chile's economy.

All of these factors have contributed to Chile's rising significance in the world market. As Chile becomes more profitable and marketable, it becomes more attractive for outsiders to move to Chile in order to find work and success for themselves. As the economy grows, the number of jobs needing to be fulfilled also grows. While more Chileans enter the workforce as higher-educated individuals, there is more of a need at home for someone to cook, clean, maintain order and take care of family members while the heads of household are out earning money as business professionals.

From 1987 to 2006, female involvement in the working sector rose from 32% to 49%, with 3 out of every 5 women in the age range of 25 to 39 working. 16% of those females were

noted to have high levels of education, and 18% have basic levels of education. In comparison to Chile's neighboring countries, the average income is significantly greater (Stefoni, 2011).

In 2002, 1.22% of Chile's population was made up of immigrants (Stefoni, 2011). Estimates show that in 2010 the estimated immigrant population would be between 1.9% and 2.08%. This immigrant population was concentrated in the Metropolitan Region of Chile, specifically near the capital, and was mostly from people relocating for labor purposes. Santiago is home to one third of the population of Chile and to 64.8% of the immigrant population, while approximately 6% of the population of migrants reside in the neighboring city of Valparaiso (Stefoni, 2011). Since Santiago is the hub of all economic and commercial transactions for the country, it makes the most sense for immigrants to begin looking for work, the most profitable city in the country. Almost 15% of immigrants live in the northern region of Chile, and the remaining are concentrated in the southern regions (Stefoni, 2011).

Although Chile has an open door policy when it comes to immigration, there are downfalls when it comes to protecting the rights of those immigrants as human beings upon entering the country. The law and regulation of immigration focuses pretty exclusively on the control and security of the national territory without giving much thought to the protection of the human rights of those immigrants and their families.

In 1975, military dictator Augusto Pinochet created the Ley de Extranjería, the law that would control immigration to Chile. Between 1993 and 2000 some amendments were made to the law that made it more applicable to the current state of immigration to Chile, considering Pinochet's policies were quite outdated. Some of these changes involved the ability to repeal provisions for entrance and exit to the country. Another allowed for any immigrants who arrived

in Chile pleading asylum or refuge to remain in the country without fear of being deported. One change to the law offered temporary residents an authorization to work during their short stay.

## **2.2 Communication and Travel**

While Peru has three official languages (Spanish, Quechua and Aymara), Chile has just one. Quechua and Aymara are both indigenous languages that are spoken regionally, but despite that fact all Peruvians are educated to speak Spanish. Even if some have been taken out of a school at young ages to help their families work in rural settings, they still speak Spanish. The only difference between Chile and Peru is the dialect, in which Chileans speak quickly, cutting off ends of words, while Peruvians speak in a slower, more formal and pronounced way. Although Peruvians and Chileans speak the same language, the dialectic difference itself can cause great discrimination. The Peruvian accent can be very easily picked up by a Chilean, whether it be in the workplace or just on the street, which can cause discrimination against them. The difference in dialect may cause Chileans to feel superior to Peruvians, not just because of the way they speak but because of their level of development. To add to these harsh sentiments, tension between Chile and Peru dates back to the War of the Pacific from 1879-1883, in which Chile seized land rich in minerals from both Peru and Bolivia. Land disputes have occurred ever since, and young Chileans and Peruvians are taught about these conflicts in school from a young age. This tension has spread to other areas of their history, including arguments over which country invented pisco, a fermented wine produced in the north of Chile and the south of Peru, and over which country produces the highest quality of this liquor (Tegel, 2012).

Since Peru borders Chile, access into the country is easy by way of bus or airplane. The majority of people who enter Chile do so by way of a tourist visa, however there are trends of

irregularity in migration caused by administration flaws, not because of those made by immigrants. There are several task forces that are responsible for the maintaining of the border and the accounting of foreigners flowing into the country, including Border Security, the police force, called Carabineros, and other military forces used to ensure that every person enters this country on their tourist visa and understand that they have exactly three months upon entrance to remain in the country without any other form of documentation. In many cases, immigrants enter Chile on tourist visas with the hope that they will find a job and therefore obtain permission to remain in the country; unfortunately, there are cases in which the immigrant must return to his or her native country because the employer would not provide proper documentation for that employee to remain in the country. Other reasons for deportation would be not finding a job at all during the period of three months. In a survey of 55,000 irregular immigrants surveyed, approximately 67% were from Peru (Stefoni, 2011).

### **2.3 Care of Family**

A phenomenon of feminization can also be seen in regards to immigration patterns, with 56.8% being females from Peru (Stefoni, 2011). This process of feminization could be a result of a large number of factors: increase in single mothers raising their children and/or providing for families, increase in domestic work opportunities and the partial towards women to have those jobs versus men, etc. This feminization in the workplace, of women holding higher position jobs and needing to be away from their homes and families more, has led to the patterns that have been observed of feminization of immigration trends. In Chile's case, from 1996 to 2008 there was an increase from 38% to 47% of females in the workforce (Stefoni, 2011). This pattern was seen primarily in women of higher education, 60% of which were between the ages of 25 and 39 (Stefoni, 2011).

According to this study, by Carolina Stefoni, there has been a decrease in Chilean women working in domestic labor jobs over the past two decades. The numbers went from 20.3% in 1992, to 16.6% in 2002 and down to 10.8% in 2009 (Stefoni, 2011). There has been an increase in the “reservation” of domestic service jobs to be for immigrants only.

## **2.4 Discussion**

According to the 1960 Census of Chile, there were a calculated 3583 Peruvians living in Chile, making up approximately 3.4% of the foreign population. The 1970 Census shows the number increasing to 3930 Peruvians living in the country; the next Census in Chile was not conducted until 1982, but it showed there were 4,308 Peruvians living in Chile and by 1992 the Census showed there were 7,649 Peruvians living in Chile. By the year 2002, there were 39,084 Peruvians living in Chile – a four hundred percent increase from what it had been a decade earlier (Stefoni, 2011). Even after Augusto Pinochet’s military regime had ended by 1990 and democracy had been restored, there was also a large inflow of migration of Chileans who had left the country either by choice or because of exile during the military dictatorship; many were returning with families, or returning to families that had stayed. In addition, because of the turn to democracy, the country’s economy was beginning to open up and their political platform had more of an international perspective. While Pinochet had imparted strict immigration laws, the new democracy allowed for an inflow of migrants, celebrating their successful economy and the end to a harsh, militaristic 17-year rule. Between 1986 and 2002, the number of temporary visas that the Chilean government had granted jumped from 4,777 to 30,031 (Doña, 2004). Despite the turn to a new set of democratic ideals for the Chilean government, no official change to immigration laws per se have been made. However, in 2001 it was recorded that there were between 15,000 and 20,000 undocumented immigrants, which were mostly assumed to be visa

overstayers. As of 2002, a study was done regarding the demographics of Chile, showing that almost half of the population of immigrants living in Chile was made up of Argentines and Peruvians (Doña, 2004). The combination of the new government of Peru led by Alberto Fujimori and the new turn to democracy after a long militaristic rule in Chile has created the perfect storm of events for Peruvians to migrate to Chile. During the time period of the 17 years of military rule there was little to no immigration of Peruvians to Chile, and little immigration of other Latin Americans at all either. With Chile being open to more immigrants and with a better established economy, it only made sense for Peruvians, just north of the border, to make their way to Chile in order to find work where they would be paid better wages than they had been in Peru.

**MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES**

## **CHAPTER 3: THE PUSH FACTORS**

### **3.1 Political Strife in Mexico**

Mexico's political history is vivid and filled with details. From colonization to wars with the United States to internal revolutions, the country south of the United States has had a history characterized by powerful leaders and involved civilians. In Mexico's most recent history, I begin by observing the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which was founded in 1929 and came to rule the nation for the subsequent 60 years.

The PRI was known as Mexico's "official" party, and it was second only to the President who served as the party's head of office. Some argue that the PRI was more important than the President himself, because it was this party that selected who would be president. Because of the immense reign of the PRI, opposing parties posed little to no threat to its power or control over public office. It was founded as the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) and its main purpose in its early years was to be a means of organizing and containing political competition among leaders of various revolutionary factions (Hudson, 1994). It was made up of labor unions, local political bosses, military strongmen, regional political parties and peasant organizations. Although there were changes in power and several name changes of the party that occurred over the years, it eventually was named the Partido Revolucionario Institucional and was set to include the same groups of people that it had involved in its beginnings. It prided itself on helping farmers and other peasant laborers materialize demands for labor union rights and land reform, and of helping those people of lower class to communicate and foster relationships with political and government officials (Hudson, 1994).

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Mexican politics were characterized by wars, political intervention by the military and violence, but the last president to come from a military background was Avila Camacho and when he left office in 1946 Mexico finally saw a time of peace and tranquility that lasted for the next five decades. Only a small number of large-scale organized violent events occurred, and there were no revolutionary movements that garnered any means of widespread support. A period of economic struggle began in 1982 that would change such a peaceful time in Mexico's history. The downside to the PRI, however, was that when necessary it used corruption, repression, fraud and bribery to solidify and continue its control over certain individuals and groups (Hudson, 1994). Some of its corruption involved the manipulation of public-sector enterprises, illegal landholdings, charging the public for services that legally were free services, charging members of unions for positions of power, favoring relatives or friends, other forms of bribery, and outright stealing money from public funds or members of the community (Hudson, 1994). Although the PRI's system was flawed and corrupt, it served for decades as a mechanism for which individuals could realize upward mobility within the system, and as a way for the party to maintain its power for an extended period of time.

In 1976, huge oil reserves were discovered off the shores of the southernmost end of the Gulf of Mexico, specifically around the states of Campeche, Tabasco and Veracruz (Merrill, 1996). The Cantarell oil field established itself there, and was producing more than 1 million barrels of oil per day and quickly becoming one of the largest oil fields in the world at the time. Jose Lopez Portillo, who was elected in 1976, promised to use the money to fund a campaign of industrial expansion, social welfare and high-yield agriculture, but in order to follow through with these tasks the Mexican government borrowed large sums of foreign money at high interest rates (Merrill, 1996). As it turns out, the oil was of low grade, which left Mexico with the

world's largest foreign debt, and by the mid-1980s the country was in financial crisis, known by many as "the crisis." Mexico plainly did not have the infrastructure to support the influx of imported goods that came along with the increased oil exploration and foreign exchange reserves. The economy suffered immensely, beginning in 1982 and continuing forward (Hudson, 1994).

Natural disasters compiled the crisis at hand to cause even more debt and unrest among the people. An earthquake in Mexico City in September of 1985 killed nearly 10,000 people and caused intense damage that displaced many residents and left many without loved ones and friends. The government's response to the situation was very minimal considering the magnitude of the disaster, so the Mexican people went on to form their own grassroots organizations that would later become human rights and civil rights organizations. Another natural disaster, a massive hurricane, struck the Yucatan region and cause great devastation, which was also not handled well by the Mexican government (Merrill, 1996).

The North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 allowed a more free trade between the three countries of the continent, but the Mexican people were not in full support of the agreement; the president at the time, Carlos Salinas, lost great popularity while his opposition on the left, the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) garnered more support. The PRD was established in 1989 by political leaders who supported social welfare concerns but who opposed Salinas' free-market reform and other economic reforms that had been implemented since the 1982 financial crisis. The PRD is characterized by economic nationalism and a fair number of its members were former members of the former communist and socialist parties of Mexico.

In 1994, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon was elected president and was the most recent PRI candidate. Upon entering office he encounters a banking crisis as the value of the Mexican

peso plunges on international markets. As the crisis ensues, the United States loans \$20 billion to Mexico which fortunately helped to stabilize the currency, along with a plan of economic austerity.

By 1997 the PRI was no longer in power and the PAN, or Partido Accion Nacional, had officially taken over, ending more than 70 years of PRI rule. The National Action Party of Mexico, the PAN, was founded in 1939 and since the 1980s has been critical to Mexican politics as one of the three main political parties, leaning right-wing (Hudson, 1994). The new president, Vicente Fox, focused his early presidency on improving trade relations with the United States, calming civil unrest in areas such as Chiapas and reducing corruption, crime and drug trafficking. Another one of his plans was to help and improve the status of millions of illegal Mexican immigrants living in the United States, but his efforts were put on pause after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in 2001. During this time as well, the president faced growing unrest among farmers who were frustrated with the inequalities of the NAFTA system.

The changing of political parties and the growing unrest of Mexicans with their political leaders is part of what shaped the desire to leave Mexico. The United States has a relatively stable government and, through the eyes of many Mexicans, did not endure such high-scale frustration between the people and their leaders. While Mexico was undergoing a time of mass instability in presidential leadership, compounded by a financial crisis, the United States was just next door to help Mexico with financial aid in efforts to re-stabilize the country and the economy. The Mexican people were able to see that, and by taking note that the States must have had an abundance of money in order to help out their neighbors to the south, they could make inferences that moving to the United States would open several doors to leading a life of more stability and wealth.

### 3.2 Economic Hardships

Individuals who migrate from one location to another are more likely to enter when conditions there are improving than when they are declining, and therefore in the case of immigration trends of Mexicans to the United States there is a greater influx of immigration when the Mexican economy is shifting downward. The general assumption is that all Mexicans migrating to the United States based on economic trends is that they do so with the intention of obtaining more work and better wages, although there are many additionally in the north that live in areas in which crime rates are incredibly high; those areas are cause for emigration as well, so that citizens may find a way to escape the violence.

During the Great Depression of the United States, Mexico suffered as well but through manufacturing and other sectors of the domestic economy began a gradual recovery in the 1930s, supported by the railroad industry, movement towards land reform and nationalization of the petroleum industry, all in addition to the industrialization movement. The economy fluctuated but saw a steady development in the 1960s, during a time when GDP growth was averaging approximately 7 percent nationwide and about 3 percent per capita, while manufacturing was still situated as Mexico's dominant growth sector. Mining and agriculture sectors of the economy also saw steady growth. Imports to Mexico were still high during the 1960s and into the 1970s; however food crops, steel and a majority of consumer goods were produced domestically (Cornelius, 1981).

Throughout the decade of the 1970s Mexico's economy experienced periods of rapid growth immediately followed by sharp decline. The country went from being a net importer of oil and petroleum to being the fourth leading exporter of the commodities, after significant oil discoveries off the Gulf Coast in 1976. Following this oil boom there was a massive increase in

government spending, although the Mexican people were frustrated with the ways in which this money was being spent, and very little of the spending went towards productive investments. Corruption and bribery were at an all-time high during this period, and inflation eventually surpassed one hundred percent annually. Foreign countries, with economies not much more stable than Mexico's, were approving large loans for Mexico in the hope that oil revenue expansion would continue over the course of the loan period and that payment would be reassured; however, oil revenue expansion declined, leading Mexico straight into grave foreign debt, compounded by stagnant exports and a highly devalued currency. During the 1980s the average growth rate of the GDP was at just 0.1 percent per year, and inflation remained extremely high (Weisbrot, 2014). Public consumption was growing at a measly 2 percent per year and total investment per year was dropping at an alarming rate (Weisbrot, 2014). It took until 1988 for the government to get the economy under control: inflation was halted, fiscal and monetary disciplines were attained, price adjustment had occurred, there had been structural reforms in trade and public-sector management, and the conditions previewing recovery were in place. Unfortunately all of these changes were not completely effective, because foreign investment remained stagnant and returns in capital were not enough to sustain recovery.

This damning recession of the 1980s in Mexico contributed largely to immigration of Mexican citizens to other parts of the world, and primarily to the United States because of its proximity. The extreme inflation was far too much for many Mexicans to handle, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to survive off of what the peso was valued at, which again, was constantly fluctuating. While Mexico was in a recession, the United States turned its eyes to pay more attention to their neighbors of the south by loaning money in efforts to support the Mexican economy, and to support itself since Mexico's primary location of oil exports was to the United

States. Although the two countries did not always agree on how to end or put off the increasing foreign debt Mexico faced, the United States was always willing to help out. The U.S. put political differences and arguments aside and instead turned their focus to investment, trade, migration, drugs and environmental concerns.

The large majority of immigrants from Mexico are involved in the agricultural sector, and at least 70% secure work in that sector upon arrival to this country (Fox, 2012). Many who immigrate to the United States themselves work in the agricultural sector back in Mexico, and for that reason are more easily able to obtain jobs in that market once in the United States. With declining wages in Mexico, there is a large push towards seeking a similar job opportunity across the border.

In 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act was put into place by U.S. Congress and successive presidents, which prompted a new era of restrictive immigration policies and repressive border controls. Additional legislations were passed in 1990 and 1996 that reduced Mexican access to legal visas, militarized key sectors of the border between the U.S. and Mexico, and penalties to legal but noncitizen immigrants. While these new legislations were being created and passed, the North American Free Trade Agreement was coming up with its own plans in 1994. While the United States itself was aiming to restrict the movement of workers across the Mexican-US border, NAFTA was constructing a plan that would facilitate with more ease the movement of goods, capital, commodities and information across the border (Massey, 2002). Both the United States legislation and the NAFTA conclusion did nothing to decrease migration from Mexico, whether documented or undocumented, as they had planned; instead, it fostered the creation of black labor market for Mexicans, where they could obtain jobs for less money than what would have been the standard wages.

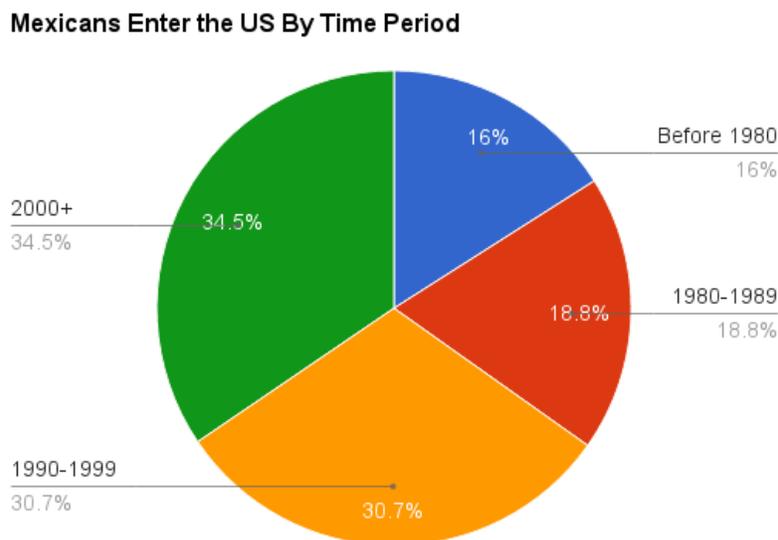
In December of 1994 the new peso collapsed, and a new economic crisis evolved. Investment and consumption dropped sharply, along with agriculture, livestock and fishing decreasing by 4 percent, construction by 22 percent and manufacturing by 6 percent (Merrill, 1996). Unemployment rose sharply during that time period. In 1995 the government increased the minimum wage by 21 percent, but because of the economic crisis that began a year earlier the cost of living had risen more than 50 percent (Merrill, 1996). Just nine months after the currency collapse, the new minimum wage was sufficient to cover only 35 percent of workers' basic necessities, in comparison to covering 94 percent of workers' necessities in 1987. By 1996 the government was finally on an upswing, but the intense recession that happened not even a decade after recovering from another bitter recession was enough to push Mexicans out of the country in search of opportunities elsewhere, namely in the United States.

The effects of NAFTA were felt strongly south of the U.S. border. Heavily subsidized U.S. corn among other staples were pouring into Mexico, causing producer prices to drop and leaving small farmers struggling to make a living, support families and survive. One of the results was that consumer food prices rose, leading to a quarter of Mexico's population to not have access to basic food. Farmers were affected significantly when transnational corporations took over land that they had cultivated and supported their family on for generations. Food production became reliant on chemical use, including genetically modified seeds and processed foods. There was a sharp increase in people living in poverty, contributing to organized crime and breakdown of communities (Weisbrot, 2014). Proponents of NAFTA were aware that family farms in Mexico could not compete with subsidized U.S. production, but their argument was that displaced workers could move to fruit and vegetable production, or towards industrial jobs. Even twenty years since NAFTA went into effect, Mexico ranks 18<sup>th</sup> of 20 Latin American countries

in growth of real GDP per person, the most basic economic measure of living standards (Weisbrot, 2014).

NAFTA had a profound effect on farmers' situations in Mexico, where farmers there depended on marketing agricultural products; fluctuating commodity prices in Mexico was something that farmers just could not afford in order to survive. When prices would dip, migration would increase. Especially during the 1990s there was a large increase in immigration from Mexico to the United States, and an increase in Mexicans who were arriving in the United States and specifically looking for jobs in the agricultural sector. For a farmer to live on a piece of land and cultivate some sort of food that does not sell for the desired prices, or to not sell at all, is dangerous not only to the farmer and his or her work but also to that person's family. In those situations, farmers would live on the land and cultivate it to provide for the market and for themselves. The situation was so intense and bleak for these farmers that they left everything – their land, their homes, often times their families – for a shot in the dark, a risky trip to the United States where they would hopefully be able to find a job in the agricultural labor market. The wages of the United States were so much larger than what they were getting in Mexico that they were willing to leave everything and make a huge risk to get to the United States.

As shown in Figure 1, the large majority of Mexican migration to the United States occurs after 1990, and especially after 2000. This evidence supports my argument that the negative effects of NAFTA caused an increase in migration to the US because of the negative impact the agreement had on agricultural workers who had spent their entire lives cultivating land and living off of that space, and because of the agreement had to change the way they were living. Many farmers were leaving everything in order to come to the United States, indicating the severity of the situations.



**Figure 1 Mexicans Enter the US By Time Period**

\*information courtesy of migrationpolicy.org

The decade of the 90s holds the largest jump in number of Mexican immigrants, followed by even more arriving during the new millennium. The effects of NAFTA were felt directly by Mexicans and evidence a push in emigration of Mexicans and their arrival in the US.

### **3.3 Daily Life: Living in Poverty and Fear**

The United States has had to face the problem of immigrants trying to enter the United States seeking asylum from war-torn, gang-ridden countries south of the border. There are countless stories of immigrants who choose to flee their countries purely because it is no longer safe to live in the cities or places that they reside. This problem can be seen across Central America and throughout many cities in Mexico, especially close to the border where drug dealers

can double as heads of political power. Corruption is rampant, and there are police forces that have no power because they are run almost entirely by gangs. This phenomenon can be seen in certain Central American countries such as El Salvador and Honduras, but also in cities that surround the U.S.-Mexico border.

There are countless statistics about the abuses, murders and disappearances of thousands of people yearly in these cities and countries due to gang violence. For these reasons many people travel to the United States seeking asylum, but unfortunately the U.S. has been turning away many of these people. In fact, the U.S. provided Mexico with \$90 million towards the task of controlling asylum-seeking refugees fleeing from Central American countries with the hopes of arriving in the United States (Nazario, 2015). To cut the issue down, the United States is using its tax dollars to pay the Mexican government to perform the duties that we as a country do not want to take on ourselves.

In a span of 21 months, 90 people were murdered shortly after being deported from the United States and sent back from Mexico to their home countries. Studies have been done on gang recruitment in several Central American countries, where young children will offer up stories in order to try to seek help and refuge with authorities, which often times are the gangs themselves (Nazario, 2015).

In Honduras, for example, gang members will stand outside of middle schools and even elementary schools recruiting children to work for them. They provide threats, saying that if they do not participate for them in being look-outs, dealing drugs, scouting out locations and eventually becoming hit men then they will kill people in their families, threatening to kill parents of children who are very young. Drive-by shootings are all too common and innocent people are killed with unusual regularity. Gang members will even force young children to begin

using crack cocaine and get them hooked and eventually brainwashed into joining the gang and doing whatever the gang members tell them to. It is a scary situation, for which reason many parents and young children wish to flee the country to avoid being roped into the vicious cycle. There are children who themselves decide that they do not wish to live in said countries or cities because they are afraid of what might happen to them. Gang members even infiltrate some schools, carrying weapons into classrooms and using threats against teachers (Nazario, 2015). It is no wonder that many of these people run away seeking asylum and refuge elsewhere.

Unfortunately, getting to the United States is extremely difficult. Many Mexicans and Central Americans do not know how to get into the United States and hire people called “coyotes,” which you can pay often a large sum of money to get smuggled into the United States. There are many people who are forced to go the routes alone because they cannot afford to pay for a coyote. Many coyotes demand large sums of money and do not follow through with promises, or may drop out along the way. Robberies in the last few years along the route across the border have increased by 81 percent (Democracy Now, 2015). Not only are there robberies, but some coyotes have abused, raped or killed the people that they are being paid to help. Crossing the border is dangerous in general, but it can also be dangerous with a coyote, though equally as dangerous to go alone.

Many immigrants make their journeys by riding atop trains that travel towards border towns. Riding on top of the trains can be extremely dangerous just because of the sheer fact that one could fall off and be killed or seriously injured and therefore unable to complete the journey. Additionally, there is a chance that those people, exposed while huddled on top of those trains along with dozens of other immigrants trying to get to the United States for similar reasons, can be killed because of border control enforcement that shoot at the tops of trains.

There are relatively safe places in certain locations throughout the desert where immigrants can stop to rest, and many express their struggles in deciding whether to move forward or to go back home. In interviews, some said that they could not go back because they would risk being killed in their home country, but also that they could not go forward because they could risk being killed along the way or being deported and sent back to square one. The effect of a lack of home and sense of belonging or safety in any place is tremendous, and causes serious grief for those who seem to be stuck in the middle. To arrive in a country and be completely unwelcomed after paying large amounts of money to get there and after a long, grueling journey is overwhelming and a source of incredible frustration and sadness for many immigrants.

Crossing the border itself is certainly no small feat, and takes time, money, effort and sacrifice. The Border Patrol was established in 1924 as part of the U.S. government's efforts to catch the smuggling of alcohol into the United States during the Prohibition era, and to block the entry of undocumented immigrants to the United States from south of the border. There were two instances in which Border Patrol was heightened, the first of which was following the inauguration of the Clinton Administration, which decided to substantially increase the budget of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; this, in turn, funneled more money into Border Patrol, and was a method to focus efforts towards areas of the border that were notorious spots for immigrants to cross. Over the next decade the amount of money that went towards border control increased significantly, almost tripling, and the number of agents patrolling the border more than doubled. The mindset of the border shifted from catching and arresting those people who tried to illegally cross the border, to trying to prevent such instances from occurring altogether by making it close to impossible for any person to even make it across the border.

With improvements in technology, it was far easier for this change to occur. After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks of 2001, the Department of Homeland Security was created in order to prevent future terrorist attacks on U.S. soil – this was the second significant moment in the strengthening and reorientation of Border Patrol (Castillo, 2011).

The number of detentions of undocumented migrants has been declining steadily since the year 2000, which is partly the result of enhanced border control; however, the number of undocumented migrants living in the United States rose from the year 2000 by 37 percent, according to the Department of Homeland Security (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2014), from 8.5 million in the year 2000 to 11.6 million in the year 2008.

Approximately 7 million of those people are Mexicans, and statistics show that approximately 290,000 undocumented Mexicans settle in the United States each year (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2014). Although border patrol has heightened immensely over the past quarter century, it has not deterred Mexicans from crossing the border to realize their potential in the United States.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE PULL FACTORS**

### **4.1 Economic Opportunities**

In January of 2004, President George W. Bush proposed far-reaching changes to immigration policy that would reflect the original needs of the immigration policy, which was to meet the national labor market needs. Temporary workers would be flowed in for the purpose of meeting said needs, which is what defines a temporary worker - any person who enters a country for the purpose of meeting labor market needs for a specified period of time.

Rewinding to World War II, in the United States from 1942 to 1964 the “Bracero Program” was implemented. It was established through formal negotiations and an agreement between the United States and Mexico with the intention of meeting U.S. food supply needs during World War II. The workers were mostly low-skilled and were employed in agricultural settings on a seasonal basis, although as the program evolved it also employed persons working for railroad companies. During its 22 years it involved 4.5 million people in a “Rosie the Riveter” phenomenon for foreigners (Bush, 2015). While men were leaving to fight in World War II there was a shortage in factory jobs and agricultural jobs, and the United States was quickly looking for people to take over. As Rosie the Riveter implored her fellow women to take on those jobs that had been left behind by soldiers in order to fight for the freedom of their country, the United States also looked outside of the country to bring in workers in order to put food shortages at bay and feed the people that soldiers had left to fight for.

Bringing foreigners into the country in order to work and provide cheap labor seemed like a great idea on the side of the United States until the war ended and soldiers began to filter

back home, demanding that they had their jobs back from before the war started. To address the problem, the United States forced many foreigners who had come in as temporary workers to evacuate those jobs and therefore pick back up and leave the country so that United States residents who had just returned from fighting in a war could resume working in their old positions. This displaced many Mexicans who had uprooted their lives and had come to work in U.S. jobs for several years, but unfortunately little compensation was given to those people who had to search for work back in their native countries and resettle in a place that they had left years earlier in order to start a new life in the United States.

Rewinding further yet to the industrialization era, the United States benefitted greatly from cheap labor during the expansion of railroad, mining and farm industries. In the railroad industry at least, Mexicans workers were needed to complete and maintain railroad lines around the late nineteenth century. In the mining industry, Mexicans were needed to work existing mines, and a large number of copper and silver mines that were being established. The increase in the number of mines being formed compounded with the growth of the railroad industry led to a need for great amounts of labor, and to have cheap labor from Mexicans was an added benefit to the United States. The demand for laborers led to Mexicans being drawn to the promise of good pay and financial security that would accompany a job in the United States, something that was attractive to them and to the futures of their families. The 1890 U.S. census showed 77,853 Mexicans living in the United States, while the 1900 census showed 103,393 (Foley, 2014). Over the next decade, the population of Mexicans living in the United States even doubled, and then doubled again over the following decade.

#### **4.2 Relationships and Familial Ties**

Often times it is the migrants themselves and their employers, not governments, who determine the magnitude and destination of migration flows, and in most cases governments cannot stop these population movements but instead either help to facilitate them or impede them. Since the Industrial Revolution in the United States they began to recruit workers in Mexico to work on railroads and in the agricultural sector; since the 1880s there has been a consistent flow of immigrants to the Southwest and Midwest industrial corridors of the United States, especially in such cities as Chicago, Detroit and Gary. A 1979 survey of 62,500 households in Mexico determined that approximately 70% of migrants hail from the eleven central, plateau states of Mexico, with another 11% coming from states closer to the border between the two countries (Doña, 2014). These numbers cause for a concentration in migratory activity in certain regions, making it more likely that attitudes, expectations and traditions will develop in favor of migration. “For many people in these areas, migration to the United States has indeed become a way of life. They grow up viewing employment in the United States as one of the few options available to them for subsisting and for accumulating the capital needed to achieve some long-term economic mobility for themselves or their children” (Cornelius, 1981: 69).

Additionally, often relatives can help each other to get jobs. They become aware of a job opening right away in their workplace, and in many cases they become aware of these job openings before the employer even knows that any of their employees is intending to leave. In that way, the relative serves as a recruiter or someone who helps to fill vacancies in the workplace quickly. Studies have also shown that racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are more likely to reside with extended family than are non-Hispanic whites, even after demographic and socioeconomic differences are taken into account (Van Hook, 2007).

Considering this fact, it is far more likely for Mexicans, considered a racial minority, to move in with extended family who might be living in the United States, instead of trying to find their own way by looking for their own living accommodations.

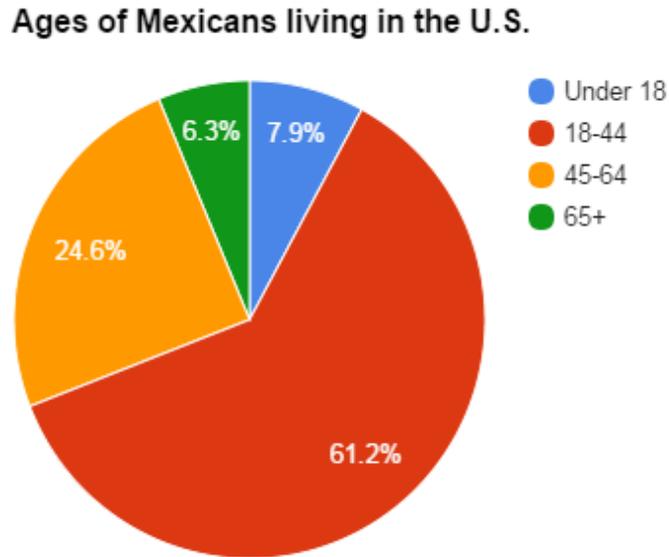
Catholicism plays an important role in the kinship that many Mexicans feel upon arriving to the United States. There are many factors that might prevent a Mexican from migrating to the United States, from questionable employment, difficulty crossing the border, not knowing where they might stay, etc., however one thing that many Mexicans have in common is their religion as Roman Catholics. Besides having a uniting race and ethnicity, Mexicans have their faith to back them; not only that, but their religion is something that they share with various people in the United States. Religion is something that many people will always have to fall back on, and the support from it is even greater when there is an entire community of Catholics standing up behind them.

Besides having the Catholic community as a support system, there are sacraments involved in the Catholic religion that establish stronger relationships, such as baptism, confirmation, and having godparents and godchildren. These people are immediately available sources of social gratification, and act as a person that that migrant can turn to for everyday interaction, a person to borrow money from and someone to receive economic support from when they find themselves in need of a job. These ties can prove to be extremely useful for a person migrating to the United States. While the migrant may not have a direct family member or godparent/godchild in the United States to help them, there will always be a friend or other relative of a family member or godparent that can and will help out. It all ties back to the Catholic faith, which drives these relationships and the standards for providing for everybody in

their lives. This phenomenon can be referred to as a sort of “transnationalization” of religious rituals (Bush, 2015).

In the year 1930, for example, Los Angeles County was home to more than 167,000 Mexicans, which was the largest concentration of Mexicans outside of Mexico City (Fox, 2012). The population, however, fluctuated with the seasons; in the winter, population increased fairly drastically because of migrant workers that came to look for work between harvests. When there was no work to be found there, migrants turned to big cities such as Los Angeles to find a job (Fox, 2012). However, what became frustrating for many citizens of the United States during this time was that these workers were not staying long enough to bear fruit, nor to become naturalized citizens. Many considered them to be a burden to the economy, even though their work is part of what helped to propel the economy and keep it moving in the way that it always had been.

As seen in Figure 2, the vast majority of immigrants living in the US are between the ages of 18 and 44, which indicates that there is a high volume of young, able-bodied workers living here that are able to support themselves economically through a job. Another quarter of the population of Mexicans living in the United States is between the ages of 45 and 64, which is still under the retirement age. There are many Mexicans, and US citizens as well, who work beyond that time frame in order to continue to support themselves or their families, however these numbers prove that there is a high number of working-class eligible Mexicans currently residing in the United States.



**Figure 2** Ages of Mexicans living in the U.S.

\*information courtesy of migrationpolicy.org

### 4.3 “The American Dream”

Historian James Truslow Adams was the first to coin the term of “the American Dream” in his book *The Epic of America*. He defined it as “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement... It is... a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” (Adams 1931: 404). This dream rests on the belief that even those from the most humble of origins can climb the ladder of social hierarchy in order to attain a richer standard of living. The dream invites its people to work hard, because with hard work achievement is rewarded. This dream has shaped

the image of the United States and has induced great pride in this country; in addition, it has attracted many immigrants to partake in this dream, and to come to the United States in search of this prosperity and new life.

In Stephen Steinberg's epilogue of his second edition of *The Ethnic Myth*, entitled "Ethnic Heroes and Racial Villains in American Social Science," he argues that "the dominant thesis of U.S. social science and popular culture is that those who have successfully assimilated into U.S. society and moved up the economic ladder have been able to do so because of their ethnic values" (Bush, 2015). This myth that Steinberg created also argues that for those who have not ascended the economic ladder it is because of shortcomings in their cultural values; in the case of Latinos, it is apparently attributed to their adherence to a culture of poverty. The American Dream, although idealistic, does rest partially on a divided society within the United States in which racial inequalities are justified by different cultures, isolating them from the economic mainstream and its values. People from different ethnicities may be at a complete disadvantage coming to the United States searching for that American Dream if they are starting out from a different country and cultural group.

Since the birth of Mexico as a republic in 1821, Mexican attitudes towards the United States have been that of admiration and fear. In the beginning, Mexico envied the United States for its independence and economic growth and prosperity, because at the time Mexico was still struggling with poverty and political instability. After gaining independence in Mexico, however, followed the United States model for their constitution. Later on when the United States supported the revolt in Texas in 1836, Mexicans grew fear that the U.S. would take over their country either by force or through a gradual colonization. Mexico began to admire the United States less and started to grow skeptical of their ways, their politics and their methods.

Mexicans during the nineteenth century also feared racism of the United States, perceiving that they, as indigenous people, were included among the spectrum of discriminated people in the United States. They feared that they would suffer and be turned into slaves, just as the Africans had been in the United States, considering the U.S. was increasingly encroaching upon their space and their land. The concept of “Manifest Destiny” was being spread all across the country, the idea of expanding the land “from sea to shining sea,” but nobody was to tell how far south that Manifest Destiny would spread to, so Mexicans lived in fear.

Additionally, most of the southwest of the United States used to be Mexico, before the United States and Mexico clashed in a war and the U.S. took the northern territory of Mexico for its own. Many Mexicans who had been living in the north of Mexico suddenly had to adapt to a new culture and lifestyle as United States citizens. In one sense it made it easier for other Mexicans to transition to the United States because many had family or relatives living in what used to be Mexico and what had become the United States, however, life for these Mexicans as new United States citizens was not always easy, as discrimination was prevalent.

Turn the page to a century later when all land conflicts have been settled and the United States prospers while Mexico’s economy suffers – this is where fear turned back to admiration for Mexicans in respect to the United States. The United States was on an upswing that did not seem to end, and appeared to have countless jobs available for immigrants who sought better lives for themselves. In the mind of many immigrants, the streets of this country are paved with gold, and to arrive here is to become wealthy. This mystique of the “American Dream,” is what many immigrants, including Mexicans, seek for themselves and their families: a world where they might be able to prosper by finding a job and climbing the economic ladder to a point where

they feel secure, and can not only support themselves but can support others who may be dependent on them – children, parents, or other extended relatives.

## **COMPARING TWO COUNTRIES**

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES AND PERU**

According to a 2010 survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau, 39,956 foreign-born members of the population were surveyed and 29.3% were from Mexico, while the second largest group was 28.2% that hailed from the continent of Asia (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Over half of these foreign-born residents resided in four states: California, New York, Texas and Florida, and one fourth of the total foreign-born population was living in California. Additionally, half of all foreign-born residents were between the ages of 18 and 44, in comparison with approximately one third of the native born population of the United States being between that age range (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Approximately one fourth of the foreign-born population from Mexico was naturalized citizens. 61.8% of Mexicans who entered the U.S. before 1980 had become naturalized citizens, 36% of those who entered during the period of 1980-1989 became naturalized citizens, 14.5% became naturalized citizens of those who entered between 1990 and 1999, and only 5.1% became naturalized citizens upon entering after the year 2000 (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

There are many factors that may play a role in these statistics, but one important one is that the process of naturalization for a Mexican citizen living in the United States may just be an extremely lengthy and tedious process, causing the timeline for achieving U.S. citizenship to be delayed further. Another option may be that Mexicans living in the United States do not enter the country with the hope or intention of becoming United States citizens, but instead come with other motivations, perhaps of working for a short period of time or experimenting to see if the U.S. is really a place that they would like to live. Because of the language barrier, and because

there can be a lack of available information, there is the possibility that Mexicans entering the United States in the more recent past do not know their rights, nor do they realize that they have an obligation to apply to be a citizen of the United States upon living here for extended periods of time. Organizations such as Mujeres Latinas en Accion, a nonprofit based in Chicago that gives aid in various ways to Latina women and their families, provides services to non-native English speakers about how they can obtain work permits, and employ social workers and legal assistants to help women get on their way towards obtaining U.S. citizenship by helping them to complete all of the necessary tasks.

According to Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends page, nearly two-thirds of the approximately 5.4 million legal immigrants from Mexico who are eligible to become citizens of the United States have not yet taken that step (Stepler, 2016). According to the Center's research, the rate of naturalization for legal Mexican immigrants in the United States is 36%, which is only half of the rate of legal immigrants from all other countries combined. Mexican immigrants constitute approximately 55% of the entire illegal immigrant population of the United States, as of 2011, however 3.9 million out of 12 million legal permanent residents in the country also come from Mexico. The Pew Hispanic Center conducted a nationwide survey of Hispanic immigrants, and in doing so found that approximately 93% of those Hispanic immigrants who had not yet naturalized would if they could. During the survey, an open-ended question was posed of why they had not naturalized yet: 26% expressed the language barrier as an issue for them; another 26% stated they had not yet tried or were not interested in the process; 18% admitted to financial and administrative barriers preventing them from taking steps towards naturalization, 13% were not eligible yet or were waiting for a green card, and 4% were currently

applying or were planning on applying to become naturalized citizens soon. Also worth mentioning is that 30% claimed to speak English “very well” or “pretty well.” (Stepler, 2016).

There are several requirements that must be met in order to become a U.S. citizen. Among these include being at least 18 years of age; having lived in the United States continuously for five years; ability to speak, write, read and understand basic English; answering questions that demonstrate a knowledge of U.S. government and history; undergoing a successful background check; demonstrating attachment to the principles of the U.S. constitution; and taking the oath of citizenship swearing allegiance to the United States of America.

Currently, the cost of the naturalization application is \$680, a sum of money that 94% of Hispanics interviewed who claimed that personal barriers prevented them from going through with the process admitted to be their main issue. The application fee is broken down into a \$595 filing fee and an \$85 biometric services fee for processing fingerprints.

On the other side of the world, migration from Peru to Chile comes with great ease. The wave of immigrants from Peru to Chile is primarily female, and some have coined the term “maid trade” for this phenomenon. Some have categorized foreign domestic workers from less-developed nations as “servants of globalization.” In interviews performed with Chilean women about Peruvian women who cross the border to serve in domestic labor markets, there are two very stark perceptions of these women. On the one hand, many Chilean women give praise to those Peruvian women who care for their families and homes, saying they were harder-working than Chilean women, educated, clean, spoke better Spanish, cooked well, and were more devoted, caring and service-oriented than their Chilean counterparts. Other Chilean women, however, were quick to characterize Peruvian women as dirty, criminal, lazy, uncivilized, uneducated, slow and childlike (Staab, 2006). In many cases, Chilean women characterized

Peruvian women on both ends of the spectrum, both praising them and criticizing them. The stark contrast is part of what creates a frustrating atmosphere in which to live for Peruvians.

In some ways, employers were describing Peruvian women as backward, uneducated or indigenous in order to position themselves above those women: as civilized, modern and white. The racism that takes place against Peruvian women is not easily masked, and unfortunately is left in the open. These stories about Peruvian women, both good and bad, reflect a shifting labor market in Chile that has been changing since the beginning of the return to democracy in Chile, in 1990 after the fall of the military dictatorship.

Peruvian women are often mistreated in the homes they live in, being forced to work overtime without extra pay and without a say in the jobs they perform. Some are required to do taxing jobs, including heavy lifting, without prior notice and without the option to decline. Many of these women work for wages lower than what the minimum is, but do so happily because it is at least an increase from what they would have been making in Peru. With so many women working in so many different homes, it is nearly impossible for them to unionize or to come together on issues that many are facing because of how spread apart they are, and because of how difficult it can be to bring so many people together from such different areas.

While each set of circumstances is unique, the reality is that workers are being taken advantage because they are foreign and come from a country seen as being less than the country they immigrated to. Chilean women hire Peruvian women to raise their children and maintain their homes so that they can have professional careers, and United States citizens hire Mexican workers as landscapers, domestic laborers and many more so that their homes, restaurants, and offices can be neat and taken care of while they continue with their professional careers. The

reality is that these workers are the backbone of the economies of these first world countries, without whom business and finance would suffer.

## CONCLUSION

According to the research that I have conducted, both Peruvians and Mexicans have shown that situations in their countries have provided a need to emigrate elsewhere. Whether it be violent political parties in Peru that suppress their people, economic situations such as agrarian reforms that took land away from peasants and forced an unnecessary industrialization onto them that they were not prepared for – the peasants, the government nor the economy – or generally poor governing from Alberto Fujimori, Peruvians had many reasons to flee, and Chile had many reasons to accept them. Following a 17-year rule by a military regime, Chile turned to democracy and opened its doors to immigrants because of a new, stable economy that was thriving. Peruvians had little difficulty assimilating because of the lack of language barrier, because of an increase in Chilean women in professional jobs that required for another person to stay at home with their children or elderly relatives, and because of the relative ease of entering Chile.

In a similar situation, Mexicans had plenty of reasons to flee their country as well. The government was overstepping its boundaries and was changing rule far too often, the economy was in a slump where distribution of wealth was among the worst in the world and where millions of Mexicans were living in poverty, and where gang violence was causing many Mexicans to live in fear, not wanting to leave their own homes for fear of what might happen to them or their children. The United States, just across the way, was incredibly inviting, with a booming economy, a strong, stable government and where many Mexicans had established lives for themselves for over a century and a half. Since the United States had taken away land from Mexico during the Mexican American war, many Mexicans had already been settled in what previously was the north of Mexico but what post-war had become the southern United States.

As a result, many Mexicans were able to flock to communities of friends and relatives there. The Catholic faith has also had a great impact on Mexicans' ability to adapt and assimilate to new cities and areas of living, where they can find help in a community of like-minded people and through such means could even find a job.

While I have researched the push and pull factors of Peruvians fleeing to Chile and Mexicans migrating to the United States, there is still research to be done about the kind of lives that each group leads in the respective country that they migrate to. Many Peruvians face harsh judgment by Chileans and are cast away as lower-class, uneducated and not deserving of respectable wages and decent work. Mexicans face the same harsh reality in the United States, where although there are communities of Mexicans that cohabit and share experiences, there still exists a great deal of discrimination against them and against the work that they come to the United States to do.

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**The Pennsylvania State University - University Park, PA** **May 2016**

*Bachelor of Arts: Latin American Studies, Spanish and Global Studies*

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Schreyer Honors College and Paterno Fellows Program: Spring 2014-present

National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS): Spring 2013-present

Dean's List: Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2014, Fall 2015

**Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile – Santiago, Chile** **July-December 2014**

Courses in Human Rights, Latin American Culture and Societies, Psychology and Spanish

**Pontificia Universidad Católica de Argentina – Buenos Aires, Argentina** **February-July 2015**

History of World Economics, Economics of the Public Sector, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Argentine History & Creative Writing

## Work Experience

**Pool Manager, Arlington Heights Park District, Arlington Heights, IL** **May 2013-Present**

Ensuring safety of patrons, managing lifeguards, administering First Aid, maintaining cleanliness of pool

**Intern, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Chicago, IL** **December 2014-February 2015**

Enhancing both English and Spanish website; researching domestic violence statistics of Latinas in Chicago

**Server, Liberty Crafthouse, State College, PA** **September 2015-Present**

Serving customers of the community, providing knowledge of craft beer and bussing tables

**Camp Counselor, GWAYO, Mt. Prospect, IL** **Summer 2011**

Helped Spanish-speaking children ages 3-13 practice reading and speaking English; organized events and activities

**Server, Berkey Creamery, University Park, PA** **September 2013-May 2014**

Scoping and serving ice cream, attending to customer needs, maintaining cleanliness of store

## Volunteer and Leadership Experience

**Volunteer at Pílares Villa 21, Buenos Aires, Argentina** **February-July 2015**

Daycare and English instructor for young children living in a slum of Buenos Aires

**Intern at Fundación Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chile** **August-December 2014**

Historical research, documenting audiovisual documents, transcribing speeches by Salvador Allende on Wikimedia

**Co-Organization Chair of Penn State Irish Dance** **May 2013-Present**

Organized meetings, led rehearsals, choreographed dances, and fundraised

**Committee Member, Penn State IFC/PanHellenic Dance Marathon** **September 2013-Present**

Work to ensure safety of all spectators and volunteers during THON, largest student-run philanthropy in the world

**Volunteer, Mercy Box Delivery, Chicago, IL** **December 2005-Present**

Delivering boxes of Christmas food to homes of underprivileged Mercy Hospital patients

**Skills** - Portuguese – Novice level speaking, reading and writing.