Case Study: Mexican Migration to the USA

Throughout history one sees that there has been a continuing trend of migration from economically and politically unstable countries to more prosperous and successfully developed countries. Whether it is the migration flow of North Africans to France or the flow of the people of Mozambique to South Africa, these desperately poor migrants will do anything it takes to gain a better life in a developed country. Currently, the most controversial and over exposed migration flow is regarding the influx of illegal Mexican immigrants into the US. Further, the follow report will analyze and explore the Mexican migration flow into the US.

Where did the Mexicans Originate?

Mexicans originated from the country of Mexico, which is just north of the equator and stretches from the US border in the North to the Belize and Guatemala borders in the south. Nowadays most Mexican people are a mélange of Spanish Europeans and Native Indians. Yet due to the extreme instability and poverty experienced in Mexico, a great number of Mexicans have been immigrating to the US since her formation. And the Mexicans have traveled great distances in order to enter the US. For example, one young teenager even biked through the desert from the southern city of Chetumal to Tuscan, Arizona before being detained by the border patrol. Furthermore, even before European settlement the Aztec people had frequently traveled throughout the Arizona, Texas and California regions; so it is in the Mexicans’ nature to move throughout the southern states.
Where did the Mexicans move to? Why did they select this destination?

Mexicans are immigrating for economic, social and political reasons. In Mexico the poverty is extreme, people live in unbearable slum-like conditions (particularly along the border), the government is drastic and disease is rampant. Further, Mexicans have selected the US because it is a developed and neighboring nation! In addition, although border patrol has recently increased, the US can still be accessed illegally (i.e. with coyotes guiding migrants through the dessert). The determined migrants will stop at nothing to live in the US! Once in the US the migrants will generally stay in the southern and Latino dominated states, like Arizona and California, for climactic and cultural reasons.

Through the media Mexicans obtain an idyllic image of the US at a very young age. Further, Mexicans move to the US in order to obtain the “American Dream,” for they have a significantly greater chance of becoming rich in America than they do in Mexico!

Was it forced or voluntary migration?
Mexican migration is voluntary for the Mexican people are relocating in response to perceived opportunity. The Mexican people are looking for a better life. They want to live the “American Dream.”

Explore/Examine ALL types of PUSH and PULL factors.

Push Factors:
1). Huge Unemployment: the economy can not support the Mexican people. There are not enough jobs to go around, so many people turn to crime and prostitution as a source of income.
2). Poor paying jobs: Maquilla Factories along the US border, which are a major part of the Mexican economy, pay their employees barely enough money to survive. Yet, compared to many other jobs in Mexico, the pay is quite a lot!
3). Poor working jobs: Although there are some labor laws in Mexico, these laws do not apply to Maquilla Factories. Thus, Maquilla Factory workers have to withstand pitiful working conditions.
4). Huge Class Disparity: The wealth of Mexico is only divided among a few individuals and the majority of Mexicans are very, very poor.
5). Poverty: Due to unemployment and poor paying jobs, poverty is widespread.
6). Disease and Drugs: In the dirty and cramped quarters of the major cities disease is out of control. Further, due to the depressing state of their lives, many Mexicans turn to drugs. Drug use, especially along the border region, is extensive.
A Youth Migrant house in Nogales, Mexico

Pull Factors:

1). Politically and economically stable: the US is more politically and economically stable.
2). Prospective employment: There are plenty of individuals who are willing to exploit illegal Mexican immigrants.
3). Education system for Children: The education system is better than that of Mexico.
4). Medical Service: Although Mexico is slowly improving her health care system, the US’ health care system is still by far superior.
5). Overall better standard of life: Mexican migrants may have to work several below minimum wage jobs to keep food on the table in the States but this lifestyle is still better than their previous lifestyle in Mexico.
6). Kinship Links: Since so many Mexicans have crossed the US border since the creation of the US, the majority of Mexicans have some form of relatives who live in the US.
7). The American Dream: is perhaps the greatest pull factor. It gives Mexicans hope that if they move to the US they too could one day be rich! This dream is what makes America widely renowned throughout the world.

A pie chart displaying undocumented people in the United States.
Could Mexicans be considered guest workers? Refugees? Part of a Major Chain Migration?

Mexico represents the largest source of immigration to the US. Of the approximately 34 million foreign born people living in the US, 30% are legal immigrants from Mexico. On the other hand, many Mexicans can best be described as illegal aliens (immigrants). For these illegal aliens, unlike guest workers, are not legally allowed to work in the states, yet Wal Mart and other large companies continue to employ these illegal aliens in inhumane and below minimum wage jobs. Further, Mexicans can not be considered refugees because they did not flee their country for fear of political persecution. However, Mexican migrants can be considered a part of a chain migration for the vast majority of new Mexican immigrants enter the country due, in part, to kinship links. The majority of Mexicans have either family or friends who live in America. For example, there has recently been a large influx of Mexican teenagers trying to enter America. This is because the teenagers’ fathers and other family members are living in America (kinship links) and the teenagers wish to join their family and obtain an American education.

The border wall in Nogales, Mexico

What Forms of Government Policy Encourage, Aid the Migration?

Up until the 1960s the US government had encouraged Mexican immigration; however, in the 1970s the US government changed their immigration policy and started to enforce new laws. In addition, in the 1990s the Clinton administration built walls along all major Mexican border cities, including Nogales and Agua Prietra. The walls, built due to the great number of undocumented illegal Mexican immigrants, were built out of old plane scrap metal from the Vietnam War. Yet the new wall did not dishearten the Mexican migrants and Mexican illegal immigration into the US actually increased in the late 1990s! Further, Mexico makes up 57% of undocumented immigration into the US and in early 2006 it was estimated that there were 5.5 million undocumented Mexicans living in the US. However, recently President Bush signed legislation which approved the building of a 700 mile fence
along a third of the 2,000 mile US-Mexico border. The new wall is estimated to cost $2.2 billion and will even run through the dessert!

**What Impact Has This Migration Flow had on the New Home (any cultural diffusion)?**

The huge number of Mexican immigrants has definitely changed the cultural makeup of the US. Spanish has become a very important language and is taught at all schools in the US. There are even regions in the southern US where Spanish is the only language spoken. In addition, many other elements of Mexican culture have become prominent in US society. For example, Mexican food and ingredients have become widely popular. Further, many industries have been taken over by Mexican immigrants, like the farming and cattle ranching industry in Arizona.

**Bibliography:**


Leaders of Today Mexico/Arizona package.