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More and more profound economic, political, and social changes are taking place along the United States-Mexico border; many focus upon the Mexico-Texas borderlands region. Issues such as the Free Trade Agreement, immigration, smuggling, urbanization, boundary disputes, ethnic relations, women along the border, bi-nationalism, and a host of other concerns are the focus of global attention. As a result, there is a corresponding need for the publication of systematic research and viewpoints regarding the border region of Mexico and Texas, the area joined by the “Río Bravo.”

Initially, faculty from the University of Texas-Pan American and La Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León agreed to fill this void with a quality refereed publication for a much wider audience. More recently in Saltillo, academics representing universities in Texas and bordering Mexican states met to discuss possible areas of cooperative endeavors. The idea for the journal and a supporting social science association for this area were discussed and widely endorsed. Those with research interests in international relations, especially perspectives of the complex world vision along the border, were most interested in an outlet for work that provides unique perspectives to the complexity of this border region.

After a sharing of the idea with both sides of the Río Bravo, we received an overwhelming response to proceed with the association and the journal. We also received several manuscripts for publication consideration. Some of you were called upon to serve as initial referees. We feel that the quality of materials reviewed is diverse and innovative, and thus, have decided to proceed with our first issue of the journal. It is anticipated that we will provide a forum for dialogue around the interdependence and future of the border region, and if submissions provide uncommon and innovative solutions to U.S.-Mexico relations, we will continue to publish.

Our goal is not to speak for one idea or one position or one side of the border, but to encourage debate among community leaders and academics in an effort to support reasonable and substantive discourse about how best to prepare for the future. Those academics or community leaders wishing to join us in the sharing of ideas, or who wish to join the association, are asked to contact the Center for International Studies, the University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999. Telephone: (512) 381-3572.
En los últimos años se han venido produciendo innumerables cambios económicos, políticos y sociales a lo largo de la frontera de Estados Unidos y México. Muchos de estos cambios tienen como escenario la frontera común Texas-México. Transformaciones que tocan aspectos muy diversos del espacio binacional: Tratario de Libre Comercio, inmigración legal e ilegal, contrabando, nuevos asentamientos humanos e infraestructura urbana, conflictos limítrofes, relaciones interétnicas, posición y cambios de la mujer fronteriza, binacionalidad y otros muchos procesos de interés internacional. Esto ha creado en nosotros la necesidad de publicar investigaciones y ensayos sistemáticos en relación a esta variedad de problemas propios de la frontera de México con Texas. La Revista RÍO BRAVO es el órgano de difusión que buscará cumplir este objetivo.

En el origen de esta inquietud están los contactos frecuentes entre la Universidad de Texas-Pan American y la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, instituciones que manifestaron su deseo de crear nexos en vistas a reforzar la difusión y la calidad de la difusión de investigaciones sobre la región. Mas recientemente, en el marco de una reunión de académicos de diferentes universidades de Texas y del noreste de México, se discutió específicamente las distintas áreas de estudio en los que conveníamos centrar nuestros esfuerzos. Las ideas e iniciativas sobre la revista, y la asociación que le daría vida, fueron, en esa ocasión, discutidas y ampliamente apoyadas.

Una vez hecha esa primera ronda de intercambios en ambos lados de la frontera, seguimos recibiendo numerosas comunicaciones personales que nos invitan a proseguir con el proyecto. Al tiempo que nos llegaban varios manuscritos para su publicación en la revista y solicitudes de académicos norteamericanos y mexicanos deseados de formar parte del consejo editorial. Esto, aunado a la calidad, variedad y novedad de los materiales recibidos, nos condujo a tomar la decisión de lanzar el primer número de RÍO BRAVO, anticipándonos a nuestro deseo de crear un foro de diálogo y discusión sobre la interdependencia y el futuro de la región fronteriza, y estimulándonos a continuar con nuestro esfuerzo de publicación y difusión.

Nuestro objetivo no es abogar a favor de un punto de vista o de un “lado” de la frontera, sino enriquecer el debate entre los representantes de las comunidades y los académicos de este espacio fronterizo. Nuestra invitación sigue vigente; aquellos académicos y representantes de esta comunidad binacional que deseen hacernos partícipes de sus ideas y hallazgos o que deseen formar parte de la asociación, serán bienvenidos en el Center for International Studies, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999. Telephone: (512) 381-3572.

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The Center for International Studies of The University of Texas-Pan American is pleased to have participated in the publication of *Río Bravo: A Journal of Research and Opinion*. The Center’s mission is to promote research, information dissemination, faculty and student exchanges, and conferences related to, and on behalf of, our international community. The Center, which was founded two years ago, supports and encourages international initiatives among faculty, student groups, and among agencies in the fields of education, health, industry, and government on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border and in other regions of Latin America.

The publication of this new journal, and the concurrent establishment of a new social science association are both indicative of the openness and opportunity on both sides of the “Río Bravo” for truly bi-national cooperation. The support demonstrated by universities in Mexico, including La Universidad de Monterrey, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, and universities in Texas, including key border institutions such as UT-El Paso, Texas A & I University, U.T.-San Antonio, and others, has provided the encouragement for launching these new vehicles for the study of bi-national issues.

The Center for International Studies is pleased to announce that the Third Annual Texas-Mexico Higher Education Conference will be held on March 18, 19, and 20, 1992 at The University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas.

In addition to exploring partnerships between higher education and other societal sectors along the border, conference participants will organize the new association, and select officers for the association and for the journal. For more information, please contact Chad Richardson, Director, Center for International Studies, The University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999. Telephone: (512) 381-3572.
MEXICAN LABOR IS NOT CHEAP

George Baker*

Resumen

Los motivos principales de los Estados Unidos para el convenio de Libre Tratado con México son: 1) el deseo de mejorar sus relaciones para acrecentar sus inversiones en México y 2) el deseo de tener acceso a los materiales crudos, principalmente petróleo. Debido a que pocos consumidores mexicanos tienen ingresos equivalentes a los de la clase media de Estados Unidos, poco se puede esperar de una apertura mayor del mercado mexicano a las exportaciones de Estados Unidos, mas allá de lo que se logró en 1986, cuando México se unió a la GATT.

Acerca de los prospectos de nuevas inversiones de Estados Unidos con México, una vez que los costos sociales (tales como el daño del medio ambiente) y los riesgos corporativos que están cargados al costo de la mano de obra son altos, no le darían a las firmas manufactureras de Estados Unidos ninguna ventaja competitiva en relación con las importaciones europeas y japonesas. El salario por hora no debe de exceder de $15.00. Una falla en la graduación de la estructura de la frontera significaría que Texas y otros estados de la frontera continuarían recogiendo los impuestos de los estados de cuenta de las compañías regidas por el Rust Belt and Far East.

Una nueva inversión de $20 millones de dólares (exclusivamente de costos administrativos) en la estructura social y económica se necesitarían para reestructurar de manera que la mano de obra mexicana en la frontera sea competitiva.

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Introduction:

There are three reasons to believe that a Free Trade agreement (FTA) with Mexico would be good for the United States; one of these reasons is not that Mexican labor is cheap and that its use by American manufacturers will increase their competitiveness in the U.S. market. There are four reasons why a Free Trade Agreement with the United States would be good for Mexico; but one of these reasons is not that it would raise Mexican salaries and thereby create a market for American exports.

An FTA with Mexico (or better, with Canada and Mexico) provides the United States a symbolic counterpart to the European Economic Community, and, in tangible ways, helps strengthen the bargaining position of U.S. trade officials seeking international agreements. Second, an FTA, by strengthening the position of the dominant political movement in Mexico (the PRI), helps solidify the governmental base that has provided security and continuity to U.S.-Mexican relations since 1929. Finally, an FTA with the United States will likely prove advantageous to U.S. firms already established in Mexico who sell to the Mexican market: U.S. investors in industries such as pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals will likely benefit as negotiators settle some long-pending points of controversy such as intellectual property rights and national treatment (which limits foreign equity to minority positions). Such benefits will to a large extent be taken as the de facto repeal of the Foreign Investment Act of 1973.

For Mexico, an FTA with the United States provides four advantages: one concerns the cost and availability of money. An FTA with the United States can be expected to be a credible metaphor for credit- and market-worthiness in the eyes of foreign bankers and prospective investors. As for the availability of money, the closest source is the estimated $50-80 billion dollars of Mexican assets held abroad. An FTA with the United States would doubtless stimulate the repatriation of a good portion of these funds.

An FTA with the United States also invites a new rhetoric for the State, one that looks toward the future, not toward the past,
not toward the Oil Expropriation in 1938, and much less toward the Revolution of 1917. The third metaphor is policy continuity: Mexico will never attract adequate investment capital so long as it is perceived as a country whose president is free, without consulting anyone, to nationalize the private banking system from one day to the next (as was the case in 1982). A Free Trade Agreement with the United States is an ideally suited instrument for tying the hands of future presidents of Mexico. Finally, an FTA with the United States strengthens the political legitimacy of the negotiator. He who negotiates an FTA with the United States will be regarded as having impeccable political credentials, a definite plus in the present case of someone whose coming to power in 1988 was marred by controversy.

What is the U.S. burdened cost of Mexican labor?

What, then, of the assumption by the Bush Administration that Mexican labor is cheap, at least by American standards? We shall argue that this assumption holds true only so far as it concerns the nominal wages paid to the worker, but that once other labor-related charges and costs are added, Mexican labor is not cheap. These charges fall into two categories: those borne by the firm and those borne by society (the latter termed social costs by economists).

Examples of social costs include the full range of public services, from criminal justice administration to education and public health, street lighting, public parks, libraries and border crossings. In the case of Mexican labor, social costs occur on both sides of the border that are not paid for by firms operating in Mexico. The general observation is that owing to the lack of adequate infrastructure investments on the Mexican side (owing, in turn, to factors to be discussed shortly), social costs arise on both the Mexican and U.S. sides of the border. The two best examples are the deterioration of air quality (and standards of living more generally speaking) in El Paso, Texas, and the tercermundización (Third-Worlding) of the border counties in South Texas. An article in the New York Times (of March 31, 1991) reported on the high incidence of diseases like hepatitis and cholera, the cause of which was associated with polluted water and untreated waste coming from Mexico. Such costs on the U.S. side, which vary with the intensity
of manufacturing employment on the adjacent border, must be scaled to the number of hours worked on the Mexican side in order to arrive at an estimate of U.S. society’s cost per hour.

There is a political dimension of the process of tercermundizació: As soon as a region comes under the effective control of Anáhuac (as the pre-Hispanic empire centered in Mexico City was called), two things happen: One is the appearance of, or an increase in, conformism in the public media, with the result that public debate on policy issues becomes muted. The second change is a shift in the composition of the community tax base from one largely made up of middle-income, consistent tax-payers to one made up of low-income, prospective tax-payers. Some observers believe that, by these two measures, South Texas, West Texas, Doña Ana County (in New Mexico) and San Diego County have already fallen under the spell of Anáhuac.

A similar argument may be made on the Mexican side: the lack of infrastructure investments causes variable social costs associated with employment, especially in the case of employment in export-processing plants called maquiladoras.

What is the cost of repairing the infrastructure deficit on the U.S.-Mexican border? The deficit covers three areas, environmental issues, public services and investments in social welfare (such as public housing).

Environmental issues.

In 1983 a U.S. Embassy study estimated that a budget of $6 billion U.S. dollars (USD) was needed to deal with environmental issues on the two sides of the border. If it took $6 billion in 1983 it would take roughly $10 billion in 1991. In the absence of studies to quantify the cost of up-grading Mexican border public services and investments to U.S. standards, we may take the figure of $10 billion as a proxy value. Our estimate, then, for the cost of a border infrastructure package is $20 billion dollars.

What if, to the hourly wage of the maquiladora workers, a surcharge to cover the infrastructure deficit were to be applied? To cover $20 billion USD, the wages of the half-million maquiladora workers, who put in 2,000 hours/year, a surcharge for social costs alone would be $20/hr if paid in one year. Spread out over time,
this surcharge would only be about $5.25/hr if paid over 5 years (at 10% annual interest with no growth in the work force).

The funding of border infrastructure (mainly, but not solely, on the Mexican side) is not settled with a dollar commitment by Mexico City and Washington. Another serious problem is the high overhead costs in public works administration in Mexico. By one assessment, only sixty cents on the dollar of a public works budget in Mexico reaches the ground—the rest is eroded by overhead and underhand. How to put U.S. tax dollars into northern Mexico’s infrastructure account with guarantees that the money will be spend in the north for agreed-upon projects and agendas? In the past, when maquiladora operators have offered to contribute funds for infrastructure on the condition of their being represented on the advisory board that would oversee their disbursement, they have been rebuffed. The Mexican government has rejected such offers alleging foreign interference in the internal fiscal administration of Mexico. Maybe so, but it would be unacceptable for U.S. federal and state tax monies to be committed to infrastructure development in northern Mexico without U.S. standards of cost accountability. The matter of funding border infrastructure, therefore, becomes two problems, not one: fiscal (and project) administration as well as fiscal budgeting.

A fair question is, Why is there such an infrastructure deficit on the border? There is a distinct answer for both the Mexican and U.S. sides. On the Mexican side the blame can be placed on two or three related causes: in the first place, the fiscal centralism of the Mexican State means that all taxing authority exists at the federal level (the states have no taxing authority). Such an arrangement in itself is not necessarily bad were the states to have an equal voice in the distribution of the federal budget for regional infrastructure; but, as the governor of the State of Baja California emphasizes, for every $1.00 of tax revenue sent to Mexico City, only 30-40 cents is returned for infrastructure and public services.

On the U.S. side of the border an analogous centralism exists at both the state and federal levels: in Texas, the legislature and governor’s office in centrally located Austin systematically have under-funded public services in the peripheral southern and western counties that lie adjacent to the Mexican border. (The situation in
Santa Fé, Tucson and Sacramento is not much better than that in Texas: officials in those state capitals hum a tune on their way to work about how things on the border are getting better and better day by day.) Meanwhile, at the federal level, there is no official or agency that has either administrative or taxing authority for border infrastructure.

There is another reason why there is an infrastructure shortage on the border: the export assembly plants in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez and elsewhere in Mexico are cost centers for their parent firms and therefore pay no real taxes on profits from operations in Mexico. (To satisfy the letter, but not the spirit, of Mexican law requiring profit-sharing with workers, the plants do report fictitious razor-thin profits, a portion of which is then distributed to workers.)

These plants consume infrastructure, but do not replace it with taxes scaled to the success of their operations in the marketplace. The Mexican State (which, on a bad day, invented this permanent tax holiday in the mid-1960s) is thereby deprived of tax revenue from the North of Mexico that could be used to replace and augment strained infrastructure and public services. On the U.S. side of the border, the parent plants of maquiladoras located across from Texas are mostly from the Rust Belt, hence do not pay taxes in Texas. On neither side of the border, therefore, do the firms that operate in Mexico serve to strengthen the border region’s infrastructure.

The predictable result is that there are serious infrastructure bottlenecks in water, sewage, public housing, transportation, education, street paving and lighting, and health, recreational and child-care services. These bottlenecks come to have an effect on the burdened cost of labor in northern Mexico. One expression of these bottlenecks appears in the plants as worker turnover, the rate of which varies from 3-20%/month. It is commonly reported that, owing to shortages in public transportation, plant workers often take two or three public busses to get to work. Company loyalty counts for little when a worker is offered a job that requires only one bus change instead of two.

One maquiladora plant in Chihuahua City, which has a low 3%/month personnel turn-over, estimates that each turn-over costs
the plant a million pesos ($333) in recruitment and training expenses. This plant employs 2,200 floor operators, 36% of whom are replaced annually at a total cost of $264,000, an amount that would pay the salaries of 100 public school teachers for twelve months. Another way of expressing the turn-over rate is this: the total cost of labor/position is 36% above the wage rate paid to the individual worker.

Another category of expense above the nominal wage consists in the loss of flexibility and time in the red tape and expense (including mandatory severance pay) associated with terminating a worker.

The Chihuahua plant provides other examples of costs not advertised in the nominal wage rate of about $1.00/hour: the company pays the city for bus service for several dozen buses that take the floor operators (mostly young women between 18-24 years of age) to and from work. The company has a rule that requires that workers be left off the bus no further from their homes than three blocks; it is not required, however, that the road to the worker’s home be paved, or that water, electricity or sewage be installed. The company also provides an all-you-can-eat cafeteria at a nominal charge as well as a first-class medical facility staffed by full-time physicians. The plant, the business of which is to assemble electronics products, boasts of an operating table as well as dental services for the workers.

Another dimension of hidden costs borne by the plant is in the area of what Mexicans call cost non-transparency. In Minneapolis a manufacturer finds one of the best infrastructure environments in the world at a high, but transparent, cost. Management may not like the high costs of labor and services, but at least the costs are known and predictable. If the plant is moved to Cd. Juárez, not only is the manufacturing infrastructure a tenth of that of Minneapolis, but the costs associated with any category of expense become non-transparent. Anyone who has lived or worked in Mexico knows of the high, unpredictable costs of obtaining permits, costs that are paid for either by lost time, attorney fees or under-the-table agreements. As one Mexico City restaurant manager puts it, “All cost categories are black holes, all cost budgets are porous.”
The telephone system in Mexico is another source of hidden costs: in 1991 the country had barely started to install digital telephone equipment, and the service and expense of existing rotary-type equipment is generally regarded as awful by business and residential customers. An American journalist stationed in Mexico City believes that in his case four hours a day are spent trying to complete telephone calls. A publishing firm in Monterrey that had an on-line database serving customers throughout Mexico and abroad cancelled the service in 1990 on the grounds that there was too much interference on the telephone lines for their customers to get adequate service. Meanwhile, as for public telephones on the streets, only one in four is in operating order (many are out of order because the coin box is full).

The inefficiencies of the mail system in Mexico add unexpected costs of doing business. As one Tijuana businessman expressed it, “If you’re not downtown, don’t expect your mail to arrive with any regularity or guarantee of delivery. Perhaps for this reason we Mexicans often will not bother to reply to correspondence received from the United States: in the first place, if the matter were really important, we would hear about it on a personal visit, or at least by telephone; in the second place, we have low expectations that a letter from us would be delivered in a timely fashion to the person to whom it is addressed. If there is any area of Mexican life where the American stereotype of Mexico as ‘mañana-land’ still is valid it’s the mail.”

The judicial system in Mexico is another source of misplaced expectations: it is a world modeled after the Napoleonic Code in which individual judges, not juries, decide on guilt or innocence, right or wrong. It is a labyrinth of uncertainty fueled by delays and rumors of pay-offs and rumors of arbitrary intervention by non-judicial government officials.

Uncertainty exists, not only in regard to how certain institutions operate, it exists more broadly. Take government contracts. On the one hand, there is the external appearance of a level playing field between all business players legally on the field; on the other hand, there is the strong intuitive impression that, if put into words, would say that “there is no commercial transaction in Mexico that takes place between arms-length individuals or
corporations. This doubt, which is always in orbit around decisions of the federal government, undermines the moral of the international manager.6

Such differences of infrastructure and civic and corporate culture may be grouped together under the heading of culture shock, an underestimated dimension of doing business in Mexico. On his way to a luncheon appointment in Mexico, a non-smoking manager from the United States may observe with dismay that Marlboro cigarette advertisements have no health warnings at all—besides the brand name there’s only just the same old burnt-out cowboy chasing his tail. Arriving at the restaurant, the north-American may easily find himself at a small table for lunch with two or three smokers with cigarettes burning; he does not want to be a co-dependent, nor does he want to be rude.

U.S. managers in Mexico have to become accustomed, for example, to the Mexican Silent Treatment.7 In mid-February of 1991 a research team from the U.S. government came to Mexico to study the effect on U.S. investors of the partial deregulation of the state petrochemical sector. Arriving in Mexico City for a two-week visit, the team was advised that its previously scheduled meetings with Pemex, the State Petrochemical Commission, the Chemical Manufacturers’ Association and Mexican private companies all had been cancelled. None of the principals from these offices would return telephone calls or re-schedule the meetings.

American businessmen may think that going to Mexico is simply a matter of finding their Mexican counterparts and working out deals in which the numbers make sense. Unfortunately, there are no such Mexicans, for all such persons are businessmen-politicians first, businessmen second. Mexican business people have alliances, favors, and special understandings of all sorts with the mayor, the governor, the minister in Mexico City (perhaps even with the President of Mexico himself) as well as with officials in Pemex and various labor and employer organizations. Show a Mexican business person the numbers of a new business venture and he will think first of his political obligations and only afterward of markets and profits. A case in point is the unwritten agreement by a prestigious newspaper in one of Mexico’s northern states not to distribute copies of the paper in metropolitan Mexico City, where
one in four Mexicans live. Were Ted Turner to propose a joint venture with the owner-publisher of this newspaper for a new, growth market in Mexico City, he would find an incomprehensible lack of interest—no matter what the sales forecasts might be. The logic of doing business in Mexico, then, is not the same logic as that which is practiced in the United States, a difference that companies will face in losses of managerial efficiency as well as in manager turn-over.

Another source of culture shock deals with the absence of a business press in Mexico. The press reports on macro-economic news—inflation, trade, national product, and interest rates. Leaving aside the stock market, however, virtually no micro-economic news of any sort is reported in any public media. While the U.S. press reported in April 1991 the lower gross margins being experienced by Apple Computer, Inc. (to 40-45%), in Mexico not only are gross margins not reported but neither are annual sales figures—or any other data of the sort that U.S. managers normally read in the morning newspaper. The conscious realization that the press is the public relations arm of the State is usually slow to come, but when it does it is accompanied by cynicism, a form of depression. As one U.S. manager put it, “In a Mexican newspaper, the best business news that I can hope to read is that the head of my trade organization might have inadvertently said something interesting in a press conference.”

Also slow in coming is the realization on the part of Mexican managers that a U.S. business press exists at all: one Mexican manager with ten years in the United States observed, in frustration, “The U.S. public knows more about Exxon, a private company, than the Mexican public knows about Pemex, a public company.”

Cost accountants deal with the sum of projected infrastructure bottlenecks and break-downs, cost non-transparencies, administrative flexibility losses and culture shock under the general category of risk. The cost of risk is applied to the cost of goods sold in such a way that the consumer ultimately pays for it. The cost is incurred either as an insurance premium or, more typically, as payments to a self-insurance fund. The risk cost of operating in Mexico in an under-funded infrastructure environment must be understood as a surcharge (or burden) on the nominal
hourly wage rate. Since the cost of risk must be applied to the total cost of goods sold, the cost of risk scaled to labor costs is high.

Ordinarily, for a product to be a worthwhile candidate for assembly in Mexico there must be a ratio of 3-5 hours of direct labor for every $100 of materials. Let’s imagine a product with $100 of components and four hours of direct labor billed at $4.50/hr. (This effective wage rate is estimated at $1.50/hr, including benefits, for the worker, plus a 200% charge for factory indirect expense and supervision.) Four hours at $4.50/hr is $18, which, added to the materials cost (plus 10% to cover two-way shipping and customs) is $128/unit crossing the border back into the United States. On the U.S. side, meanwhile, there are other associated costs (relating to procurement, corporate overhead and the amortization of investments in product engineering, plant and equipment) estimated at 10% of Mexico-side costs. The total unit cost, ex risk, is $128 plus 10%, or $140.80.

A risk cost of 10% applied to the cost of goods sold would come to $14.08, and the total, risked cost of the product would be $154.88. Note that the cost of risk ($14.08) for the unit is over nine times the direct hourly labor cost ($1.50), and nearly 80% of the value of the burdened price of labor. If direct labor is $18.00 and risk is $14.08, then the total cost, ex social costs, associated with the use of that labor is the sum of these two categories, or $32.08. This amount, scaled to the hours worked/unit (four), is $8.02/hour.

If social costs are in the area of $5.25/hr, the total hourly cost of Mexican labor at the 10% risk rate is $13.27. A risk cost of 20% pushes the effective cost of labor up to $11.54/hr, ex social costs. Adding the estimate for social costs ($5.25/hr), the total risked and socially funded cost of Mexican labor comes to a shadow cost of $16.79. A cost of $16.79/hr is roughly equal to the price of labor in Minneapolis exclusive of risk corporate overhead, and social costs. As for risk, in round numbers it is zero. Corporate overhead might be 100%, for a total effective corporate cost $33.58/hr. What about social costs? Since most of the these are sunk costs, let’s take the value of costs such as added the extra unemployment insurance expense and increased cost of criminal justice administration, both associated with previous plant closings, as 10% of the total corporate cost, or $6.72/hr. The total cost of
Minneapolis labor, then is $40.30/hr, including direct wages, corporate overhead and risk, and social costs.

With a direct wage of $1.50, an overhead cost of $3.00, and a social cost of $5.25, the total labor cost would seem to be a mere $13.27/hr, ex corporate risk. It is unimaginable that the risk cost could ever be put at $27.04/hr, a price that would make it a penny higher than that of Minneapolis.

An explanation for the difference between these two burdened hourly wage costs, $16.79 for Mexico and $30.30 for Minneapolis, lies in two considerations: (a) the standard of living of the workers, and (b) the nature and degree of political responsibility demanded of the worker. What does society buy when it invests infrastructure to the extent that it will support a $16.79/hr job? It buys his privilege of contributing a third of that amount to taxes, a source, were one to dig deeply, of dignity, since paying taxes implies a personal responsibility to the social and material order. (Mexican maquiladora floor workers, in contrast, pay no taxes on income.)

Society also buys a potentially informed electorate. In Mexico, an average newspaper costs $1,000 pesos, 6.7% of a day’s wage (at $15,000 pesos/day); converted to Minneapolis-equivalent terms, a newspaper would cost 6.7% of an eight-hour day at $16.79, or $9.00. Were newspapers to cost $9.00 or its equivalent, blue collar readership would disappear—as is the case in Mexico. At $16.79/hr a corporation buys, therefore, a worker that believes that he has the available time and disposable income to keep himself informed on local, state and national politics and issues. A U.S. company going to Mexico will categorically not be hiring this type of worker, at least not for minimum-wage jobs.

This line of reasoning makes us question assumptions underlying our estimate of the social costs in Mexico associated with the use of Mexican labor. Our estimate of $5.25/hr for “social costs” assumed what standard of living? The U.S. standard? Surely not. At $5.25/hr, it would take a half-million maquiladora employees putting in 2,000 hours a year ten years just to approximate the University of Texas system—all the while ignoring all other dimensions of infrastructure.
The difference in wages corresponds to differences in the expected values of (a) material and social well-being, and (b) informed political views and electoral participation. The economic history of the United States and of other industrial countries in the twentieth century suggests that private companies have prospered when the standard of living and political responsibility of their workers was high.

The matter of wanting low wages in Mexico, then, corresponds to a shift in (some would call it a betrayal of) basic values: No longer will U.S. companies understand their implicit social and political roles in Jeffersonian terms. But can American companies really work, be internationally competitive over the long-term, in an anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic environment? Can the American political society work if workers fall, through loss of income, below the level at which being informed politically is affordable?

**Will salaries rise in Mexico?**

The Bush Administration has argued that with an FTA Mexican salaries would rise, thereby creating a market for U.S. goods and services. Given that model income (as distinct from mean income) has fallen 60% in Mexico since 1981, any improvement in Mexican wages would be welcome, but there is little reason to believe that the State would index wages to trade gains. Wage rates for the majority of Mexicans are controlled by the State through the mechanism of the minimum salary (about $4/day in 1990). Very few American goods and services will be bought by a wage earner taking home $4/day; not only is this wage insufficient to buy American goods, it is not enough to buy Mexican ones. As the El Paso-based industry organ, *Twin Plant News*, put it in the May 1990 story on worker compensation, "The cost of a basket of products and services considered the absolute minimum required to allow a blue-collar worker to subsist is considerably more than the average maquila operator can afford." The average Juárez worker, said the report, earned only enough to cover 54% of the cost of the minimum basket.

To capture the current potential market for American exports represented by Mexico, two adjustments have to be made to the
rosy, but unrealistic, figure brandished by the Bush Administration: to adjust for real purchasing power, Mexican population statistics must be substantially deflated, from 85 million to about 20 million. Even the figure of twenty million is not trust-worthy. We have to ask a question that, at first, seems strange: What is an American product (for export)? Except for the simplest consumer item, like tableware, an American product is not just a thing, it is a social network of related business services. An American product requires delivery, installation, training, warranty service and on-going customer service. The potential export market in Mexico for American products requiring the in-place operation of this service network is thus doubly limited.

The question is often asked, If there are so many hidden costs of Mexican labor, why have 1,800 maquiladora companies gone to Mexico to hire a half-million workers? There are various answers to this question: the first answer is that the companies, for not paying taxes either in northern Mexico or in the U.S. border counties, are not paying for all of the costs of operating on the border. They benefit, as economists say, from a market imperfection. A second general reason is that companies do not operate in Mexico with an adequate cost accounting model of their total costs, including opportunity costs. As Mexican accounting conventions do not recognize payments to a self-insurance fund for risk as a deductible business expense, foreign companies ignore this category of expense, and operate as if Mexico were a Minneapolis-like, risk-free operating environment, which it certainly is not. The maquiladora companies act as if their manufacturing costs are lower than they are in fact.

Nor do the companies estimate the opportunity cost of operating an export assembly plant in northern Mexico. The Bush Administration wants to encourage American companies to be more competitive in relation to Europe and Japan, but does so using a reductionistic argument. The best way for a firm to be more competitive is to have a better product. In First World markets, having the same-quality product at a lower price is a firm’s second-best choice. Next to having a better product, a company can have better customer service, better advertising, R&D, training, technology and materials, better sales people—even better financing.
At the end of a long list of possibilities to improve corporate competitiveness is the option to lower labor costs. The opportunity cost of ignoring the more reliable, if long-term, methods of enhancing competitiveness is high: for every man-year put into lowering labor costs in Mexico (or elsewhere) is at the expense of devoting a man-year into any of the other, less risky categories listed above.

**What is the Mexican burdened cost of Mexican FTA labor?**

So far our discussion has been limited to why the cost of Mexican manufacturing labor is not cheap from an American perspective, taking into account both corporate costs as well as social costs. We shall turn briefly to a consideration of why Mexican labor in the North is not cheap from (northern) Mexico's perspective.

As discussed, northern Mexico operates under a fiscal and political framework in which Mexico City sets the rules of investment, taxation and infrastructure budgeting. The North has little say in any of these matters. In consequence, given the Center's disdain for the outlying provinces, infrastructure budgets allocated for the northern states lag behind the creation of employment by five to ten years. In some areas of infrastructure, environmental protection, for instance, the lag is even longer. The North has no say in the budget to be given to fund the staff for the border operations of Mexican EPA (known by its acronym Sedue). The hope that Sedue's budget for U.S.-impacting environmental issues will increase as Mexico becomes more prosperous does not square with the chronic raw deal that the North has received from the Center.

Every new manufacturing job that comes with unfunded or under-funded infrastructure lowers the standard of living of the community, as more plants and families draw upon the same, already strained infrastructure. The result is that new employment makes the existing plants, Mexican and foreign, less competitive: these firms will now have to compete for qualified personnel as well as share infrastructure and public services with the new-comers.
There is also an opportunity cost incurred by the North connected with the Bush-Salinas proposal for a Free Trade Agreement: it is the cost associated with an external solution to overcoming the historic inertia that has impeded Mexican producers from aggressively approaching the U.S. market. With the exception of winter vegetable growers from the State of Sinaloa and a few beer exporters located in Monterrey, very few Mexican firms have ever tried to face up to the challenge posed by the U.S. market. Historically, they have justified their passivity on the grounds of their being interested in the protected Mexican market, where they could get away with high margins and low quality and service. One major Monterrey industrial firm, when, in 1980, it was told that it should enter the U.S. electronics industry with its own product—by buying a profitable U.S. company if necessary—replied “We can’t do that: the government would regard it as capital flight, and penalize us for being disloyal to the Mexican market.”

Mexican manufacturers seldom think in terms of developing a product designed to be competitive in the U.S. market. At best they think of what merchandise already on their shelves could be exported to the United States; few realize that the U.S. market for the exedentes (left-overs) of Mexican domestic production is small. The real U.S. market for Mexico consists in products whose design, production and marketing are U.S.-oriented from the start. In this perspective, the obstacles for Mexican exporters exist in the minds of Mexican manufacturers, not in tariff schedules. Where, then, are there courses in Mexico in American business English, American corporate culture, American packaging, American advertising and American sales techniques? Where is there a course for Mexican managers on how to read The Wall Street Journal?

To tell Northern firms that their future competitiveness will arise from the increased presence of foreign manufacturers in their midst is, at best, a mistaken notion. Such an external solution is not likely to work. The argument is sometimes given that an FTA will force Mexican firms to sink or swim, but can the Mexican economy afford the risk of their sinking?8

The opportunity cost of the use of a Mexican floor operator in a foreign-owned plant is the cost of that worker’s not assembling a Mexican-designed product for the U.S. market. Not assembling a
Mexican-designed product means that more passivity is encouraged, and more Mexicans will be drawn into what in Mexico is called the businesses of widows (such as industrial real estate and purely financial investments). The cost of making it seem that the growth of the North was a function of the activities of the newly arrived American manufacturers is the cost of deferring the emergence of a sustainable Mexican entrepreneurial class dedicated to U.S. marketing.

The North already faces two dilemmas: How to overcome its passivity and inertia in relation to the U.S. market and how to upgrade its chronically under-funded infrastructure? The North does not want to have to worry about how that infrastructure will be strained even further by the presence of new foreign investments. So, absent a Bush-Salinas commitment to a $10-20 billion package for border infrastructure and a complete fiscal rethinking of the border region, it would be better for the North to oppose an infrastructure-less FTA.

The real Northern agenda in FTA negotiations

Northern businessmen, however, are not telling what drives their support of an FTA. Mexico City quickly put the word out to the big Monterrey conglomerates (as well as to the northern press) that their cooperation (i.e., non-opposition) was requested. As one Monterrey businessman put it in late May, after the U.S. Congress had voted in favor of extending fast-track authority for trade negotiations, “The Government is buying the private sector’s cooperation with favors, and everybody is pretty much on board with Mexico City’s view of an FTA with the United States. Unfortunately, not much independent leadership can be expected from the big conglomerates, which are now being run, not by the founders, but by their sons, Mexico’s Yuppies, the Mexico-Citified ‘Juniors.’” To express its solidarity with Mexico City, the northern press has down-played or ignored criticism of the Mexican government’s trade proposal.

Do northern Mexican business leaders actually expect a trade boom coming out of an FTA? On April 19, 1991, a senior educator at Monterrey Technical Institute’s main campus said, after listening to comments about how an FTA might harm Mexico, “As for me, I
would sign an FTA with the United States tomorrow—even if it were a bad deal for Mexico.” He explained that the FTA would give Mexico something it sorely needed: a new frame of reference for looking at the future, one that inherently overcame the protectionist, isolationist framework of earlier decades. A few days later, at the Tech’s Chihuahua campus, twenty of thirty maquiladora executives agreed with this educator’s observation (the other ten abstained from expressing their views).

A more subtle understanding of the Monterrey educator’s sentiment was expressed by an industrial park manager in Mexicali on May 9: the FTA, he said, will give the North new policy tools with which to negotiate with Mexico City over budgets and programs. “Mexico City,” he observed with irony, “is our biggest bottleneck on the U.S.-Mexican border.” He said that he hoped that the FTA would go a long way toward upsetting the monopolistic grip of Mexico City on northern development. “Mexico City controls our elections, our state and municipal budgets, and our demographic, energy and socioeconomic statistics.” This entrepreneur, then, would sign a Free Trade Agreement because it would give the North a new point of leverage over the Center—even though, in the short and medium terms, it might be bad for the North.

The idea that an FTA might give Mexico a new world view free from the constraints of history was objected to by an historian at the National University in Mexico City: “Mexico cannot live in a history-less, symbol-less past. The way in which we think about the future must incorporate the past. Mexico should sign an FTA with the United States only if it is a good deal for Mexico.”

Conclusion
On balance, then, the winners in a Free Trade Agreement without a parallel commitment to finance a major up-grading of border infrastructure are these: Northern industrial real estate entrepreneurs, and Northern politicians seeking moral support for their struggle with Mexico City over the issues of electoral, fiscal and informational democracy. Mexico City will win to the extent that an FTA provides access to new credits and results in greater domestic and international legitimacy. Washington D.C.
(sometimes called Washington, D.F., on account of its pro-
Establishment leanings), also gains a low-budget negotiating card
with which to bargain with the EEC and Japan.

As proposed, the only losers in a Mexico City-Washington
trade agreement will be the companies themselves and the residents
of the bi-national communities in which they will establish new
plants: the FTA is good neither for General Motors nor for the
residents of the U.S.-Mexican border region; for without adequate
infrastructure on the border, General Motors will be less competitive
and will continue to lose U.S. market share to Japanese and
European imports.

The negotiation of an FTA between the two countries is an
ideal time to attend to a region that has not been dealt with
substantively in bilateral negotiations since the Treaty of Guadalupe
Hidalgo in 1848.

Notes

1A reader of The San Diego Union complained in a letter to
the editor published on May 26, 1991, that “the only viewpoint you
have expressed is one of unconditional support.” Jeffersonian
students of American democracy will rightly object to anything that
tends to make the American press an arm of the executive branch—
especially if the trunk of that branch is abroad, in this case, in
Mexico City. One reader believed that Interstate Highway I-5 out
of San Diego has become dangerous to automobile traffic owing to
the frequency with which non-documented (read: illegal) immigrants
attempt to cross the ten-lane highway on foot.

2A useful, more recent, discussion of environmental
problems on the border, although without quantification, is the U.S.
GAO’s report on “Information on Mexican Environmental
Protection Regulations and Enforcement” (B-243997, May, 1991).

3A vignette illustrative of the grief experienced by Mexican
business people owing to the quality of telephone service in Mexico
can be seen in this comment by a Mexican businessman who bought
a second home in Marin County, near San Francisco, in the early
1980s: “I went to the telephone company in person to begin the
process of getting service. A young woman asked only for my
name and address and if an installation date two days away would
be satisfactory. When I asked, ‘Is that all?’ and she replied yes, tears unexpectedly welled up in my eyes. In Mexico I would have waited for weeks or months, and only with pay-offs would I have obtained service.” In the 1990s Mexican businessmen flocked to the cellular phone as a hoped-for life raft that might save them from the inefficiencies of the telephone system.

4A reader from Guadalajara of an earlier draft of this paper wrote that it is best not to use the Mexican zip codes, as “mail ends up in strange places.” A Mexico City resident believes that it’s pointless to mail letters except at the main post office.

5A U.S. government official with broad experience in Latin America observes, “In Latin America, the way you win a government contract is to disqualify your competitor on some technicality, such as trying to show that his bid was not properly sealed or notarized.”

6In Pemex, where, officially, a restructuring is taking place for a new organization and role for Pemex, in the passageways workers talk of the “compadrigrama de la des-estructuración de Pemex.” “Compadrigrama” is a made-up word, a take-off on organigrama (table of organization) that points to a common quasinepotistic pattern in Mexican public agencies: some politically appointed officials have been known to name one of their children’s godfather (the compadre) to a lucrative post. The other made-up word is a take-off on “destruction.”

7Sometimes called in Mexico “The Law of Ice,” suggesting that a person is frozen out of some activity.

8The same sort of reasoning compares Mexico to Spain prior to its admission to the EEC: before, it was a poor, authoritarian, back-water state, afterwards it began a return to prosperity and democratic government. Mexico, this way of thinking goes, will become another Spain—or else another Peru. (See Enrique Krause, “The Historic Dimensions of Free Trade with Mexico,” Wall Street Journal, May 24, 1991, p. A11.) The problem with this reasoning-by-analogy is that it is another form of an externalized solution to issues that easily can be understood on their own domestic terms. In one way or another these issues all concern the need for decentralization of the State’s monopolistic control of fiscal, electoral and informational policies.
Summary

The erosion of cultural identity along the Mexican border with the United States has been seen as a given by many theorists and journalists in both countries. Despite the diversity of concerns, serious research about the actual loss of cultural identity in the border region has been sparse. This article reviews some of the most prominent approaches to the study of border culture, and discusses the possibility of using the perspective of hegemony and popular culture as a coherent theoretical framework for the study of national identity in the border region.

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sus significados debido al aderezo inflamable de la proximidad geográfica con la cultura del país más poderoso de la tierra. La vecindad de esta parte de México con Estados Unidos, en efecto, ha provocado innumerables afirmaciones apocalípticas sobre la erosión de la identidad nacional y la adopción de valores, costumbres y tradiciones norteamericanas. A esta posición se han unido desde periodistas y funcionarios públicos, hasta académicos de los más respetables.

Un buen ejemplo de esta preocupación sobre la pérdida de identidad cultural la ofrecen Espinoza y Tamayo al señalar:

“La proximidad geográfica con los Estados Unidos, los constantes flujos económicos y humanos a los que se añaden los etéreos flujos de información y comunicación social, así como el fácil acceso de los residentes a los medios de comunicación estadunidenses, alientan que en la frontera norte se estén conformando patrones socioculturales altamente influídos por la sociedad norteamericana en detrimento de la cultura, las costumbres y las tradiciones nacionales…” (Béjar y Capello, 1988, p. 41)

La mayoría de las veces, los medios masivos de comunicación norteamericanos son vistos como el brazo ejecutor de la penetración cultural extranjera. Salas Porra (1989, p. 167) ilustra esta postura al señalar que en la frontera los medios de comunicación “literalmente bombardean el dogma de la supremacía norteamericana; fomentan la homogenización, el consumismo, las actividades recreativas más superficiales y los valores de la competencia, la agresividad y el militarismo”. En la misma línea, Arenal (1989, p. 167) afirma que en Reynosa, Tamaulipas los jóvenes están muy influidos por la música americana: “el modo de vestir es extravagante, sobre todo entre los hijos de familias que se pueden dar esos ‘lujos’. El peinado y la música rock se ven entre todos los jóvenes, no importa la condición social.”

Mendoza Berrueto, académico y político mexicano, ha denunciado ese mismo tipo de penetración cultural, aunque en un tono mucho menos histérico. Puntualizando que las clases altas de la frontera son las más afectadas por la ideología y los valores de Estados Unidos, Mendoza Berrueto concluye que las
manifestaciones artísticas y culturales en la frontera—costumbres, lenguaje, educación, creencias y tradiciones—han sido conformadas durante un largo proceso de influencias recíprocas, en el que la fuerza de la cultura estadunidense ha sido tan vigorosa que “es posible hablar de una dependencia cultural relacionada de cierta manera con la dependencia económica de la región fronteriza” (Mendoza Berrueto, 1981: 58).

Incluso el reconocido intelectual norteamericano Stanley R. Ross compartía ideas similares sobre la magnitud de la penetración norteamericana en la frontera de México. En su introducción a una de las más importantes antologías sobre estudios fronterizos, Ross afirmó que en vez de interpenetración cultural mutua en la frontera, se ha manifestado una masiva penetración de la ideología estadunidense en el modo de vida de los mexicanos:

“la importancia de los medios de comunicación en los Estados Unidos ha sido una de las causas principales de lo anterior. El cine, la radio, la televisión y la prensa de los Estados Unidos diseminan en México ... imágenes de estilos de vida y hábitos de consumo más compatibles con los habitantes al norte de la frontera ... la penetración cultural inducida por los medios de comunicación no se da por completo de una manera unidireccional. Sin embargo, está lejos de manifestar un equilibrio, y aquellos preocupados por la necesidad de mantener la integridad de la propia cultura mexicana desesperan por la ‘cocalización’ de las regiones fronterizas.” (Ross, 1979: 5)

En términos similares, el ex-corresponsal del New York Times en México, Alan Riding, describe el impacto de la cultura estadunidense en la frontera. Senala Riding:

“El problema de la absorción cultural de la región por los Estados Unidos ... es agudo. Su población carece de una personalidad propia, puesto que los migrantes han llegado de todas partes del país. Las nuevas generaciones nacidas en la frontera han crecido sin siquiera una vinculación sentimental hacia un pedazo de tierra en el interior de México. Mientras que casi todos han visitado los Estados Unidos, muy pocos conocen la Ciudad de México. El inglés se habla ampliamente, y hay rótulos en este idioma por todos lados;
numerosos anglicismos se han infiltrado en el español regional. La mayoría de los adultos fronterizos trabajan para compañías o familias norteamericanas, consumen productos estadunidenses y ven programas televisivos de ese país. De hecho, la cultura popular mexicana —comida, música y artesanías— sobrevive más por la demanda de los turistas norteamericanos y los migrantes itinerarios que por el gusto de los residentes.” (Riding, 1986: 418-19)

Los periodistas mexicanos no se quedan muy atrás, como se advierte en el siguiente fragmento tomado de una revista de Monterrey:

“Lejos de Dios —y de México—, y a unos pocos metros de los Estados Unidos, los habitantes de la frontera tamaulipecana son víctimas —aunque se piensan beneficiarios— de un fenómeno de desnacionalización tan profundo, ya que constituye, sin exagerar, no una amenaza, sino un amago contra la soberanía de México en esa franja divisoria ....

"A diario recibe el fronterizo el brutal impacto de la cultura norteamericana: cine, radio y TV; libros, revistas y periódicos; costumbres y actitudes ante la vida; bocadillos que comer, ropa qué vestir.”(José Isabel Candelaria, 198/, p. 17)

A pesar de las anteriores afirmaciones, son muy escasos los estudios que han intentado abordar el estudio de la supuesta pérdida de identidad cultural en la frontera. Unos cuantos trabajos han tratado de determinar el grado de exposición de algunos grupos fronterizos a los medios de comunicación estadunidenses (cfr. Bustamante, 1983; Malagamba, 1986; Lozano, 1988; Zuniga, 1987). De esos pocos estudios, solamente uno o dos han abordado directamente el problema del impacto de los medios en actitudes y valores (cfr. Malagamba, 1986). Una razón para esta carencia de investigaciones se encuentra, sin duda, en la falta de marcos teóricos capaces de definir el término “identidad cultural” y cuáles elementos y tradiciones son los que deben preservarse.

¿Qué debe entenderse por “identidad cultural?” ¿Cómo se puede operacionalizar este concepto? ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre “identidad cultural” y “cultura nacional” o “identidad nacional”?
¿Podría ser que la cultura “oficial” mexicana fuera un concepto artificial que impone sobre culturas regionales y locales valores y actitudes tan ajenas a los habitantes fronterizos como los productos culturales norteamericanos? ¿Es la cultura nacional mexicana una colección estática de valores y tradiciones incapaces de incorporar nuevos rasgos? Todas estas cuestiones hacen difícil el análisis de la identidad cultural en la frontera de México con los Estados Unidos.

En la siguiente sección, se revisarán las opiniones de algunos de los historiadores de la frontera más prominentes sobre la identidad psicosocial de los fronterizos. Posteriormente, se sugerirán algunos enfoques teóricos para el estudio de la ideología y la cultura de la región. Finalmente, se revisarán algunas evidencias empíricas sobre la penetración y la resistencia cultural en esta área de México.

La Cultura Fronteriza: una perspectiva histórica

Algunos académicos mexicanos y norteamericanos han intentado explicar la complejidad de la cultura fronteriza mediante una perspectiva histórica. En sus análisis, las diferencias en el proceso colonizador del norte de México por los españoles, la aridez geográfica de los territorios, y la cercanía geográfica con un país diferente, son consideradas como variables fundamentales en la formación de la identidad cultural de los fronterizos.

Ignacio Bernal, arqueólogo mexicano, explica las diferencias culturales entre el norte y el interior del país en el casi inexistente mestizaje de españoles con indios en la región:

“El mexicano del centro representa la fusión de dos mundos: el indígena y el español. Esta fusión moldea su personalidad, su forma de vida y su futuro a tal grado que no puede ignorar la voz de ninguno de los dos sin correr el riesgo de perder la mitad de su ser. (...) la influencia indígena en el norte de México es infinitamente menor que en el resto del país. Algunas veces la diferencia reside en una ausencia absoluta de dichas influencias autóctonas.” (Bernal, 1979: 30-31)

Con respecto al carácter del fronterizo, o norteno, Bernal señala que es considerado por la gente del interior de México como “menos complicado, claridoso y más directo, con costumbres
sencillas y poca afabilidad, pero más práctico, emprendedor y eficiente” (ibid., p. 32).

En forma similar, León Portilla explica que debido al carácter nómada de los grupos indígenas que habitaban en el norte, fue imposible para los españoles reproducir la experiencia del México central, donde la población indígena había vivido en poblados y estaba acostumbrada a trabajos comunitarios (León Portilla, 1976: 135). Las duras condiciones geográficas y el aislamiento por carencia de vías de comunicación formaron de una manera especial el carácter de los norteños. Quienes llegaron a la región en tiempos de la colonización, de acuerdo a León Portilla, tenían una voluntad decidida, valor ante los peligros y propósito de entregarse al trabajo. Más adelante, la cría de ganado se convertiría en una de las actividades económicas más importantes de la región, influyendo en y moldeando el modo de vida de los norteños (ibid., p. 159).

Como rasgos culturales característicos del fronterizo, León Portilla menciona: 1) su determinación de confrontar cualquier riesgo y dificultad para alcanzar sus metas económicas; 2) su desvinculación con la tradición indigenista del centro del país; 3) su fuerte cohesión familiar y la persistente preservación de los lazos de parentesco, debido a la histórica situación de aislamiento del centro del país y la necesidad básica de protección ante condiciones de vida extremadamente difíciles. El historiador mexicano destaca la gran capacidad de adaptación de los norteños, su firme defensa de lo que consideran suyo, y una cada vez más fuerte conciencia de su mexicanidad (resultado de su histórico rol en el rechazo de invasiones extranjeras, y su trascendental papel en la revolución mexicana). A pesar de los grandes movimientos migratorios del interior a la región fronteriza en el presente siglo, León Portilla afirma que los rasgos culturales descritos arriba continúan predominando en los estados fronterizos.

El análisis de Oscar Martínez sobre los norteños o fronterizos es similar al anterior. Martínez destaca igualmente la casi total carencia de mestizaje en la región como uno de los elementos más importantes en la conformación del carácter del norteno. Asimismo, el historiador chicano menciona la influencia que tuvieron las actividades ganaderas y mineras en la autosuficiencia individual y grupal, su movilidad e independencia (Martínez, 1988:
107). En palabras muy parecidas a las de León Portilla, Martínez habla del vigoroso espíritu de lucha, determinación, adaptabilidad y trabajo duro atribuido a los norteños debido a las difíciles condiciones tradicionalmente encontradas en esta área de México (ibid., p. 107-8).

En contraste con León Portilla, quién solamente se plantea la cuestión de una posible influencia cultural en los Estados Unidos sin contestarla, Martínez afirma que los fronterizos han sido afectados por las fuerzas modernizadoras de los Estados Unidos; “de esta manera, se afirma que en el norte (de México) se han desarrollado ideas e instituciones más progresistas que en el resto del país” (ibid., p. 108). Aunque autosuficientes y emprendedores, los fronterizos han sido influenciados culturalmente por los Estados Unidos debido a la marcada dependencia de la economía fronteriza mexicana. De acuerdo a Martínez:

“Mientras la economía norteamericana domine la frontera mexicana, se experimentarán fuertes influencias culturales y lingüísticas extranjeras. Es en propio beneficio de los fronterizos que se vinculen con la economía del dólar, que aprendan inglés, y que se familiaricen con los estilos de vida norteamericanos....Sin importar lo que piensan los mexicanos del interior sobre la supuesta desnacionalización de la frontera, los habitantes de esta región continuarán buscando en el norte su mejoramiento material. Ese ha sido el destino desde la creación de la línea divisoria, y el futuro no parece ofrecer modificación alguna de ese patrón histórico.” (Martínez, 1988: 121)

Más adelante, Martínez agrega que aunque las acusaciones de una rampante desnacionalización en el norte son exageradas, la fuerte interacción de los norteños con los Estados Unidos es inevitable. El número de mexicanos que trabajan en el lado norteamericano—con tarjeta verde—o ilegalmente, en las maquiladoras de propiedad estadunidense, o en establecimientos turísticos enfocados al visitante del país vecino es tan grande, que la influencia cultural de Estados Unidos continuará a pesar de los esfuerzos para la integración nacional del gobierno federal (p. 122).

Sin duda alguna, las perspectivas históricas de Bernal, León Portilla, Martínez y otros académicos son esenciales para el
entendimiento de la identidad cultural en los estados mexicanos de la frontera. Sin embargo, sus explicaciones parecen ser incompletas. Al hablar del norteno en términos generales, no toman en cuenta las significativas diferencias entre las clases sociales fronterizas, ni buscan un impacto diferenciado de la cultura norteamericana por estrato social. Para ellos, la identidad cultural de los fronterizos se caracteriza por rasgos generales y compartidos como la fuerza de voluntad, vigorosos lazos familiares, autosuficiencia individual y grupal, independencia, simplicidad, y mentalidad práctica. En ninguna parte de sus escritos se encuentran consideraciones de que dichos rasgos se manifiesten en distintos grados de intensidad en cada grupo y clase social. Aunque Martínez incluye en su descripción de la frontera las migraciones en gran escala de mexicanos del interior hacia la frontera en décadas anteriores, no menciona que estos migrantes ejerzan algún impacto cultural en la identidad de los norteaños. Estas oleadas migratorias, entre 1940 y 1980, produjeron que la población permanente de ocho de las principales ciudades fronterizas (Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Piedras Negras, Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa y Matamoros) creciera veinte veces más a 3.4 millones de personas (cfr. Riding, 1986: 418). El impacto de los valores, tradiciones y prácticas culturales de esos miles y miles de nuevos residentes es ignorado, o minimizado, en sus análisis históricos.

En oposición a esta perspectiva, algunos teóricos afirman que en el flujo migratorio del interior de México a su región fronteriza reside la preservación de la cultura nacional mexicana. Mendez Silva, por ejemplo, afirma que los migrantes llegan a la frontera cargando sus valores y tradiciones, y que por ello, diseminan y refuerzan la cultura de los otros pobladores fronterizos. Según él, los migrantes que llegan de todas partes del país cumplen la función de vínculos entre el viejo México y la frontera, revitalizando los valores nacionales en ambos lados de la línea divisoria. Mendez Silva agrega que los migrantes cargan con ellos los símbolos, expresiones, signos y señales de una cultura producto de una historia compleja y profundos procesos de mestizaje. Como elementos de este bajage cultural, el académico mexicano menciona las prácticas gregarias, la lealtad y dependencia a la comunidad
cultural, así como los fuertes lazos familiares (cfr. Mendez Silva, 1988).

De igual forma, Robe destaca el decisivo impacto de los migrantes provenientes del medio rural en la cultura fronteriza. El investigador norteamericano explica que cada migrante carga con él su herencia cultural, sus ideas, valores, creencias y hábitos originados en su rancho o pueblo. Al llegar a la frontera, se encuentra con “paisanos” que llegaron 10, 20 o más años antes también de un contexto rural. El legado cultural de los recién llegados revitaliza el espíritu rural y tradicional de los habitantes fronterizos, mientras que por otro lado reciben la influencia de nuevos valores predominantes en la región (Robe, 1981: 268-69).

Aunque Mendez Silva y Robe corrigen la falta de atención de Bernal y León Portilla a la influencia cultural de los migrantes, vuelven a eliminar de su análisis el impacto de la clase social en la asimilación o rechazo de los valores y tradiciones de los migrantes, así como del complejo proceso ideológico mediante el cual la cultura hegemónica interactúa, se funde con y determina las prácticas sociales de los recién llegados. Mendez Silva y Robe caen asimismo en el extremo opuesto de ignorar la existencia de una cultura nortena particular, significativamente diferente a otras culturas del interior del país.

Otro problema común a las dos perspectivas revisadas arriba es la falta de hallazgos empíricos que respalden sus teorías. Bernal, León Portilla y Martínez utilizan fuentes históricas para encontrar las raíces de la cultura nortena. Mendez Silva y Robe, por su parte, usan fuentes secundarias sobre la magnitud del flujo migratorio a la región en las últimas décadas. Sin embargo, ninguno de ellos menciona hallazgos empíricos o etnográficos que documenten las características actuales de la cultura y la identidad nacional. Aunque la investigación histórica es básica para el entendimiento de la formación original y la evolución de la cultura fronteriza, es insuficiente al momento de revisar las prácticas culturales contemporáneas, especialmente a la luz de migraciones masivas recientes. Por otra parte, datos sobre el número de personas que han migrado a la región desde el interior de México no pueden explicar su impacto específico en la cultura autóctona de la frontera.
Lo que parece estar ausente de estos análisis es una perspectiva teórica coherente capaz de tomar en cuenta las complejas prácticas culturales de las diferentes clases sociales, así como el impacto ideológico diferenciado de la cultura norteamericana en la población fronteriza. En la siguiente sección se sugerirán algunos planteamientos teóricos útiles para la elaboración de marcos conceptuales más apropiados sobre la cultura fronteriza, y se revisarán algunos ejemplos de estudios empíricos compatibles con estos enfoques.

**Hegemonía, Culturas Populares y Estudios Fronterizos**

Numerosos estudiosos de las culturas populares en México ponen énfasis en la necesidad de diferenciar entre cultura dominante y cultura popular o subordinada. Tomando como punto de partida las proposiciones de Gramsci sobre el rol de la cultura hegemonía en la preservación del consenso social, estos académicos cuestionan la validez del concepto “cultura nacional”.

En vez de que represente la suma del total de prácticas sociales, tradiciones y valores de diferentes grupos en el país, la “cultura nacional” es considerada por ellos como un sistema ideológico dominante y represor. Joaquín Blanco, por ejemplo, califica a la cultura nacional como una cultura de imposición que carece de originalidad, espontaneidad y oportunidad; “algo absurdo y arbitrario.” (cfr. Blanco, 1982: 23).

Lo primero que resulta claro para estos investigadores es que no hay tal cosa como una “cultura nacional”. México es un país con una gran diversidad de grupos étnicos y sociales, cada cual con sus propias prácticas y tradiciones. Asimismo, es una nación caracterizada por grandes disparidades en su estructura social, con una pequeña clase económica y política dominando a la vasta mayoría de los habitantes. El concepto de cultura nacional, por tanto, representa primordialmente los valores ideológicos de la clase dominante, y “sirve el propósito de legitimar un sistema de explotación” (Margulis, 1984: 41).

Al comparar los conceptos de “cultura nacional” y “cultura popular”, Colombres afirma que esta última es, o debería ser, la auténtica “cultura nacional”. Sin embargo, en países como México, señala, el proyecto cultural de la clase dominante se “oficializa” y se
Lozano—37

convierte en la “cultura nacional”. Esta ideología dominante es impuesta, posteriormente, en los sectores subordinados de la sociedad mediante la educación formal y los medios de comunicación. Este proceso, aclara, permite a la clase en el poder debilitar la identidad de clase de los grupos dominados, aculturándolos e integrándolos al desarrollo económico capitalista (Colombres, 1984: 8).

Para estos teóricos, así, existe una “cultura nacional” mexicana que reproduce la ideología de la clase dominante, y culturas populares subordinadas que luchan por sobrevivir y que resisten el sistema hegemónico de creencias, aunque inexorablemente incorporan algunos valores dominantes en sus propios hábitos culturales. En estas culturas populares es donde se encuentran elementos y prácticas útiles para definir la auténtica “identidad nacional”.

Stavenhagen define “cultura popular” como los procesos de creación cultural que emergen directamente de las clases populares, sus propias tradiciones locales, su espíritu creativo cotidiano: “la cultura popular es cultura de clase, es la cultura de las clases subordinadas; con frecuencia, es la raíz que inspira al nacionalismo cultural” (Stavenhagen, 1984: 26). Margulis, al describir a la cultura de masas como dependiente de y dominada por la ideología hegemónica, afirma que únicamente la cultura popular es capaz de convertirse en cultura nacional, pues “lo nacional existe sólo como acción y como creación colectiva de un pueblo, un pueblo que ejerce activamente su creatividad” (Margulis, 1984: 50). El académico agrega que la cultura popular contribuye a que las clases subordinadas resistan la ideología del sistema y fomenta la conciencia de clase; guía las acciones políticas, la lucha por la liberación (ibid., p. 46). Mientras que la cultura de masas es producida para las masas, la cultura popular es creada por las masas y para las masas.

Como puntualiza García Canclini, la cultura de las clases subordinadas incluye no sólo elementos originales en oposición a la ideología dominante sino también numerosos valores hegemónicos. Así, es necesario entender que dentro de las culturas populares se dan elementos que mezclan lo autónomo con la reproducción del status quo (García Canclini, 1984: 71). Del mismo modo, la cultura
hegemónica incluye elementos de la cultura popular. Si la clase dominante desea mantener eficientemente el consenso social tiene que...

“incluir en los productos ... no sólo sus intereses sectoriales sino aquella parte de la cultura subalterna que vuelva a esos productos útiles y significativos para la mayoría. Para entender la eficacia persuasiva de las acciones hegemónicas hay que reconocer ... lo que en ellas existe de ‘servicio’ hacia las clases populares. Si no pensamos al pueblo como una masa sumisa que se deja ilusionar siempre sobre lo que quiere, admitiremos que su dependencia deriva, en parte, de que encuentra en la acción hegemónica cierta utilidad para sus necesidades. Debido a que este ‘servicio’ no es enteramente ilusorio, las clases populares prestan su consenso, conceden a la hegemonía una cierta legitimidad.”

(García Canclini, 1984: 72)

En consecuencia, cualquier análisis de las culturas hegemónicas o subordinadas debe evitar considerarlas entidades autónomas; más bien, debe de tomar en cuenta “la interacción entre la cultura elitista, la popular y la masiva, entre lo tradicional, lo moderno y lo postmoderno” (García Canclini, 1987: 1).

¿Qué relevancia tienen los enfoques anteriores para el estudio de las culturas fronterizas? Primero que nada, ofrecen un marco teórico coherente para el estudio de las complejas prácticas culturales en diferentes clases y grupos sociales en la región fronteriza de México con los Estados Unidos. Como en el interior del país, la sociedad fronteriza es una sociedad de clases caracterizada por grandes disparidades en ingresos y apropiación cultural. Las clases altas están vinculadas tanto a las clases dominantes de México como a las de los Estados Unidos, y son las más dadas a adoptar los valores de la ideología hegemónica capitalista prevaleciente en ambos países. Las clases bajas, por el contrario, mantienen sus propias manifestaciones populares—reforzadas y revitalizadas una y otra vez por la constante migración del interior—y preservan prácticas culturales que impugnan y rechazan algunos elementos de la ideología dominante. Al mismo tiempo, las culturas populares en la frontera parecerían presentar niveles más altos de asimilación de valores y creencias hegemónicas, debido a la fuerte dependencia
económica del lado mexicano en el norteamericano, y la proliferación de medios de comunicación en ambos lados de la frontera.

En segundo término, los enfoques sobre culturas populares y hegemonía sugieren que los estudios fronterizos deben dejar de buscar la supervivencia de una cultura nacional monolítica opuesta a la poderosa cultura extranjera. Más bien, el análisis debiera enfocarse en la pluralidad de las prácticas sociales y en la reproducción de la cultura hegemonica por las clases altas de la región. La cultura fronteriza, así, pudiera incluir elementos compatibles entre las ideologías dominantes mexicana y estadunidense, así como sistemas de resistencia e impugnación por los grupos subordinados. En estos últimos es donde podrían encontrarse elementos auténticos de la cultura nacional.

Por último, el rol de los medios de comunicación nacionales y extranjeros en la región fronteriza podría ser, de acuerdo con estas perspectivas, la reproducción del sistema capitalista hegemonico. Ya sean extranjeros, nacionales o locales, las radiodifusoras y televisoras comerciales, los periódicos, las revistas y los cines estarían transmitiendo los valores dominantes de la clase en el poder. Esto, sin embargo, podría ser matizado por las contradicciones que necesariamente se presentan en los mensajes de los medios. Como han señalado Hall (1980), Fiske (1987) y Barbero (1987), para tener éxito y aceptación entre las clases mayoritarias los mensajes televisivos, radiofónicos y cinematográficos retoman elementos de la cultura popular, incorporándolos a los mensajes hegemónicos. Al hacer lo anterior, incorporan a los “textos” las contradicciones ideológicas y de clase, produciendo una tensión permanente que sólo en última instancia se resuelve a favor de la versión hegemónica. Si ésta prevalecerá al concluir la telenovela, película o canción, la incorporación de elementos populares subalternos en la trama podría propiciar “lecturas” o interpretaciones divergentes y contradictorias a los objetivos hegemónicos de los productores de los mensajes. Cualquier análisis del impacto de los medios de comunicación, nacionales o extranjeros, así, deberá considerar que aunque los grupos subordinados fronterizos se exponen constantemente a ellos, bien puede darse una negociación en la que el contenido hegemónico quede hasta cierto punto nulificado. Como
afirma Margulis, la cultura popular toma elementos de la cultura de masas, los excluye de su circuito, los resemantiza y emplea de una manera nueva (Margulis, 1984: 47). El curso particular que este proceso demitificador puede tomar en la frontera está abierto al análisis, así como la existencia de elementos contestarios y subordinados en los mensajes de los medios de comunicación locales y nacionales a los que se exponen las clases populares.

La investigación sobre identidad nacional en la frontera norte de México, de acuerdo a la discusión anterior, podría centrarse en los símbolos y prácticas culturales de los grupos y clases subordinadas en la región: sus tradiciones, costumbres, creencias y hábitos que ofrecerían alternativas a la cultura hegemónica impuesta desde arriba.

Evidencias Empíricas

Muy pocos estudios sobre la cultura fronteriza se han llevado a cabo usando marcos teóricos similares a los discutidos en la sección anterior. Esos pocos estudios, sin embargo, tienden a corroborar las afirmaciones sobre elementos de resistencia e impugnación a las culturas hegemónicas mexicana y norteamericana.

Un firme testimonio de impugnación cultural al sistema hegemónico lo advierte Manuel Valenzuela en la subcultura de los cholos. En sus agresivas vestimentas, su lenguaje cifrado, su cercanía a poderosos símbolos tradicionales como la virgen de guadalupe, su violencia y su desafiante actitud hacia las conductas "normales", Valenzuela vio una respuesta colectiva de estos jóvenes proletarios en Tijuana y Ciudad Juárez a la pobreza, marginalidad, desigualdad y opresión (Valenzuela, 1984: 22). Entre los elementos que explican la intensa cohesión social de los cholos en los barrios se encuentran, según Valenzuela, la similitud de sus problemas y requerimientos, su necesidad de protección ante poderes externos hostiles como la policía municipal, otros barrios, las autoridades federales, los ricos, etc.; el intercambio de favores económicos, la ayuda en pleitos de bandas contra otros barrios, la costumbre de compartir drogas con compañeros y el gusto común por estilos de vestimenta y expresión (ibid., p. 16).

Sin embargo, la conciencia de clases de los cholos es muy elemental; carecen de un proyecto político propio, y los afecta una
El Cholismo es "un fenómeno cultural sin la fuerza necesaria para representar un modo de vida alternativo para sus miembros" (ibid., p. 22). Como se mencionó anteriormente, las culturas populares usualmente incorporan elementos de la cultura hegemónica, y con frecuencia son incapaces de desarrollar respuestas articuladas contra él. En otro ensayo, Valenzuela confirma lo anterior al explicar que aunque la subcultura de los jóvenes de clase baja en la frontera representa un esfuerzo de impugnación y resistencia, tiende a reproducir la ideología dominante (Valenzuela, 1987, 76).

Sin usar el enfoque sobre hegemonía y culturas populares como marco teórico, un estudio realizado por el Colegio de la Frontera Norte sobre jóvenes fronterizos encontró algunas evidencias sobre valores culturales diferenciados en las diversas clases sociales. Al preguntar a los jóvenes diversas cuestiones diseñadas para evaluar su proximidad o lejanía hacia valores y tradiciones mexicanas, el estudio encontró que los jóvenes de clase media y baja mantenían su legado cultural significativamente más que los de clase alta (cfr. Bustamante, 1983: 44-46).

El mismo estudio—efectuado en Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Matamoros y la Ciudad de México—concluyó que los jóvenes fronterizos de clase alta tienden a preferir la televisión norteamericana sobre la mexicana, mientras que los de clase media y baja se inclinan hacia la nacional (ibid., p. 59). Aunque Bustamante aclara que la televisión mexicana es muy similar a la estadunidense en valores culturales y contenido ideológico, el académico mexicano afirma que en la diferenciación subjetiva de preferencias continúa siendo importante distinguir entre los dos tipos de programación televisiva (ibid., p. 60). Interpretando estos hallazgos desde la perspectiva de la hegemonía, resulta factible suponer que al rechazar la programación televisiva estadunidense, los jóvenes fronterizos de clase media y baja podrían estar ejerciendo un cierto grado de resistencia cultural.

De igual modo, una investigación reciente sobre los estudiantes de secundaria de Nuevo Laredo determinó que los alumnos de clase baja prefieren los medios de comunicación locales y nacionales, mientras que los de clase alta se exponen con mayor frecuencia a los medios norteamericanos. Tanto los hombres como
las mujeres de clase baja, de acuerdo a los hallazgos, tendían en mucho menor grado que los de clase alta a exponerse a películas producidas en Estados Unidos, o a estaciones de radio y televisión de ese país. Aunque los estudiantes de clase alta seguían prefiriendo los medios nacionales sobre los extranjeros, se exponían con mucha frecuencia a filmes y a música moderna norteamericana. (cfr. Lozano, 1988).

En un trabajo reciente de antropología visual, García Canclini y Safa (1989) analizaron la concepción de la vida urbana y los conflictos interculturales de ciertos grupos de Tijuana, Baja California. Con un marco teórico como el descrito anteriormente, los investigadores entrevistaron a estudiantes de primaria, secundaria y preparatoria, a maestros de actividades culturales y bilíngües, y a tres grupos de trabajadores culturales especializados en la “alta cultura”: las edecanes que realizan visitas guiadas en el Centro Cultural Tijuana, y dos grupos de artistas plásticos, escritores y periodistas. Los entrevistados fueron expuestos a 50 fotografías de aspectos representativos de Tijuana, de las cuales debieron elegir 10 que les parecieran las más apropiadas para identificar su ciudad. Con base en ellas, los grupos generaron discusiones colectivas que les permitieron a los investigadores profundizar en los sentimientos de identidad y en las percepciones culturales sobre la frontera. Aunque García Canclini et al. encontraron que sí se manifestaba “una vinculación estrecha con los bienes culturales procedentes de los Estados Unidos”, sobre todo en los alumnos de secundaria y preparatoria, la conclusión final del estudio fue la siguiente:

“La actitud prevaleciente no es el rechazo ante lo extranjero, sino la interacción creativa. La mayoría se complace en afirmar lo propio, lo de sus padres, y al mismo tiempo siente fascinante que la fluida relación comercial, laboral y comunicativa con los Estados Unidos multiplique las opciones, la información, las experiencias sociales y culturales.” (59)

**Conclusiones**

Los estudios mencionados en la sección anterior constituyen un primer paso para el entendimiento de la problemática cultural en la región fronteriza. Sin embargo, se requieren más estudios para
determinar prácticas culturales específicas de los grupos hegemonicos y subordinados en la frontera de México con los Estados Unidos. Hasta el momento, aparte de los grupos juveniles, no parecen existir investigaciones sistemáticas sobre las tradiciones, costumbres, valores y concepciones del mundo de grupos subordinados como los obreros, choferes, empleados, vaqueros, artesanos, trabajadores indocumentados, migrantes y demás sectores subalternos.

Sin embargo, para que dichos estudios ofrezcan hallazgos útiles para entender la complejidad de la cultura fronteriza, parece aconsejable que tomen como punto de partida enfoques teóricos que, como el que se ha discutido en este trabajo, permitan el estudio de la cultura como práctica ideológica y el análisis de las formas de resistencia e impugnación de grupos subordinados que ocupan el lugar de las clases oprimidas en el México contemporáneo.
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Summary

Matamoros, like other border cities in northeastern Mexico, has a social environment in which a complex youth identity is born: “los locos del barrio.” Several components shape this identity: delinquency, distinctive symbols, drugs, peers, and the U.S.-Mexico border. Nevertheless, the identity of “los locos del barrio” is not the usual youth stigma. Instead of the usual survey of biographical information, “Los Locos del Barrio...” examines the sociological reasons for this border youth identity. Ethnographic materials were taken during a year of observations and interviews with sixty Matamoros youngsters aged 14 through 21.

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Introducción.

“To our families any variance from cultural norms made us pochos .... To Spanish-speakers those of us whose Spanish was deficient were pochos. To working class mexicanos middle class Mexican Americans were pochos. To la gente del barrio those of us who no longer lived there were pochos. To rural raza, urban dwellers were pochos. To the residents of the border areas, especially to our tejano relations, those of us who lived north of the frontera were pochos. And of course, to our hermanos mexicanos all of us on this side of the border were pochos” escribe Arturo Madrid-Barela (1976) cuando escudriña esa multiforme idea encerrada en la noción de Pocho. Haciendo esto, el autor introduce el objeto que nos ocupar las fronteras inventan una identidad o, en sentido inverso, las identidades son líneas fronterizas. La frontera, margen o línea divisoria, impone identidades sociales y, en la otra dirección, no hay identidad social que no marque separaciones sociales.

Este mismo asunto puede ser entendido en términos de forma cultural (¿Existe una cultura fronteriza?); la esencia de esta forma, su naturaleza, sus ingredientes y productos, su extensión y sus límites (Ver por ejemplo a Stanley L. Robe 1981 y 1985).

También puede uno meter las narices en este asunto de la “cultura fronteriza” tratando de definirla como visión del mundo; una visión con sus mitologías, sus respuestas, sus valores, sus ideologías, sus símbolos, sus miedos y fantasmas; Monsivais (1981 y 1985) y Bensusan (1985) han tenido, echando mano de variados instrumentos, la valentía de hacerlo: encuentro de visiones de mundos pasados, presentes y futuros o cosmovisión fronteriza.

Hay quienes, finalmente, ven en la frontera un campo de producción de identidades sociales: gringos, chicanos, cholos, pachucos, pochos, mojados, springbreakers, greasers, bolillos... En esta perspectiva ubicamos el presente trabajo, observando en ella algunos recodos sociológicos poco explorados.

Siguiendo los pasos de Madrid-Barela, nos ha parecido valioso hacer la lectura de un material etnográfico que recoge elementos culturales producidos por una pandilla de jóvenes “cementerios” de Matamoros, Tamps. Una lectura basada en este binomio: identidad social y frontera norte (para los mexicanos) o frontera sur (para los norteamericanos).

La perspectiva de este binomio posee el valor heurístico que le proporcionan las categorías sociales con las que trabaja: pocho, cholo, pachuco... Cada una de estas categorías constituye una síntesis mas o menos acabada que expresa, a su manera, una formación cultural, es decir, una red de relaciones culturales desiguales. Esto significa que, en la frontera, est n confluyendo formas o redes de relaciones simbólicas que producen singulares categorías diferenciadoras o artefactos culturales al servicio de la línea divisoria; artefactos, a su vez, mantenidos por enredados procesos culturales (entornos conflictivos y cambiantes: “... un mundo —la frontera mexicana— cuya enorme provisionabilidad elige como gran tradición el afán de sobrevivencia —la necesidad de
trabajo es una visión del mundo—” (Monsivais 1981 p. 290), códigos y criterios de distinción contradictorios, modos de relacionarse y ejes morales y jurídicos movilizados; patrones biográficos y familiares diversificados. Estos artefactos serían, en suma, fruto y síntesis de esa compleja y contradictoria red de relaciones simbólicas o encuentros culturales conflictivos. Sin esto, los artefactos dejarían de existir, de funcionar, de tener vigencia cultural.

Estos artefactos (categorías o identidades) funcionan, para el sociólogo, como los eclipses solares para el astrónomo: lugares principalísimos en donde se pueden observar múltiples movimientos cósmicos. "Los locos del barrio," como identidad social, son el eclipse al que hemos acudido para recoger un producto de esa red de relaciones simbólicas que tiene lugar al extremo oriente de la frontera México-EUA.

Identidad social es el término que E. Goffman (1963) usa para designar esas categorías históricas que M. Mauss (1969 y 1983) estudiaba: el "nombre," el "alma," el "espíritu," la "persona." Rastreando la cuestión del mito del alma, en sociedades no europeas y europeas, Mauss descubre que el origen de este "mito" o "leyenda" está, en gran medida, en la necesidad de nombrar al individuo. Este acto de nombrar equivale a definir la posición social del individuo tanto en el mundo de los vivos como en el de los muertos. El "nombre" o "alma" es la forma como distintas sociedades humanas han asignado a los individuos el personaje que habrán de representar en la vida social: "Ainsi, d'une part, le clan est conçu comme constitué par un certain nombre de personnes, en vérité de personnages; et, d'autre part, le rôle de tous ces personnages est réellement de figurer, chacun pour sa partie, la totalité préfigurée du clan" (Mauss 1983 p.339). Reconstruir la figura del clan o mundo social, ésta es la función del "nombre" o máscara o posición que le ha sido asignada al individuo o al grupo de individuos. "Alma" que no es otra cosa que síntesis de la historia colectiva: "le nom, le wing, est un collectif, c'est une chose venue d'ailleurs: l'ancêtre correspondant l'avait port, comme il reviendra au descendant du porteur. Et quand on a philosophé, quand dans certaines métaphysiques on a essayé d'exprimer ce que c'est, on a dit de l'individu qu'il est un composé, de shen et de kwei (encore deux collectives) pendant cette vie" (explica el autor al analizar el nombre en China p. 349).

De ahí al "alma pachuca," al "espíritu cholo" o a la "identidad chicana" no hay más que actualización de materiales y contenidos. Ser cholo o pachuco no es sólo identidad social, pero es eso antes que cualquier otra cosa. Es una máscara, un personaje, una posición, en este caso, fronteriza y asignada.
Así el problema de la “pérdida de identidad nacional”—tema recurrente de discursos oficiales—entre los mexicanos al lado del “bordo,” del otro lado del “bordo” o de los mismos chicanos, se traduce en el problema de la adopción-asignación de nuevas identidades en nuevos mundos simbólicos.

La naturaleza de la identidad social, dice Goffman, se entiende cuando se la opone a la identidad subjetiva o identidad “para sí”. La identidad subjetiva es el sentimiento de la propia situación y de la continuidad del personaje que el individuo ha adquirido en sociedad. La identidad social sólo resulta del interés que los “otros” tienen en definirla. O, en palabras de Berger y Luckman (1972): “...el yo es una entidad reflejada ... entraña una dialéctica entre la auto-identificación y la identificación que hacen los otros, entre la identidad objetivamente atribuida y la que es subjetivamente asumida ... En realidad, la identidad se define objetivamente como ubicación en un mundo determinado y puede asumírse la subjetivamente sólo junto con ese mundo” (p. 167-168).

En este contexto, la meta del presente trabajo puede definirse en estos términos: recoger y organizar los materiales que permitan definir el “alma” de los locos del barrio en Matamoros y mostrar así uno de esos productos nacidos de esa forma o red de relaciones simbólicas llamada frontera.

La identidad social es, por tanto, marca de un límite (definición del “nosotros” en contraposición a los “otros” como dice R. Hoggart, 1957), síntesis de numerosos procesos culturales (“entidad reflejada” como dicen Berger y Luckmann) y posición atribuida y asumida (personaje o máscara en las observaciones de Mauss o nombre en la nomenclatura en Lévi-Strauss 1962).

La marca, la síntesis y la posición que recogemos en este trabajo están ubicadas en un espacio de, al menos, cinco coordenadas. Uno: el eje internacional, el de los beneficios del capitalismo más exitoso de la historia o pas vecino para los mexicanos de este lado; los muchachos de Matamoros viven a 100, 200, y rara vez 1000 metros de distancia del río que los separa y los acerca a ese mundo de riquezas (el delito, como veremos, tendría aquí un significado fronterizo). Dos: el eje urbano y de clase social, el de los beneficios de la ciudad, sitio en el que se concentra el capital dentro de una sociedad con capitalismo dependiente; estos muchachos (“nosotros” dirían ellos) viven en estos barrios marginados en donde el agua potable no llega pero que las lluvias torrenciales convierten sus casas en islas provisionales. Tres: el eje generacional, el del mundo de los adultos que dirigen instituciones y unidades productivas, al que estos muchachos, por su edad, difícilmente tendrían acceso. Cuatro: el eje moral, el del mundo de los buenos o éticamente aceptables; estos mismos jóvenes, en tanto que
usuarios de inhalables y marihuana, en tanto que pandilleros, est n del lado de los “indeseables,” los marginados al interior mismo de los barrios marginados. Cinco: el eje jurídico, el de la policía, del tribunal para menores, los consejos tutelares y el Centro de Detención de Brownsville, Texas. Estos muchachos son los eternos sospechosos, los fichados, los infractores de la ley.

En la conciencia y el lenguaje de estos mismos jóvenes, estos ejes están bien marcados:

- de un lado, los gringos y los mexicanos con “papeles;” del otro ellos;
- de un lado, los ricos de Matamoros; del otro, ellos;
- de un lado, los “camellos;” del otro ellos;
- de un lado, los “peidos”(los muchachos buenos); de éste ellos;
- y, desde luego, de un lado “la patrulla,” “los judíos” y la “ley;” y del otro, ellos, los “malillas” del barrio.

Este espacio de cinco coordenadas no está concebido en términos de exclusión o marginación, sino de planos superpuestos por los que estos jóvenes definen su posición. En cada uno de estos planos, los jóvenes realizan el juego de la exclusión-inclusión o como dice Monsivais a propósito del pachuco: “conductas y vestimentas que eran a la vez un desafío al sistema norteamericano y una arrogante solicitud de ingreso, un alejamiento de la tradición de sus padres y un reconocerse distintos por seguir siendo mexicanos” (1985” p. 164).

En la identidad: “locos del barrio,” están incluidos cinco elementos desacreditadores pertenecientes tanto al plano moral como al jurídico: “pateros,” “mojados,” “delincuentes,” “drogadictos” y “pandilleros.” Es decir, la identidad fronteriza que nos ocupa, es una identidad desacreditada o estigma como dice Goffman. No es, por tanto, una identidad cualquiera, es una identidad que, a los ojos de los “otros,” aparece como una identidad “detestable,” “anormal,” “desviada”. Digna, por tanto, del encierro, la separación o la cárcel, de las razzias y el descrédito generalizado.

Un estigma que intentaremos definir etnográficamente en este trabajo y que es escultura social a base de mil pequeños y grandes golpes, a ritmos biográficos diferentes, siguiendo patrones morales diversos pero intercambiables, todos ellos provistos por la detención policiaca en Brownsville o en Matamoros, por las mafias organizadas de la frontera, las bandas de narcotraficantes, la experiencia de ser ilegal en Texas, el filme norteamericano de violencia, la canción anecdótica, la historieta de hazañas maravillosas, las páginas rojas de la frontera, el descrédito del gringo, la imaginación popular, el deseo heredado de no dejar que “nos hagan pendejos,” en suma, la experiencia vivida, transmitida,
novelizada y recreada, de uno y otro lado de la frontera, por este grupo de jóvenes consumidores de mariguana e inhaladores de cemento con quienes estuvimos en contacto a lo largo de un año: los que a sí mismos se llaman los locos del barrio.

**Lugares de Presentación de una Identidad.**

Dentro del marco institucional del Centro para la Juventud y la Familia (CEPAJUF) del DIF de Tamaulipas, se llevaron a cabo nuestros encuentros con estos jóvenes. La institución hace llegar al Centro de Detención de Brownsville, Tex. y al Consejo Tutelar de la Cd. de Matamoros una invitación para hacerse cargo de los jóvenes “delincuentes.” Al mismo tiempo, contactamos personalmente a distintos muchachos detenidos invitándolos a formar un grupo que sesionaría dos veces por semana en el edificio de la institución.

No fue necesario insistir. Pronto un grupo “natural,” es decir, previamente formado, inicia intercambios regulares con nosotros. 25 jóvenes constituyen el grupo central con el que tuvimos un diálogo asiduo; en torno a este grupo giraban otros 69 amigos que asistían a las reuniones con irregularidad.

A dos meses de iniciado el intercambio, decidimos abandonar la perspectiva institucional—normativa—y nos definimos a nosotros mismos como participantes-observadores de un proceso en el que intentaríamos conocer al grupo de jóvenes y dejar que nos conocieran siguiendo las tradiciones del “approach” etnográfico. Sin muchas hipótesis ni presupuestos teóricos, aceptamos unánimemente nuestra ignorancia y el carácter específico del proceso.

Los lugares del intercambio pronto fueron apareciendo:

a) los centros de detención a los que los miembros del equipo de investigación acudíamos, muchas veces a solicitud de los mismos jóvenes o de sus familias, con el objeto de obtener su libertad. Los encuentros en este contexto fueron de vital importancia para garantizar otros “lugares de presentación”.

b) Las sesiones de videofilm con películas casi siempre seleccionadas por los jóvenes. Durante la transmisión y al término de ella se desataba un diálogo colectivo o interpersonal que ofreció mucho del material que aquí presentamos.

c) los “entrenamientos deportivos” bien recibidos por nuestros invitados, dieron pie a intercambios informales y comentarios fructíferos sobre el cuerpo, el sexo y la familia.

d) los paseos a la playa constituyeron días enteros en donde el encuentro rompía las barreras de la desconfianza. El grupo de
jóvenes se fue transformando paulatinamente en un grupo de amigos.

e) Los encuentros informales que fueron creciendo en número e intensidad. El teléfono de la institución era también teléfono de los muchachos, la sala de juntas del edificio era también su lugar de reunión, los patios del Centro: sitio para verse con los amigos.

f) El conflicto. El uso de drogas, el robo, la destrucción de objetos y las agresiones aparecieron conjuntamente con la confianza y la intensidad del encuentro. La institución jugaba un doble papel contradictorio. Por un lado, protectora y refugio de los “locos del barrio”; por otra, cómplice de sus “infracciones a la ley”. Los conflictos así generados constituieron otro lugar de presentación que enriqueció el material que veníamos recogiendo en fichas y diarios de campo.

La primera y más inmediata presentación la compone, lo que llamariamos, el perfil del grupo: el promedio de edad de estos jóvenes es de 17 años fluctuando entre los 14 y los 21. Hijos, en su mayoría, de padres consumidores de alcohol que trabajan en los sectores subordinados de la economía matamorense (construcción, autoempleo, artesanado, pequeño comercio, etc.), estos muchachos trabajan intermitentemente como trabajadores de la construcción, meseros, pintores, etc. Todos ellos han estado detenidos y han tenido, en múltiples ocasiones, problemas con la policía de uno y otro lado de la frontera. Los motivos casi siempre son los mismos: robo o consumo de drogas. De hecho, robar en el “otro lado” es para más de la mitad del grupo un modus vivendi aceptable cuyas consecuencias no provocan en ellos ninguna angustia.

Todos usan drogas. El uso de marihuana, thiner o spray es parte sustantiva del grupo, es emblema o totem de grupo. La presentación de un nuevo miembro en las reuniones siempre va acompañada de esta aclaración: “éste también le pone”.

El material recogido en todos esos lugares de presentación fue dividido, para su análisis, de la manera que sigue: simbología del grupo, droga y delito, organización interna y valores propios, familia y matrimonio. Cada uno de estos campos de análisis dió lugar a las secciones que forman el cuerpo del presente trabajo.

Modos de Ostentar una Identidad: cuerpo y lenguaje.

El primer dato, dato ostentado por cada uno de los miembros del grupo de jóvenes de Matamoros, es el símbolo corporal: indumentaria, tatuaje, peinado, manera de sentarse, aire al caminar,
gesto, mirada, modo de fumar, objetos ornamentales, sonrisa. Cada uno de estos símbolos no sólo los delata como usadores de droga y habitantes de centros de detención en Brownsville y Matamoros, no sólo los identifica entre ellos, no sólo expresa una incipiente forma cultural, sino que además los define biográficamente ante sí mismos, los hace evidentes ante sí mismos.

“Molacho me preguntó: ¿por qué estás tan triste? si te quiere volverá. Yo me sonréi y le dije: ojalá. El me contestó con una anécdota: cuando yo andaba de novio con mi chapete (novia) nos enojábamos y ¿sabes lo que hacía?, pasaba por su casa disfrazado. ¿Cómo disfrazado? le pregunte. Pos con pantalón de mezclilla, guayabera, lentes y un sombrero bien de aquellos, no me reconocía; yo me retrate y cuando le enseñé las fotos me dijo: ¿eres tú? y le daba un beso de aquellos”.

Una identidad asignada socialmente engendra una simbología corporal específica. Abandonar esta simbología es disfrazarse, disponerse a no ser reconocido, engañar a los otros y engañarse a sí mismo. Se es “loco” en el interior y en el exterior. Exteriorizar esta identidad es una práctica indispensable para que la identidad no se disuelva. Ser mexicano al lado de los “bolillos,” “malilla” al lado de los policías mexicanos y norteamericanos, pobre al lado de las clases medias urbanas, “chavo” al lado de los adultos y “pomero” al lado de los “peidos” (muchachos buenos) conduce, al menos, a crear una simbología cuyo objeto de ornamentación más inmediato es el cuerpo, como lo fue de hecho en la génesis del arte: “L’objet d’ornemant le plus immédiatement donée, c’est le corps humain; peinture temporaire et tatouages permanents sont les types principaux de ce mode d’ornamentation” (M. Mauss 1969 p. 199).

Sus cuerpos recibirán la huella del personaje que habrán de jugar en este teatro fronterizo. La máscara se construye de la indumentaria, el lenguaje, la ornamentación corporal, el tatuaje y, sin duda alguna, el nombre.

A los muchachos se les identifica y se identifican primero por la indumentaria. En la cabeza un pañuelo negro o una cachucha, en el tronco la camisa abierta o una camiseta con letreros en inglés o también con calcomanías; hay quienes prefieren las camisetas a mitad del tronco; los pantalones a la pachuco en ciertas ocasiones o bien los pantalones cortos a 3/4 de la pierna —pantalones que ellos mismo cortan—; zapatos tenis, blancos o rojos o también zapatos de charol al estilo cholo: puntiagudos, negros y en ocasiones con adornos. Indumentaria distintiva que les permite ser reconocidos y reconocerse a sí mismos. Son los “locos” del barrio; identificación que puede hacer cualquier vecino, los habitantes de la ciudad, los empleados de instituciones de salud o de educación y sobre todo la policía de Brownsville y de Matamoros.
La indumentaria no es un código nuevo, sino un signo de pertenencia y de diferencia. Ser “loco” es vestirse así. La función esencial —razón de ser— de este ropaje es la diferenciación de una posición en el conjunto de coordenadas que atraviesan la sociedad fronteriza (el río no es más que una de ellas). Conviene evitar confusiones. No se trata de un desafío simbólico a la manera de los pachucos (según análisis ya clásico de O. Paz 1950), ni una moda cultural al estilo de los punks, ni tampoco la expresión organizada de una protesta en los términos del hippismo, ni mucho menos un lenguaje grupal sedimentado del tipo chaquetín blanco del médico, capucha de los KKK o hábito de los monjes. Es simple y sencillamente un modo de presentar una identidad, de diferenciarse, es una necesidad impuesta e internalizada de aparecer como lo que en realidad uno es.

El lenguaje cumple ya otra tarea; no sólo es marca de diferencias, sino también cumple una función nómica: nombrar nuestro mundo “nous,” el propio, el que nos hace ser lo que somos.

Conversaciones periódicas con ellos dan un diccionario no mayor de treinta términos. Muchos de ellos tomados en préstamo de una jerga popular ya casi nacional: jefa—madre, nel—no, quemar—fumar, pisto—borracho, madrina—soplón, puro pedo—mentira, churro—toque—droga, azules—policías, cáscara—partido de fútbol, bañado—abusivo, cantón—casa, grifo—drogado, culero—miedoso, camarada—miembro del grupo o amigo, etc. Pocos términos son tomados del inglés y castellanizados: waino—borracho, bironga—cerveza, baica—bicicleta. Y habría algunos más que ilustran un esfuerzo fronterizo por crear un lenguaje subcultural y drogo, esfuerzo que no necesariamente lo hacen estos grupos de Matamoros sino que, hoy día, probablemente se encuentra en jóvenes y adolescentes más organizados de otras partes de la frontera: chapete—novia, peido—sangrón/rajón/salido, jambo—ratero, chihuahueño—chaparro, camellar—trabajar, becerro—güey, tiral o león—no hacerle caso, lampareando—viendo, sinche—salvadoreño, patear—robar, bolillo—gringo, cato—golpe, etc.

No hay un caló en el sentido lingüístico del término (sublenguaje, dialecto), hay más bien términos diferenciadores y, en consecuencia, identificadores que hacen las mismas funciones que el paliacate rojo o los zapatos de charol. Pero además, el lenguaje nombra las zonas más específicamente distintivas: drogadicción, delito, policía, pandilla, complicidad, fidelidad, sexualidad, menosprecio al trabajo. Se han creado términos exclusivos para designar las experiencias exclusivas: drogarse, robar, pertenecer a una pandilla. Resultado de una mecánica de distanciamiento de la
que resulta un código común. Distinción necesaria para la existencia de una identidad social.

La decoración corporal, por su variedad y su estructura, pareciera ya no sólo ser signo diferenciador sino verdadera ostentación. Este proceso mediante el cual se llega a ostentar visualmente la identidad asumida y asignada es un acto de creación: “el personaje que esta sociedad fronteriza me impuso no sólo no me avergüenza sino que lo enriquece, lo exhibo, lo adorno”. La decoración es la recreación de esta identidad fronteriza.

Collares al cuello, cruces de hilo, anillos de oro, aretes brillantes, pañuelas en la muñeca, cadenas de fierro en la cadera, cadenas de plástico, botones amarillos colgando al cuello, pañuelos con la bandera mexicana, cruces de alambre. Decoración que beatifica un destino que es condena, el destino del joven fronterizo de clases populares; cadenas que encadenan, cruces que crucifican, lentes que esconden el rostro, aretes que se hunden en la piel de la manera de los botones en la ropa. Ya no sólo los “shorts” o las camisetas abiertas, es ya una decoración particular pensada para el grupo y para sí mismo, reflejo de una identidad asignada que incluye la conciencia o semiconciencia de no solamente el querer ser diferentes sino de querer serlo ostensiblemente.

Los tatuajes perennes son marcas como las marcas que traen sus rostros, sus piernas y sus espaldas producto de la violencia que han recibido en pleitos callejeros, en intentos de hurto en Brownsville, en sus encuentros con la policía o en sus tentativas exitosas o fracasadas de pasar al “otro lado” de mojados. Los tatuajes son símbolos como el lenguaje o la vestimenta o la decoración del cuerpo; los tatuajes significan. Los tatuajes son manifestaciones de una nueva identidad sobre todo si están hechos para ser vistos por otros; por eso están en los brazos, en la muñeca, y en los chamorros preferentemente, pero también en el cuello, en los hombros, en la mano, en el pecho, en la rodilla. Rara vez en la espalda o en los muslos. El tatuaje es la indicación etnográfica más evidente de la ostentación, no sólo de una identidad, sino de una identidad desacreditada:

“tengo una flor, aquí una mariposa, mira acá tengo a mi novia (indicando el chamorro), tengo también la panocha (órgano femenino) de mi novia —carcajada— aquí tengo un hongo en la espalda y sólo tardaron una hora en hacerlo.”

El tatuaje es estigma, porque es muestra indeleble, dolorosa y corporal de que se es un “loco,” es decir, fronterizo—pobre—joven—mojado—drogadicto—delincuente. Es el estigma social en la
piel. En su conjunto, los tatuajes constituyen un mapa en el que se ven dibujadas las piezas centrales de esta identidad desacreditada:

- la araña y su red: líneas a la manera de arañazos, telaranes con una araña al centro;
- el corazón y sus afectos: corazones, corazones partidos por la mitad, corazones cruzados por flechas, bocas en forma de corazón, la palabra "love";
- la cruz: cruces por medio de puntos, cruces colgadas de una cadena;
- rostros: de cantantes, de indios, de indias, de diablos, de la Virgen de Guadalupe;
- siglas y palabras: nombres de una mujer, nombre o siglas de su madre, las siglas de su nombre, los del nombre de la novia;
- otros animales: pájaros, mariposas, palomas, pavo reales, chuparrosas;
- vegetales: las rosas, el hongo, las hojas entrelazadas;
- objetos: puñales, anclas;
- el futuro: la rueda de la fortuna, estrellas;
- sexo: la "panocha" de la novia.

Estos cuerpos están marcados por temáticas comunes, experiencias comunes, biografías comunes; no hay, en este mapa, criptografía alguna, sino un código transparente: la cruz del crucificado en vida; las siglas de una madre primer y último refugio; la guadalupana o el rostro de la india como señal del orgullo étnico, cultural y de clase social así como la estrella, la rueda de la fortuna, los rostros diabólicos y la red de la araña signos de un destino popular y fronterizo. Pero también hay corazones flechados y partidos, el sexo de la novia, la rosa o el pavo real, algo así como el deseo incalculable de encontrar algo que no sea digno de desprecio. Y, desde luego, el hongo y la hierba, totem del grupo, lo único verdaderamente distintivo, lo que los hace ser definitivamente "locos": la droga.

El tatuaje precisamente por ser marca y mapa es fetiche, dibujo que permite manipular el futuro probable:

"El tatuaje que traigo me lo puse porque es de buena suerte por eso nunca me agarrar la chota".

Todo sucede como si la ostentación de su propia identidad, en su propio cuerpo, hiciera que estos muchachos se garantizaran un control sobre su propio destino; el tatuaje asegura continuidad biográfica.

Los apodos impuestos por la pandilla muestran que el joven accede a una nueva identidad, su verdadera identidad que comparte con un grupo que la otorga y alimenta. No se posee identidad deteriorada, ni se tendría la capacidad de ostentarla sin la existencia
de un grupo que les permite reconocerla. Eres el Bizco, el Lupe, el Min, el Fifi, el Caballo, el Maquinista, el John Caserolasa, el Vale, el Mono, el Puya, el Negro, el Apache, el Pingua, la Pioja, el Busga, el Diablo, el Vico, el Matón, el Pelón, el 9aca 9aca, el Molacho, el Chato, el Memo, el Robatanques, el Cobra, el Galga, el Ecoloco, el Chapulín, el Resortes, el Chichoche, la Lombriz, el Lobo, el Cumbres, el Peraloca, el Índio, la Muñeca o el Tino o el Lobo. Eso eres, para el grupo y para ti mismo; eso eres antes que Marcos, Antonio o Fermín. Esa es la razón por la que te vistes así, te tatúas o te cuelgas una cadena. El grupo te bautiza no tanto porque te ofrezca una nueva identidad sino porque te permite aceptar, reconocer y manifestar la que ya tienes: la de ser un "loco".

**La Identidad Oprobiosa: droga y delito.**

‘‘La droga le cambia a uno el pensamiento, dejas la escuela y te haces malilla,’’ dijo el primero. El segundo añadió: ‘‘le pongo porque no me llevo bien con mis jefes’’. Pero el tercero hizo la sinopsis: ‘‘no hay que echarle la culpa a los jefes, la culpa es de uno, nosotros le hacemos (inalamos) porque nos gusta andar de cabrones’’.

Estas breves referencias a la droga anotan elementos fundamentales de la arquitectura de esta identidad: ruptura con las instituciones socializadoras (familia y escuela), culpa-vergüenza, destino biográfico, grupo de referencia y delito—identidad idealizada. Los mismos actores nos ofrecen un programa completo de investigaciones a largo plazo en torno a su identidad entendida como historia personal, es decir, escultura de esta identidad:

‘‘me corrieron de la escuela, yo iba bien, todo por andar en la calle,’’ ‘‘uno le hace acá a la yerba porque nos gusta,’’ ‘‘la raza es lo que lo hace a uno,’’ ‘‘porque me gusta y yo sé que rollo’’; viendo un filme de violencia y narcotráfico: ‘‘¡qué mas puedes pedir: mota, mujeres, reventón pesado!’’.

Los puntos sobresalientes, distintivos, de esta historia, se repiten:

- ruptura con las instituciones morales: ‘‘me corrieron de la escuela’’;
- internalización del estigma: ‘‘te haces malilla’’;
- asunción de la identidad entendida como vocación: ‘‘porque me gusta y yo sé que rollo’’;
• formación de la comunidad de estigmatizados: “la raza lo hace a uno”;
• construcción de una nueva moral acorde a su identidad social asumida colectivamente: “nos gusta andar de cabrones”;
• identidad oprobiosa idealizada: “mota, mujeres, reventón pesado, ¡qué más puedes pedir!”

Esta es la autobiografía de los hijos de migrantes que se asientan en eso que Monsivais llama el resumidero de México o ciudad fronteriza de “este lado”. El “encuentro” de economías, políticas, legislaciones y culturas o este enredoso mundo fronterizo puede ser visto también como campo en el que florecen estas biografías. Así como es caldo de cultivo de contrabandistas, traficantes de droga, de policías corruptos y de indocumentados, así también es tierra fértil para los “locos” del barrio.

Una identidad implica una biografía, un destino. Ser “loco” es primero una cuestión de identidad social, de colocación en la sociedad; se es “loco” al tiempo que se es fronterizo, adolescente, miembro de una familia transformada por la migración, hijo de una obrera de la maquila e hijo de un alcohólico. Ser “loco” es, en segundo lugar, un estigma, la marca colectiva del descrédito de ser mexicano en la frontera, joven y drogadicto. Y se es “loco,” en tercer lugar, porque hay un destino iniciado en la ruptura con las instituciones morales y prefigurado por la droga y el delito. Un personaje desacreditado en un escenario social que hace que las cosas sean así y sigan siendo así. Es como el color de la piel en una sociedad racista: a cada color se le atribuye un lugar, un personaje y una biografía probable:

“The child formulates his racial attitudes from several interrelated social forces, such as his family, his playmates, his neighborhood, his church, his socio-economic status in the community, his school, and the mass media” como afirma Cecilia Cota-Robles en “Skin color as a factor of racial identification...” (1971).

Los muchachos usan droga. Esto los distingue y los define. Saben, sin embargo, que hay jóvenes de su edad y de su clase social que no usan droga. Ellos son los “otros” más próximos. ¿Qué piensan esos muchachos de esos “otros”? ¿Cómo explican esta diferencia? Este es un asunto de primordial importancia para el análisis del estigma porque, lo que piensan de los “otros” más próximos, habla mucho de lo que piensan de sí mismos.

Existen tres ingredientes principales de esta definición de los “otros” más cercanos:
• el primero es la tesis de que todos los muchachos son iguales, de la misma naturaleza, hechos del mismo barro. Por tanto, ellos, los “cementereros,” no son aberraciones de la especie ni nada
que se le parezca; son, como los demás, muchachos, fronterizos y de clases populares;
  • el segundo es una diferencia. Ellos sí expresan, sin tapujos ni remilgos, la verdadera naturaleza del ser jóvenes fronterizos y marginados, ellos lo saben y lo manifiestan, ostentan su marca de descrédito. Los otros, por el contrario, ni lo saben, ni quieren aceptarlo, ni mucho menos expresarlo públicamente: “todos los chavos fuman mota pero unos son peidos y otros no”. Esta afirmación de uno de los jóvenes no es una afirmación epidemiológica, sino sociológica; significa, en el fondo, que todos los que son de su clase y condición, fuman mota, debieron fumar mota o han de fumar mota, es decir, es en ellos y no en los otros (los peidos) en los que está expresada la quintaesencia del ser popular•fronterizojoven, como si en ellos estuviera la “fronteriez” más pura. La pregunta que ellos nos lanzan no es: ¿por qué hay muchachos que son drogadictos? sino: ¿por qué hay muchachos que no lo son?
  • el tercer ingrediente es otra diferencia. Ellos son grupo mientras que los otros no lo son, ellos se conocen y se reconocen mientras que los otros hacen como si no se conocieran ni se reconocieran.

Son “cementeros” y “mariguano” pero también “malillas,” “cabrones,” delincuentes. En este caso, uso de drogas está vinculado a delito. El descrédito se lleva al nivel del oprobio. Ser “loco” implica una manera de ser y también de sobrevivir, un modus vivendi, un estilo de vida, una nueva moral. Los modelos éticos no son ni San Francisco de Asís, ni Eugenio Garza Sada (conocido empresario del norte de México), ni menos el General Zaragoza sino el Cacho (conocido narcotraficante local asesinado por la mafia), Camelia la Texana o Caro Quintero. Desde ahí se entiende esta moral, esta forma de disfrute, estos criterios de distinción y estas prácticas grupales.

El robo es el delito predominante. El robo en Brownsville, desde luego, Y esto por cuatro razones, unas más evidentes que otras. Una: en Brownsville hay muchas más cosas que robar; están a 300 metros de la sociedad—concentración de capital más importante de la historia. Dos: robar en el “otro lado” da prestigio, aumenta el curriculum vitae, los hace dignos de admiración ante el grupo: “en una ocasión acudimos al Centro de Detención para sacar al Charolas. Y por mala pata andaba un periodista en busca de notas rojas. Le dije: ¡callala güey! no saques fotos. Pero el Charolas me contradijo: nombre, déjelo que me saque pa’ que los camaradas me vean en el periódico”. Tres: en caso de caer en manos de la policía norte-americana hay muchas más probabilidades de salir triunfantes: “a los bolillos les picamos los ojos,” “se los periquea uno muy fácil”; estos
jóvenes son expertos constructores de historias que, a su juicio, son dignas de crédito a los oídos de la policía norteamericana. Cuatro: caer en el Juvenile Probation Department es casi un premio: “¿Por qué jodidos no robas mejor en Matamoros?, pregunta la asistente social en tono amable; porque quiero comer y bañarme, responde el muchacho”.

En efecto, ahí habrán de disfrutar de las condiciones de los centros de detención norteamericanos para menores infractores: cuarto propio, limpio, agua caliente, Kentucky Fried Chicken, televisión a colores, videocasetera y cepillo de dientes. Y si no se ven obligados a pasar esas noches de “Holiday Inn” es porque la policía norteamericana los puso a disposición de la patrulla fronteriza la que, por ley, lo único que hace es depositarlos a mitad del puente, es decir, llevarlos de nuevo a su casa.

La Identidad Compartida: el grupo y la moral.

Los muchachos forman un grupo, un grupo “natural,” una comunidad en el sentido sociológico del término. Esta es una característica que comparten con muchos otros tipos de estigmatizados: los ciegos, los paralíticos, las prostitutas, los homosexuales, los judíos. Como toda comunidad de personas que comparten una marca de descrédito deben tener su propia organización, sus propias formas de liderazgo, sus propias reglas, sus propios valores y, sobre todo, su propia manera de relacionarse con los “otros”.

Hay quienes poseen cierta autoridad dentro del grupo, fungen un cierto liderazgo y son dignos de admiración y algo que se parece al respeto. Nunca un solo individuo posee toda la autoridad; el liderazgo no se hace patente mas que en las ocasiones requeridas, ninguno es portavoz plenipotenciario del grupo. Hay liderazgo en unos para ciertas actividades y en otros para otro tipo de actividades.

Ahora bien, si en el seno de esta comunidad la autoridad es algo fluido en su funcionamiento, el camino para adquirirla depende de criterios muy rígidos y definidos. Se es líder cuando se tiene alguna de estas capacidades: poseer droga y repartirla, pasar la frontera y tener conocimiento de los métodos para hacerlo sin ser detenido o haber probado su aptitud para realizar delitos cada vez más riesgosos.

Hay ciertas condiciones que facilitan la adquisición de autoridad en el seno del grupo, por ejemplo la edad, poseer un vehículo, tener la ciudadanía norteamericana o papeles para residir en Estados Unidos o ser físicamente más hábil.
Las decisiones, los acuerdos, nunca se toman por la vía parlamentaria aunque muchos no dejan de expresar su parecer. La decisión la toma uno de los líderes y debe de acatarse por el resto del grupo. Esto da lugar a resentimientos callados y pacientes, en espera de la hora de que las cosas cambien. Reglas grupales y órdenes de uno de los líderes, son la misma cosa. No hay, por tanto, normas definidas válidas para todos ni legitimadas por algo así como el honor. El líder mismo que establece una disposición se puede dar el lujo de romperla o cambiarla.

Las normas tienen consecuentemente una validez temporal y su objeto debe ser explícito y útil. Como toda regla con fundamento utilitario su aplicación está limitada temporal y espacialmente. Las normas no son propuestas y asumidas autógenamente, sino que deben ser impuestas y explicadas en términos pragmáticos. El funcionamiento de éstas debe ser claro, principalmente lo que se refiere a la relación entre infracción a la regla y el castigo merecido.

Al interior del grupo se dan relaciones eminentemente lúdicas y ociosas, conversaciones en donde los límites entre lo serio y lo frívolo, lo verdadero y lo fantástico, lo importante y lo banal nunca se establecen (una especie de carnavalismo); intercambios personales, sin otro objeto que la recreación y el gusto de estar juntos; mensajes que el mismo que los emite los desacredita burlonamente; actividades que no requieren la m s mínima organización.

Los valores del grupo se entienden mejor si empezamos por enumerar aquellos valores socialmente dominantes que son menospreciados por la nueva moral de estos muchachos. El trabajo es uno de los que reciben la más alta dosis de desprecio; el trabajo por sí mismo es un absurdo y una desgracia, si se puede sobrevivir sin “camellar” los muchachos lo hacen, éste es un ideal en la mente de muchos de ellos. Puesto que el “camello” que ellos realizan es actividad de sobre—explotados, es difícil que lo eleven a categoría de valor. Además, los paradigmas de su padre albañil o su madre obrera de maquiladora les dan en mucho la razón.

La seriedad y la sinceridad no solamente no son valores, son defectos y hasta vicios; su experiencia vital les enseña que quien toma en serio las cosas y las personas, como quien dice la verdad o expresa lo que piensa, sólo recibe golpes y castigos; el engaño y la frivolidad redituan, son rentables a corto plazo y éste es el plazo que realmente cuenta en su vida. Así nos explicamos mejor la opinión que tienen de la legislación y la policía texanas: “se los hace uno güeyes muy fácil”. La palabra de honor no forma parte de su mundo, lo mismo sucede con la urbanidad, el patriotismo, el respeto a los demás y la entereza; esos valores son inimaginables en su propio andamiaje ético; son lujos de clase media, diríamos nosotros.
Todo parecería indicar que no respetan nada, que estos muchachos son el mismo demonio. Pero no es así. En ellos encontramos tres valores que rompen el comportamiento lúdico, ocioso y frívolo del grupo: la solidaridad, la complicidad y el destino común. La muerte, la enfermedad o la detención de alguno de ellos provoca de inmediato la irrupción de estos valores. Solidarios porque comparten la suerte de aquel que las pasa mal; cómplices porque el delito de uno es de alguna manera el delito de todos y sobre todo la vocación colectiva de estigmatizados, el grupo como tal. El grupo es sagrado, en él han puesto los fundamentos de su identidad. Algunos relatos de los observadores ilustran estos valores:

“Cuando Morocho se transtornó con la tomada los muchachos que están con él lo ayudaron a pesar de que Morocho los había golpeado,” “el día anterior a esta reunión, detuvieron a dos de los miembros del grupo, fueron cuatro o cinco muchachos a pedirle a la trabajadora social para que fuera a verlos y que los sacara porque fueron detenidos, al parecer, sin motivo alguno,” “entre ellos se pueden atacar verbalmente pero si esto lo hace alguien ajeno al grupo, inmediatamente salen todos a su defensa,” “hace poco desbarataron la casa de la mamá de un chavo que mató a palos a un miembro del grupo”.

Estos valores son los que engendra este personaje, este escenario y este destino común.

La Identidad Cínica: familia y matrimonio

“Rizco dijo que no reconoció a su mamá y que le tiró una patada pero que no le dió porque la señora se movió. El no se acordaba, su familia le platicó al día siguiente: fíjate lo loco que me puse que ni a mi jefecita la conocí, chingado, ahora me da vergüenza con la gente que se dió cuenta. Todo esto sucedió porque Rizco se puso a tomar cajita. El dice que se la tomó como agua”; “A tu hermana se la robaron dijo Folo, y Neto le contestó, ¿por qué no te la robaste tú güey?, ahora espera que crezca la otra. Esto lo comentaron mientras se pasaba una película donde se estaba casando una pareja”;

“Mero está muy apenado porque por borracho le quería pegar a su mamá”;

“Minga dice que no le pide nada a su esposa de lo que gana en la fábrica y dice: yo estaré sin dinero y sin trabajo pero no le pido, para eso tengo a mi jefecita”;
“Me platicó Eco que él y su chava con frecuencia pelean por chingaderas, y que ella trata de golpearlo pero él se saca, que ella le reclama porque no va con frecuencia a la casa”;

“Lupita (un miembro del equipo de investigación), ¿No quieres casarte conmigo? le dijo Per, Andale para que me arregles los papeles y me hagas ciudadano. Fíjate que yo ya era ciudadano cuando le metí unos putazos a mi ruca y me echó la ley y la mandé a la fregada”;

“tengo que buscar un jale, pero cuando me case me voy a hacer pasar por loco para que me mantengan, me platicó Angel”;

“cuando llegó Elvis vi que se levantó los pantalones y me dijo: ¿no te gustan mis calcetas?, yo le dije: ¿dónde las compraste?, y me respondió: se las quitó a mi ruca, como se quedó dormida, aproveché”.

Podríamos seguir esta fila de observaciones pero las conclusiones serían exactamente las mismas:

• la facilidad con la que se habla de la madre, la novia, la hermana y la esposa;
• las dificultades para expresarse del padre, del hermano, de los hijos;
• la frivolidad en el tratamiento de temas como el noviazgo y el matrimonio;
• la violencia como parte integrante de las relaciones matrimoniales y familiares;
• el recurso a la madre como refugio seguro;
• los cuadros familiares o matrimoniales tan conflictivos que son pintados por los relatos de los jóvenes;
• la independencia afectiva y económica respecto a las esposas o novias de los jóvenes;
• el uso utilitarista y pragmático que se hace de la pareja;
• la aparente ausencia de normas en relación a la sexualidad y el amor;
• la jactancia que se muestra al referirse a la capacidad de enamorar o engañar mujeres.

Otras lecturas habrán de hacerse a partir de estas observaciones. En nuestro trabajo, este es un material que añade un elemento nuevo y extremadamente valioso para la mejor descripción, comprensión y explicación de la identidad social deteriorada característica de estos jóvenes. Nos referimos al cinismo. No el cinismo en el sentido moral, sino en términos preciso y unívocos (casi filosóficos), no actitud desvergonzada y concientemente retadora sino sobre todo jactancia de poseer una posición impudente y sacrílega ante las cosas socialmente reconocidas como más sagradas (intocables). No es, lo decimos para evitar confusiones,
una postura organizadamente iconoclasta o, en su defecto, el
embrón de una posible contracultura a la manera del hippismo, del
feminismo o, quizás, del cholismo. En la actitud que estamos
describiendo, no hay nada que se le parezca a estos movimientos
socio-culturales. Lo que encontramos es rigurosamente la
ostentación cínica de un estigma en el sentido más puro de la
expresión de que no “respetan ni a su madre”. Se trata, pues, de un
modo de enfrentar la vida.

Se podría objetar que esas afirmaciones no son más que
fingida presunción de los muchachos, que en realidad no le dan
patadas a su madre y sienten vergüenza (no culpa) ante los vecinos y
no ante la madre, que no le roban efectivamente los calcetines a la
novie mientras duerme, ni tampoco le dan sus “putazos” a la esposa
que les dió la posibilidad de residir en EUA. Estas no serían, desde
esta perspectiva, mas que puras fantasías de los jóvenes. Nosotros
creemos que la objeción no modifica en nada las conclusiones del
análisis. Sean reales o ficticias estas prácticas (en algunos casos hay
evidencias de que son reales, dicho sea de paso), la ostentación
cínica del estigma social queda en pie, su presunción de ser unos
verdaderos “malillas” y su actitud sacrílega frente a la maternidad, la
familia y el matrimonio es una certeza. Lo importante aquí es hacer
notar que la ostentación se eleva a niveles del cinismo cuando se
trata de objetos tan sagrados para una sociedad como la mexicana.

A falta de una clase social en sentido estricto (¿quién podría
hablar de clase ante estos millares de migrantes mexicanos de origen
rural que arriban a las ciudades fronterizas?), nuestros “locos del
barrio” no están traicionando ninguna tradición, no están obligados a
mediar entre un origen y un presente. De igual forma, en ellos no
hay nada de absurdo (¿quién hablaría de absurdidad delictiva en
muchachos mexicanos que viven a 500 metros de Texas?). Nuestro
muchachos no son vándalos en el hoyo negro de la vida, presas de
una rabia irracional. Ellos son simplemente cínicos, como cínicos es
el río, cínica es la distribución de los beneficios en Matamoros,
cínicas son las legislaciones internacionales, cínica es la policía, el
mundo de los adultos y el mundo de la explotación laboral y de las
diferencias de ingreso. Cínicos, insistimos, en el sentido casi
filosófico: jactancia de despreciar las reglas sociales dominantes que,
por cierto, nadie, en la frontera, parece tener mucho interés en
respetar. Y si acaso en su paso por la vida, estos jóvenes,
encuentran alguien que las aprecie y respete—como es el caso de los
policías de Brownsville—ese no es mas que un “pobre güey”. 
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ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: THE TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVE

Pamela McCurdy*

Resumen

Esta investigación refleja la percepción de una maestra que enseña Inglés como segunda lengua. (ESL). Un cuestionario abierto fue dado a 94 maestros del Sur de Texas para que pudieran obtener su certificado en ESL. Un análisis de sus respuestas fue dado a conocer: 1) en algunas de las respuestas dijeron que tenían que obtener certificado, pero por razones intrínsecas algunos se percataron de que los cursos les ayudaban en su educación, mientras que otros que se habían matriculado en el programa sentían que era de poco valor para ellos. 2) La mayoría de las respuestas fueron que se reconocía la necesidad de utilizar el contenido académico como un contexto para enseñar ESL y para motivar a los que aprendían a continuar demostrando su habilidad en inglés, 3) los que respondieron percibieron su rol en la clase ESL tanto en términos humanos como motivadores o en términos más tradicionales como maestros de lengua y cultura. 4) que los estudiantes de ESL se diferenciaban por su limitada habilidad en inglés (LEP), motivación en los estudiantes, habilidad, actitudes y su manera de ser, 5) que los estudiantes de ESL pero no los de LEP, mejoran su aprendizaje en los salones de clase y 6) los que respondieron experimentaban considerables frustaciones cuando ellos trataban de trabajar con estudiantes ESL\LEP. Es recomendado que los programas de ESL para los maestros de educación den mayor enfoque al rol de las percepciones y presunciones y su impacto potencial en el ESL\LEP para estudiantes y trabajar para sensibilizar a los administradores en la importancia de una abierta y positiva actitud del maestro, así como seleccionar a maestros para trabajar con estos estudiantes.

Se ha proyectado que para el año 2000 habrá un exceso de 3.4 millones de estudiantes de inglés (LEP) de edades entre los 5 y 14 años en el sistema de las escuelas públicas de los Estados Unidos (qtd. en McKeon 1). Esta población está compuesta de recientes imigrantes que no hablan bien el inglés, o no lo hablan del todo y de aquellos que han vivido en los Estados Unidos toda su vida pero
que por numerosas razones no hablan bien el inglés. Los valores y prioridades de ambos grupos de estudiantes frecuentemente reflejan su cultura nativa. Con la falta del buen inglés estos estudiantes se imposibilitan para el éxito de su carrera, cuando se les pone un currículum en inglés.

En un intento de obtener las necesidades académicas para esta creciente población, para 1987, 33 estados y el Distrito de Colombia obtuvieron certificación mandatoria o aprobación para aquellos que deseen enseñar el inglés como segunda lengua (ESL), (Krudler 1). En Texas, como en la mayoría de otros estados, los gobernantes pueden aprobar en lugar de certificar. Esto significa que el estado no reconoce ESL como un campo de estudio. En orden de calificar maestros para obtener un certificado en ESL. Aquellos que estaban enseñando ESL antes de la autorización del estado, fueron elegibles para el endorso ESL bajo un “grandfather clause”. Hay mucha presión para los maestros en obtener el certificado de ESL, deseen o no enseñar ESL.

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It has been projected that by the year 2000 there will be in excess of 3.4 million limited English proficient (LEP) students aged 5-14 in the public school system of the United States (qtd. in McKeon 1). This population is made up of recent immigrants who have little or no fluency in English and those who have resided in the U.S. for most or all of their lives but for numerous reasons lack full proficiency in English. In addition, the priorities and values of both groups of students frequently continue to reflect their native culture. Lacking the necessary skills in English these students are precluded from academic success when placed in an all-English curriculum.

In an attempt to meet the educational needs of this increasing student population, 33 states and the District of Columbia had, by 1987, mandated certification or endorsement for those who teach English as a second language (ESL) (Kreidler 1). In Texas, as in...
the majority of the other states, the mandates are in the form of endorsement rather than certification. This means that the state does not recognize ESL as a teaching field in and of itself. In order to qualify for endorsement in ESL a teacher must first hold certification in another teaching field. Those who were teaching ESL prior to their state's mandate, whether they had the expertise or not, were eligible for the ESL endorsement under a "grandfather clause". Additionally, because the population of ESL/LEP students is growing so rapidly, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, many school districts have begun to place considerable pressure on their teachers to obtain ESL endorsement, regardless of their interest in teaching ESL. Together, these factors underlie one of the most serious problems in the teaching profession, i.e., teachers' negative attitudes toward and erroneous assumptions about teaching ESL.

Teachers are no different from the rest of society when it comes to cultural bias and linguistic stereotyping; however, these perceptions and beliefs take on crucial significance in the teaching-learning process for the ESL/LEP student because they become the basis for judgments of academic achievement and potential (Edwards 27-30). Such factors as the presence of nonstandard linguistic features in a child's language system and the degree to which that system is influenced by another language can become the basis for judgments of a student's capabilities (Christian 1). The greater the degree of influence and the number of nonstandard features, the less favorably that language system is viewed. Ramirez and Milk (500-506) and Ford (33-35) substantiate the extent to which teachers make judgments of capability based on linguistic characteristics in the speech of their students. Teachers in both studies rated Hispanic students who spoke Spanish-influenced English as lower in intelligence, confidence, ambition, pleasantness, and relative quality as students than they rated students who spoke Standard English. The Hispanic student has further been viewed by teachers as being a disruptive influence in the classroom because of a lack of appreciation for education, a general tendency toward laziness, and a restrictive home life which causes students to "go wild" at school (Penfield 31).

Often little training is provided for teachers in how to integrate the ESL/LEP student into a classroom of native speakers of
English; thus, it is not unreasonable to expect expressions of resentment, frustration, and a general unwillingness to deal with the added burden of having these students in the classrooms. These feelings emerge, often subtly, when the types and number of teacher-student interactions are studied. Jackson and Cosca (qtd. in DeAvila and Duncan 113-114) noted that teachers had significantly fewer interactions with their Hispanic students than with their Anglo students and that these interactions conveyed more negative feedback and much less praise.

While research in the field of ESL has recently begun to demonstrate the effects of teachers' attitudes on the second language learning process, it is important to determine how pervasive these negative attitudes of the ESL/LEP student are and what their implications for teacher education programs might be. The survey described below examined the perceptions of teachers seeking ESL endorsement through the program at The University of Texas-Pan American, a university located in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas where the majority population is Hispanic and where, often, as many as 90% of the students in the public schools are classified as ESL/LEP.

Method

Design:

The database used to infer the teachers' perspective was descriptive in nature and consisted of their responses to a questionnaire of nineteen, primarily open-ended, questions (see Appendix). The responses were classified into the following four categories based on the topic of the response rather than on the actual question: (1) motivation for obtaining ESL endorsement and perception of the value of the endorsement program, (2) the most effective instructional setting for the ESL/LEP student, (3) role of the ESL teacher in the classroom, and (4) the teachers' attitudes and assumptions of the ESL/LEP student. A detailed analysis of the content of the responses revealed a variety of different perspectives within each of the categories and provide a realistic view of the challenges faced by the teacher who works with the ESL/LEP student in the public school setting in the Rio Grande Valley region.
Respondents:

The questionnaire was distributed to 127 public school teachers enrolled during the summer and fall of 1989 in courses in descriptive linguistics or psycholinguistics, two of the four courses in UT-Pan American's ESL endorsement program. The content of the courses in the program meets the TESOL guidelines for teacher education in ESL (Norris 340-342). All of the respondents had previously taken at least one of the required courses. The questionnaires were distributed during the second class period, completed at home, and returned to the investigator the following class period. Insufficiently completed questionnaires were eliminated, leaving 94 questionnaires to serve as the data base for analysis.

Seventy-four (78.7%) of the respondents identified themselves ethnically as Anglo; the majority (81.1%) were born and educated in the Midwestern United States where the population of ESL/LEP students is much smaller than in South Texas. The remaining 21.3% of the respondents identified themselves ethnically as Hispanic, born and educated in Texas; 14.9% of these were native to the Rio Grande Valley.

Seventeen (18.1%) of the teachers listed Spanish as their native language and indicated that they had learned English as a second language when they began studying in the public school system; all considered themselves equally fluent in both Spanish and English and used both languages in interactions with their family, friends, students, students' parents, and other teachers. The remaining 81.9% (n = 77) of the respondents listed English as their native language. Although none of these teachers considered themselves fluent in another language, 39.4% (n = 37) of them indicated they had proficiency at a survival level in Spanish. The only situation in which they attempted to use Spanish, however, was when talking with their students' parents, although many indicated they used a translator in these situations to ensure understanding.

The respondents represented five urban and four rural school districts in Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron Counties in South Texas. Eighty-three (88.3%) of the teachers taught in grades K-8 and the remaining 11 in grades 9 through 12. Eight (8.5%) taught ESL on a full time basis; all other respondents had LEP students in their classes. The mean number of years teaching experience for the
94 respondents was 5.59 (range = 24 years to 6 months). Slightly less than two-thirds (60.6%; n = 57) of the respondents had been teaching for fewer than 3 years and, for these, the teaching position they held at the time of the study represented their first one after graduation with their teaching certificate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Motivation for Obtaining ESL Endorsement:

The responses to Question 15, which asked the teachers to indicate why they were obtaining the endorsement in ESL, were separated into two categories based on whether the reasons they gave were intrinsic or extrinsic. (See Table 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to teach ESL students</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascination with language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future career opportunities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district requirement</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than half of the respondents indicated their motivation for obtaining ESL endorsement was intrinsic. Twenty-seven (28.7%) of the teachers expressed the desire to more effectively meet the needs of their students or the belief that teaching language minority students is challenging and rewarding. The following comments are representative of those citing intrinsic reasons: "I want to understand why my students are having difficulties in English and what I can do to help them overcome these difficulties," "Working with students who are not fluent in English is much more exciting than working with native speakers because I can actually see language growth," and "There is a lack of knowledgeable and effective ESL teachers; the kids need guidance—well-informed
guidance—and I want to be able to offer them that.” Ten of the respondents in this category indicated that because English was their second language, the primary reason they were earning the endorsement stemmed from feelings of empathy with their students and the problems encountered in developing the ability to communicate in English. The remaining intrinsically motivated respondents (n = 3, 3.2%) indicated that they were obtaining endorsement because of their fascination with language and language teaching: “I love language and I think I can inspire my students to want to learn more about English as well as about language in general.”

Questions 17, 18, and 19 elicited the respondent's perception of the value of the course content in the endorsement program. In conjunction with these respondents' intrinsic motivation to earn endorsement, and probably in large part because of it, the comments they made regarding the coursework were quite positive. All believed that they were gaining considerable value from their training; they indicated that they were acquiring a deeper appreciation of language and of the task facing their students in acquiring proficiency in English as well as the teacher's responsibility in this acquisition process. In addition, the content of the courses, they noted, was providing them with (1) a more holistic view of second language learners, (2) the theoretical bases underlying the teaching methods used in ESL, and (3) practical techniques needed to work with the second language learner in the classroom.

The reasons for obtaining ESL endorsement cited by 64 (68%) of the respondents were categorized as extrinsic. Ten of the teachers felt that earning the endorsement would make them more marketable and would be helpful in furthering their career goals because “nowadays an ESL endorsement looks good on an application for a teaching position in any part of the country.”

The remaining 57.4% (n = 54) of the respondents were earning ESL endorsement because their school districts demanded that they do so. A significant number (n = 29) of the comments had a common thread: if they did not earn ESL endorsement within two years, they would lose their teaching positions. The general attitude toward being required to earn the endorsement was quite negative: “The omnipotent Texas Education Agency demands it.” Several respondents indicated that the two year limit created considerable
hardship for them especially when coupled with their full-time teaching responsibilities. One teacher noted that “While I think it (the endorsement) is a positive idea, as a teacher new to the area there were just too many things to do these first two years—3 ExCETS, 12 credits at the university plus a delivery system in the classroom, new books, new language, new culture, new place to live, etc.” Many of the other respondents indicated that being required to earn the endorsement caused considerable frustration and made them “more hostile toward non-English speakers,” that “it's unethical; no one can force me to learn,” or that “just because the district makes me go through this, it doesn't mean I'll be a good ESL teacher, especially if I don't really want to teach ESL and I don't.”

The source of the negativism in these respondents' comments is understandable; the implications of it, however, are alarming because this attitude is reflected in other areas, particularly in their understanding of the ESL/LEP student and their perception of the value of the endorsement program. In general, these teachers viewed the language minority student as one who has little motivation to learn, who makes little effort to speak English, and who creates disturbances within the classroom by demanding extra attention. Likewise, the respondents found very little of value in the content of the coursework within the endorsement program. Their comments indicated that much of the course material, particularly in those courses designed to provide an understanding of the nature of language and English language systems, was boring, demanding, too theoretical, or not relevant for the students they work with. One teacher stated she had been told by several other teachers that “the courses were hard and that I'd never use them. They were right.” Another commented “I am a second grade teacher. As soon as I get my ESL endorsement I will have a bilingual class and will have to teach in Spanish. I'm getting ESL endorsement not a bilingual endorsement. My Spanish is limited; I certainly don't feel confident enough in Spanish to be able to teach in it. I don't see the correlation between the ESL courses and teaching curriculum in Spanish.”

These respondents expressed little interest in the program content unless it was directly related to some activity or technique that they could implement immediately in their classroom. They
appeared to have little understanding of the difficulty of effectively implementing techniques or evaluating whether the techniques worked with their students if they lacked an understanding of the underlying basis for the technique and what the technique is supposed to accomplish. Unfortunately, these respondents felt they were getting little out of the training program that would allow them to assess their students' needs and/or to develop approaches for meeting those needs; as a result, their comments present a rather bleak picture of the attitudes some teachers take into the classroom with them.

**Instructional Setting for the ESL/LEP Student**

Questions 12 and 13 on the questionnaire provided the basis for determining teachers' views of the type of instructional setting that best suited the ESL/LEP student. Question 12 asked the respondents to indicate which instructional setting they believed most appropriate for students who are non-native speakers of English: ESL classes only, regular classes plus an ESL class, regular classes only, or bilingual education. As can be seen from Table 2, slightly over half of the respondents (53.2%; n = 50) favored placing the language minority student in the regular classroom in addition to an ESL class because this setting allows maximum exposure to English. Most commented that the regular classes allow students to maintain and continue to develop their knowledge of the content areas while the ESL component provides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Setting</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular classes + ESL class</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL classes only</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular classes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on proficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the opportunity to focus intensively on specific aspects of the English language. One of the respondents commented on the importance of the regular classes by stating that she did not feel that "isolating the non-native speaker of English to ESL-only classes provided sufficient motivation; many regard the isolation as safe and then don't work to move out while others view themselves as having problems and needing to go to a 'dummy' class." In addition, several respondents felt that the regular classes help motivate students toward fluency in English by giving them an opportunity to maintain contact with their non-LEP peers. Although most instructional settings are not designed to take advantage of this valuable source of input, research into the second language acquisition process supports the idea that the more successful L2 learners are those who have opportunities to establish and maintain interaction with L2 speaking peers. Wong Fillmore ("Instructional Language as Linguistic Input" 292), Johnson (65-66), and Chesterfield, Barrows Chesterfield, Hayes- Latimer, and Chavez (414-416) noted that the growth in English language proficiency was notable when fluent English speaking peers provided L2 learners with the informal social and linguistic environment they needed to augment the formal L2 learning.

Eighteen (19.1%) of the respondents indicated that the most appropriate educational setting for non-native speakers was intensive classes in ESL only. Two main reasons were cited for this choice; first, ESL provides the language base on which learners are then able to build the rest of their skills; and second, ESL has the most appropriate techniques and activities directly related to teaching those who have language barriers. Many commented on the efficacy of the ESL-only classes: "ESL seems to be the most efficient method of teaching English; it is quicker than bilingual education and more humane than dropping the learner into regular classes." and "The students in my ESL class communicate in English much sooner and more competently than the bilingual education students, with no noticeable difference in knowledge of content areas." None of the teachers who favored ESL-only classes expressed undue concern for the learners' falling behind in the other academic areas. They felt that this instructional setting represented the first phase of their students' education process and should be maintained for a
limited period of time. In the second phase, learners should be placed into "sheltered" classes where the language of the academic content, but not the content itself, is simplified and where ESL teaching methods could still be utilized. The final phase in the process should be full transition into regular classes.

Seventeen of the respondents (18.1%) viewed bilingual education as the most appropriate setting for non-native speakers of English. In general, they believed that using the learner's native language to teach core concepts was necessary for helping students develop cognitively, for providing meaningful input, i.e., the content, as a basis for instruction in the English language, and for helping to make the transition into all-English classes smoother. Several noted that for the ESL/LEP students to develop academically while simultaneously acquiring English placed far too great a burden on their capabilities. Another overriding concern of the respondents who favored this instructional setting was the importance they attached to being bilingual-bicultural. A comment by a kindergarten teacher, though not bilingual herself, summarizes the attitude of these respondents, "non-native speakers of English should never be asked to abandon their first language; it should serve as a basis for learning and should be enriched as much as the second."

Six of the respondents, all of whom felt forced by their school districts to earn ESL endorsement, favored regular classes only for the ESL/LEP student. Their reasoning was that far too much of the learners' first language is used in all of the other instructional settings, thus causing the students to become so dependent on their first language that they never develop sufficient proficiency in English. One teacher stated that she was "...shocked at the number of ESL students who were born in this country and have attended 5 to 7 years in a supposedly English-speaking school. If they want Spanish taught, do it as a language class and work on English for everything else." Each of the respondents who selected the regular classroom only mentioned that ESL/LEP students must be immersed in English and must be forced to communicate and to think in English because they lacked the motivation otherwise. "It worked 40 years ago when non-English speakers were granted no special privileges, so why not now?" another respondent noted.
Only three of the respondents indicated that determining the most appropriate approach for teaching non-native speakers of English was dependent on the students' level of proficiency in English. For those with little or no proficiency, bilingual education was deemed most appropriate because it allows students to develop basic academic skills in their native language. Students with survival skills in English should be placed in ESL-only classes where the focus of instruction is on further development of English language skills. The regular class plus an ESL class was deemed appropriate for students who are “sufficiently proficient in English” to handle the content.

Question 13 asked the respondents when the non-native speaker should be placed solely in the regular classroom. Fifteen (15.9%) of the respondents indicated that they had no idea when this should be done. Seventeen of the teachers (18.1%) set a time limit for ESL instruction stating that after 1 1/2, 2, or 3 years of ESL, the students should be able to survive in the regular classroom without benefit of special instruction in English. Wong Fillmore (“Research Currents: Equity or Excellence?” 476) notes, however, that even under the best of circumstances, it is generally 4 to 6 years before the ESL/LEP student achieves sufficient proficiency in English for full participation in school. Twenty-three (24.5%) felt that certain skills should be achieved before being placed into regular classes, i.e., “when reading at one grade level below the rest of the class,” or somewhat more unreasonably “when they achieve a workable English vocabulary of 500 words,” or “when they have a complete grasp of English grammar.” The remaining 41.5% (n = 39) of the respondents, however, were less specific, stating that ESL/LEP students should be placed in the regular classroom only when they could comprehend and communicate their ideas sufficiently to be active members of the class.

Despite the diversity of opinion as to the type of instructional setting best suited to the needs of the ESL/LEP student, the respondents, in general, did recognize the need for maximizing the opportunities these students have to use English and the importance of using academic content as both a motivator and a meaningful context for teaching English.
Role of the ESL Teacher

Question 14 asked the respondents how they perceived of themselves as ESL teachers. Analysis of the content of their comments indicates that the ESL teacher assumes three primary roles: (1) facilitator/motivator, (2) teacher of language and culture, and (3) a teacher of academic content (see Table 3).

Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Responses on the Primary Role of the ESL Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator/motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of lang. and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of academic content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forty-one (43.6%) respondents saw their role as primarily facilitator/motivator and tended to view themselves and their interactions with their students in humanistic terms. They saw their main responsibility as providing a situation conducive to learning language, a positive and safe but challenging environment where their students are free of ridicule and can reach “their highest potential, and be happy with themselves and their lives” as one respondent put it. These teachers noted that the most effective way of achieving this environment was for them to be “patient, open, caring, motherly cheerleaders.” In addition, one teacher noted that a part of the responsibility of the ESL teacher in the role of facilitator/motivator was to “create pride in the student by inspiring him/her to be proud of being bilingual.” The types of activities these respondents indicated they used to meet the language needs of their ESL/LEP students (Question 9c) imply that their classrooms are very much student-oriented. A wide variety of activities were mentioned with role plays, games, songs, paired and small group work, and whole language and manipulative activities cited most frequently.

Half of all respondents viewed their role in the ESL classroom to be that of language teacher. They saw themselves as
providing the model in English, as monitoring their students' language attempts for errors, and as teaching specific skills or language areas such as word attack and reading skills, grammatical structures, writing skills, and oral communication and vocabulary. All indicated that in addition to teaching language it was their responsibility to "teach some of the values of the 'American Way.'" A second grade teacher commented that "part of my role in the classroom is to be that of ambassador to bridging cultural gaps." Twelve of the teachers in this category reported that the activities they used with their ESL/LEP students did not differ significantly from those they use with native English speaking students and that they relied upon a Spanish-speaking teacher aide to translate when necessary. The remaining respondents reported using traditional language teaching activities, such as oral and written language drills, listening exercises, and reading aloud.

The role of the ESL teacher as seen by six of the respondents is that of content area teacher. Their comments indicated that in addition to increasing their students level of proficiency in English, they were responsible for teaching grade-level subject matter. It was apparent from the responses in this category that academic content was used not as the context for developing language skills but as a separate body of knowledge to be taught in addition to teaching language.

Penfield's study focused on the regular classroom teachers perception of the ESL teacher and found that her respondents placed a particularly heavy burden on the teacher of ESL (34-35). Although their primary responsibility was to teach language, it was equally important for the ESL teacher to reinforce academic content taught by the regular teacher, to advise the regular teacher on relevant materials for the ESL/LEP student and to monitor the students' progress in the regular class. Because of the frustrations expressed by Penfield's respondents toward the ESL teacher and the ESL/LEP student, she notes that one of the primary roles of the ESL teacher may be to serve as a consultant to the regular teacher. Although none of the respondents in the present investigation indicated that they perceived of themselves as advisors/consultants to the regular classroom teachers, it is an aspect of the ESL teachers' role that should receive considerably more focus in ESL training programs.
Ending the isolation of the ESL teacher from the regular teacher by establishing lines of communication which will help them plan for the ESL/LEP students can only improve the effectiveness of the educational process for these students.

The ESL/LEP Student

Questions 10 and 11 focused on the contributions which the ESL/LEP student brings to the classroom and the frustrations the respondents experienced in working with these students. A summary of the categories of comments can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers' Responses on Frustrations and Learner Contributions</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions of ESL/LEP Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural variation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role model for others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contributions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher related factors</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student related factors</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although not specifically elicited by the survey instrument, 58.5% (n = 55) of the respondents commented that they made a distinction between the LEP student and the ESL student. For these teachers, the LEP student is one who was born in the U.S. but whose native language is Spanish. Despite having attended school in this country and having some proficiency in English, LEP students are still not fluent speakers. These students are more often viewed in a negative light, as generally unmotivated and with little potential in the learning situation, uninterested in learning or using English, and incapable of functioning at a higher academic level; in addition, numerous behavioral and attitudinal problems are asso-
associated with the LEP student. The following comments are representative of many respondents' view of the LEP student: "Because they don't speak English, they stand out as illiterate, inarticulate students, and they get laughed at," "They don't make any effort to speak English; in fact, they refuse to practice," and "They're harder to discipline because they have no regard for any authority." In differentiating between LEP students and ESL students, a kindergarten teacher stated that the Spanish influenced English used by her LEP students was "a demented form of English." The ESL students, on the other hand, are identified as recent immigrants to this country who have had less exposure to English. Even though they have less proficiency in English than the LEP student, they are seen as highly inquisitive, highly motivated, serious, enthusiastic and well-behaved students. Several of the respondents stated that they wished it were possible to separate the students because before long the ESL students acquire the negative attitudes of the LEP students and then develop behavior problems.

Question 10, which focused on the contributions that ESL/LEP students make to the classroom, elicited comments from only 70.2% (n = 66) of the respondents. Forty percent (n = 22) of those who felt they were being forced to earn ESL endorsement and 15.4% (n = 6) of those whose involvement in the endorsement program was motivated by internal factors failed to respond to this question.

Fifty-five (58.5%) of the respondents acknowledged that ESL students, but generally not LEP students, enhance the learning environment in their classrooms in two primary ways. They are seen as positive role models for the other students in the class by approaching the learning situation seriously, by being enthusiastic and patient, by persevering, and by valuing what they learn. As such, "they show the rest of my students what it means to be a 'real' student." In addition, ESL students introduce cultural variation within the classroom. "They bring a different perspective to everything that takes place in the class" and thus help to teach other students cultural sensitivity and tolerance. One comment in particular summarizes this contribution succinctly: "They open my mind and eyes as well as those of my other students as we try to open theirs." One respondent, a first year sixth grade teacher, found her
ESL/LEP students' primary contribution to be in their art ability; "they made bulletin boards for me since I began teaching the day after I finished student teaching and had no materials."

The frustrations in working with the ESL/LEP students felt by the respondents to this survey were numerous and appear to arise from several sources. One major area of frustration is related to the teachers themselves. The respondents expressed concern about their lack of knowledge of the methods and techniques used to teach the ESL/LEP student. "I make assumptions," said one respondent, "about my students' ability to comprehend the sentence structure and the vocabulary I use in class and about the type of experiences they bring to the classroom. Usually my assumptions are inaccurate and my lesson falls apart. Then I don't know what to do." Most of the respondents expressing this concern indicated that they hoped their level of frustration would diminish as their experience in ESL increased. Ten respondents indicated that courses in Spanish should be a requirement in the endorsement program since what upset them was not being able to understand what their students were saying when they were speaking in Spanish: "If I knew more Spanish, I could stop the sassing or under-the-breath comments that I get." In addition, a number of respondents cited the negative comments expressed by other teachers about the ESL/LEP student as their major source of frustration: "What frustrates me most is the attitude of some teachers; they make uncalled-for comments about ESL students in the Teachers' Lounge. Teachers should pass some kind of vocation test."

A variety of external factors over which the respondents felt they had little control presented another source of frustration for 12.8% of them. The parents of the ESL/LEP student are generally viewed as being uneducated, as having limited proficiency in English themselves, and as working at more than one job in order to support their families. Consequently, according to these respondents, they have neither the ability nor the time to provide support for their children and what they are accomplishing in school. While parental involvement correlates with student achievement, school attendance, and classroom behavior (Simich-Dudgeon 1), few respondents in this study appear to be aware that involvement may be a new cultural concept for many of the ESL/LEP students'
parents and attempts to involve these parents in the educational process of their children may be viewed as a request for interference. Those teachers commenting on the lack of materials expressed dissatisfaction with both student and teacher resource materials available to them: “You'd think that with the tremendous numbers of LEP students in the schools, there would be a plethora of good materials, but that certainly doesn't appear to be the case.”

The time factor was another source of concern for those not teaching exclusively ESL/LEP students; they indicated that there was not sufficient time to help students with language problems without holding back and frustrating those students who had no language difficulties.

The major frustrations felt by the teachers were related to the behavior and attitudes of the students who are perceived as having little or no respect for authority, little or no self-esteem, little or no motivation to learn, and little or no ability to set goals and as a result create the most serious discipline problems in the classroom. While these comments were directed primarily toward the LEP student, the ESL student is also a source of frustration for teachers by being impulsive, talking too much and too loudly, asking too many questions, not being able to follow instructions, and having to touch everything the teachers brought into the classroom. The following comment summarizes this attitude: “These students think they're so special because they receive much more individualized instruction from the teacher or the aide; they are constantly demanding attention and feel they can get away with doing things the other kids aren't allowed to do and they're constantly bringing this to the attention of the other kids.” Another student-related frustration stems from the students' seeming disinterest in learning and using English: “The students know they can survive in Spanish so they see no need for developing skills in English.” One teacher commenting on the difficulty she experienced in motivating her students to use English noted, “I've tried everything I can think of to help; sometimes I just go home and cry, but, of course, that doesn't solve the problem.”

Adding to this frustration is the tendency by other teachers and administrators of speaking to the ESL/LEP student primarily in Spanish thus reinforcing the notion that learning English is not
essential and, in a very real sense, defeating the purpose of the work
done in the language classes.

Why these frustrations are so profound is a difficult question
to answer without considerably more research. It appears some
frustration stems from the respondents' motivation for obtaining
ESL endorsement. Feeling forced to teach ESL without having the
desire to do so and fearing the loss of one's job understandably
causes stress and frustration. Furthermore, the respondents reflect­
ing this negativism may have a cultural bias against the language
minority student. In fact, the preponderance of frustrations and
negative comments came from the young teachers in their first
teaching position who were raised and educated in a geographical
area of the U.S. where there are not large populations of limited
English speaking students. Because they have little experience in a
bilingual/bicultural environment, they have few coping mechanisms,
other than hostility, to draw on in dealing with their situation. Yet
another explanation may be found in the students' reaction to the
quality of instruction. Wong Fillmore ("Research Currents: Equity
or Excellence?" 477-478) in a summary of her large-scale study on
academic and English language development found that Hispanic
students were much more sensitive than Chinese students to the
quality of the learning situation. When the emphasis was on com­
prehension and interaction, when teachers' instructions were well­
organized and clearly presented, and when the material was rich in
content, the Hispanic students performed well; when the work was
tedious, non-challenging, or seemingly irrelevant, they lost interest
and did not perform well. The Chinese students, on the other hand,
were not disturbed by this type of work and tended to perform
willingly and well. The reason, then, for some of the frustration felt
by the respondents in the present study may be found in the way
their students react to what is being taught and how it is being
presented in the classroom.

Despite the reasons, the overwhelming negativism
associated with the comments expressed by many of the respon­
dents in this study has very serious implications for the ESL/LEP
student. The teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward these
students can have a tremendous impact on their self-concept, their
expectations and their academic performance. Cohen (qtd. in
DeAvila and Duncan (114) reports that teachers' perception of their students can produce a self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of the student. As a result, students who are perceived as having little motivation and little academic potential are directed by prior experience to fulfill this perception.

**Conclusion**

The results of this investigation support the finding that, often, teachers hold negative perceptions of ESL/LEP students. These perceptions affect not only the way they view themselves as teachers of ESL, but also their desire to gain additional expertise in defining and meeting the needs of these students. The failure of teachers to recognize and accept differences among students and the language varieties they speak can cause a lack of response on the part of the students to the sociolinguistic demands of the classroom. This lack of response is interpreted by teachers as lack of motivation and valuing of the educational process. Teachers then tend to lower their expectations of their students' academic potential which in turn results in poorer student achievement and second language learning.

Because of the potentially destructive effects on the ESL/LEP students and their education, these perceptions must be recognized by the teachers themselves, by their administrators, and by the educators in teacher education programs. However, recognition by itself is not sufficient. It is essential that teacher education programs place greater emphasis on the development of knowledge of linguistic and cultural variation. It is equally critical that these educational programs provide opportunities for teachers to examine the beliefs and assumptions that they hold toward the language minority student as well as opportunities for them to modify these beliefs and assumptions. In addition, the educators in the training programs must work more closely with administrators in the school systems to provide pre-service and in-service training programs and to develop methods of identifying a teacher's potential, or lack of potential, in the ESL/LEP classroom. Above all, administrators must be sensitized to the importance of positive teacher attitudes as they are involved in the process of selecting teachers to work with the ESL/LEP student. Only when we recognize and focus on alleviating the very serious effects of negative teacher attitudes can
we begin to provide the ESL/LEP student the same access to a quality education that we accord the non-ESL/LEP student. §

References


______“Research Currents: Equity or Excellence?” Language Arts 63 (1986): 474-481.
APPENDIX:
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Ethnic background: _____Anglo
   _____Hispanic
   _____Other

2. Place of birth: _____in the Rio Grande Valley
   _____in Texas, other than the Valley;
   where___________
   _____outside of Texas; where___________

3. (a) What is your native language?
   (b) What other languages do you speak?

4. Rate your proficiency in the other language(s) you speak:
   _____highly proficient in____________________
   _____more proficient in____________________than in
   English
   _____equally proficient in____________________and in
   English
   _____more proficient in English than in____________________
   _____highly proficient in English

5. What language do you use when interacting with:
   (a) your family____________________
   (b) your friends____________________
   (c) your students____________________
   (d) your students' parents____________________
   (e) other teachers in your school____________________

6. What school district do you teach in?

7. (a) What grade do you teach?
   (b) What is your primary teaching area?

8. (a) How long have you been teaching?
   (b) How long have you been teaching ESL/LEP students?

9. (a) How many ESL/LEP students did you have in your classes
    during the last academic year?
   (b) How many hours a day did you work with these students?
   (c) What types of activities did you use to meet the language
       needs of these students?

10. What contributions do ESL/LEP students make to your classes?
11. What are some of the things that frustrate you most in working with ESL/LEP students?
12. Which instructional setting do you feel is best suited to ESL/LEP students? Why?
   _____ ESL classes only
   _____ regular classes plus an ESL class
   _____ regular classes only
   _____ bilingual education
13. When, in the process of their language development, should ESL/LEP students be placed solely in the regular or content classroom?
14. How do you perceive your role as an ESL teacher?
15. Why are you earning ESL endorsement?
16. At U.T.-Pan Am the ESL endorsement program consists of the following four courses. Which have you completed?
   _____ ENG. 3319 Introduction to Descriptive linguistics
   _____ ENG. 3330 English Grammar
   _____ ENG. 4238 Introduction to ESL
   _____ EDCI.3324 English as a Second Language
17. In what ways have each of the courses that you have completed been valuable to you?
18. In what ways did each course NOT meet your expectations in providing what you thought it should?
19. What suggestions would you make for enhancing the value of each course for you?

Additional comments?
DECENTRALIZATION WORKS: CHINA AND MEXICO MAKE IT HAPPEN IN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

Paul Villas, Janet L. Lile, and Hector Perez-Coronado*

Resumen

Este estudio compara la política nacional del cuidado de la salud en China con las políticas iniciales para la salud en México. Los esfuerzos de China en dar protección a la salud para su nación son paralelos a la política de México y viceversa. En China el progreso ha sido hecho debido a los efectos creativos de tener programas de salud y doctores con unidades movibles. México también tiene una actitud positiva para mejorar la salud de su gente. El secreto es una regla de decentralización en donde las comunidades locales deciden lo que es mejor para ellos. En ambos países, la demistificación de médicos y de utilizar a personal sin ser médicos al nivel local fue necesario a fin de poder brindar el cuidado básico de la salud para todos y cada uno de ellos.

Ejemplares para el cuidado de la salud en China y en ciertas partes de México pueden ser modelos para otras regiones donde el cuidado de la salud en unidades movibles es inadecuado.

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The “Sick Man of Asia” phrase attributed to China is no longer true. After liberation in 1949, giant steps were taken by the Chinese government to provide better health and well being for its people. Health and health care delivery were established as top priorities of the People's Republic of China and great strides were made to assure a high health status for every citizen (Ying & Davis, 1985). This was accomplished by developing a system which directly paralleled the societal organizations, thereby insuring that each commune or factory had at least an elemental health facility to deliver primary care to the workers.

Innovative strategies to build health resources were crucial. An essential component in the delivery of health care in China was the decentralization of governmental policies and mass health education campaigns combining Chinese traditional and Western medicines. In addition, China demonstrated that keeping people healthy did not depend on some mystical power bestowed on a select group of physicians. Emphasis was on prevention of disease and provision of accessible care for the masses of workers.

Mexico, on the other hand, which by many estimates should have been a leader in health care in Latin America, actually resembled an underdeveloped country. The health signature of Mexico was one of a third world country with respiratory illness as the principal cause of death and high child mortality rates from diarrheal causes (Ellis, 1987). However, the poor health status was not shared by everyone. The nation's capital “boasted lavish hospital facilities, a prestigious cardiac research institute and a high doctor/patient ratio” (Horn, 1985). Other large, wealthy cities were equally blessed.

Recognizing that Mexico's morbidity and mortality patterns were a function of poverty and inequity, the nation elevated the right to health care to a constitutional level. The goal was to promote, prevent, maintain, and restore health for all by providing equitable services of increasing quality (Perez- Coronado, 1990). Decentralization with less direction and input from the Federal District in Mexico City allowed individual states and communities more autonomy and self-direction in the delivery of health care. This allowed communities to be innovative in using
material and human resources not traditionally used in the dispersement of health care. Results of these efforts in both countries could be seen in the changing health patterns of the people.

**Changes in People's Health**

The health of the Chinese people has changed dramatically over the past few decades. This becomes apparent when analyzing the principal causes of death (Sidel & Sidel, 1981). A health care system was created which resulted in the elimination of many of the deadly infectious and nutritional diseases that once plagued the Chinese people (Ying & Davis, 1985). Studies in Shanghai Country have shown that the health status of the people improved to the level of more developed countries. Malignancy, heart disease, and cerebrovascular disease became the leading causes of death (Xing Yaun & Mai-Ling, 1982). On the surface, the change seems merely the substitution of one type of death for another. However, it was evident that the Chinese people were dying at progressively higher ages. Sick children and ailing adults, once a commonplace sight, were replaced by young and old appearing to be in excellent health (Sidel & Sidel, 1981).

How did the Chinese accomplish this with their limited resources? The liberation from shorter lives, crippling diseases, and a miserable way of life began with the people themselves. Huge “mass campaigns” were launched to eradicate venereal diseases, drug addiction, rats, mosquitoes, and lice (Langmuin, 1976). Learning to purify water and dig latrines was associated with increased health and prosperity that people could see. The arrival of mobile health teams in the villages to give inoculations and other preventative health services was greeted with open arms. Local clinics were established to encourage preventative health measures (Langmuin, 1976). The transformation of China's health system was made possible by carefully constructed principles to guide the health services development, to encourage active participation of the people, and to build effective leaders.
As in China, an increase in vaccine coverage and the improvement of general health standards brought about a decrease in preventable illness in Mexico, most notably in the northern border states (Chavira & Olaiz Fernandez, 1990). In 1970, measles was the eighth leading cause of death in Mexico. Although there has been a significant reduction today, malnutrition and poverty, the underlying reasons for the measles deaths, have not received as much attention as the vaccinations (Horn, 1985). Providing a potable water supply and proper sanitation have brought about better health since these determinants accounted for much of the parasitic and diarrheal diseases. Twenty years ago, only 17.3% of rural Mexico was reported to have potable water in their homes and rural disposal of sewage was practically nonexistent (Horn, 1985). Within ten years, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), piped water was easily accessible to 32% of rural Mexican residents although still less than one percent had access to proper sanitation (PAHO, 1978). Today, through a policy of decentralization, these basic health needs are given priority (Perez-Coronado, 1990).

Demographic population shifts took place in the country of Mexico. More and more rural inhabitants migrated to the cities. With a vast daily influx of new arrivals, Mexico City became the largest city in the world. Because of their proximity to the United States and the development of the Maquiladora industry, the northern border cities attracted the jobless, the sick, and those who sought to improve their standing in life. Since these cities grew at such rapid rates, they simulated both urban and rural environments. A Mexican commitment to provide health care for all of its citizens should become evident in the rural areas around and close to the urban setting.

Making Health Care Available

In bringing better health to one billion Chinese people, individuals had to be instilled with a sense of responsibility for preventing disease and maintaining good health. China had to make health care available by providing huge numbers of health care workers that the people could trust. China's achievement in
transforming the delivery of health care showed an interviewing of three main threads: decentralization, demystification, and continuity with the past (Sidel & Sidel, 1981). Both politics and cultural nationalism play important roles in determining health policy directions. The three threads illustrate this. Since centralization of all services was the status quo, it seemed like the route to follow until it was realized that to decentralize health services was to provide easy access of services to multitudes. The second thread was to demystify the position held by health care deliverers. This led to the democratization of health knowledge among the population. People learned about their bodies, and patients were better informed about their particular diseases and treatments. The third thread was to combine Chinese traditional medicine and Western medicine. China, with a rich medical heritage dating back to 2500 B.C., placed great pride and trust in traditional methods that included the concept of "natural" balance between yin and yang, acupuncture, herbal medicine, massage, and other therapeutic modalities (Dornbusch, 1990).

The Chinese planned for health resources to reach the most rural areas of the country where 80% of the population lived. However, the implemented measures did not meet the tremendous health care needs in these areas. During the Cultural Revolution in which all social institutions were significantly revamped, a second revolution in the Chinese health system began (Christiana, 1984). Physicians began to delegate some of their diagnostic and therapeutic responsibilities to non-physicians. This resulted in a new kind of allied health worker called the "barefoot doctor." A member of a community, this worker received relatively short periods of training outside the community and came back to provide health care to his or her friends, neighbors, and fellow peasants (You-Long & Li-Min, 1982). The basic activities of barefoot doctors responsible for health services were outpatient consultations, home visits, preventative health and anti-epidemic work, maternal and child health and family planning, health education, maintenance of adequate drug supplies, and other administrative duties (You-Long & Li-Min, 1982). Medical education was drastically
reformed to shorten the curriculum and to stress primary care training rather than specialized medical sciences.

Mexico also began to disseminate health care services in order to reach the masses. Urban health care centers were established in 1943 when the Department of Public Health and the position of Secretary of Assistance were fused to create the position of Secretary of Health and Assistance. During the 50s, the first Urban Primary Health Care Centers were constructed as part of a medical assistance infrastructure. From 1964-1970, more than 2000 health centers were constructed both in urban and suburban areas with some attention given to the rural areas. In 1981, programs were developed to focus on the right to health protection of marginal populations in large urban and rural areas with the purpose of extending health care by means of prevention. In 1983, the protected right to health care was elevated to constitutional status. In 1984, the general law of health was published which established the equal access of services and initiated decentralization of programs. In 1985, as a result of the authority established by law, a Secretary of Health was appointed with the objective of consolidating standard health care and decentralizing the operation of health services. To strengthen these ends, an open model of attention to health care signaled the organization of primary care of all Mexican citizens (Perez-Coronado, 1990).

The Secretariat of Health became responsible for the provision of health care to the rural population and the formerly rural who were crowding into over-taxed and over-burdened cities and establishing “colonias.” For example, the state of Nuevo Leon, in fulfilling the constitutional mandate that all Mexican citizens should have access to the national health systems, provided health care services in rural clinics and hospitals. Because it was difficult to find specialized health care delivery personnel, Nuevo Leon instituted a rural rotation system for resident physicians during the last year of their specialization training. The physicians rotated into the rural areas for three months at a time and thus made it possible for rural residents to have access to specialized care. In addition, primary health care personnel also rotated in the same manner.
(Garza, 1989). In Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, for example, massive immunization campaigns were carried out in effect to include what was termed the “open population.” These are the fringe area residents of the colonias. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) cooperated in the preventive health effort through the Extended Immunization Program (EIP) (Chavira & Olaiz Fernandez, 1990).

**Making Health Care Work**

In China, each person was expected to be part of a network of health services at every level of community organization. Figure 1 describes the organization in the countryside. It consisted of production teams (about 150 people with one to three health aides and one barefoot doctor), production brigades (about 1800 people or 12 production teams with a health station consisting of four barefoot doctors and one midwife), communes (a self-governing political and economic unit with out-patient hospital facilities, a lab and x-ray machines) and counties with specialized and general hospitals with both Western and traditional practitioners (Sidel & Sidel, 1981).

![Chain of Health Care Services in the Chinese Countryside](image-url)

In the cities, people were organized according to work and housing. Groups of those who worked in factories choose
a member to be released from the job to get health care training. This person would then return to work at the factory but at certain times would go on rounds, hold clinic hours or provide first aid. This “worker doctor” received the same salary as fellow workers with similar qualifications (Langmuin, 1976). Figure 2 describes the city organization. It started with courtyards consisting of a few families whose main function was looking out for each other. Blocks or lanes consisting of about 400 families were next with medical stations manned by housewives who are called “red health workers” or “street doctors.” Their responsibilities included dispensing primary care services, providing birth control counseling and distributing contraceptives, and administering immunizations. The following level was neighborhoods which had approximately 50,000 people. Each neighborhood had a general hospital with a staff of 90 people including seven Western-trained physicians. Districts were the next level with 400,000 people and included both research and general hospitals. Several districts made up a city (Sidel & Sidel, 1981).

![Figure 2](image)

**CHAIN OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN THE CHINESE CITIES**

In both counties and cities, from the initial point of contact, a clearly organized system of referral led level by level
up to a plateau of sophisticated medical specialization. The patient with a problem that could not be handled at one level of this decentralized structure moved on to the level above. The system has been an efficient and low cost one. Moreover, it has advantages of building social cohesion and local self-reliance by emphasizing neighborliness and service of others from the lowest point to the upper level.

In Mexico, if the decentralization of governmental health policies are to work and the constitutional status granting the right to health care to the population is to be realized, there needs to be a shift from a curative mindset to one of health promotion and prevention. There have been some encouraging signs. The government, committed to demographic control, has integrated family planning into welfare and social security programs (Horn, 1985). In addition, the National Health Department's budget was 30% larger this year than last year's, totaling close to one billion dollars (El Paso Times, 1990). Mexican health journals have reflected the preventive position WHO and PAHO hold as well as recommending social medicine. Different social agencies began to include information about child and infant welfare, programs on nutrition and feeding, and training of paraprofessionals and midwives (Taylor, 1974).

Dr. Hector Perez-Coronado (1990), the physician in charge of public health services for the state of Chihuahua in Ciudad Juarez, wrote that in meeting the health goals for the nation and following the decentralization process of providing primary health care, Mexico has established various state responsibilities which include:

- Detecting and referring cases not treatable at the first point of contact to a different level of health assistance;
- Promoting basic health practices;
- Promoting community participation for health action;
- Informing and enabling the population to care for their own health
- Identifying and encouraging the training of non-medical individuals.

An example of decentralization, promotion efforts, and prevention has occurred in the colonias surrounding Ciudad
Juarez. The Coordinated Public Services for the State of Chihuahua Agency in Ciudad Juarez supervised 14 community centers (basic health care clinics) under the Secretariat of Health. The centers are strategically located to serve as many people as possible with primary care and primary and secondary prevention. Health education, vaccinations, consulting, medication distribution, and basic examinations take place in these clinics. The physicians staffing these clinics are graduates from the University of Juarez Medical School. They have completed their residency at some local hospital and are serving the state for one year under the social security system. The clinics also have a director, health educators, nurses, coordinators, and other support personnel. The clinics desire to fulfill the health needs of the majority of the people through health promotion and primary and secondary prevention. Those persons who cannot be treated at the clinics are then referred to more specialized services at the General Hospital. The educational thrust the clinics promote is self-responsibility and community concern.

Conclusion

China's health care delivery model, which uses concerned citizens to provide health education, referral services, consultations and family planning, is working. Recent evidence suggests that the system is adapting to current social changes and exhibits viability and vitality. Mexico, which has a national directive to deliver health to all its citizens, could innovatively include some of China's emphasis on health care. An organization including smaller groups at the pre-clinic level should be established to furnish more individualized attention. Lay people in roles such as the barefoot doctor could be involved in order to encourage preventative measures as well as provide early detection of health problems requiring special attention. The current struggling economy of Mexico has influenced the dissemination of health care. Yet with a decentralization policy already in place, Mexico could easily do what China has done—develop a system that delivered so much to so many for so little.
A system of decentralizing state public health departments and recruiting other “health workers” might be the mechanism that can positively affect the health of our country. Could the principle of empowering and involving people to care for their own health be applied and implemented in poor and rural areas of the United States—especially along the U.S.-Mexico border? An expansion of lay health worker programs in on-going prenatal clinics in Arizona and migrant health clinics in other parts of the U.S. could serve as additional models for border areas (Meister & Guernsey de Zapien, 1990; Watkins, et. al., 1990).

Works Cited


U.S. PRISONERS IN BORDER PRISONS 
IN TAMAULIPAS, MEXICO

J. Michael Olivero*

Introduction

There is little systematic analysis of U.S. citizens held in 
Mexican prisons. The current high numbers of U.S. citizens in 
Mexican prisons appears to be directly related to Mexico’s role in
U.S. drug interdiction efforts. In 1971, United State (U.S.) President Richard M. Nixon declared "War on Drugs" (Wiesheit, 1990). One of the current efforts in this war has been drug interdiction, or the attempt to seize drugs and drug smugglers on their way to the U.S. from source countries such as Mexico. Mexico is an important link in interdiction efforts in that it has become the main gateway for the importation of the three major illegal drugs; i.e., cocaine, heroin and marijuana (Reuter, 1988).

Under Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gotari, Mexico has allegedly cooperated in U.S. interests and taken an active role in detecting and arresting drug producers and smugglers in Mexico. Questions can be raised as to why Mexico would take part in U.S. drug intervention efforts. For example, Mexico has no significant indigenous drug problem and there has been no great increase in domestic drug use in the last several years (Reuter, 1988).

Mexico's participation may have been inspired by considerations less attached to a concern for drugs, than for financial gain. To begin with, Mexico holds a large foreign debt as the result of loans. The Salinas administration has worked closely with the Bush administration in the effort to renegotiate Mexico's foreign debt, receiving some satisfaction. Secondly, Mexico, some contend, may appear to be headed towards political crisis, with the first serious challenges to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Mexico's dominant political party), some insurrection among rural peasants, the possibility of remnants of armed leftist guerrillas, and opposition labor unions. In the past, such problems have been handled or met with military and police repression which include killings and tortures (Americas Watch, 1990).

Out of the positive relationship between Bush and Salinas, in 1990, Mexico received $249,000 U.S. dollars for International Military Education and Training. In 1991, this figure was to increase to $400,000 dollars. Mexico also received 15 million U.S. dollars for drug interdiction in 1990. This was also to increase to 18.3 million dollars in 1991 (Americas Watch, 1990). In essence, then, it is possible to argue that while the U.S. receives Mexican support for interdiction efforts, the Mexican government fortifies its implements of repression assisted by funds from the U.S.
To lead the charge in Mexico’s war against drugs, President Salinas appointed an elite squad from the Federal Judicial Police. According to human rights activists, many members of the squad were formerly involved in repressive public security units and are widely reputed to having involvement in drug trafficking themselves. Further, the federal narcotics police are held accountable for a large number of the cases of murder, torture and abuse of due process today. These atrocities are virtually ignored by the Mexican government and seldom if ever draw prosecution (Americas Watch, 1990; Monge and Ramirez, 1989).

Drug possession, attempting to possess drugs, or drug trafficking have long been associated with U.S. citizens in Mexican jails and prisons (Flanders and Price, 1979; Fogelnest et al. 1984; Price, 1973; Peterson, 1979; Serrill, 1978; Vagts, 1977). For example, in 1982, there were 973 criminal charges officially reported to be filed against 841 U.S. citizens in Mexico. Out of these, 26% (N=255) were charged with drug offenses. This was the largest offense category, followed by offenses such as illegal importation of electrical appliances (Fogelnest et al., 1984).

One of the means used to detect illegally imported electrical appliances was roadblocks on highways which led from the U.S.-Mexican border, to the interior of Mexico. The Federal Judicial Police simply reversed these stops to check vehicles coming from the interior of Mexico to the north (Americas Watch, 1990). These and other efforts have been successful in capturing drug traffickers from both Mexico and the U.S.. The present research indicates that the result has been a recent overcrowding of Mexican prisons along the border. This article outlines issues involved with U.S. citizens housed in these facilities.

Previous Conditions in Mexican Prisons

In 1966, for the first time in its history, Mexico established standards for prisons, including selection and training of prison personnel, appropriate installations, post-institutional assistance, etc. These standards were based upon United Nations’ Minimum Standards for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Prisoners and were applied to state prisons. In 1971 prison reform on the federal level was carried out (Galindo, 1979). The policy for
prisons in Mexico was decidedly humanitarian (Cuaron, 1977). Galindo (1979:101) reports that:

The general Mexican policy for the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders has been directed along the lines of profound humanitarianism, which has eliminated the death sentence and is to replace the concept of a sentence as punishment, retribution, and repression with one of rehabilitation, readaptation, and resocialization. The adoption of this program has been hampered in the past by economic conditions in Mexico. By 1979, 35% of Mexico’s prisons had been transformed according to the policies and goals of 1971 (Galindo, 1979).

In 1973, Price (1973), a U.S. anthropologist performed an ethnographic study of La Mesa Penitenciaria, near Tijuana, in the state of Baja California (a U.S.-Mexican border prison). The researchers concluded that the U.S. could learn from Mexican prison organization. Instead of a highly disciplined program for prisoners, as was the case in the U.S., Canada and Europe, the Mexicans allowed for a much more open system without negative consequences for most prisoners. Mexican prison officials allowed prisoners fairly unreserved access to their families, including conjugal visits, and large quantities of goods brought by relatives of prisoners inside the prison. The result was a self policing free enterprise market economy, without major violence or parasitical homosexual relationships commonly found in U.S. prisons (Braswell et al., 1985; Lockwood, 1980).

These positive attributes were somewhat offset, however, by the prison officials who did little in regard to a rehabilitative program or caring for prisoners. Instead, prison officials were bribable and took gratuities for allowing breaches in the law. Unfortunately, under this system prisoners who were too poor or sick to work barely survived. Further, officials also allowed prisoners to engage in drug use and sales, including heroin. Price concluded that Mexican prison officials could learn from the prison system in the U.S. However, he also stated that U.S. officials could benefit from adopting Mexico’s policies involving conjugal visits, retained family ties and the allowance of an inmate economy.
Wilkinson (1990) reporting upon a Mexican border prison almost two decades after that of Price (1973) essentially found a similar situation. He found that prisoners had access to a wide range of material goods and their own food, could carry money to spend as they wished, and had visits from friends and family including conjugal visits. He concluded that life inside of Mexican prisons was neither brutal nor harsh. Moreover, the prison was not an unusually severe place within which to be confined. Unfortunately for our analysis here, Wilkinson made no reference to U.S. prisoners present in the prison.

U.S. Prisoners in Mexican Prisons in the 1970s and 1980s

Data on U.S. prisoners and the conditions in Mexican prisons during the 1970s and 1980s are then in conflict. Some works have portrayed Mexican prisons or the conditions for U.S. citizens in Mexican prisons in a favorable light. Moreover, they describe a Mexican prison experience in a similar fashion to that of Price (1973) or Wilkinson (1990).

Stirewalt (1981), a U.S. federal prisoner, formerly incarcerated at Tapachula Prison in Chiapas, Mexico, wrote that the Mexican prison system should be emulated by the U.S. He stated that his transfer under the U.S.-Mexico Prisoner Exchange Treaty was in the hopes of earlier release and an ignorance of how poor the U.S. prison experience was. In a similar fashion, Serrill (1978 (B)) reported upon a Mexican citizen who was happy to transfer out of the U.S. and into Mexican prison under the exchange.

Both researchers, Stirewalt (1981) and Serrill (1978 (B)), essentially report similar experiences and arrangements inside of Mexican prisons. Praise for Mexico’s prison system over that of the U.S. centered upon several elements. Stirewalt and Serrill mutually commented on the positive aspects surrounding Mexico’s allowance of women and families inside the prison and found this aspect superior to the system in the U.S. Similarly, Burke (1981:34-35) reporting on the central role families play in Mexican prisons stated that:

The most attractive feature of the Mexican prison system, however, is its determination to preserve family ties during incarceration. Whereas American institutions regard visits as
part privilege, part nuance, and typically afford prisoners one or two visits a month in crowded rooms offering little privacy, the Mexican system treats family visits as an integral part of prison life. Prisoners have visitors once a week or more; fully a third of the compound is designed for family activities.

Mexican prisoners, whether married or not, have long been allowed conjugal visits. Evans (1975) concluded that Mexican prison policy in this regard helped ensure family stability and reduced homosexual encounters in prison.

However, there is also evidence that did not extol the virtues of the prison system in the Mexico versus that of the U.S. For example, Burke (1981) found that Mexico's attempt at reform had not totally eliminated abuses to prisoners. Prisoner abuses had continued despite attempts to upgrade the staff. Incidents of guard brutality and prisoner shakedowns persisted. Furthermore, gang violence, homosexual attacks, and drug abuse remained prevalent among young single male prisoners, who represented the majority of every prison population.

In 1976, 600 U.S. citizens were incarcerated in Mexican prisons. The release of the film Midnight Express, which concerned the abuses suffered by a U.S. citizen in a Turkish prison piqued media attention to U.S. citizens incarcerated in Mexico. Peterson (1979) reported that the deplorable conditions claimed to exist in Mexican prisons by U.S. prisoners - through the emphasis of the media - led to an articulate protest in the U.S. to the State Department and Congress.

Congress also became interested in these individuals as the result of lobbying efforts on the part of such groups as the Committee of 1732, comprised of family members of U.S. citizens incarcerated in Mexican prisons (Fogelnest, et al., 1984; Narcotics Control Digest, 3/12/75). These families stated that U.S. citizens were being mistreated and that the conditions one suffered in Mexican prisons depended on the amount of money the prisoner was willing to give officials (U.S. Congress House Committee on the Judiciary, 1977). Moreover, there were reports that U.S. citizens were suffering from torture, extortion and discrimination (Corrections Digest, 2/5/75; Corrections Digest, 8/6/75; Narcotics
Vagts (1977) reported that problems for U.S. prisoners included poor sanitary and dietary conditions, no families directly outside the prison walls to bring them food and other comforts, language barriers, little in common with guards or other prisoners, as well as extortion attempts.

The Treaty Between the United States of America and the United Mexican States on the Execution of Penal Sentences

In 1977, as the result of a treaty entitled, "Treaty Between the United States of America and the United Mexican States on the Execution of Penal Sentences," over 200 U.S. citizens were released from Mexican prisons and returned to the U.S. to serve the balance of their sentences. Of the 2,000 Mexican prisoners incarcerated in the U.S., 72 chose to return to Mexico to serve their sentences (Serrill, 1978). According to U.S. President Carter, the treaty was intended to:

- relieve the special hardships which fall upon prisoners incarcerated far from home and to make their rehabilitation more feasible and also to relieve diplomatic and law enforcement relations between the two countries of the strains that arise from the imprisonment of substantial number of each country's nationals in the institutions of the other. It constitutes part of an ongoing effort to improve the relations between the two countries. It is also part of various efforts to establish closer international cooperation in law enforcement activities (U.S. Congress House Committee on the Judiciary: 1977:7).

Apparently, the efforts of families of U.S. prisoners in Mexican prisons were successful, in conjunction with diplomatic strains between the U.S. and Mexico, in convincing the U.S. to agree to the trade.

In a similar fashion the Mexican government also found the treaty desirable. They argued that prisoners incarcerated in foreign countries resulted in harsher sentences than the same sentence to indigenous prisoners, due to a number of reasons including unfamiliar customs, a language they do not understand, etc. As such, they believed that prisoners in foreign prisons were suffering sentences which were not commensurate with their offenses.
Another theme in Mexican cooperation with the treaty was concern with placing their prisoners in facilities in home states, close to friends and families. Friends and family were felt to be necessary to achieve the goals of Mexican penology, i.e., rehabilitation and reintegration (Lepine, 1978).

Previous to agreeing to the treaty, there was considerable debate in the U.S. Senate as to the constitutionality of having U.S. citizens incarcerated in U.S. prisons for convictions in countries which do not follow the U.S. Bill of Rights, etc. (Fogelnest et al., 1984; Peterson, 1979; Serrill, 1978; U.S. Congress House Committee on the Judiciary, 1977; Vagts, 1977). A host of testimony on the constitutionality of the transfer was provided by legal experts. It was felt that the process was constitutional as long as transfer was the result of complete and knowing consent by each prisoners to be transferred (Serrill, 1978; U.S. Congress House Committee on the Judiciary, 1977).

Vagt (1977:22) grudgingly stated that, "It is predictable that prisoners who vociferously sought to be included in the treaty will go to court to challenge its legality the moment they are over the border." Indeed, several legal challenges have been attempted. Most challenges center upon continued custody for crimes allegedly committed in Mexico, and cases in which the validity of voluntary consent (granted under supposed horrid conditions in which anything would have been said to get away) is questioned. International legal defense attorneys state that after much litigation, challenges to confinement on these bases have proved fruitless. Even if successful, there stands a chance that the offender would simply be returned to Mexico to serve his or her sentence. Basically, the courts have found that U.S. citizens in foreign countries are subject to their laws and are not entitled to all the constitutional protection granted U.S. citizens in the U.S. (Fogelnest et al., 1984).

There are several rules involved in transferring through the treaty. To be transferred to the U.S. the prisoner must be a U.S. citizen. They have to be convicted. The transfer recipient must not have any appeals pending concerning his or her conviction (Fogelnest et al., 1984). No data appears to exist as to whether prisoners are avoiding their appeals in order to transfer out of prison.
in Mexico or the U.S.. The prisoner must have at least six months remaining on his sentence. The prisoner must not be convicted of several types of offenses (immigration, military or political offenses), or living in Mexico for five years previous to arrest. He or she must be convicted of a crime, which is a crime in both countries. Finally, there must be consent from the U.S. government, the Mexican government, and the individual being transferred (Fogelnest et al., 1984).

Serrill (1978) reported that the first U.S. citizens incarcerated in Mexico did not totally fit the image of the treaty’s intentions. Instead of young offenders, the average age of those transferred was 32 years of age. Further, instead of mere tourists who made the mistake of purchasing or attempting to purchase a small amount of drugs, most of the transferred offenders were major drug traffickers. Moreover, the transfer did nothing for abuses that allegedly took place before trial and conviction.

Methods
Research commenced with tours of prisons located in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. In the process, the author has spent approximately 90 hours, during 1990 and 1991, inside the prison yard at Reynosa State Prison (a Mexican prison on the border of Mexico and the U.S.) observing prison operations and interviewing 19 of the 25 U.S. citizens (24 males and 1 female) incarcerated there. He has further interviewed Mexican prison officials (located both at Tamaulipas state regional headquarters at Ciudad Victoria and at Reynosa State Prison), prison guards, members of the U.S. and Mexican Consulates, former prisoners in Mexican prisons and family members of U.S. prisoners in Mexican prisons. All interviewees were assured anonymity and interviewed in private, in an effort to assure truthfulness.

Results
The “War on Drugs” has produced a crisis of sorts in border prisons in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. Mexican officials at Ciudad Victoria, regional headquarters for the prisons in Tamaulipas, indicated that 90% of all offenders (Mexican, U.S., Colombian, etc.) in Tamaulipas prisons are there for drug
trafficking. Mexican officials at Reynosa indicated that 90% of the inmates there were charged with drug trafficking offenses. A look at the nature of U.S. citizens incarcerated at Reynosa State Prison corroborates the above figure. Of the 25 there, 19 were in prison for drug trafficking. There were also 3 prisoners charged with car theft and another 3 with weapons violations.

Wilkinson (1990), who visited the Reynosa facility in 1987, described a very different prison from the one that exists in 1991. He reported that 25% of the offenders were there for drug trafficking and made no mention of the presence of U.S. citizens. He found that the facility held 240 prisoners. Between 1987 and 1991, the population rose to 1,250 prisoners. As such, the situation has changed significantly.

Another border prison in Tamaulipas is located at Matamoros. In 1989, according to representatives of the U.S. State Department, Matamoros State Prison (also known as Matamoros Center for Social Readaptation or CERESO) held 22 U.S. citizens. In 1990, the U.S. population in this institution had risen to 93. Of these, 90% were federal prisoners charged with drug trafficking (Garza-Trejo, 1990).

Both Matamoros and Reynosa are grossly overcrowded. The Matamoros prison was constructed to house 250 prisoners. Currently, the facility holds from 1,000 to 1,500 inmates. Therefore, several hundred prisoners compete for 200 beds, 12 toilets and 12 showers (Garza-Trejo, 1990). The facility at Reynosa was designed to house 150 inmates. At the time of our research (1990-1991) there were 1,250 incarcerated at the prison. The prison was equipped with 10 showers and 10 toilets. A tarp had been extended over the prison yard, including the basketball court, to act as a sleeping shelter. According to officials at the American Embassy at Matamoros, all border prisons are suffering overcrowding. The reason for this overcrowding and increase in the presence of U.S. citizens was seen as being directly linked to Mexican President Salinas’ participation in the “War on Drugs” (See also, Garza-Trejo, 1990).

The majority of those arrested for drug trafficking had been arrested at road blocks (“retenes stops”) on highways leading out from the interior of Mexico. All but 2 of the respondents alleged
that they had been abused by Federal Judicial Police at the time of their arrests. Abuses included threats, extortion, theft, mineral water mixed with red peppers forced up their noses, plastic bags over the offender’s head until unconsciousness occurred from lack of air, general beatings, and electrical cattle prods to testicles or other sensitive body areas. Representatives of the U.S. State Department indicate that they believe many of these allegations of abuse; however, vigorous protests to the Mexican government are apparently ignored.

Torture is explicitly prohibited by Article 22 of the Mexican Constitution. On top of this, the Mexican federal legislature, in 1986, passed the Federal Law to Prevent and Punish Torture. Under this law, a public servant who tortures a suspect may be punished by up to 8 years imprisonment. The law also voids any confession made as the result of torture. Moreover, Mexico also ratified the United Nations’ Convention Against Torture and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture. According to the Director of Legal Affairs of the National Executive Committee of the PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party) torture continues to be used in Mexico because of the ironic fact that the same people who are to uphold the laws against torture are also torturers themselves (Americas Watch, 1990; Mange and Ignacio, 1989).

At the time of their arrests, ten of the participants stated that they were held incommunicado in police detention for up to one week. Americas Watch (1990) reported that it is at these incommunicado detention sites that police torture of suspects commonly occur. This practice violates Article 20, Section II, of the Mexican Constitution, which requires that arrestees be brought before a judge within 24 hours of arrest (Americas Watch, 1990).

None of the prisoners we interviewed had been tried. All had been in prison for over a year and a half. This was in violation of the Mexican Constitution (Article 19, Section 8) which requires a trial within one year of arrest if the maximum penalty for the charge is greater than two years (Fitzgerald, 1968). Chief Consul at the American Embassy at Matamoros stated that the backlog in cases to go to court was the result of successes in the “War on Drugs” (Garza-Trejo, 1990).
In spite of their experiences previous to incarceration, none of the participants experienced life in prison to be unduly harsh, brutal or severe, outside of overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Only 2 prisoners were concerned for their well being. One had anxieties about the possibility of a riot. The other had a medical condition and did not believe that he was receiving adequate treatment for his illness. In contrast to Burke’s (1981) report, none of the prisoners were concerned with homosexual rape or had homosexual advances from other prisoners. All seemed to enjoy the presence of personal property, women (wives, girlfriends, prostitutes, etc., could remain in the prison all night) and other amenities provided in the prison. None of the U.S. inmates believed that they were being discriminated against or treated in any way different than Mexican inmates. Many stated that absent the problems associated with overcrowding (including poor sanitation and cleanliness), they would prefer Mexican prisons to those of the U.S.

All but one of the prisoners interviewed indicated that they would transfer to the U.S. as soon as they were convicted. This was similar to when the treaty was enacted in 1976, a minority of prisoners decided to remain in Mexican prisons. In that instance, the reasons for remaining included Mexican wives and girlfriends, the wish to not have a criminal record in the U.S., or the ability to live comfortably inside of Mexican prisons (Serrill, 1976). The general reason for the Reynosa prisoners wishing to transfer was the belief that they would serve less time in prison in the U.S.

Conclusion

The history of Mexican prison life has been marked by a lack of programming found in the U.S. prisons (regimentation, forced labor, etc.), and an emphasis on the offender retaining his or her ties to friends and family. In fact, rather loose barriers allowing goods and visitors into Mexican prisons, has produced a microcosm of open society within Mexican prisons.

U.S. offender reaction to this situation has been mixed. Stories of brutality, extortion and corruption motivated the U.S. to embark upon a prisoner exchange treaty. Mexican motivation for participation in the treaty included concerns surrounding the
offender’s adjustment to incarceration and the need to retain family ties. The constitutionality of this treaty in the U.S. was at question from its inception. Basically, efforts to challenge the constitutionality of the treaty in the U.S. have gone unrewarded.

The present research found that U.S. experience behind Mexican prison walls is not seen by most prisoners as being unduly harsh, brutal or severe. Abuses allegedly occur, for the most part, previous to incarceration. The treaty only applies to convicted offenders. As such, the treaty may serve the unintended function of allowing U.S. offenders to spend less time in prison than their Mexican counterparts with similar offenses.

An answer to abuses may entail a U.S. financed legal defense foundation which would represent U.S. prisoners in Mexican courts. The foundation could file the “juicio de amparo,” (similar to the U.S. writ of habeas corpus) in instances of torture induced confessions, and other violations of Mexican constitutional rights. Diplomatic pressure, etc., may be successful in maintaining Mexican constitutional guarantees for U.S. citizens charged with crimes in Mexico.

Finally, the “War on Drugs” in the U.S. has had an impact upon border prisons in Mexico. Mexican law enforcement officials have been successful in interdicting drugs on their way from the interior of Mexico to the U.S.-Mexican border. This success has led to an increased presence of U.S. citizens in Mexican border prisons in the state of Tamaulipas. Further, this success has produced major overcrowding in these prisons as officials manage to capture both Mexican and U.S. offenders.

In essence, the Mexican government has exhibited a cooperative effort with the U.S. in regard to drug interdiction. That this cooperation pays dividends towards Mexico’s foreign debt has been suggested. It is safe to say that Mexico has received significant funds from the U.S. to substantiate their drug interdiction efforts and more drug traffickers are being captured as a result.
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LAMPAZOS AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

Ward S. Albro, III*

Resumen

Lampazos de Naranjo, Nuevo León, es bien conocido nacionalmente como el lugar natal de prominentes mexicanos. La contribución de varios lampacences a la Revolución Mexicana son particularmente notorias. Sin embargo, este estudio trata de mostrar lo que la Revolución Mexicana hizo a Lampazos. La investigación de los archivos revela que la mayor parte del tiempo entre 1910 y 1918 los dueños de pequeños negocios y los ganaderos que gobernaban entonces Lampazos, se encontraron así mismos tratando simplemente de sobrevivir a una revolución que no entendían en su totalidad. Estudios adicionales sobre los efectos locales de la Revolución Mexicana en comunidades como la de Lampazos profundizaron el entendimiento de este evento trascendental en la historia de México.

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Lampazos de Naranjo, Nuevo León, prides itself on being the birthplace of many illustrious men—and a few women—in Mexican history. The names of many adorn the streets of contemporary Lampazos: Juan Ignacio Ramón from the independence period; Juan Zuazua from the war against the United States and the War of the Reform; Santiago Vidaurri, once the most powerful man in all northeastern Mexico; General Francisco Naranjo, whose service against the French and later frontier Indians earned the addition of his name to that of his native town. Not all the noted lampacenses were men on horseback. Poets, journalists, essayists and the like added to the fame: Nemesio García Naranjo,
Luis Mario Benavides and Leopoldo Naranjo are some familiar names.

The Mexican Revolution brought another group to prominence: General Pablo González Garza figured throughout the decade of violence; Antonio I. Villarreal, whose career spanned the Revolution from precursors to Cárdenas; his sister Andrea Villarreal, styled by an overly dramatic San Antonio newspaper as the “Joan of Arc” of the Mexican Revolution; Ing. Francisco Naranjo; Vidal Garza Pérez; Fortunato Zuazua; and many others.¹

One time Nemesio García Naranjo, after being reminded of the major products of various Nuevo León municipalities, was supposedly asked “¿Lampazos qué da?” to which the reply was “Lampazos da Hombres.”²

The lives and exploits of many of these individuals have received considerable attention. As far as the Mexican Revolution is concerned, the contributions of various lampacenses are fairly well known. Additional studies will increase our knowledge and understanding of these contributions. However, this study will not concern itself with what Lampazos did for the Mexican Revolution. Instead, the focus here is on what the Mexican Revolution did to Lampazos. What were the effects of this epic upheaval in Mexico on one important northern frontier town lying just 70 miles to the west of the United States border at Laredo? Founded as the Mission of Santa Maria de los Dolores in 1698, Lampazos was for many years the northernmost settlement in Nuevo León. Populating this frontier was extremely difficult, but the Valle de Santiago lying to the south of the Punta de Lampazos was vital to the security of Nuevo León. The town of Lampazos stood like a sentinel between developing mountains, facing the open plains to the north and the east. Frequent Indian attacks from these directions marked the history of the pueblo. Greater importance came with major mineral discoveries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also to the south of Lampazos. The silver strike at La Iguana in 1757 brought many new settlers and “produjo muchos millones en pocas días.”³

While La Iguana’s bonanza days were limited, it produced a tremendous amount of wealth. Subsequent discoveries of silver at places such as El Refugio, about 50 kilometers south of Lampazos and roughly parallel with La Iguana continued to develop the area...
and draw settlers throughout the nineteenth century. In 1910 some 39 mines were reported in the municipio of Lampazos producing silver, lead, zinc and iron. The latter was the important new product with the growing needs of Latin America’s first steel mill, Fundidora de Fierro y Acero in Monterrey, operating since 1902.

Following the mining frontier came the stockmen raising sheep, goats, cattle, and pigs in large number, particularly the former. With the ending of most of the Indian wars in the late 1870s and the coming of the railroad in 1882—the main line from Nuevo Laredo to Monterrey—Lampazos entered what native historian Ernesto Zertuche González described as “la bella epoca.” Rich miners and prosperous stockmen gave support to what became celebrated annual fairs, and visiting operas, zarzuelas, and dramas appeared in the elegant Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón (completed in 1892) while a Plaza de Toros functioned regularly. The ricos included native lampacenses such as the Naranjos and, increasingly, new men of wealth such as representatives of the Milmo and Ferrara families, builders of Fundidora, banks, and other economic interests in Monterrey. To Zertuche and other nostalgic lampacenses, all the grand life of Lampazos came crashing down when the Mexican Revolution arrived—a life never to be recovered. To the lampacenses of the time, however, “la bella epoca” was not so apparent and the coming and process of the Revolution for the most part found a people just trying to cope. They did not see their world collapsing. The Revolution brought indelible changes but at the time, paying a school teacher’s salary or lighting the plaza were the issues at hand.

The first contacts with the coming of the Mexican Revolution were felt early in Lampazos. Ing. Francisco Naranjo, son of the famed general, organized a club liberal in response to the anti reelectionista liberal movement organized in San Luis Potosí. General Bernardo Reyes, governor of Nuevo León, immediately moved firmly against this club, using the pretext of the club members burning a Judas on Good Friday, April 1, 1901, instead of the following Saturday. Naranjo, Luis G. Avila, César E. Canales, Carlos Zertuche, Luis Mario Benavides were among the members arrested and imprisoned for varying months. This action made Reyes a special villain to the developing Partido Liberal.
Mexicano. It also effectively suppressed political activism in Lampazos for a decade.8

Despite this early involvement with the precursor movement, the revolt launched by Francisco I. Madero in November 1910 had little effect in Lampazos. Francisco Naranjo had resurfaced heading up a maderista antireelectionista movement in 1909. At the time the Madero revolt itself came, Lampazos de Naranjo was a municipio of over 8500 inhabitants. Its schools enrolled more students than any city in the state except Monterrey.9 The students, their families, indeed most of the citizens of Lampazos seemed to go about their lives with little change as the aging Porfirio Díaz stepped aside in the Spring 1911. By August of that year a “Club Republicano de Nuevo León” was holding a meeting in the Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón to promote Madero’s certain victory in the upcoming presidencial election.10 A preview of some later revolutionary problems for Lampazos came when Ramón González, “El Aguililla”, assaulted and robbed a mezcal factory owner at the Hacienda of Golondrinas and claimed to be working for the maderista cause.11 Distinguishing between bandits and revolutionaries was sometimes no easy task.

Naranjo organized a volunteer group called the Auxiliares de Nuevo León to protect the area. Later with Madero in power Naranjo led forces against the counter revolt involving Benardo Reyes, his old antagonist. His success in these endeavors led to his being sent to Morelos to lead the forces against Emiliano Zapata, when that southern leader rose against Madero. Naranjo, with many lampacenses in his “regimiento irregular,” became military governor of Morelos. With the overthrow of Madero Naranjo continued to support Victoriano Huerta and would return to his native city in 1913 as a colonel in command of the Lampazos garrison.12

The years of Madero were calmer in Lampazos than they were in Morelos. To pass time, a December 1911 inventory of the public library revealed some 44 titles, although several were multi-volume sets, awaiting the curious citizenry. For the less literate, movies were being shown in the teatro—even some from Laredo, Texas. The Academia de Musica continued to offer training to the privileged youth of Lampazos.13
Along with the cultural life, political action heated up in 1912. A public rally in Lampazos supported Nemesio García Naranjo for deputy to the national congress. Both a Club Liberal Lampacense, led by some of the early liberals, and a Partido Constitucional Progresista, headed by local stockmen and store owners appeared. Along with increased political activity came concern about increased revolutionary activity. The instability of Madero’s regime threatened interests all over the republic. Even in Lampazos there was concern over Felix Díaz’s revolt in Vera Cruz. The key railroad points and mining centers in the municipio were of constant interest to the authorities in Monterrey.

The Revolution finally came to Lampazos in 1913. In February of that year, after the “Decena Trágica” in Mexico City, Madero was overthrown and murdered. Victoriano Huerta, the porfirista general, took over but faced immediate revolt in the north, led by Venustiano Carranza of Coahuila. Huerta named the elderly porfirista general, Gerónimo Treviño, interim governor of Nuevo León. It was Treviño who then appointed Naranjo to defend Lampazos. Naranjo sent a crew escorted by 80 armed men to repair some railroad bridges. They were driven back into Lampazos and on March 18, 1913, rebel forces under Alfredo Valdez unsuccessfully attacked the city. The revolutionaries in the area were under the general command of lampacense Pablo González Garza. One of the main goals was to cut the rail communications between Monterrey and Laredo. Having taken Bustamante and Villaldama, González and Jesús Carranza turned on Lampazos by late March. Naranjo commanded 200 soldiers, a smaller number of volunteers in a “Defensa Social,” and a few mounted guards from the customs service. He refused a request to surrender to avoid bloodshed, and on March 28 the attack began. The revolutionaries numbered about 500 and were led by Majors José E. Santos, Fortunato Zuazua, Alfred Ricaut, and Francisco Sánchez Barrera. Zuazua was a native of Lampazos—grandson of Juan Zuazua.

The attack began on March 28 and fighting was intense throughout that day and into the following. On the second day the defenders gave up the plaza and were able to flee to Sabinas without pursuit. In control the revolutionaries burned the railroad station for strategic reasons and burned a mill belonging to the Naranjo family,
probably a personal attack on the leader of the government forces. Sixty-three killed and 22 wounded was the cost of taking Lampazos. Naranjo’s losses were probably somewhat less, but severe. After three days the rebel forces moved on to the Bustamente-Candela area to better defend themselves against federal forces under General Trucy Aubert. The Huerta government felt it could not allow Nuevo Laredo, the “puerto fronterizo,” to fall into revolutionary hands. Huerta replaced Aubert with Joaquín Téllez, who took Villaldama and then marched on Lampazos. Téllez, with 700 men, four cannon, and three machine guns, attacked on June 15, 1913. Within a few hours the rebels, under Jesús Ramírez, Teodoro Elizondo, and others, were driven out of Lampazos.

Huertista forces controlled Nuevo Laredo and had 85 men at Estación Rodríguez, in the Lampazos municipio, to protect the bridge over the Río Salado. Francisco J. Múgica led an attack on the bridge but failed. By the end of 1913 the rebels were back in Ciudad Victoria and Lampazos and the rest of Nuevo León remained in federal hands. Lampazos had also seen all the real fighting it would see in the long years of the Revolution. In 1914 revolutionary, or more often termed, constitutional forces moved back into Nuevo León. Monterrey, naturally, was the key to controlling the area. In early May, González’s Army of the Northeast took the regiomontana capital and with it consolidated the victory in the northeast. With this victory too came significant changes in Lampazos.

The next year, 1915, the victorious revolutionary force split apart and plunged Mexico into a civil war of sorts. In the north carrancistas fought villistas (supporters of Francisco “Pancho” Villa). In April 1915 a villista force under General Orestes Pereyra came into Lampazos without opposition. The fact that carrancista generals González, Antonio I. Villarreal, Fortunato Zuazua, and Vidal Garza Pérez all hailed from Lampazos could not have escaped Pereyra. Before leaving, and ultimately facing defeat on the way to Nuevo Laredo, Pereyra’s troops burned the Teatro Juan Ignacio Ramón, apparently to punish this carrancista community. This was but a brief interlude in what was generally consistent support of Carranza from 1914 on in Lampazos.
The revolutionary activity that began in 1913 obviously affected the daily life of Lampazos. The military, whether federals of Huerta or constitutional forces under Carranza, controlled more of the daily life. The ayuntamiento changed reflecting significant changes in revolutionary fortunes, but it was many of the same shopkeepers and stockraisers in the main local government positions. Samuel Cantú and Juan Sobrevilla, two merchants, occupied the municipal presidency at one time or another over 1913. Through the year, with the federals in control, the city leaders dealt with numerous complaints of depredations by carrancistas. The Lecea brothers, for example, businessmen and stockmen at the Hacienda of Golondrinas, asked tax relief because of losses suffered in carrancista attacks.\(^{16}\)

With 1914 and the victory of the carrancistas in Nuevo León, the basic makeup of the city government changed little. The story was different in the countryside, however, and that became apparent very soon. Even in the city itself, the businessmen, well represented in the government, had to deal with the changing value of revolutionary currency. Just as the Army of the Northeast consolidated its position, Lampazos comerciantes were being told they had to remain open to supply necessities without altering prices and they had to accept the billetes in circulation.\(^{17}\)

While Pablo González commanded the Army of the Northeast, another lampacense, Antonio I. Villarreal, led the forces into Monterrey and stayed on as military governor. The Lampazos leaders had been quick to congratulate both native sons on every promotion, particularly since they were winning. Villarreal’s governorship left lasting impressions on all of Nuevo León. In two areas in particular, Villarreal forced more “revolutionary” positions on his countrymen. On June 23, 1914, Villarreal’s government published an agrarian decree to stimulate agrarian reform in Nuevo León. Less than a month later, July 14, 1914, came one of the strongest anti-clerical decrees yet produced by the Mexican struggle.\(^{18}\)

The agrarian decree caused considerable consternation among the landed interests, who were already feeling some of the effects of dislocations caused by the fighting around Lampazos. Felix Valdés led the commission to see to the distribution of lands
and waters. No more than three and one half hectaras were to be distributed to individuals. Valdés said there was sufficient water in Lampazos and the Haciendas of Dolores and El Carmen to support the land distributed. This work went on through the summer and the fall, or until Villarreal left the area. The Jefe de las Armas, Col. José E. Santos was called on to provide soldiers to accompany the commission members. Complaints about the program from prominent citizens such as Fortunato Zuazua of El Carmen and others abounded, but there seemed to be a sincere effort to carry out Villarreal’s program. By August 15, 1914, 131 1/2 hectaras of land had been distributed, 122 1/2 of them irrigable land.19

Agrarian problems were severe in the municipio. Even before the Villarreal decree, Regidor Plutarco González asked the ayuntamiento to aid the farmers in the area by appropriating $500 (pesos) to be distributed $20 per agricultor for seed. Col. Santos, calling for more support for the Constitutional Army as well as the people of Lampazos, urged that the Molina de Maiz y Trigo be put back in operation. Miguel Ferrara Volpe was the principal owner and a key member of the Ferrara-Bortoni families who had extensive interests in Monterrey as well as Lampazos. Graciano Bortoni y Cía was for many years the largest commercial operation in Lampazos, representing also the Milmo interests. The families were not generally seen as keen supporters of the Revolution.20

Some of these actions and reactions resulted in a growing revolutionary fervor. In September Regidor González delivered a long discourse arguing that the ayuntamiento had been passive and servile during the porfirian dictatorship, González said the Constitutional Revolution gave an opportunity for action, particularly to help the community. Of prime concern to González was the fact that ejido lands had been sold off in the past to benefit the few. He proposed that maldistributed ejidos be turned over to service of the community. His proposals were accepted.21 Plutarco González’s call for action on the ejidos made front page news in La Revolución, Diario de la Mañana in Monterrey.22

Villarreal’s anti-clerical decree generated excitement throughout Nuevo León and had substantial repercussions in Lampazos.23 Before the decree, the Villarreal government instructed alcaldes in the state that all priests who refused to turn
over keys to churches were to be expelled. It was further suggested burning the confessional might produce the keys. Juan Sobrevilla, while alcalde primero, received direct instructions from Villarreal to send a Lampazos priest on the first train to Laredo with an order to leave the country.24 Greater problems arose over the confiscation of property from the Colegio de Sagrado Corazón for use in the public schools of the municipio. These actions led to conflicts in the cabildo with José María Cárdenas calling one-time alcalde primero Celso Canales a reactionary and an obstructionist. Protracted debate and discussion ensued over the colegio’s piano and other objects said to be hidden in Graciano Bortoni’s house. As the argument went on United States Consul Philip C. Hanna protested that the property of the Colegio de Sagrado Corazón belonged to the Incarnate Word College of San Antonio, Texas. Hanna stated that the piano was being cared for by Bortoni and he asked that it be allowed to remain there. The Lampazos officials replied that under the Laws of the Reform neither national or foreign associations could have private property in the Convento. It was national property.25 There the matter rested, although Bortoni fled the country for a time. The fugitive piano passed into other hands.

The difficulties Villarreal’s decrees caused in Lampazos were not noticed when the native son came to visit in August 1914. Citizens of all political persuasions contributed to the costs of a reception as well as the expenses of Col. Santos in going to Monterrey to arrange the visit. Bortonis, Sobrevillas, Zertuches, and practically all the commercial interests were on the donation list. Villarreal came with an entourage of fifty on a special train from Monterrey. Along with this group came 100 kilos of ice and plenty of Indio Beer. Budweiser, Schlitz, and 26 bottles of red wine were brought from Laredo, Texas. The carne puerco, tamales, cabrito and the like were produced locally.26 Soon Villarreal would be off to the Convention of Aguascalientes and Lampazos would not see many benefits of their extravagant entertainment.

After the Convention in Aguascalientes failed to resolve the differences among the revolutionaries a state of civil war developed. As mentioned Lampazos had only one brief, destructive visit from the villistas but deteriorating conditions throughout the country affected the municipio. Money woes grew more serious, with rival
forces issuing and canceling currencies with great frequency. Life went on in Lampazos as C. Holck and Company of Monterrey was contracted to light the plaza and make other improvements. Roque Garza of Monterrey got the contract to build the kiosk. The economic problems associated with short term native son governors became apparent later in 1915. Samuel Cantú informed the ayuntamiento in September that Villarreal had authorized public school repairs in Lampazos the previous year. Bessén Rodríguez y Cía of Monterrey did the work for $10,000 (pesos). Villarreal left for the final time in January 1915, without arranging any funds. The ayuntamiento then turned to another local-boy-made-good, Pablo González, for a donation. They received some aid from him.

Financial problems grew throughout 1915. Hiring and paying policemen was difficult. A continuing concern was maintaining the schools and paying the teachers. Books and other school supplies came from dealers such as Daniel Montero and C. Holck in Monterrey. Taxes on many of the things the city could tax, such as retail sales, were set from above and could not be changed. The cabildo raised fees for patentes to sell liquor, tobacco, milk, and many other items. City revenues also came from the operation of slaughterhouses. Registration fees for “mujeres públicas” were enforced. The old wood from the decaying city-owned Plaza de Toros brought in $275.40 While the regidores wrestled with the issue of paying for schools, they also insisted eligible lampacenses attend those schools. Fines were levied for non-attendance.28

Even though the Villa-Carranza conflict continued for a time in 1915, Lampazos stayed solidly with Carranza. The ayuntamiento proclaimed the government of Don Venustiano Carranza as the only legal government in the Republic. However, it was not until December that Carranza’s land reform decrees from Vera Cruz the previous January took any effect in Lampazos. Most of what was done was simply surveying the ejidos to determine the property rights.29 Still the revolutionary upheaval drove some of the 1910 elite to temporary exile. Miguel Ferrara Volpe was another prominent temporary resident in Laredo in this period.30 Many of the same problems continued through 1916: setting and collecting patentes; salaries for teachers; salaries for police. The
economic difficulties and monetary uncertainty associated with Carranza’s regime affected the municipio of Lampazos as it did every other part of the Republic. By November municipal employees were demanding payment in money “metallica”. The federal government maintained close to 100 troops in the municipio in 1916 but the local authorities had to bear much of the expense of maintaining the troops. Further evidence of the continued breakdown of everyday life in Lampazos appeared throughout 1916. In January representatives of the Milmo interests complained to the Nuevo León government that fences were cut and stock run in to graze their land. A junta was established to sell maize to the public. Patentes continued to increase and some merchants were complaining about the clandestine sale of liquor by non-licensed dealers. On the other hand, the Jefe de las Armas was threatening fines if the merchants continued raising their prices. If there was not enough to worry about, the governor’s secretary needed to know in mid 1916 how many men, arms, horses, saddles, and ammunition Lampazos could supply in the event of war with the United States. The year ended on a low note with alcalde primero José María Cárdenas fatally wounded in a personal altercation at the Lampazos railroad station.

Bandoleros arrived on the scene in 1917. Court records reveal a great increase in robberies, escapes from jail, and incidents connected with increasing banditry. Ranches in the municipio were attacked by well known bandoleros such as Rafael Hinojosa. Hinojosa boldly entered Lampazos alone one spring day and then eluded the soldiers and police who pursued him. Lucio Vidaurri, Nicolás “El Mechudo” Benavides, and Miguel Hinojosa were among other well known bandits. Some banditry was associated with continued revolutionary action, but most was simply robbery with no pretense of other causes.

The population of the municipio declined with the breakdown of law and order. Between 6000 and 7000 people resided in the municipio in 1917 according to several estimates. Included in the jurisdiction of Lampazos were six haciendas and 80 ranchos producing maize and wheat along with the varied livestock. Some hacienda lands were fairly well divided up before the Revolution, but now many were overrun with squatters. The Patricio Milmo
holdings had been taken over by small stockmen. Leopoldo Naranjo was holding on to Dolores for the family. He also continued to operate the Naranjo’s mining interests. Other prominent mining entrepreneurs of long standing were the Graciano Bortoni interests, who also operated one of the four mills in Lampazos. A new miner rising to prominence was Epigmenio Ayarzagoitia. There were fifteen foreigners living in Lampazos—the prominent Italians as well as some natives of Germany, Wales, Ireland, and the United States.

The school situation worsened through 1917, and reached a crisis point in early 1918. Adding to the misery was a smallpox epidemic beginning in late 1917. Sixty-six deaths resulted—51 in January 1918 alone—and hardest hit were the very young. The schools closed, partly because of the epidemic and partly because the teachers had not been paid since November. The new ayuntamiento which took office on January 1, 1918, blamed the previous government for the problems and looked to the state government to resolve them. The state government agreed to pay the December salaries and the teachers returned to work. However, in February, classes were consolidated, assisting teachers let go, and salaries reduced. Cristóbal Cárdenas, the head teacher whose salary was cut to $100 a month, made it clear he would not return to Lampazos in the fall 1918 unless his salary was raised to $125 oro nacional. Cárdenas did not return. The Nuevo León director general of education hired Ramón Osuna, a Monterrey business school director, to replace Cárdenas at $100, payable in oro americano if there was no oro nacional. Pablo González sent $200 to assist the schools. It was a struggle but Lampazos consistently fought to keep the schools of the municipio operating.

In August 1918 Fermin Garza Pérez, prominent citizen and several times member of the ayuntamiento, was murdered near his home by Ignacio Cárdenas. The Cárdenas family was also prominent in Lampazos. The murder was an outgrowth of a feud from the year before which had already seen Rafael Cárdenas, the father of Ignacio, lose an arm. With such lawlessness among the leaders of Lampazos an invitation from the International Immigration Company of San Antonio, Texas, that same August must have tempted less prominent lampacenses. It offered $1.75 a
day and $1 per hundred pounds for picking cotton. Industrial workers were held out the possibility of earning $5.00 or more a day. It is not known if there were applicants but the ayuntamiento publicized the offer.\textsuperscript{42}

The bandolero problem also worsened in 1918, especially through the summer and fall. Attacks continued on area ranches where the bandits often made off with horses and saddles as well as weapons. Attacks on mining headquarters increased. In June a group of ten armed and mounted men assaulted and robbed the Fundidora de Fierro y Acero company at Piedra Imán, one of the largest operations in the municipio. It was hit again in October. Bandolero activity remained heavy, actually for several years.\textsuperscript{43}

By the end of 1918 Lampazos seemed to be staggering through difficult times to even more difficult times. The problems did not go away in the subsequent years. Lampazos de Naranjo experienced what many small northern communities experienced in the 1920s and 1930s. The other communities did not have “la bella epoca” and “los hombres ilustres” to look back on, so perhaps that made things a bit harder on the lampacenses. Increasingly, moreover, the Revolution came to be viewed more in terms of what various lampacenses contributed to it, not by what difference it made in Lampazos. Lack of funds, lands being overrun, mines playing out, bandoleros here and there, all contributed to a population concerned mostly with surviving from day to day. It is perhaps symbolic of waning revolutionary fervor in Lampazos that in 1918 the ayuntamiento was considering trying to rent that famous piano of Sagrado Corazón for use in its Escuela de Niñas.\textsuperscript{44}
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