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**The Bracero Program and the Migration from Michoacán to Oregon: 1942-
1995**

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Migration patterns of Mexicans to the United States have been occurring since the beginning of the United States in 1776. However, the migration of Mexicans swiftly grew in the beginning of the 20th century due to the increasing availability of industrialized labor jobs. By 1930, Mexican men and women alike were the third largest racial group only behind Anglos and Blacks in the United States.¹ World War I in 1917 was the first official time where Mexican's, primarily men, migrated by governmental policy to work in the United States.² American men left the United States to fight in World War I, which left farmers across the West Coast and southern states in need of cheap labor to satisfy the increasing demand for produce. After the war, Mexicans were sent back to their homes in Mexico. The important information to consider is that there is several past migration patterns of Mexican's to the United States. This is significant because it shows people from Mexico have had long lasting and ever changing migration patterns to the United States that have had an underlining affect in the migration patterns being examined. Historians such as Erasmo Gamboa have extensively studied Mexican migration to the United States. Gamboa and other historian's note World War I started the first large migration of Mexicans to the United States. Apart from World War I, World War II has become the main starting point for historians' evaluation in understanding current Mexican migration because it offers a large migration pattern from Mexico to the United States that had never been seen before in the history of either country. This thesis pursues the connections of migrants from a specific state in Mexico called Michoacán to the state of Oregon since World

¹ Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

² While this is the only book currently footnoted, many books in discussion of the Bracero Program reference in short detail that in WWI the US did have a much smaller scale of immigrants come to the US. Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

War II and the social, economic, and political issues Michoacán has faced that make them linked to Oregon.

Oregon has interestingly since World War II become linked to the state of Michoacán in Mexico. This thesis paper will evaluate what has made Oregon a destination for these people since the inception of a dual government ran program known as the Bracero Program. This program functioned primarily during World War II as a large migration effort to send Mexican men to the United States and help with the increased agricultural needs during war. I argue the connection of Michoacán migrants to Oregon since World War II seems initially simple to understand but the social, political and economic history of this state in Mexico shows there is an ongoing and clear shift of migration to Oregon that extends beyond World War II and the Bracero Program. The conclusion of this thesis is an analysis of the political, social, and economic issues in Michoacán with interviews that were performed by me in that I argue there has been a shift of migration to Oregon that is more influential and long lasting that far surpasses the Bracero Program migration.

The interviewees I use as proof that economic burdens in Michoacán and social connections to Oregon from family and friends has spurred a long lasting migration to Oregon. I assert in the conclusion that social connections to Oregon and economic downfalls in Michoacán are the cause for the shift and ongoing migration to Oregon of not only men, but women, children and families. Political shifts of neo-liberalism have caused great economic suffering for Michoacán citizens. Drug violence and cartel control has also ruled in Michoacán for the latter half of the 20th century. Issues like these and many others will be evaluated in each political, social, and economic section to further the connection of Michoacán to Oregon beyond the Bracero Program. Mexicans are currently the largest minority group in Oregon and hopefully this

paper sheds light on explaining their various migration patterns to Oregon in a more bottom to top look by examining their political, social, economic burdens that have occurred since the latter half of the 20th century.

Michoacán:

Michoacán is a state in South West Mexico. For most of this state's history, Michoacán has been primarily agriculturally based. Most of the months out of the season are filled with radiant sun where the rainy season is from June to October that has allowed Michoacán to be a fertile agriculturally based economy. Many of Michoacán's landscapes of mountains, fertile land, and seasons have similarities to those of Oregon's. The original inhabitants of Michoacán were of Native American descent. The Natives were called Purepechas and had a majority of the control of Michoacán and were actually one of the few tribes to resist the Spaniards during the Spanish Conquest of Mexico in the 16th Century. Many of the characteristics that described Michoacán during the Spanish Conquest continue to hold validity to this day.

Michoacán is still a significantly rural state and many of the citizens live in towns outside of the main cities like the capitol Morelia. Many of these rural towns function primarily to support farm work and field labor. In these rural towns many of the farms are small scale and are owned and run by the families themselves. Since a majority of the citizens are generally labor workers in fields, Michoacán and Oregon in this way can relate since the Pacific Northwest states of the United States in particular have been widely agricultural and labor intensive states. Throughout almost 100 years, a connection from the West Coast states of the United States and Mexico has had a profound effect on the migration of people from Michoacán to Oregon. With

the past and continuing issues of drug violence and drug related crimes in Michoacán, some historians have researched this as one of the many themes in explaining Michoacán people migrating to Oregon.

The drug issues in Michoacán are not to be ignored, as Michoacán has developed into one of the most dangerous drug states in Mexico. The drug violence in Michoacán plays a role in magnifying the immigration of Mexicans out of Michoacán and into a place they have already heard of from family or friends, Oregon. But for much of Michoacán's history, it remained a quiet rural state where it had many small towns filled with beauty and hard working people. Because of the growing drug trafficking in Mexico and only worsening after NAFTA was enacted in 1993, many drug cartel leaders have chosen Michoacán historically as the state to reside in. The state has many rural areas for the drug leaders to build their mansions and operate with little police interaction. Many of the police are simply paid off thus allowing many drug traffickers to function without abiding by the law, which only amplified the drug issues in Michoacán.

Michoacán is located relatively close to Mexico City and Guadalajara, making it a perfect hub for drug cartels.³ More recently, the port called Lazaro Cardenas has also played a huge role in bringing in a large amount of drugs from South America and also shipping them out.⁴ As the rural areas of Michoacán are intriguing for drug cartels, the port and its easy access to large cities in Mexico has also caused a large growth of drug activity to function in Michoacán. Rural mining of ore and iron have been extracted in very complicated routes and

³ Jerjes Aguirre, and Hugo Herrera. "Institutional weakness and organized crime in Mexico: the case of Michoacán." *Trends In Organized Crime* 16, no. 2 (June 2013): 221-238. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 1, 2017), 224.

⁴ Aguirre, *the case of Michoacán*, 224.

sent to the port of Lazaro, where the distribution of drugs is simultaneously sent around Michoacán. Multinational corporations are responsible for the extradition of many of these natural resources. The communal lands are extracted of their crops and forced to the port to be shipped to either China or India and the process is forced by armed groups that simultaneously move the drugs around that arrive from the port as well.⁵ The issues of armed forces and drugs have caused fear in many of the citizens in Michoacán. The economy has been negatively affected by the extradition of all these resources in Michoacán that has only made life for rural people more difficult.

For people to fully understand the issues happening directly in Oregon with Mexicans, what has been happening in Michoacán over the same period is just as important to understand. Many of the Mexicans from Michoacán that now reside in Oregon have been dealing with the above issues of drugs their whole lives. Where poverty and then drugs became the norm for Mexicans in Michoacán, why would they not want to move to Oregon where they all hear how there are jobs and an opportunity for a new life? As an interviewee in an oral interview stated, “my state always had drug issues but now it is worse with the cartels being so big and dangerous. My town was not so bad when I left [there were] no jobs or no money.”⁶ To many, the lack of research and knowledge to fully grasp this phenomenon of current Mexican workers in the United States and in Oregon in particular has been a reoccurring issue stated by many historians who have studied Mexican immigration to the Pacific Northwest since the Bracero Program.

⁵ Salvador Maldonado Aranda, "You don't see any violence here but it leads to very ugly things': forced solidarity and silent violence in Michoacán, Mexico." *Dialectical Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (June 2014): 153-171, Accessed May 1, 2017, <https://ezproxy.wou.edu:4368/article/10.1007/s10624-014-9335-4>, 156 Aranda, 156.

⁶ Martin Salinas, Written Interview.

WWI is a small glimpse that all historians studying these migration patterns shortly discuss and is firstly examined in the political section.

Political

No connection to Mexican-American migration in World War I beyond the economic aid they gave to farmers around the United States had been previously studied by scholars. The lack of deep research of World War I Mexican migrant workers continued into World War II when Mexicans were re-invited to work in farms across the United States and, more exclusively, in the Pacific Northwest. This is brought up because every history discussing the topic of the Bracero Program rightfully make claims to World War I in 1917 as the first initial time the United States and Mexico made an agreement to send Mexicans to work in the United States agricultural sector. This is discussed because the first agreement in World War I laid the ideas and framework to what would be the Bracero Program of World War II in 1942. The lack of class, social, and economic studies of the Pacific Northwest in regards to the Bracero Program though has resulted in an unknown understanding of the current largest minority group in Oregon. The preliminary history of Michoacán migrants to Oregon in a larger historical context begins rightfully so in World War II with the creation of the Bracero Program in 1942.

The Bracero Program is the first major governmental initiative of World War II that legally allowed Mexicans to come to the United States and work as laborers, hence the name Bracero (meaning working with your hands). The outcry by United States farm owners across the nation insisted that they would be in a state of disarray and lack of labor once able bodied

men who otherwise would have been laborers in the farms would leave for the war.⁷ This policy helped balance out the absence of working men that left the United States to fight in World War II. The Bracero Program lasted far longer than it was originally meant to. The Bracero Program officially concluded in 1947, but US farmers continued to bring Mexicans across the border to work for them. In other words, the Bracero Program was functioning unofficially for roughly 4 years from 1947 to 1951. After 1951, as the Bracero Program archive website notes, the United States amended Public Law 78 to extend the Bracero Program once again and was extended until 1964.⁸ Michoacán migrants to Oregon since World War II begins with governmental policies of both the United States and Mexico and then revolves around the social and economic aspects of Michoacán. The development of the migration patterns of Mexicans to the United States has been ongoing since before the inception of the US. Many of the beginning migrating patterns of Mexicans had been informal in comparison to mid 20th century migration to the US, however, it is important to note, whether small or large, the migration of Mexicans to the United States has not been a new phenomena, but due to the specifics of this paper, this discourse will begin in 1942 with the Bracero Program and a quote from the Bracero Program archive website.

The Bracero Program was created by executive order in 1942 because many growers argued that World War II would bring labor shortages to low-paying agricultural jobs. On August 4, 1942 the United States concluded a temporary intergovernmental agreement for the use of Mexican agricultural labor on United States farms (officially referred to as the Mexican Farm Labor Program).⁹

⁷ Otey M Scuggs, "Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942." *Agricultural History* 34, no. 3 (1960): 140-49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3740146>.

⁸ This website gives a fairly thorough look at the Bracero Program and offers various information in regards to the Program. University of Texas at El Paso, "The Bracero Program Archive" Accessed April 1, 2018, <http://braceroarchive.org/about>.

⁹ University of Texas at El Paso, "The Bracero Program Archive" Accessed April 1, 2018, <http://braceroarchive.org/about>.

The Bracero Program initially was highly favorable in the Pacific Northwest since a majority of the farm labor needed was in the Pacific Northwest. Yet, like most historians studying this region like Gamboa note, little justice has been served in providing a thorough historical analysis of Oregon's (and the Pacific Northwest's in general) current largest minority group. Gamboa has done extensive research in regards to Mexicans and the Pacific Northwest and helps greatly in my research when looking at Mexicans in the Pacific Northwest during the Bracero Program.

For example, in one of Gamboa's books he notes that the Bracero Program in the Pacific Northwest contracted roughly 21% of the bracero workers and fell behind only California in sheer numbers.¹⁰ While aspects of the Bracero Program did not directly mention or include the Pacific Northwest in many cases, states like Oregon held the 2nd highest number of bracero workers only behind California. This is important to note because the over 1500 braceros that came to Oregon from 1943 to 1947 offer an understanding in how many ended up calling Oregon their home due to the increased economic struggles that existed in their home towns of Michoacán.

Many details of the braceros' lives, in regards to exploitation and discrimination across the states, has been glossed over by scholars with what has been a more important factor to consider for some in that the workers helped the United States become extremely successful in its agricultural output. From 1943 to 1947, braceros in the Pacific Northwest harvested 40% of the sugar, 60% of pears and peas, and 50% of the apples.¹¹ From the creation of the Bracero

¹⁰ Erasmo Gamboa has done a wide array of research in regards to the Pacific Northwest. His pursue in developing books and photographic entries of the Pacific Northwest during the Bracero Program have helped fill many blanks that have been left by fellow historians. In many regards he has done the most extensive research of the pacific Northwest and Latino-Chicano livelihood there. Erasmo Gamboa, *"Mexican Labor and World War II : Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947."* 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, 129.

¹¹ Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza. *Mexicanos in Oregon Their Stories, Their Lives.* Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010.

Program in 1942 until its completely official cancellation in 1964, implications of worker exploitation had become rampant across the United States. This is important to look into in regards to Michoacán migration to Oregon because, despite the exploitation and discrimination the men faced on the farms, they still chose to continue to migrate to the United States.

Historian Erasmo Gamboa, who has done extensive historical work of the Pacific Northwest in regards to Mexican migration during the Bracero Program states, “[...] the braceros were generally treated worse than the Italian and German prisoners of war held in northwestern farm labor camps.[...] Protected by the Geneva Convention, they were better treated by their guards than employers treated the braceros.”¹² While Gamboa did not study the migration of Michoacán migrants to the Pacific Northwest, he has done great photographic work depicting decades of the Bracero Program and many of the hard facts of the braceros lives in the Pacific Northwest. What was initially an intergovernmental agreement between the US and Mexico quickly became a regime of exploitation of the Mexican workers who chose to enter the US. Several accounts of Mexican individuals during the Bracero Program can testify to the exploitation and discrimination one faced as a bracero. Jesus Calderon, a bracero in 1951 states, “after several days without food, the sandwich tasted like glory [...] In the farms we would do anything, although our permit was to pick cotton only.[...] I worked four months, seven days a week, at least 12 hours every day and I took home almost \$300 dollars.”¹³ Although this is only the account of one man, it shows the extreme hardships braceros faced and yet they still chose to

¹²Gamboa, *Braceros in the Pacific Northwest*, 129.

¹³ Although this individual did not specifically work in the Pacific Northwest, the working conditions across the nation were one of exploitation and discrimination. “Testimony from a ‘bracero,’” Assessed April 5 2018, <http://www.farmworkers.org/testmony.html>.

come because it meant something better than what was at home for them. This example is only magnified in regards to Michoacán braceros because they were faced with even worse economic issues that further led to migration in the decades after the Bracero Program.

From the moment the braceros entered the United States, they were faced with a lack of food and placed in line like a slave and thrown white powder on to “kill the Mexican flea” and wait to be picked by the farmers to work on their land.¹⁴ The exploitation and discrimination that the braceros faced cannot be ignored when discussing the role of Michoacán Mexicans to Oregon because, despite the grueling conditions the braceros were faced with, they still chose to come back to work in the United States well after the Bracero Program. From 1942 to 1949, over 60 percent of all previously contracted braceros obtained visas to re-enter the states. As Gamboa states, “the current population of Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest, as well as in many other parts of the nation, had its genesis in the U.S. conceived and sponsored bracero program of WWII.”¹⁵

Although the formal contract of the Bracero Program prohibited such exploitation through its written agreement with Mexico, such cases were more than common.¹⁶ The Mexican officials during the Bracero Program worked tirelessly to make sure their civilians were being treated fairly, but a complete lack of resources in providing those protections were more than apparent. For Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Montana for example, only two inspectors, who

¹⁴ The men were lined up after coming to the United States and were thrown a white powder over them as stated to “kill the Mexican flea”. Although only one account is looked at, it is still significant in showing the racism that the braceros were faced with. “Testimony from a Bracero”

¹⁵ Gamboa, 131.

¹⁶ This website shows the actual notes that were passed on by the United States government and Mexico respectively as the Bracero Program was being finalized between both nations. Each country laid out a framework of a list of what the United States had to offer the Mexican immigrants who were participating in the Bracero Program. But as noted, many of these protections guaranteed were not efficiently maintained and protected for the workers. “The Official Bracero Agreement” August 4th 1942 <http://www.farmworkers.org/bpaccord.html>.

were stationed in Portland, monitored the braceros in those areas thus allowing the farmers to be in control of virtually every aspect of the braceros' life, from pay to work, due to a lack of overseers to ensure the braceros rights were being met.¹⁷ To reinstate and continue the Bracero Program and to attempt to better monitor and protect the braceros, Public Law 78 in 1951 was passed. Public Law 78 had been formally amended in 1951 into the Agricultural Act of 1949.¹⁸

The Agricultural Act of 1949 initially formalized various roles of the United States government in regards to its resources in the agricultural sector. The Agricultural Act as a whole is a framework still in place with several amendments of different policies in regards to the agricultural sector in the United States. When passed in 1949 by Harry S. Truman, the act allowed the US government to supply other friendly nations in need with various food commodities such as corn, soy, milk or other agricultural staples that the US generally had a surplus of. It provides various initiatives now, like school lunch programs. In its inception, it provided what also was a growing issue in the agricultural sector by 1950, which was the stabilizing of prices of agricultural commodities throughout the states.¹⁹ The Agricultural Act of 1949 was used by the government in 1951 to formally address the Bracero Program by amending it into the act as stated in the previous paragraph with Law 78.

Back to addressing Law 78, what had been an agreement by the United States and Mexican governments through an executive order in 1942, almost a decade had went by before

¹⁷ This practice was unfortunately fairly common across the board. Gamboa notes with the large amount of braceros that were coming into the United States during the Bracero Program, the resources for inspecting all the farms and making sure they were providing the rights they should have was doomed to fail from the start. Gamboa, 53.

¹⁸ 82nd Congress, S. 984; Pub.L. 82-78; 65 Stat. 119, *Public Law 78*, Accessed April 1 2018, <http://library.uwb.edu/Static/USimmigration/65%20stat%20119.pdf>.

¹⁹ 81st Cong. 1st sess CHS, 791, 792, Oct 31 1949, Accessed on April 3rd 2018, <http://www.legisworks.org/congress/81/publaw-439.pdf>

the United States formally addressed and amended the immigration of Mexicans to the United States to aid in agricultural work. Some skeptics of the time felt it was merely a way for the US farms to allow low wage work and thus increase profit.²⁰ And so with the coming of the Korean War, some argued it played in perfectly for the United States to consider continuing with the cheap labor the Mexicans gave the farmers. The farmers also enjoyed in the extremely cheap and productive work the braceros and Mexican immigrants as a whole provided for them. Public Law 78 in the Agricultural Act of 1949 became the formal acceptance by the United States government through an amendment. Interestingly enough, many Pacific Northwest farmers, due to high costs of transportation and other responsibilities given to them through Public law 78, began recruiting, not from Mexico, but merely from the South of the United States. In many ways, this helped offset the expenses the farmers would face if they had traditionally received them from Mexico because they were required to provide transportation to and from wherever the farmer had them working. Public Law 78 as a whole continued the process of emigrating Mexicans from Mexico to the United States for agricultural labor, but also became a far reaching policy to try to continue to protect what had been an onslaught of agricultural exploitation by the farm owners across the United States. As an attempt to see the more direct connections to the Bracero Program now in relation to Michoacán migration to Oregon, Historian Josh Reichert becomes one of the first historians to study this mass migration of Mexicans and does so in a top to bottom perspective in that he uses the Bracero Program as a framework for his research.

The numbers in his studies of Mexican migrants going to the United States are staggering and directly correlate to the beginning of the Bracero Program and onward. Reichert, in his study of a rural town in Michoacán, examines specific towns in Michoacán and the numbers of people

²⁰ Scruggs, *Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor*, 140-149.

there that migrated to the United States beginning in 1940.²¹ In Reichert's research, he made the connection that the majority of workers from Michoacán and, more specifically, this town called "Guadalupe" (the name has been changed for privacy of the people living in this town) were strictly agricultural laborers. Through the Bracero Program, which allowed migrants from Mexico to legally work in agriculture in the United States, strictly men of working age left their respective town and, up until 1965, not a single woman left "Guadalupe" to the United States.²² There is even a development in Reichert's methodology over a ten year period. In this ten year period, he went a step further with his research and continued his research of the rural town until 1975 and made further discoveries.

After 1964, which is the end of the Bracero Program, there begins to be a drastic shift in the demographics from this town. As women and children began migrating to the United States, Reichert made the connection that they were migrating there to be with their husbands and/or laborer siblings who had stayed in the United States after the Bracero Program ended. This matches up with Gamboa's research in that over 60% of the men who participated in the Bracero Program ended up getting a visa to return to the United States. What was thought of as a temporary migration by the United States quickly became an exponentially growing migration, because now wives and children were coming to join their men. Reichert's research, however, ends up being a strict analysis of migration of Michoacán's people from a specific rural town and no conclusions are directly made in regards to any other results besides the stemming Bracero Program as the leading cause for the migration. Reichert's research identified and provided a

²¹ Josh Reichert, and Douglas S. Massey, "History and Trends in U.S. Bound Migration from a Mexican Town." *International Migration Review* 14, no. 4, (1980): 475-91.

²²Reichert, *History and Trends*, 477.

layout and framework of how the Bracero Program extended migration into the United States well into the 1970s, however, he lacks key information that could further make an argument of the increase of Michoacán migrants to the United States through social, cultural, and economic means. His only argument of increased migration to the United States stemmed from his research in relation to the Bracero Program, but other historians have looked at the social and economic situations Michoacán people have undergone that make them specifically susceptible to migrating to the United States.

Reichert makes the initial credit of the explanation of the migration to the Bracero Program. Being one of the first historians to look at this migration pattern, he does not look at any other methodologies besides the governmental impact of policy. While some quantitative research is developed in his work, no analysis to social history or the importance of the family or individual is mentioned in his argument of the increasing migration of Michoacán immigrants to Oregon. His ten year development that goes into 1975 does begin to offer a more social conclusion onto why women and children from Michoacán began to migrate to the US. And, as noted earlier, the Pacific Northwest held more bracero workers than the rest of the United States besides California, so naturally more of these migrants from Michoacán would be destined to be going to Oregon.

From 1942 to 1947, over 47,000 Mexicans are documented have went to the Pacific Northwest to work in the fields.²³ Mexicans from as early as World War II were sent up because they were in need by the United States government in order to make sure our food was being

²³ Lise Nelson, "Farmworker Housing and Spaces of Belonging in Woodburn, Oregon." *Geographical Review* 97, no. 4 (October 2007): 520-541, accessed May 1, 2017, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, 523.

cultivated. This early connection created a pathway from Mexico to the West Coast. Naturally, farm workers from Michoacán were drawn to work on the West Coast, where many chose to reside the rest of their lives.²⁴ Many towns in Oregon have now become highly populated with Latinos; one which will be looked at is Woodburn, Oregon.

Woodburn, Oregon is now a city that is over 50 percent Hispanic.²⁵ This unique city did not grow into this highly Hispanic city overnight, as Lisa Nelson notes in her research; many of the origins of cities in Oregon like Woodburn were first started from the Bracero Program.²⁶ Many Mexicans were beginning to move to the Pacific Northwest and were eventually permanently choosing to stay there in contrast to staying just for the harvesting seasons.²⁷ After Oregon stopped participating in the Bracero Program, which was around 1947, the white farmers in Oregon continued to hire illegally undocumented Mexicans. World War II had ended and many of the men returned home; however, the agricultural labor force, like in Woodburn, continued to be virtually only Mexican.²⁸ The white farm and field owners had huge incentives to hire only Mexicans. The farm owners were able to hire Mexican workers and hire them for far less pay than what they were paying whites to work the fields. In a sense, the relationship had become a success for both sides because the farm owners were able to drastically reduce expenses by having such a cheap labor force, and the Mexicans were thankful to have a job and make more money than what they would have in their respective homes in Mexico. This process continued through the last half of the 20th Century. Mexicans at greater numbers were migrating

²⁴ Ibid, 523.

²⁵ Ibid, 520- 541.

²⁶ Ibid, 523.

²⁷ The continued "Ibid" is due to the fact that the whole article can and should be referenced when making these footnotes. Ibid, 520- 541.

²⁸ Ibid, 520-541.

to Oregon and they were able to work on rural farms and fields without ever seeing any police or anyone that would deport them back to Mexico. Woodburn was a destination for Mexicans and has continued to be because of its location. The highest level of farm work in Oregon is located at accessible distances from Woodburn. Mexicans mapped out that they could spend a lot of time in Woodburn working the fields in on and off seasons and could drive to Hood River or to Washington to engage in other field work, but still reside in Woodburn as their residence.²⁹ This interesting migration relates to Mexican migration as a whole because this was happening across Oregon, and as we now know, a large majority of those Mexicans have come from Michoacán.³⁰

However, Reichert argues that the initial passing of the Bracero Program is a leading cause of the continuing migration but does little to offer where those people were specifically migrating. Other slightly more recent historians take a different approach such as Wayne Cornelius, who focuses on social, economic, and cultural shifts of Michoacán as being important motives for the migration of people from Michoacán to Oregon.

Social Implications:

Wayne Cornelius looks at the social advancements Mexicans made after the Bracero Program that fueled the increase of migrants from places like Michoacán to the United States. While Reichert used the Bracero Program as the main focus of his research and lacked research investigating the average family and cultural shifts of the people, Cornelius saw a direct correlation of social structures within Mexican towns that fueled and continued the migration of

²⁹ Ibid, 520-541.

³⁰ Ibid, 521

Mexicans well into the 1980s.³¹ The common theme in these Mexican towns was connections of friends and family that lived in the United States, where 95 percent of the people from these towns knew someone in their community who migrated to the United States.³²

Cornelius made his research nearly nine years after Reichert's, in 1989. He begins to introduce aspects of economic history as a leading cause for Michoacán people to migrate to the US. He examines rural Mexican communities, mainly in Michoacán. His study takes a bottom to top look at the motives for reasons behind migration instead of using a strictly governmental perspective. So, unlike Reichert's history of the policies enacted by the United States and Mexican governments causing migration, nine years later, Cornelius emphasizes local conditions. He looks at the cultural history of these people and why they might be more inclined to migrate out of Michoacán. Cornelius argues that a shift in the mindset and motives for immigration changed. He believed a better lifestyle was more than guaranteed for them if they migrated to the United States.³³

Cornelius argues that the past experiences family members and relatives migrating to the United States had been the driving force in continued migration of Mexicans to the United States. The lack of a concrete connection and conclusion of his arguments through not explicitly discussing political history of the Bracero Program or other political history influences leave a hole in explaining the ever complicated answers to this migration. Reichert, however, is the

³¹ Wayne A Cornelius. "Impacts of the 1986 US Immigration Law on Emigration from Rural Mexican Sending Communities." *Population and Development Review* 15, no. 4 (1989): 689-705.

³²Cornelius, 695.

³³Cornelius, 701.

perfect bridge in providing a means of research into the exact reason why people at a societal level in Mexico began to know of so many people who had migrated to the United States.

Not only did Reichert make the initial connection of mass migration through the Bracero Program of World War II, but he gave reason to Cornelius' work into how the societal structure of Mexicans in the 1980s was developed. As historian Reichert offers an initial top to bottom perspective through policy and government actions in explaining the migration of immigrants, Cornelius provides the early connections of a social history in explaining the migration patterns through the family structure and cultural shifts as key motives. This is important because it explains in Michoacán's instance and in my final argument that the social aspects of family living in Oregon are a key reason for the continued migration to Oregon. As history has evolved to focus greatly on more of a bottom to top look, historians such as Radolfo Zamora see a leading motive for the migration being an economic crisis in Michoacán.

Economic:

Radolfo Zamora, a university professor in Mexico, like Cornelius and Reichert, made his own claims behind the reasoning of Mexican immigration by looking at the economic struggles of Michoacán, but focuses on the 1990s to 2013. Zamora makes a bold claim of blaming the economic struggles such as extreme poverty Mexico has been faced with as being the root of why Mexicans are migrating to the United States.³⁴ By historians, this has not been a widely studied motive for the reasoning of migration from Michoacán to Oregon, but Zamora's

³⁴ Rodolfo García Zamora. "Mexican Experience on Migration and Development 1990-2013." *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar Da Mobilidade Humana* 21, no. 41, (2013): 205-224, <https://doaj.org/article/0f704e75446747aeb09870ee16977c81>.

methodology focuses strictly on the economic history of Michoacán in explaining the migration, which is why his claim is so bold. The issues of the economic struggles in Michoacán studied by Zamora had been seen largely as a closed economic situation by scholars, meaning little to no connections of the economic issues in relation to the migration of Mexicans to the United States had even been pursued by historians. The initial research examined strictly the influence of governmental policy as Reichert asserts and very little social history of these people had been conducted to further explain the migration pattern. Cornelius, by contrast on this issue of the economy of Michoacán as a motive for migration, saw that Mexicans were seeking a better life by migrating to the United States, implying their lives in Mexico were worse in comparison to one who migrated to the United States. However, Cornelius' and Reichert's works left out altogether the economic implications actually going on in places like Michoacán that further advance the argument of why Mexicans were truly migrating to the United States.

Zamora notes that in Michoacán from 1990 to 2000, 10 percent of the population had migrated to the United States.³⁵ Zamora also notes the migration from Michoacán since 1980 correlates to the economic downward failure of the state. His research correlates that the current residents from Michoacán living in Oregon are because of a declining economy. Zamora's economic perspective tries to better understand the economic situations these people were facing. His research further complicates, in understanding another key motive as to why these migrations were occurring. Zamora's claims that the economy is the sole reason for the migration, and the crisis of these people suffering is the cause for their migration and fails to

³⁵Zamora, 205-224.

connect it to the other motives of political, social, and cultural approaches in helping to understand this complicated topic.

John Gledhill, a well known Mexican immigrant historian, developed a case study and shows issues while also going hand-in-hand with many claims asserted by Zamora and the other historians.

Gledhill asserts that the poverty of Michoacán is one of the leading causes for people migrating to the United States. Almost 20 years after the first historian, Reichert, John Gledhill in 1995 conducted a complete bottom to top study involving these people from Michoacán. Gledhill, for the first time, introduced the class struggles created by the Mexican government that directly affected these rural people in Michoacán. While Gledhill discusses governmental policy as a motive, he explains Michoacán migration through the lens of the individual. Gledhill's research focuses primarily on the individual in Michoacán; no other historian has done anything quite like him. Using this focus, Gledhill has been able to largely blame neoliberal policies in the 1970s through the 1990s for the motives of people from Michoacán to migrate to the United States and continuing to do so.³⁶

In a more recent study of Michoacán done in 2017, Xochitl Bada, a historian, connected not only the issues of poverty of the individuals, as Gledhill does, but also notes the extremely violent and rampant issues of the drug cartels in Michoacán as yet another cause for why so many of them have chosen to migrate to the United States.³⁷ While 2013 is two decades past the

³⁶ John Gledhill. *Neoliberalism, Transnationalization, and Rural Poverty : A Case Study of Michoacán, Mexico*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.

³⁷ Bada Xóchitl, and Andreas E Feldmann. "Mexico's Michoacán State: Mixed Migration Flows and Transnational Links." *Forced Migration Review*, no. 56, (2017): 12-13, <http://www.fmreview.org/latinamerica-caribbean/bada-feldmann.html>

early 1990s, Bada's research on drug violence is relevant to much of Michoacán's history since the latter half of the 20th century. This shift in historical research becomes one that initially sees the migration pattern as something simply created by government influence in a very top-down perspective. However, historians like Gledhill and Bada begin to ask other questions in regards to explaining Michoacán's migration, such as the economy, class struggles, and social issues that the people have been facing. Not to undervalue the earlier research relative to more recent research, but all of them help in identifying key motives in explaining the migration of Michoacán people to Oregon. Each historian provides part of the picture when evaluating the motive and causes of Michoacán migrants to Oregon.

From early researchers like Reichert to a more contemporary one like Bada, all study aspects of one or more of the social, economic, and cultural research that all help paint the larger picture of Michoacán migration to Oregon. As mentioned in the research by Reichert and Cornelius, the migration has been aimed at states like Oregon due to the previous ties of family and friends who had previously migrated to Oregon under government ran initiatives like the Bracero Program. Where Reichert made the connection of early immigrants going in high numbers to West Coast states through a top to bottom look of governmental involvement, Cornelius delivered further research that Mexicans, from states like Michoacán into 1975, begin to have family and friends that were living in Oregon at extremely high rates. Through the research by these historians, it is clear that through the Bracero Program, people from Michoacán had heard initially of family members and friends going to states like Oregon and making good money working in agriculture and the word spread quickly back to their home towns in Michoacán. The migration to places like Oregon has only been drastically intensified since the

Bracero Program due to the wide spread poverty and violence that has stricken the state of Michoacán, which more recent historians like Gledhill and Bada note. All these historians give insight into migration of Mexicans in general, but as a whole, they give a complicated and intertwined answer as to why so many Mexicans from Michoacán have migrated to Oregon since World War II. Beginning in the 1990s, historians like Erasmo Gamboa, who has written several books looking at firsthand accounts of Mexican immigrants living in the Pacific Northwest, begin to shift their historical analysis to a far more social history. A clear shift from initially looking at politics and governmental influence as the motive for the migration, historians now ask far more reaching questions of these people that reflect their economic, social and cultural histories as an answer in explaining the migration pattern. The primary source documents and interviews about to be introduced here coincide with the conclusion gathered from these various historians.

Conclusion

There is a clear but subtle shift of how historians have approached this migration from Michoacán to Oregon. The early historians had merely quantitative data without any further questions developing from them and provided a political motive through policies as to why the migration was occurring. By the mid and late 1980s, historians, such as Gledhill and Gamboa, begin to take a sharp turn in the methodologies of explaining the migrations by opening up the social, cultural, and economic implications the individuals were facing. And so, by the 1990s, we see historians asking far reaching questions and making arguments looking at, not the governmental motives of the migrations, but a more social history to answer the migration. Questions revolving Michoacán's own economy, the peoples' cultural influences, and even

economic incentives of Oregon have now been seen as crucial motives in the migration of these people. The more recent approaches by historians have now been looking at every facet of these people's lives, and through that, a better understanding of their migration to Oregon has been made and that is the approach and conclusion I come to. The social and economic sections in the thesis help to develop the conclusion presented here in that they provide a wide examination of the various attempts at answering the migration from Michoacán to Oregon since the mid 1990s.

The primary sources introduced here have been oral history interviews that were gathered around the Salem, Oregon area during the creation of this thesis. The oral history interviews conducted by the current Michoacán residents in Oregon back many of the claims Reichert, Cornelius, Gamboa, and Bada pose involving the migration. I make the conclusion that while each of the sections of political, social, and economics motives have played a role in the migration of people from Michoacán to Oregon, the social and economic aspect has far more influence in having people from Michoacán migrate to Oregon. The interviews conducted were contrary to what I originally thought would be my conclusion. Before conducting the interviews, through the various historians discussed earlier, many point to the Bracero Program as the beginning of the migration patterns from Michoacán to Oregon. However, as it will be looked, the interviews conducted are contrary to what many of these historians conclude in regards to the Bracero Program. None of these individuals had participated in the Bracero Program and never heard of anyone who had participated in it at all.

The interviews were conducted on seven individuals, who will remain anonymous to protect their identity, but all currently reside in Salem, Oregon and were born and raised in

Michoacán, Mexico.³⁸ These interviews were conducted with the sole purpose of gaining inside knowledge into why these individuals chose to migrate and reside in Oregon. While six of them migrated to Oregon between 1990 and 1995, one interviewee migrated to Oregon in 1987.³⁹ The interviewees were asked a series of ten questions and, in some cases, a few more if the opportunity opened for it.⁴⁰ Five of the interviewees were men while only two were women. The Women only came to Oregon because their husbands (who were also interviewed) had decided to migrate to Oregon after getting married. One such interviewee noted that the first time he heard of coming to the United States was when he was a small child in the late 1970s. His father traveled to California on several occasions to work in agricultural labor. He claimed everyone in his community in Michoacán growing up knew someone who migrated to the United States and the societal imprint that if they migrated to Oregon or a West Coast state, like many of their friends and family, they could have a successful life was apparent.⁴¹ This mindset of travelling to the United States for a better life directly backs up Cornelius' research and further proves his argument that the societal structures in parts of Mexico were based largely on migrating to the United States.⁴² This helps with furthering the conclusion I make in that the issues involving the

³⁸ All interviews again were written, recorded and conducted by me unless otherwise noted and all but 1 of the interviewee's names will remain anonymous to protect them. Interviews, Written and Recorded by author, April 14, 2018.

³⁹ Interviews, Written and Recorded, 2018.

⁴⁰ The Questions are as listed

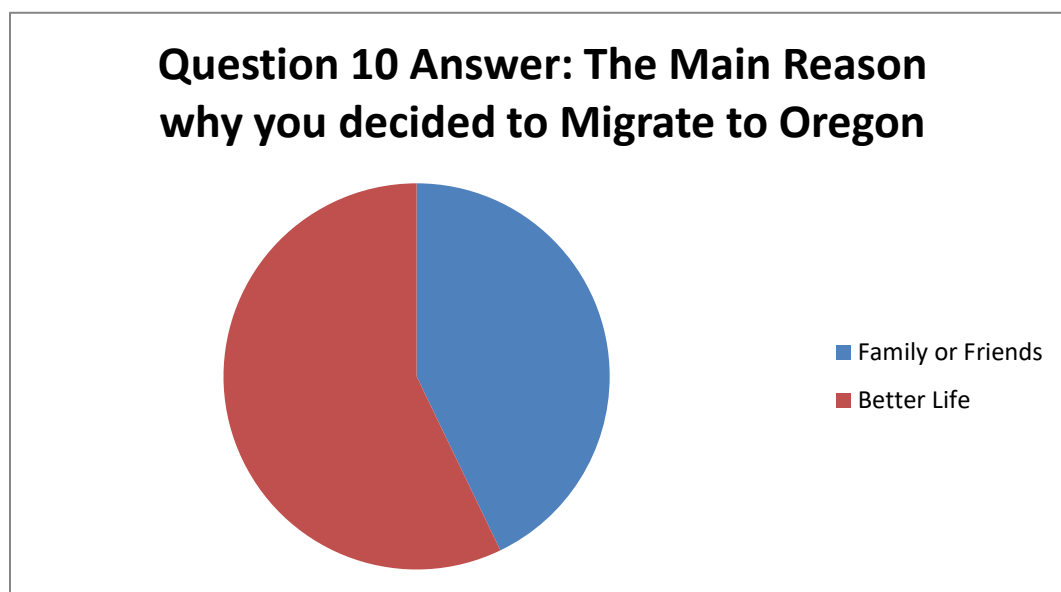
1. Where from Michoacán, Mexico did you come from?
2. How old were you when you came to Oregon from Michoacán?
3. Did you save any money to get to Oregon?
4. Did you have people where you were from in Michoacán tell you about Oregon? Friends or family etc?
5. Did you have friends or family already live in Oregon before you travelled to Oregon?
6. Did you ever hear about the Bracero Program growing up or anyone that ever participated in it?
7. What was the first job you received in Oregon?
8. Do you live close or nearby relatives or friends that also were from Michoacán? (50 miles)
9. Do you travel back to Michoacán to see relatives or friends?
10. If you could pick the main reason why you decided to go to Oregon to live what would you say?

⁴¹ Martin Salinas, written Interview by author, 2017.

⁴² Cornelius, *Impacts of the 1986 US Immigration*, 689-705.

migration become far more complicated than simply looking at governmental policies, but that the social and economic information about these people's lives back in Michoacán have been a huge reasoning to why they initially came to Oregon, not because of a past connection with the Bracero Program.

I conclude through these interviewees that the shift of migration due to economic hardship and having family living in Oregon has far outweighed any other reason to why they have migrated to Oregon. Their migration had only been amplified after the Bracero Program because their unique struggles in Michoacán allowed for the opportunity for them to continue to migrate at larger numbers. While there are only seven interviewees, they provide a conclusion in that the main reason all of these individuals migrated to Oregon was to experience and have a better life and because previous family or friends already resided in Oregon. As one interviewee states, "all the friends and family just came here and I follow them."⁴³



⁴³ To protect their identities each interviewee besides "Martin Salinas" will simply be numbered for this footnote and any further ones referring to them. The interviewees that are anonymous are six in total and the interviews again were recorded where they signed an oral interview sheet and are to remain anonymous. Interviewee #1, done in person by author, April 14, 2018.

This simple pie graph depicts how 100% of the interviewees migrated to Oregon either because they wanted a better life (which includes lack of employment for them in Michoacán or because they heard of jobs in Oregon) or because they already knew of a family member or friend that lived in Oregon.⁴⁴ To be exact, 86% of the interviewees had a family member already living in Oregon before they decided to migrate to Oregon.⁴⁵ This is astonishing to note because the connection between families through these interviews has been the biggest determining factor as to why these individuals migrated to Oregon. Through the interviews, an astonishing discovery was made as well. While the end of the Bracero Program was, in fact, in 1964, and many of these individuals couldn't have physically been able to participate in it since they migrated to Oregon in the 1990s, not one individual had ever even heard of the Bracero Program. This furthers the conclusion I make in that the Bracero Program has little or no connection to the current migrants from Michoacán who reside in Oregon. The interviews conducted in my own research prove indefinitely that these interviewees solely chose to migrate to Oregon because they had simply heard of a friend or family member who lived in Oregon or because they simply chose Oregon to reside in because they wanted to leave the poverty stricken state of Michoacán.

The average age of these interviewees when they migrated to Oregon were from 20 to 22 years old. Their age would represent that they would have if not parents maybe grandparents or family friends who participated in the Bracero Program before they were born. While this was expected in the interviews, again not one of them had come across anyone in Michoacán who had previously participated in the Bracero Program. The majority of the individuals also came from rural towns around Morelia, the capitol of Michoacán. Their early lives consisted of

⁴⁴ Interviewees, 2018.

⁴⁵ Interviewees, 2018.

working on family farms to some capacity since that was the few options they had in the rural areas of Michoacán. An astonishing discovery is that a number of the individuals for reasons that will be kept confidential, have never visited their family back in Michoacán since migrating to Oregon. This is an unfortunate circumstance because it shows what many of these individuals who migrate from Michoacán sacrifice. And while they are aware of the sacrifices of possibly never seeing their mom or dad or family again, they still feel it more valuable to migrate to Oregon and bear that burden. In over half of the cases of the interviewees, a lack of documentation with the United States is a clear reason to why many of them have never gone back to Michoacán to visit family or friends. Since all of the interviewees came from fairly rural towns in Michoacán, communication through the phone or technology is also made more difficult. It is very profound that many of these individuals migrated to Oregon and have lived here for over 23 years and still have legal documentation issues that have blocked them from travelling back home. This stems beyond the research but notes an issue that had surfaced while conducting the interviews in that many migrants spend a lifetime in the United States without being able to or simple not obtaining legal documentation.

Overall, Oregon has become the destination for many Michoacán Natives to migrate to. The combination of the ongoing issues with the drug cartels in Michoacán and the promise of work and a better life that has been spoken of through the decades in Oregon after the Bracero Program from family and friends have helped create this fascinating migration connection. The social, political, and economic history of Michoacán shows there is an ongoing and clear shift of migration to Oregon that extends beyond World War II. This includes severe economic issues along with the power of word of mouth

from family and friends who had lived in Oregon after the Bracero Program urging others back home to migrate to Oregon.

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