

When Pernicious Foreigners Become Citizens: Naturalization in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico

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Abstract

Concern about foreigners who seemingly live in Mexico with little regard for joining the Mexican nation has endured throughout the twentieth century and to the present. Today, Mexicans do not believe naturalized citizens should be afforded the same political rights as Mexican-born citizens. This attitude, however, has often contradicted larger national economic and political demands that warranted bringing immigrants to populate Mexico and support the development of the nation-state. Immigration policies respond to this dichotomy of both needing immigrants to bolster the Mexican economy while also creating restrictive policies to discourage “less desirable” – in particular, ethnically undesirable – immigrants. This tension is not unique to Mexican policy nor is it a historical aberration. The concept of citizenship has significance for Mexicans and prompts a question about how citizenship is granted, what it involves, and who might be eligible. While there have been studies on the number of immigrants in Mexico and their historical roles in Mexico, there has been a dearth of analysis to understand the process of obtaining Mexican citizenship and who becomes a naturalized citizen in twentieth-century Mexico. This article describes the prominent features of Mexican immigration law, the criteria to become a Mexican citizen, and analyzes data of 6,619 naturalized Mexican immigrants offering insights about the development of the Mexican nation-state, the cultural notion of *mexicanidad*, and the limits of political inclusion.

Keywords: Mexico, foreigners, immigration, naturalization, citizenship

1. Introduction

On May 20, 1934, Mexico City’s daily newspaper, *El Universal*, reported that a School for the Mexicanization of Immigrants was to be opened in June 1934. A group from the Mexican ministries of Public Education, Interior, Foreign Affairs, National Economy, the Central Department of the Federal District, and the Office of Civil Retirement Pensions, were committed to founding the School of Mexicanization to be located on the first floor of Calle Tacuba No. 87 in Mexico City. According to the *El Universal* article, “there are now in Mexico around 200,000 foreigners in Mexico, who control a large part of the national wealth, and nevertheless, continue to retain their customs, their language, and, in general, all their manner of living, without preoccupying themselves with their positive integration to Mexico” (Little, 1934). This concern about foreigners living in Mexico with seeming little regard to join the Mexican nation has endured throughout the twentieth century to the point that today Mexicans, in turn, do not believe naturalized citizens should be afforded the same political rights as Mexican-born citizens. This belief suggests that the concept of citizenship has significance for Mexicans and prompts a question about how citizenship is granted, what it involves, and who might be eligible. While there have been studies on the number of immigrants in Mexico and their historical roles in Mexico, there has been a dearth of analysis to understand the process of obtaining Mexican citizenship and who becomes a naturalized citizen in Mexico (Chávez, 2010).

As many Mexican government officials, such as Gilberto Loyo, Inspector of National Census in 1930, and Andrés Landa y Piña, head of the statistics section of the Department of Migration in the late 1920s and later head of the Immigration Department in the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, Ministry of the Interior (hereafter SEGOB), believed in the 1930s, foreigners were not particularly interested in Mexican culture and society, and should not be granted the same political rights. Gilberto Loyo wrote in 1935, “We cannot hope for a quality migratory stream and the average amount that has reached the best periods, there is nothing to solve the serious

problem of depopulation and national social and economic integration of the country” (Loyo, 1935). Loyo also indicated that some immigrants were not desirable due to their nationality, and Mexico needed to form a criteria to decrease the influx of undesirable immigrants: “the criteria for judging the undesirable immigrants should be rather specific to each group of foreigners by nationality, cultural and social characteristics of foreigners who have lived or still live among us, belonging to the same nationality or race” (Loyo, 1935).

This attitude, however, often contradicted larger national economic and political demands that warranted bringing immigrants to populate Mexico and bring necessary resources and talent for the development of the nation-state. Immigration policies respond to this dichotomy of both needing immigrants to bolster the Mexican economy while also creating restrictive policies to discourage “less desirable” – in particular, ethnically undesirable – immigrants. This tension is not unique to Mexican policy nor is it a historical aberration. In the early twentieth century, Mexican policy makers, particularly under President Porfirio Díaz (1876-80 and 1884-1911) aimed to attract more ethnically desirable immigrants. Yet, the Mexican government simultaneously naturalized Chinese, Middle Easterners, and Guatemalans at higher rates than European immigrants. The seemingly inchoate policies and practices suggest that Mexican policy makers’ techniques of governance served a variety of purposes and responded more to political expediency than singularly to a racist ideology.

According to the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hereafter the SRE), more than 6,619 immigrants became naturalized citizens from 1913-1937. These naturalization cases in which foreign immigrants are formally admitted to the Mexican nation as Mexican citizens contrast with Mexican laws and eugenicist thinking. The naturalization cases thus suggest a need to revise or qualify the notion that “Mexico had one of the most restrictive immigration laws on the continent” (Yankelevich, 2009; Yankelevich, 2012). Rather, the data suggest that the post-revolutionary regimes allowed the naturalizations of foreigners despite popular sentiment and for larger economic and political purposes. Moreover, the profile of the foreigners who became naturalized citizens contrasts with the policy aim of attracting desirable immigrants while excluding the undesirable, or more widely termed “pernicious” immigrants. Some of these undesirable immigrants, in fact, became naturalized citizens in early twentieth-century Mexico.

Among immigrants to Mexico, the undesirable and the pernicious have largely participated in the Mexican national discourse by adopting *mestizo* identities, thereby showing the flexibility of *mexicanidad*. (Note 1) Roger Bartra argues that, “studies on Mexicanness constitute an expression of the dominant political culture” (Bartra, 1992). *Mexicanidad* can accommodate and integrate social difference, tolerate difference, and alternately suppress, disregard, and obscure difference such that the terms *mexicanismo* and *lo mexicano* promote unified, homogeneous meanings. These constructions have obscured the rich cultural mosaic of Mexican society. Instead, they have tended to emphasize a tripartite ethnic and racial composition of the nation—begun during the colonial era—of Mexicans as Spanish, indigenous, or *mestizo*. The *mestizo* construction aims to temper the influence of foreigners and the visibility of the indigenous, yet it has also served to accommodate difference and to allow for inclusion (Vinson & Restall, 2009).

From the founding of the Mexican nation-state, intellectuals sought to create a unique national identity based in part on European traditions dating from the colonial period while still drawing on indigenous notions of *mestizaje* in post-revolutionary Mexico. Although intellectuals aimed to temper the influence of foreigners and the visibility of the indigenous by emphasizing the *mestizo*, naturalized foreigners, by definition, extended the diversity of the Mexican nation, and embodied the flexibility of *mexicanidad*. Unlike other Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, Mexican immigration policies were constructed and implemented as part of *mexicanidad*—the uniquely Mexican discourse of belonging to the Mexican nation and its blend of indigenous and Spanish traditions as well as its geopolitical and historical relationship to the United States. As Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Tania Carrasco write, “Mexico is essentially a multicultural country not only for its indigenous and Iberian culture, but also for the contribution of the immigrant cultures” (Stavenhagen & Carrasco, 1997).

Taking Mexico to be a multicultural country, this article describes the prominent features of Mexican immigration law, and the criteria to become a Mexican citizen. How the Mexican government grants citizenship and whom it naturalizes offers insights about the development of the Mexican nation-state, the cultural notion of *mexicanidad*, and the limits of political inclusion. The final section of the article analyzes data of more than 6,600 immigrants who became naturalized Mexican citizens between 1913 and 1937. This article stems from my earlier work on the experiences of Middle Eastern immigrants to Mexico. While researching and writing about these immigrants and their descendants I examined over 8,000 immigrant registration cards from the Mexican National Registry of Foreigners. I found variability in Mexican immigration practices that prompted new questions about naturalization in Mexico (Alfaro-Velcamp, 2007). Here, I aim to shed light on Mexican law and

practice through an examination of the content and context of naturalization data. Despite recent theoretical constructions of citizenship in Mexico, there is a paucity of scholarship to explain the naturalization process. Moreover, it is my contention that Mexican national history often dismisses the importance of immigrants, especially after the Mexican Revolution, which coincides with a period of inconsistent treatment of foreigners in society, law, and politics. Records of individual naturalization cases contain information about immigrants' countries of origin, residences in Mexico, occupations, and years of arrival in Mexico. Their collective profile is a portrait of Mexican immigration and its politics.

2. Prominent Features of Immigration Law

2.1 *Porfiriato*

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, President Porfirio Díaz promoted immigration to Mexico with the hope of transforming Mexico's "backward" indigenous past and controlling mounting debts. Under his administration, the "Colonization and Naturalization Laws of the Republic" were passed in 1883 to encourage settlement and economic development in sparsely populated areas. Immigrants from Italy were some of the first colonists in 1887 (Mánica Zilli, 1981). By 1896, however, the program was abandoned. It had proven too costly, inefficient, and difficult to implement (González Navarro, 1994a).

Díaz's openness to immigration even extended to Japan and China. In November 1888, the "Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between México and Japan" was signed to facilitate the Japanese immigration. María Ota Mishima found that between 1890 and 1949, 3,626 Japanese immigrants came to Mexico (Ota Mishima, 1997). In 1893 Mexico and China signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce containing a "most favored nation" clause welcoming Chinese immigrants. After the United States terminated Chinese immigration by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Mexico became an attractive alternative destination (Chinese Exclusion Act of May 6, 1882; Hu-DeHart, 1980). Despite Díaz's openness to immigration, however, neither Japanese nor Chinese were initially eligible to become naturalized citizens in Mexico, just as they were excluded from naturalization in the United States.

In this period, the Foreignness and Naturalization Law of 1886 (*Ley de Extranjería y Naturalización de 1886*) proved to be one of the most significant pieces of legislation on naturalization. In 1885, Ignacio Luis Vallarta began drafting the law under the authority of Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs (Vance & Clagett, 1945, 1973). For Mexicans in territories ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Hidalgo in 1848 and later by the Gadsden purchase in 1853, and for those living in Guatemala (Treaty of 1882), Mexican citizenship could be maintained if the citizen applied within a year (Article 1, Section VIII) (*Ley de extranjería y naturalización* (20 de mayo de 1886)). For foreigners residing in Mexico, the 1886 law was seen to confer Mexican citizenship on certain foreigners almost by default. Those foreigners who owned property were considered Mexican citizens if they did not express their intent to maintain their foreign nationality before the proper authorities, linking Mexican sovereignty to land, property, and legal title. Foreigners were given six months to declare their desired nationality/citizenship (Article 5) (*Ley de extranjería y naturalización* (20 de mayo de 1886)). In addition, the 1886 law deprived Mexican women of Mexican citizenship if they married foreigners (Article 3) (*Ley de extranjería y naturalización* (20 de mayo de 1886)). These Mexican women remained "foreign" even after becoming widows. Children born of such marriages were to be registered as "foreigners." This aspect of the 1886 law was enforced until 1934. It was not until 1934 (during the post-revolutionary period) when children of male immigrants could obtain Mexican citizenship by *jus soli*, meaning by place of birth, if born in Mexico. Children born of Mexican parents received citizenship based on *jus sanguinis*—the notion that citizenship derives from blood, which may apply to mothers or fathers, or to parents, generally. The two forms of citizenship exist in Mexican law today, as they do in most countries with some variation.

The 1886 law also discussed expatriation (Chapter 2) and naturalizations (Chapter 3). Chapter 3 notes that the participation of foreigners in civic activities would be deemed harmful to the nation and that such foreigners could be expelled. The notion of denaturalization, to strip a naturalized foreigner of his or her citizenship (which is often coupled to removal or deportation) is not, however, explicitly addressed. Administratively, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assumed the responsibility for granting certificates of nationality and letters of naturalization to foreigners in Mexico (*Ley de extranjería y naturalización* (20 de mayo de 1886)). Kif Augustine-Adams argues that arbitrary application of the 1886 law and the 1917 Constitution created ambiguous categories for Chinese Mexicans, whereby Mexican census enumerators changed the status of civilly married women's nationality from Mexican to Chinese (Augustine-Adams, 2009). Archival research on Middle Eastern immigrants also indicates that 39 Mexican-born women out of 8,036 registered foreigners were identified by Lebanese, Arab, or Syrian nationality *por matrimonio* (by marriage) (Alfaro-Velcamp, 2007).

This intersection between law and politics in immigration is also manifest in efforts to control disease and the implementation of disease-based exclusionary practices that date from the Porfiriato. When U.S. Immigrant Inspector Marcus Braun visited Mexico City in 1907, he reportedly met with President Porfirio Díaz, who agreed to develop an immigration agreement similar to what was in place between the United States and Canada. According to Braun, Díaz mentioned that “anyone not good enough for the United States ought not [to] be good enough for Mexico” (Braun, 1907). Braun went so far as to say:

The Mexican Government fears that ... the accumulation of diseased persons within the borders of that country, but such condition prevails at the present time, as hundreds of aliens who have been excluded at boundary ports upon account of their afflictions, are harbored at points in Mexico and are proving a menace to the population (Braun, 1907).

Mexican policy makers such as Andrés Landa y Piña and Gilberto Loyo were concerned with diseased immigrants entering the country, and the reproduction of deemed “human scum” among Mexicans. In describing Asian immigration to Mexico, Landa y Piña stated, “I could personally convince the delegate [a special delegate of the Immigration Inspector in Hong Kong, China] the number of abuses and irregularities committed by [the shipping] companies, that try to send to Mexico real human scum, they probably do it to relieve that region in which the elements natural life were already exhausted” (Landa y Piña, 1930). His contemporary, Mexican immigration attorney Ricardo Rivera, also expressed concern with the lack of immigrant assimilation in 1931, “foreigners in Mexico usually form colonies that remain isolated from the rest our population...[and it is] difficult their assimilation into our race and our spirit” (Rivera, 1931). This concern about disease infecting the Mexican population resonated at many political levels from the physical health of an individual immigrant to the metaphorical and reproductive health of the nation. During the presidential administration of Porfirio Díaz, the Mexican Superior Health Council under the leadership of Dr. Eduardo Licéaga “devised a comprehensive Sanitary Code of the United Mexican States, enacted in 1891 and reformed and revised in 1894, 1902, and 1904” (Ross, 2009). Paul Ross documents how during the Porfirian period in Mexican history the Mexican Superior Health Council tried to prevent diseased emigrants and to simultaneously “clean the population.” Katherine Bliss’s work on prostitution in Mexico City documents a preoccupation with the reproduction of syphilis-infected children, and Alexandra Minna Stern interrogates the intersection between U.S. public health agencies and the use of bathhouses along the U.S.-Mexican border as an example of racialized biomedical practices against Mexican immigrants (Bliss, 2001; Stern, 1999). Policymakers thus perceived foreign immigrants as pernicious and a challenge to the construction of a healthy and industrious Mexican state, just as Mexicans were perceived to the north.

Nancy Stepan notes that the underlying concern of eugenics penetrated the Latin American psyche in much the same way it did in the United States. The political notion of constructing a “fit” nation often meant selecting appropriate immigrants. As Stepan notes, “the concern for racial consolidation and the fitness of the Mexican nation was a prominent theme” (Stepan, 1991). Mexican eugenicist Rafael Carrillo wrote in the 1930s that Japanese, Syrians, and Lebanese could not properly assimilate and would “cause further fragmentation of the nation” (Stepan, 1991; Carrillo, 1932). Alfredo Valle also wrote that Russians, Poles, or Czechs “did not mix well with nationals, ...thereby refusing to contribute to the process of *mestizaje*” (Stepan, 1991).

To the extent that documentable diseases were used to exclude immigrants, trachoma provides a good example of what concerned policy makers. Trachoma is a bacterial infection of the eye, also called Conjunctivitis “pink eye”— granular (Markel, 2000). Certain populations marked by poverty, crowded living conditions, or poor hygiene are at higher risk for this illness. The condition occurs worldwide, mostly in rural settings in developing countries. It frequently affects children, although the effects of scarring may not be seen until later in life. Trachoma is spread through direct contact with infected eye, nose, or throat secretions or by contact with contaminated objects, such as towels or clothes. Certain flies can also spread the bacteria. For immigrants arriving in the early twentieth century, trachoma was quite common, and also became a barrier to entry. Aristide Zolberg describes the process of controlling of immigration through regulation of passenger ships and vessels, and inspections made before immigrants arrived at ports of entry as “remote control” (Zolberg, 2006).

In response to disease-based restrictions and quarantine laws in the United States, steamship companies, for their part and in order to maintain their customer base, began to actively use Veracruz, Mexico in the 1890s as an alternate port of entry in North America. As new health standards barred previously legal entries into the United States, corruption created new migration patterns. Entrepreneurial immigrants, steamship agents, and doctors quickly learned ways to evade or circumvent immigration laws intended to exclude diseased immigrants, such as making use of Veracruz. Once entering Mexico, immigrants such as those from Greater Syria and Greece could travel to Ciudad Juárez and then enter the U.S. at El Paso, Texas or other border towns. Later, as an international

agreement lifted all passport requirements for Americans and Mexicans living within a forty-mile zone on both sides of the border in 1921, immigrants from the Mediterranean, as well as from China, could cross the relatively open U.S.-Mexican border unimpeded if they could appear to be Mexican (Lay, 1985; Alfaro-Velcamp, 2007).

In this context, the Díaz regime passed another significant immigration law in 1908 that, effective in 1909, aimed to stop diseased immigrants from entering Mexico (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1908; Ley de Inmigración de 1909). This law, “The Immigration Law of 1909,” under Article 3, listed illnesses such as bubonic plague, cholera, yellow fever, meningitis, small pox, tuberculosis, leprosy, trachoma...etc as grounds of exclusion that would bar immigrants from entering Mexico (Ley de Inmigración de, 1909). Chapter 2 of the law addressed questions of who could enter at Mexican seaports and other ports of entry. New measures were introduced to quarantine diseased immigrants, responding to those already in place in the United States that required immigrants to undergo health inspections before departures and upon arrival at a point of entry. The 1909 law illuminates the apprehension among Mexican functionaries to both adhere to U.S. demands for restriction of diseased immigrants coming to the United States borders, and independent Mexican concerns about keeping pernicious immigrants away.

Although Díaz attempted to both court foreigners with capital and to keep diseased immigrants out of Mexico, virulent anti-foreign sentiments nevertheless swept parts of Mexico leading up to and lasting throughout the Mexican Revolution. The massacre of over 300 Asians in Torreón, Coahuila became emblematic of this xenophobia as the Mexican Revolution, beginning in 1910 and lasting nearly a decade, proceeded to impact the country and its varied regions (Gómez Izquierdo, 1991). In Mexico City, the institutions of government did not fully function throughout much of the decade because of the fighting between the revolutionary factions. With this turbulence, immigration issues became marginal to national concerns until the framing of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and the administration of President Venustiano Carranza (1917-1920).

2.2 Post-Revolutionary Changes

Under Carranza, the revolutionary concern about national composition gained renewed expression as Mexican policy-makers sought to compensate in the 1917 Constitution for the favoritism of early regimes toward foreigners. In particular, Article III on foreigners notes that, “...the Federal Executive shall have the exclusive power to compel any foreigner whose remaining he may deem inexpedient to abandon the national territory immediately and without the necessity of previous legal action. Foreigners may not in any way participate in the political affairs of the country” (1917 Constitution of Mexico). Again, the preoccupation with foreigners who become involved in political affairs signals a strong assertion of Mexican sovereignty. The Mexican Constitution also clearly distinguishes Mexicans from foreigners, stating that Mexican nationality is acquired by birth to Mexican parents (*jus sanguinis*) or by naturalization. The Constitution further states that regardless of the nationality of the parents, someone born in Mexico has the right to Mexican citizenship (*jus solis*, birthplace determines one’s nationality); a 1998 amendment that further recognizes Mexican nationality as transmitted by birth, limits nationality to the first generation born abroad. In these respects, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and those of peer nation-states run largely parallel. However, despite attempts in other articles of the Mexican Constitution to address previous foreign abuses of the Mexican nation, questions of how to handle foreign investment and foreign populations continued to garner considerable post-revolutionary political debate.

Expulsions, in particular, demonstrated executive control and sovereignty. Between 1911 and 1940, Mexican presidents signed 1,185 orders of expulsion. Procedurally, Article 33 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution established a mechanism for expedient removals by conferring immediate authority on the President without an explicit judicial check or opportunity for judicial appeal (Zamora et. al., 2005). Gilberto Loyo’s work identifies 370 cases between 1924 and 1934. (Loyo, 1935). Among the total 1,185 orders 1911 and 1940, 786 immigrants were permanently expelled while 399 had their deportation orders subsequently revoked (Yankelevich, 2004a). Pablo Yankelevich has examined these cases to show how immigrants faced deportations due to perceived political motives and/or criminal activities that were interpreted to threaten the nation-state (Yankelevich, 2004a). His research shows, however, that while expulsions were symbolically important, only a very small number of pernicious foreigners were affected. Elena Poniatowska’s fictional account of Tina Modotti captures this theme as Modotti worries about Article 33 for herself and her contemporaries. Modotti writes to her ex-lover and famed photographer Edward Weston: “Things are insecure here [in Mexico] for ‘pernicious foreigners’—I am prepared for the worst – any day they may apply the ‘33’ on us” (Poniatowska, 1992, 1995). This preoccupation of her fragile immigrant status and her relationship with Cuban revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella has been clearly documented in Mexican archives (Salazar Anaya, 2012).

The case of a Middle Eastern immigrant Josefina José Mabarak, also known as the *vampiresa árabe* (an Arab *femme fatale*) shows the highly individual character of immigrant experiences under Mexican law and how community concerns intersect with national political intrigues. Charged with having an affair with Dr. Joaquín Aguilar and ruining his family, she was understood to be a dangerous, pernicious foreigner. Aguilar's son, Juan Aguilar González, began writing in December 1927 to have her deported (Dirección General de Gobierno, Dec. 5, 1927). He claimed that she was married to a Middle Easterner in Puebla who had left her because of her prostitution and that Josefina José had a police record in Puebla as well. To further damage her reputation and secure her removal from Mexico, the younger Aguilar said she had an abortion in 1925 and had supported the *delahuertistas* in 1923. The baby's father was not identified as Señor Aguilar or someone else. In her own testimony in 1930, Josefina José did not mention an abortion. However, other documents contain a doctor's testimony that she had the abortion in her eighth month of pregnancy due to an infection in the placenta (Dirección General de Gobierno, Jan. 1, 1928). According to the story, she was a lover of a colonel who later claimed she was a rebel and a spy (Dirección General de Gobierno, Dec. 5, 1927). In 1928 the Governor of Veracruz wrote the State Attorney General of Justice (*Procurador General de Justicia*) to say that Josefina José deserved to be deported. At the same time, her lover Dr. Joaquín Aguilar went on record saying that she should not be deported on the basis of having an affair with him (Dirección General de Gobierno, April 21, 1928). Josefina José also visited the French Consulate for assistance, probably employing her status as a "subject" of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon (1923-1943). It is unclear what assistance, if any, the Consulate provided. Sometime during the case, a newspaper ad ran trying to solicit more information about Josefina José and her activities. As her case presumably reached conclusion, by October 1930, it appears that she was to be deported (Dirección General de Gobierno, June 16, 1930).

Meanwhile, in the broader domains of policy and legislation, President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) implemented the Migration Law of 1926. This law elaborates on previous Mexican immigration laws and among other aspects expands the list of medical reasons for which immigrants could be refused entry (González Navarro, 1974). The law notes the importance of selecting good immigrants and excluding individuals for immorality, lack of education, physical degeneration to the Mexican race and incapable customs. In addition to its expression of concern about immigrants bringing down the morality of the Mexican people, the Migration Law of 1926 further established the National Registry of Foreigners to collect information on immigrants. In trying to get an accurate count of foreigners, registration cards were processed from 1926 to 1951 and, starting in 1931, immigrant workers, were required to pay 10,000 pesos (roughly \$1,000 today) to enter the country (González Navarro, 1974). Whether this fee was universally applied is not known, and would be difficult to assess given evidence of corruption and smuggling practices at Mexican ports of entry (Alfaro-Velcamp, 2007).

In 1927, as reported in Mexico's *Diario Oficial* and in response to Mexican protests that foreign merchants' unfair competitive practices undermined Mexican economic interests, Armenians, Syrians, and other Arabs were prohibited from entering [into] Mexico (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1927). As Mexico continued to struggle to rebuild itself after the Revolution, citizens wanted to prevent foreign merchants from profiting at the expense of Mexican people. Citizen complaints about unsavory business practices prompted immigration restrictions targeted against specific ethnic populations.

By 1930, in addition to immigration laws pertaining to arrivals and admissions, the Mexican government also established a registry of foreigners over 15 years of age under the *Ley de Migración de 1930*. All foreign nationals were obligated to appear before the proper authorities and show their personal identification papers (Ota Mishima, 1997). Increasing anti-foreign sentiment, combined with tough economic times during the depression, gave immigrants the incentive to register with the Mexican Migration Department through which they could become legal and begin the process of naturalization. Under the law, non-compliance was an act of disobedience. Penalties ranged from suspension of employment for a month (Chapter XVIII, Article 137) to paying a 1,500 peso fine (Chapter XVIII, Article 143) for the immigrants (Ley de Migración de 1930).

2.3 From the Lázaro Cárdenas Presidency to the Present

In an effort to balance xenophobia and national economic challenges, the population law of 1936 (*la Ley General de Población*, 1936) was passed. The 1936 General Population Law aimed to further resolve the perceived, fundamental demographic problems of the nation by establishing and maintaining more comprehensive records on the immigration and repatriation of foreigners (Palma Mora, 2003). This law prohibited the entrance of alcoholics, drug-addicts, prostitutes, anarchists, and salaried foreign workers. It further banned the exercise of commercial activities by foreigners, except when such activity was necessary (González Navarro, 1994b).

Concerns about pernicious foreigners persisted and in 1937, the Mexican Department of Migration in the Ministry of Interior (SEGOB) set a quota of “5000 immigrants accorded to European countries and to Japan ...,” following the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 (Stewart, 1937). According to the American Consul in Mexico City at the time, “there has been no editorial comment with regard to the quota system but it is anticipated that any comment [that] may be forthcoming will be favorable” (Stewart, 1937). Similar to U.S. immigration policy objectives, Mexican policy makers aimed to keep less desirable immigrants, such as Syrians and Chinese, out of Mexico. But unlike the United States, Mexico did not put restrictions on immigrants from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Santo Domingo, Uruguay, and Venezuela because of common language and ancestry—meaning ethnicity that is able to assimilate (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1937). In comparing Mexican census data between 1930 and 1950, the number of foreign-born Asians (undifferentiated by country) in Mexico declines from 29,031 recorded in 1930 to 15,786 in 1950. Between 1930 and 1950, the Mexican census data indicate that Chinese, Korean, and Japanese foreign nationals residing in Mexico declined from 15,976, 2,751, and 219 respectively in 1930 to 6,180, 1,951, and zero in 1950. In the case of European countries, Spanish and German immigration increased between 1930 and 1950 with 4,471 foreign-born Germans in 1930 and 4,567 foreign-born Germans in 1950. The Spanish foreign-born population was recorded at 26,675 in 1930 and 28,855 in 1950. In the cases of French, Italian and British foreign-nationals living in Mexico, their immigrant groups declined from 1930 to 1950 (Chávez, 2010). These changes correspond to the Mexican quota law and illustrate how Mexico was taking steps to handle its immigrant populations and limit those found or deemed to be undesirable.

Moving away from the Cárdenas quota law, President Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) saw the question of immigration as a form of international collaboration and a mechanism of national development. He offered hospitality to those foreign populations displaced by the war, in particular Jewish refugees (Gleizer Salzman, 2002). However, those admitted had to be able to “ethnically fuse with national groups” (Reyna Bernal, n.d.). This allowed Mexican policy makers discretion to interpret which ethnic groups were most useful to the Mexican economy and nation. In 1947, a second population law (*Ley General de Población de 1947*) was passed which attempted to resolve the discrepancies in the number of foreigners in the census data. The 1947 law also sought to create equality among all races before the law rather than selecting desirable immigrant groups; this is yet to be seen in practice (*Ley General de Población de 1947*).

Subsequently, among many pieces of legislation affecting immigrants and foreigners, three major immigration laws were passed in 1974, 1996, and 2000. In 1974, the *Ley General de Población* was passed which planned to accelerate population growth in scarcely populated areas and to improve the quality of life (Chapter 1, Article 3). Chapter 3, article 32 under immigration, the 1974 General Law explicitly stated that foreign immigration “was to contribute to national progress” (*Ley General de Población de 1947*). In 1990, another population law was enacted to try and handle the large influx of Central American refugees, primarily Guatemalan immigrants from the Civil War (1960-1996). Mónica Palma writes, “the main innovation was to incorporate in the immigration legislation the refugee figure that had not been provided until that time” (Palma Mora, 2008). In 2000, the Regulation of the General Population Law (*Reglamento de la Ley General de Población*) was enacted with many additional provisions. Section 2, Article 47, a national registry of citizens was introduced for all Mexicans over 18 years old. In completing the documents, a person must have a nationality certificate or a naturalization letter. Registration also requires: “nationality of origin when the citizen has acquired nationality by naturalization” (*Reglamento de la Ley General de Población de 2000*). Separately, as a matter of routine citizenship and identification, all Mexicans are required to register in order to obtain a *Cédula de Identidad Ciudadanía* (citizenship identity card). In a similar manner, the Mexican consular identification card, or *matricula consular*, has become a form of registration for Mexican nationals living within the jurisdiction of a particular consulate office. In some California counties, these consular identification cards are used when Mexican immigrants lacking papers are pulled over by local law enforcement (Espinoza, 2011).

Today, the SEGOB (Ministry of the Interior) oversees immigration through the General Registry of Population and Personal Identification (*General del Registro de Población Identificación Personal*). The National Institute of Migration (*Instituto Nacional de Migración*) determines the admissibility of immigrants (Instituto de Migración, 2004). Employing Articles 44 and 48 of the General Population Law of 1996, the National Institute of Migration considers whether the immigrants are professionals, investors, renters (lease-holders), scientists, artists, sports players, and/or family members. The category of “*rentistas*” (lease-holders) was designed to capture North Americans living in Mexico. According to the Mexican census in 2000, over 343,000 U.S.-born citizens resided in Mexico, representing 69.7 percent of the total foreign-born population. Sheila Croucher notes

that, “the impact of Americans in Mexico may be as great, or greater [than the Mexican immigrants in the U.S.]” (Croucher, 2009). She suggests that the economic and political weight of Americans living in Mexico both increases local Mexican employment opportunities and can swing narrow presidential races, such as the 2000 Al Gore and George W. Bush election.

Although the total foreign-born population living in Mexico in 2000, according to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática*, INEGI) represented .5 percent of the total Mexican population of over 97 million people, it does not account for undocumented and unregistered immigrants. Based on Mexican census data, the foreign-born population has grown from .4 percent in 1950, 1970, and 1990 respectively, to .5 percent in 2000, totaling roughly 492,617. Despite these small numbers of foreign-born, immigrants have garnered significant legal and cultural attention, suggesting a larger presence both economically and symbolically.

3. Nationality and Citizenship Laws in Mexico

To understand the distinctions of legal standing in Mexico, it is important to note the difference between nationality and citizenship. In international law, nationality is generally regarded as the attribute of personhood that describes an individual’s affiliation with a nation or nation-state. Citizenship is a status held by those nationals who are afforded legal and political rights and who bear responsibilities under law. Immigrants undergo naturalization to become citizens in a host country, and to hold its citizenship. Their status as citizens contrasts with that of a subject (who may not bear rights), a stateless person who lacks citizenship in a recognized nation or nation-state, or a refugee/asylum seeker whose circumstances in a home country fail to afford the minimal protection of citizenship. Unlike U.S. immigration law, foreigners in Mexico may be eligible to obtain certificates of nationality that are distinct from and often used to support applications for naturalization. In Mexico, the concept of nationality (*nacionalidad*) has special relevance to naturalization because an immigrant must express the intent to acquire Mexican nationality if not already obtained under a certificate. Under Mexican law, there are historical distinctions regarding nationality and citizenship and, since 1998, recognition of dual nationals (Becerra, 2010). Although nationality binds an individual to the Mexican state, citizenship signifies the eligibility of nationals to participate in governance, i.e. the right to vote and to hold some political offices. Mexican nationality is usually established at birth or through naturalization (Becerra Ramírez, 2010). Patrick Weil’s insights from a survey and comparison of twenty-five nationality laws are generally applicable to Mexico. He explains that nationality laws are “the boundary between domestic and international law. Since the attribution of nationality is inherently part of the state’s sovereignty, legal conflicts are likely to emerge when citizens from one country develop a relationship with either the territory of another country or with one of its citizens” (Weil, 2001).

3.1 Citizenship and the Mexican Constitution

The notion of Mexican nationality law is rooted in the Constitution of 1857 and many of the core elements were retained in the Constitution of 1917. In particular, Article 30 based nationality on a combination of *jus sanguinis* (those born of Mexican parents within or outside of the Mexican territory) and *jus soli* (those foreigners who naturalize) remained in both constitutions. However, the Constitution of 1917 delegated the task of governing nationality, legal status of foreigners, citizenship, and naturalization to the federal government, not the individual states (Becerra Ramírez, 2010). The term citizenship refers to those born in Mexico or those born in a foreign country of Mexican parents or of a Mexican mother and unknown father, and those born on Mexican ships or aircraft (Secretaría de Gobernación, 1944). Citizenship is acquired automatically at the age of eighteen. For those who wish to acquire Mexican nationality (as distinct from citizenship), they must obtain a certificate of nationality from the SRE. These applications must include certification of legal immigrants, age, and good health. By comparison, “completion of the naturalization process [for foreign nationals (immigrants)] involves a court procedure to verify minimum residence of five years, a means of livelihood, good conduct, and ability to speak Spanish” (Vance & Clagett, 1945, 1973).

One of the most well known provisions of the Constitution of 1917 is Article 27, a response to growing U.S. expansionism, which does not allow foreigners direct ownership over land and waterways within one hundred kilometers of the border and fifty kilometers of the shoreline. According to legal scholar Manuel Becerra Ramírez, “foreigners are prohibited from direct ownership of land, water, and waterfront property, unless they submit to the Calvo Clause before Foreign Relations Secretariat, by which they agree to forfeit any diplomatic protection for the property by any other state” (Becerra Ramírez, 2001). The Calvo Clause refers to Argentine jurist Carlos Calvo and the notion of resistance to political and military power often brought with foreign investment and threat to the nation’s sovereignty (Zamora et. al, 2005).

In 1994, modifications were made to the constitution, which permitted a candidate with a foreign father or mother to be eligible for president. Prior to this modification, to be eligible to be president, one must have been “a Mexican citizen by birth enjoying full rights to be the child of a Mexican father or mother, and have resided in the country for at least 20 years” (Becerra Ramírez, 2001). This change, which was implemented in 1999, enabled Vicente Fox, whose mother was born in Spain, to run for president (Mabry, 2009-2011).

Following this constitutional modification, Article 30 went under additional changes in 1997 to allow Mexican nationality for those born abroad to only the first generation. This allowed many children of Mexican descendants residing in the United States to obtain their Mexican citizenship. Also in 1997, the Federal Congress amended the constitution to allow for dual nationality. Mexicans living outside of Mexico were not eligible to vote in Mexican elections; this was revised in 2005 (Smith & Bakker, 2007).

Further changes were instituted on March 20, 1998 with the new Nationality Law that recognizes three types of Mexican nationality: 1) Mexican nationality acquired by birth or 2) by naturalization and 3) dual nationality (Becerra Ramírez, 2001). Similar to U.S. law, Mexican law defines “a Mexican of good moral standing in the way traditionally described in Mexican legislation: ‘Mexican nationals of good moral standing are those who comply with Mexican law and maintain their legal residence in national territory’” (Becerra Ramírez, 2001). The idea of good moral character has given Mexican policy-makers latitude in interpreting the behavior of the foreigner if not the ability to engage in arbitrary decision-making. Moreover, the conflation of nationality and the qualities of citizenship are blended in the idea of “good moral standing.”

The significance in the meaning of citizenship has long been debated from social science perspectives. In discussing Latin America, Hilda Sabato defines the ideal citizenship as the status of someone who has been granted political rights and becomes a member of the national political community. As Sabato acknowledges, the notion of political citizenship becomes problematic during the process of nation formation (Sabato, 1997, 1999). During the nineteenth-century in Mexico, to restore the republic and the liberal revolution, political citizenship increased, whereby citizenship became accessible to men who showed an honest living and who offered quality services to a community. More contemporary debates on citizenship suggest a larger dynamic at work. Lorenzo Meyer notes the fragility of Mexican citizenship over the past two decades. He writes: “the very concept of citizenship implies not only belonging to a sovereign nation but also the political and legal equality and the rights and obligations of a free individual and protected by law” (Meyer, 2012). Meyer concludes that present-day notions of Mexican democratic citizenship are a “caricatura” (caricature) saying that divisions of power simply do not exist, especially in light of human rights abuses. The degree to which citizenship has evolved and continues to evolve in Mexico sheds light on the role of foreigners and their ability (or inability) to join the nation-state.

The most recent changes to Mexican citizenship laws allow Mexican citizens living abroad the opportunity to vote in the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections. According to David FitzGerald, an estimated 3-5 million Mexican living in the United States were eligible to vote; however, only 57,000 registered to vote and fewer than 33,000 cast a valid vote. Moreover, voting was only allowed by mail (FitzGerald, 2011). How future voting will unfold is unknown, especially insofar as many Mexican citizens are also dual citizens whose motivations to vote in more than one political system are unknown.

3.2 Naturalizations in Twentieth Century

Whether contemporary Mexicans living abroad vote in Mexican elections is only part of the story when it comes to understanding Mexican citizenship. In the process of examining Mexican immigration laws and the process of obtaining Mexican nationality and later Mexican citizenship, the issue of who naturalizes and why they naturalize needs to be further explored. According to Gilberto Loyo, the Department of Migration received 10,808 naturalization cards from 1828-1933 (Loyo, 1935). According to the SRE, more than 6,619 immigrants became naturalized citizens from 1913-1937; however, these numbers seem quite small when compared to Mexico’s population at the time and the number of foreign-born immigrants. Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez estimates that 116,526 foreigners lived in Mexico in 1910 and 140,587 foreigners lived in Mexico in 1930 out of a total Mexican population of 16,552,722 (Chávez, 2010). Therefore, for purposes of historical interpretation, these naturalization cases should be handled with some caution and skepticism. For instance, the naturalization cases do not show how many undocumented (unregistered) immigrants were residing in Mexico at the time, nor do they indicate how many immigrants were rejected at ports of entry and or in at an earlier stage in the migration process. Similar to other Mexican data points regarding immigration, such as the National Registry of Foreigners, the naturalization cases probably show a self-selecting, legal sample of the foreign-based population living in Mexico between 1913-1937.

Table 1. Naturalization in Mexico by country of origin, 1913-1931 and 1936-37 (data compiled from Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1930-1937)

Country/Nationality of Origin	Number of Naturalized, Mexican Citizens, 1913-31, and 1936-37	Percent of Total Population of Naturalized Mexican Citizens, 1913-31, and 1936-37
China	959	16
Germany	244	4
Guatemala	1637	27
Japan	219	4
Middle East	741	12
Other European	659	11
Other Nationality	201	3
Russia-Poland	381	6
Spain	940	15
United States	148	2

According to Table 1, of the documented naturalizations, 27 percent were Guatemalans – 1,637. Of those naturalizing between 1936-1937, 70 percent were single men. Neither the sex nor ethnicity of the immigrant was provided in the records for 1913-1932. Furthermore, the data do not indicate where the Guatemalans emigrated from and whether they were migrating for work or other reasons. In fact, this type of information was not provided for any of the immigrant groups discussed here. Chinese immigrants followed the Guatemalan immigrants with a 17 percent of foreign naturalizations, accounting for 959 individuals. Numerically third, 15 percent of all naturalized citizens, 940 cases were Spaniards. The fourth ranked immigrant group for naturalizations were immigrants from the Middle East with 12 percent—741 cases. Immigrants from Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, Persia, Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey are grouped as “Middle Eastern.” This categorization clearly does not reflect geopolitical affiliations or historical events with specificity but rather provides only a rough estimation of some of the Arabic-speaking immigrants who naturalized in Mexico. Following Middle Eastern naturalizations were other European naturalizations at 11 percent, 659 cases. These naturalization cases contrast with notions of Mexican racist and eugenicist thinking to suggest that there is a disjuncture between law and practice in the post-revolutionary regimes.

With respect to the years in which immigrants became naturalized, as shown in Figure 1, the case of nearly 1,000 single Guatemalans naturalizing in 1936/1937 in Chiapas, Mexico warrants particular attention. Stephen Lewis’s description of historical events suggest that the naturalizations were an attempt by the Lázaro Cárdenas administration to temper German influence in the region. He writes, “...Mexicans of Guatemalan descent were among the biggest winners as Cardenistas targeted several large and productive coffee plantations in Soconusco and Mariscal. The reparto was a stroke of state- and nation-building genius. These recently naturalized citizens owed a debt of gratitude to Cárdenas and to Mexico” (Lewis, 2005). David Carey Jr.’s work also shows that many Guatemalan coffee finca owners were German, and Cárdenas certainly would have had a receptive audience among Guatemalan *solteros* (single-men) who would otherwise be subject to [President Jorge Ubico of Guatemala (1931-1944)] Ubico’s vagrancy and vialidad (2 weeks unpaid labor for the government) laws (Carey 2001, 2007; Castellanos Cambranes, 1985). In 1934 Ubico abolished debt peonage (for which many Maya laud him) and introduced the vagrancy law. He effectively shifted control of labor from private individuals to the state. By 1936, Mayas and poor Ladinos would have been feeling the full effects of his forced labor law (Carey, 2012). Lewis further notes that although recently naturalized Guatemalans benefitted from Cárdenas’ expropriation, it was at the expense of Plutarco Elías Calles’ sympathizer, Enrique Braun (Lewis, 1994;

González Navarro, 1994b). As some have argued with regard to the Bracero Program between the U.S. and Mexico (1942-1964), Cárdenas' decision-making was often influenced by political expediency. (Note 2)

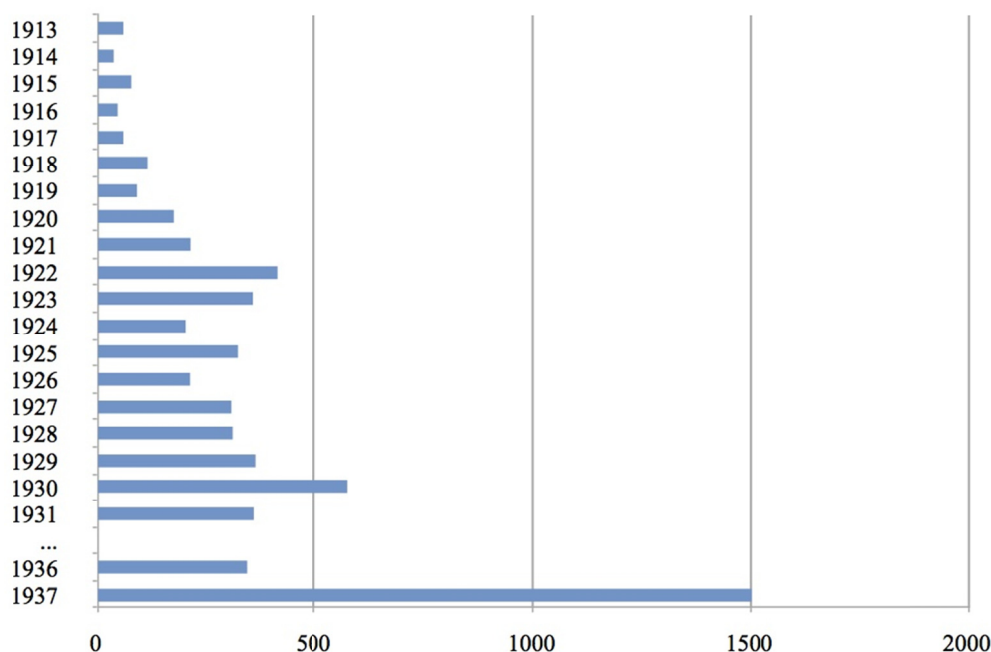


Figure 1. Naturalizations in Mexico by year and number, 1913-1931 and 1936-37 (data compiled from Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1930-1937)

More recently, in the 1970s and 1980s, other refugees, in particular those with leftist leanings from Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, fled their respective military dictatorships to settle in Mexico (Palma, 1995). Many Central American refugees, escaping civil wars at home, came to Mexico as well. Some immigrants aimed to cross into the United States. While many Salvadorans have traveled to Mexican border towns to cross into the United States, many Guatemalan immigrants have often taken refuge in Chiapas (Casillas, 1995; Martínez, 1995). In 1990, 356,400 Central American refugees settled in Mexico (Palma, 1995). Recent media reports have been focusing on the abuses that Central American immigrants suffer while crossing into Mexico. In June 2006, Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister Gerónimo Gutiérrez acknowledged that Mexican immigration laws were “tougher than those being contemplated by the United States.” This comment reflects the dilemma faced by Mexican authorities on how to handle its 1.5 million undocumented people crossing the southern Mexican border in the state of Chiapas. These undocumented immigrants often include Guatemalans who are willing to do the jobs that “Mexicans departing for the north no longer want” as well as Chinese, Ecuadorian, Cuban and Somalia emigrants using Mexico as a “backdoor” to the United States (Thompson, 2006). Films such as “Wetback” (2004) document the dangers that Central American immigrant face when migrating to Mexico. Moreover, the drug violence sweeping through Mexico and Central America calls into question whether some of these migrants ought to be regarded as asylum seekers.

Table 1 also shows that Chinese immigrants were naturalized at the second highest rate at the beginning of the twentieth century. These data conflict with reports of widespread anti-Chinese campaigns during the Mexican Revolution and in the 1930s and suggest that some Chinese joined the Mexican nation (Gómez, 1991; Schiavone, 2012). As Julia Schiavone Camacho argues, President Cárdenas sought to divest foreigners of their power in the nation and “repudiated exclusionary policies,” thereby diminishing the power of the anti-Chinese movement in Mexico; Cárdenas eventually repatriated several previously expelled Mexican women and Chinese-Mexican children (Schiavone, 2012). Unlike the data for the Guatemalan immigrants, there is not a particular date for large number of Chinese naturalizations; rather the Chinese were naturalized throughout the period of 1913-1937 thereby illustrating a disjunction between popular sentiment and policy objectives.

During the decades of these naturalizations, Andrés Landa y Piña wrote about the perils of Asian immigration to Mexico, quoting Dr. Francisco Valenzuela as describing the immigration as “an invasion of a conquered

country” (Landa, 1930). As Landa y Piña describes these pernicious immigrants, he notes the establishment of the Servicio de Migración in 1908, and its charge to track these immigrants (Landa, 1930). And while he was writing about the role of Migration Service, he was also processing immigrants for the National Registry of Foreigners whereby he registered 248 Middle Eastern immigrants. As functionaries tried to balance immigration legal codes, their personal views and practices often varied causing inconsistencies.

While the third largest number-940-naturalization cases occurred among Spanish immigrants complementing “ethnic” desirability notions, these Spaniards were only a small portion of the total foreign-born Spanish population. According to Mexican census data, in 1930 there were 28,855 foreign-born Spaniards living in Mexico (Chávez, 2010). These Spanish naturalizations could have been the beginning of the larger Spanish Republican emigration. As President Lázaro Cárdenas feared the rise of General Francisco Franco and the spread of fascism, he supported the Spanish Republic and refugees of the Civil War. In January 1939, the Mexican government officially welcomed Spanish refugees and formed a special commission to help accommodate them (Kenny, 1979; Lida, 1979). Between 1939 and 1942, some 12,000 Spanish Republicans resettled in Mexico, and by 1943, almost 30 percent of them had acquired Mexican citizenship (Mörner & Sims, 1985). Cárdenas continued to give Spanish Republicans and leftists special treatment as foreigners along with political refugees in general. Although the Spanish were perhaps seen as more desirable than other foreigners, they have historically been viewed as taking jobs from Mexicans and pernicious in economic activities (González, 1974). Since the naturalization records do not, however, indicate the religion of foreigners, it is difficult to speculate about how many naturalized Spanish immigrants in the data were Jewish refugees. However, Daniela Gleizer Salzman provides an excellent study of the contradictory nature of Mexican immigration policies with respect to Jewish refugees in the 1930s, noting that despite the Mexican discourse of helping refugees, roughly 1,850 to 2,250 Jews came to Mexico between 1933 and 1945, whereas 22,123 Spanish refugees were admitted to Mexico. (Gleizer, 2002, 2009).

The fourth largest immigrant population to naturalize was 741 Middle Eastern immigrants from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Persia/Iran, and Turkey, and they were also often deemed pernicious to the Mexican economy. What makes their naturalization cases particularly interesting is the existence of a 1927 anti-Arab law that aimed to bar Middle Eastern immigrants from migrating to Mexico. Middle Eastern immigrants already present in Mexico may have felt pressure or motivation to pursue naturalization. The history of Carlos Slim Helú and his family relates to this period and its politics. Carlos Slim was worth \$69 billion in March 2012 according to *Forbes* magazine, and he attributes his wealth to his family’s/Lebanese hard work ethic. The family immigrated to Mexico from Jezzine, Lebanon in 1902 when Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire (Slim, 2011). (Note 3) His father Julian Slim served as President of the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce for nearly twenty years (from 1930 through the late 1940s) (Slim, 2011). Yet, his role as a civic leader and steward of commerce can be contrasted with perceptions of his brother, José Slim, uncle of Carlos Slim. José Slim was charged for “*el delito de injurias*” (injurious crimes) in January 1922, though no details are provided in the surviving records. The existing documentation does suggest that many Mexicans were probably skeptical of the Slim family’s prosperity in the wake of the destruction of the Mexican Revolution. (What the Slim family wealth amounted to after twenty-five years of residency in Mexico is unknown, but the family had sufficient resources to purchase several buildings in downtown Mexico City after the Mexican Revolution.) Carlos Slim’s uncle, José Slim, naturalized in 1929, his uncle Pedro Slim naturalized in 1924; his uncle Jorge Slim naturalized in 1927, his uncle Eliás Slim naturalized in 1930. His father, Julian Slim, naturalized in 1930 as well (Slim, 2011).

At the same time as the Slim brothers were naturalized, Nicolas Yarahuan called a “Sirio-Libanes,” a Lebanese, and a Syrian in three separate documents (showing the conflation of these categories) entered Mexico in 1912, ran a business from 1923-1927, declared bankruptcy. Then in 1928, he shot a fellow *paisano*, *el árabe* Angel Guerra in Villa Francisco Madero in Durango. The letter written expressed concern with Yarahuan’s intent to naturalize as a Mexican citizen (Secretaría, 1929). If the 741 cases of Middle Eastern naturalizations are comprehensive, he was not ultimately naturalized as a Mexican citizen; he did, however, register with the National Registry of Foreigners in 1934. Similar to other immigrant groups that naturalized between 1913 and 1937, the Middle Eastern naturalizations illustrate the disjuncture between policy aims and policy execution.

The naturalization data also illustrate that the majority of foreigners identified their employment as “*comerciante*”—the commercial sector—followed by farmer and the third category as “other.” The various uses of the term *comerciante* could have implied being a peddler, store merchant, or smuggler. The data do not provide any further details about employment, how the occupations varied by immigrant group, or when or for how long the various professions were held during the working lives of the individual immigrants.

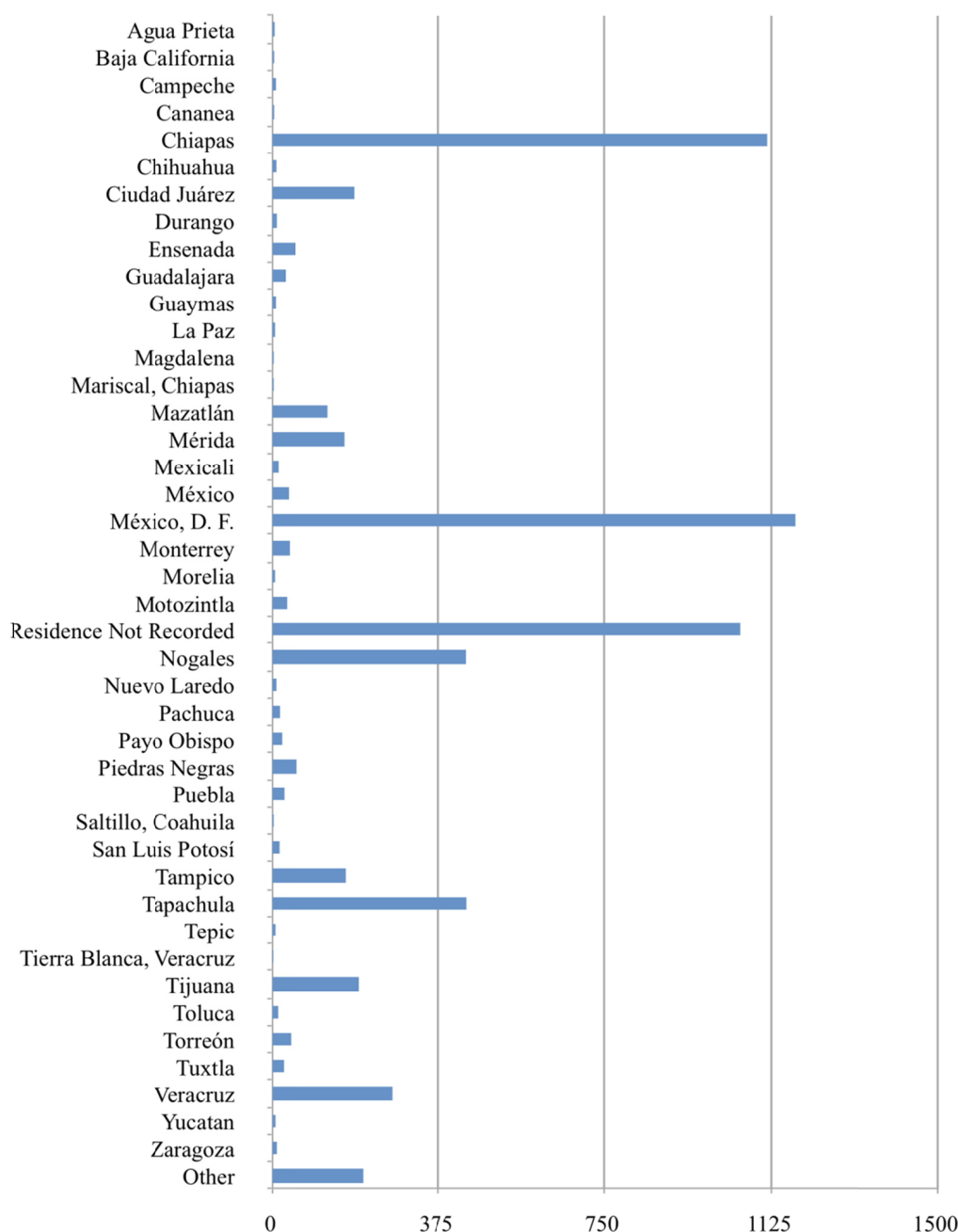


Figure 2. Recorded Naturalizations by immigrant residence, 1913-1931 and 1936-37 (data compiled from Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1930-1937)

As shown in Figure 2, the naturalization data indicate that the most common place of residence among naturalized foreigners was Mexico City followed by Chiapas. The third largest category of immigrant residence is “unknown/residence not recorded.” The incompleteness of the records may indicate how mobile these immigrants were with respect to their places of residence. And whereas Mexico City remained a constant hub for foreign settlement among immigrants from many countries of origin, the number of naturalized immigrants in Chiapas reflects the large Guatemalan presence in the naturalization data.

Overall, the naturalization data provides a very rough outline of who naturalized over a two-decade period in the early twentieth century. The data indicate (Figure 1) that the largest numbers of immigrants naturalized under the president administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). This increase corresponds to his political agenda of political expediency and social justice. As mentioned earlier, the General Population Law of 1936 (*la Ley General de Población 1936*) was consistent with Cárdenas’ policies to emphasize mexicanidad through a very

centralized single political party (Medina Peña, 1994). Although the immigration laws aimed to keep pernicious foreigners out of Mexico, the data show that at least some naturalized and actively joined the Mexican nation-state.

4. Conclusion

As foreign immigrants were routinely admitted to Mexican citizenship through naturalization in the early twentieth century, twenty Mexican merchants along with the Municipal President of a small town in the northern Mexican state of Durango wrote the Mexican Secretary of Interior (*Gobernación*) in 1935 the following: “We are not xenophobic; we want to conform to the Law [referring to Article III of the 1917 Mexican Constitution] that foreigners live in our *patria* [homeland]; that they naturalize in order to have equal rights as Mexicans ... because we do not want Mexico to be for the foreigners” (Solis et al., 1940). The notion that Mexico is not for foreigners and that foreigners need to join the nation-state are enduring tropes in post-revolutionary Mexican discourse.

In 2006, CIDE (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas) and COMEXI (Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales [the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations]) reported on Mexican public opinion of the country’s role in international affairs. A clear pattern in the CIDE poll was that: “Mexicans are wary of foreigners, rejecting even the possibility of naturalized citizens having the same rights as native-born Mexicans” (CIDE, 2006). Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the respondents felt “Mexican” above all in contrast with 34 percent who identified first with their state, and 72 percent felt very proud to be Mexican (CIDE, 2006). Juxtaposed to these nationalist sentiments, the pollsters probed for views on the role of foreigners and noted, “there is a lingering distrust of foreigners, of ‘others,’ who are ‘outsiders’ and ‘different’ and therefore not considered to be part of the national community” (CIDE, 2006). The report indicated that Mexicans are reluctant to allow naturalized Mexican citizens “to hold leadership or high-profile positions in government and academia where they would have key policy-making jobs” (CIDE, 2006). Of the respondents, 81 percent did not agree with naturalized citizens having the right to be elected to Congress, 73 percent do not agree with naturalized citizens being named president of the public university, and 55 percent are opposed to naturalized citizens playing on the national soccer team (CIDE, 2006). As the naturalization data show, this mistrust of foreigners has led to contradictory and complex applications of immigration policies historically and in the contemporary context. Despite the aim of exclusion of pernicious foreigners and the discourse of *mexicanidad*, nation-state building in postrevolutionary Mexico and immigration data suggest a certain level of inclusivity, and that Mexico is also and undeniably an immigrant nation.

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Notes

Note 1. For a discussion of *mexicanidad*, see Henry Schmidt suggests understanding the concept in relation to the allied terms *mexicanidad*, *mexicanismo*, and *lo mexicano* that all refer to the Mexican ethos as well as to its study and that, for this reason, became a driving principle for the growth of knowledge related to Mexico. (Schmidt, 1978).

Note 2. This type of political expediency can be explained as Michael Snodgrass argues that "the Bracero Program sought to achieve distinct political ends: rewarding the state's allies rather than extending a prized bracero contract to potential dissidents" (Snodgrass, 2011).

Note 3. In my examination of the Lebanese immigration records, I have found four immigrants named Slim migrating from Jezzine, Lebanon to Mexico. They include: Alfredo Slim born in 1888 and who named Jorge Slim as a reference; Elias Slim born in 1880 who named A. Letayf as a reference; Julian Slim born in 1889 with no reference named on his card; and Said Kathan Slim born in 1903 who named Julian Slim as a reference. This evidence could possibly indicate name changes and larger family networks and differences between official records and family history. The biography posted on Carlos Slim Helú's website states that his father, Julián (Khalil) Slim Haddad, arrived in Mexico in 1902 at the age 14 and following his four older brothers—José, Elias, Carlos, and Pedro Slim—who had begun arriving in Mexico in 1898.