

LOS GOLONDRINOS¹

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The worst work in the United States is better
than the best here.²

Demand for labor in the United States during the years of the First World War, the inter-war years, and those of the Second World War, brought many golondrinos³ or braceros⁴ over the Mexico-United States border. The workers who came during and following the First World War were predominately from areas of Mexico bordering or close to the United States-Mexico border, although workers did come to the United States from other parts of Mexico⁵ (Moore 1949:31, 34). Taylor, for example, writes that the demand for labor in the United States during 1917 and 1920 was strongly felt in Arandas, Jalisco (Taylor 1933:36). The even greater demand for workers during the years of the Second World War brought more braceros into the United States, and because of organized recruitment and because of a central recruitment center in Mexico, D.F., the majority of the workers came from central Mexico rather than from the northern areas as was earlier the case (Moore 1949:34).

The first of the war-time labor agreements to bring in braceros was made between Mexico and the United States during August of 1942. Under this agreement, the War Food Administrator (later the Department of Agriculture) was considered the employer. Provision was made under this war-time arrangement to transport and sustain the bracero's family and to protect and educate his children, but by consent of Mexico and the United States, no families were actually brought into the United States ([16]: 236, 238). This original 1942 agreement was extended in 1943, 1944, and in 1945 (Moore 1949:33).⁶

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting
The oranges are piled in their creosote dumps
You're flying them back to the Mexico border
To pay all their money to wade back again.

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita
Adios, mis amigos, Jesus and Maria
You won't have a name when you ride the big airplane,
And all they will call you will be deportee.

Some of us are illegal and some are not wanted
Our work contract's out and we have to move on
Six-hundred miles to that Mexican border
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves.

(From the "Song of the Deportees"
Guthrie and Hoffman 1962:8.)

Immediately following the Second World War, the problem of a great influx of wetbacks⁷ into the United States brought the whole question of bracero labor up for consideration. Under the agreement negotiated in 1948, work contracts were to be made directly between the grower or growers' organization and the individual workers "with the intervention of the

governments to assure compliance with certain standards." The grower was to obtain certification from the United States Employment Service that there was a local need for workers which could not be filled by domestic workers at the prevailing wages. Consent was then obtained from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to hire bracero labor. Although workers were guaranteed "free, hygienic lodgings of a type used by domestic agricultural workers in the area," no minimum wage was set by the treaty of 1948, and there was no specified agency with the actual power to enforce the obligations of the agreement ([4]:15, 16). This attempt to control the illegal entry of bracero laborers was, as one critic put it, "Like making international agreements about locusts" ([22]:24). In 1936, only 650 wetbacks had been caught in the United States ([24]:35), but the figures jumped to 278,538 in 1949 to 458,215 in 1950, and to 500,628 in 1951 ([14]:47).⁸

American farmers continued to choose wetback labor over bracero labor, and the Mexican government grew increasingly irritated over the seeming weaknesses in the 1948 agreement and the increasing flow of wetback labor across the border ([22]:24). Solving the wetback problem was, of course, not so much that of remedying specific conditions of border control but of doing something about the factors operative in the economics of Mexico and the United States which made workers from Mexico seek employment in the United States ([23]:408).⁹ By 1951, however, the Mexican government made certain specific demands of the United States government. An agency of the United States government was to handle recruitment of braceros; both governments were to "redouble efforts to stop illegal entries"; any farmer who violated the contract was to be deprived of braceros ([18]:44). Under the new agreement, contracting was to take place on Mexican territory ([20]:300).

Public Law 78 was enacted in 1951 "for the purpose of assisting in such production of agricultural commodities as the Secretary of Agriculture deems necessary, by supplying agricultural workers from the Republic of Mexico" (Galarza 1956:6), and was not intended to be a permanent ruling. It was hoped that legal and controlled importation of braceros would be a solution to the wetback problem and also help alleviate the labor shortage of farm labor due to the Korean War (Mayer 1961:35 and [6]:149). "Whenever United States employment is at such a level that Mexican workers are needed to supplement the United States labor force and whenever they can be spared temporarily from Mexico, we of course welcome their valuable assistance to our farming community if they will cross the border legally."¹⁰

The United States did welcome the braceros--the following chart shows the number of braceros admitted from 1949 until 1962.

1949	143,455	1956	416,833
1950	116,052	1957	450,422
1951	115,742	1958	418,885
1952	223,541	1959	447,535
1953	178,606	1960	427,240
1954	213,763	1961	294,149
1955	337,996	1962	282,556 ([14]:47) ¹¹

The "temporary" Public Law 78 was extended in 1954, 1956, 1958, 1961, and is currently being considered for extension.

Se ve mal a los Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos.¹²

One grower, speaking of the Mexican farm labor program, said that "we used to own slaves, now we rent them from the government."¹³

Because of increasing reports of the injustices of the bracero program, Secretary of Labor, James P. Mitchell, urged investigation of the program between the third and fourth renewal of Public Law 78. This investigation led to the shutdown of several bracero camps and brought improvements in others. The study also urged that real protection be given domestic farm workers against the adverse effect on wages and employment caused by the importation of braceros, that there be guarantees that domestic workers would have at least the same benefits as braceros, and that the bracero program be limited to unskilled seasonal jobs on nonsurplus crops. The relationships between bracero and domestic labor have very important bearing on the whole question of continuing to import Mexican nationals and will be considered, in greater detail, later in this paper.¹⁴

Meanwhile, we tried to get into the United States legally. We went to the Center every day and finally got all the papers filled out. The next step was to show up at the United States Customs House. We got in line in front of the office and waited. . . . There were people from all ends of the Republic, all dirty, in rags, and starving. Most of the men were so weak that the strong Mexicali sun made them walk like drunkards. I saw one or two just fall over dead, poor things. Really, they seemed like souls in anguish. It was a sad thing, all right, a sad thing to see. Everybody was anxious to get through; I understood their desperation because I felt the same way. . . .¹⁵

The actual process of becoming a bracero is a complicated and quite often a time-consuming one. During the months of May, June, and July, the major period of contracting takes place, and thousands of would-be braceros descend upon the three current recruiting centers of Chihuahua, Monterrey, and Empalme. Admission to the recruiting center is only the first step toward the coveted economic opportunity of working in the United States (Cunningham 1957:501). Empalme, Sonora, is the processing center for the West and Southwestern states, and since these areas employ the greatest numbers of braceros, it is Empalme that draws the largest number of hopefuls. Before a man can be contracted, it is necessary to have his name on the official list at Empalme (using it as an example). The principal method of getting on the list is to obtain a letter of recommendation from the local city authorities, generally from the Presidente of the municipio.¹⁶ It is often the custom to pay mordida¹⁷ to obtain the all-important letter of recommendation. With this letter, the prospective bracero travels, at his own expense, to one of the recruitment centers,¹⁸ shows the letter, gets his name on the list, and then waits for his name to be called (Soto 1959:258-9).

A more recent method of getting on the official list at Empalme is to work for at least fifteen days for the cotton growers in the area. They then issue a letter which will get the prospective bracero on the list. Another method is to work, without charge, for the local municipal government which then, in turn, issues the necessary recommendation.¹⁹ Then,

with his name on the official list, the prospective bracero waits to hear his name called over the loudspeaker. Critics of the bracero program have focused a great deal of their criticism on this period of waiting. During the peak time of recruitment, Chihuahua, Monterrey, and Empalme are overflowing with men who have no lodging, only hope of a job, and who are actually quite rootless. Manuel Sanchez' description of the dirty, starving, weak men gathered at the recruitment center is no exaggeration, and there are those who take full advantage of the conditions by overcharging for food and by stealing and gambling.

When a man hears his name called, he has gained entry into the camp. He is then given a preliminary health examination by Mexican doctors who are indirectly employed by the United States Public Health Service. These doctors work on a contract basis through arrangements made by the United States Public Health Service with the Mexican government ([14]:75). The men admitted to the camp are screened by Mexican officials and by the United States Immigration Service officers to eliminate as far as possible the "unfit" and "undesirable" (Cunningham 1957:501). Officers working for the United States Department of Labor also are sent to Mexico, and help to make selections in the migratory centers.²⁰

Those who are selected at the migratory camps are sent in special trains or by bus, at United States' expense, to the bracero reception and contracting centers just inside the United States border.²¹ After the men reach the contracting center, they are given a more thorough physical examination by United States Public Health Service officials. The men are dusted with DDT, X-rays are taken, and final tests are made to check for venereal diseases ([14]:75, 79). The men are also given a more intensive security check than they received at the recruitment center.²² At the contracting centers, the braceros are assigned to work for various employers. Assignments are made by reading specific work contracts to groups of men assembled in a large hall. After hearing the contract read in Spanish the men stand if they wish to be hired by the specific farmer or grower offering the contract. (The specific terms of the contract state: (1) the bracero will be paid the same prevailing wage as offered to domestic farm workers in whatever area he works, (2) \$1.75 per day will be taken from his earnings for meals, (3) the bracero will be given free "hygienic" lodging, and (4) the bracero has the right to "determine wages, hours and working conditions by arbitration through his own economic organizations" (LeBerthon 1957:123).²³)

If a man does not sign a contract within five days, he is sent back to Mexico (Eldridge 1957:63). Those who have accepted contracts are transported, at the employer's expense, to the place in the United States where the work is to be done. At the end of the specific work period stated in the contract, the employer is obligated to take the worker back to the contracting center where he was hired. The bracero can then be rehired for another temporary period if there is a prospective employer waiting at the contracting center, or, if no employer is available, he is taken back to the recruiting center, and must then find his own way back to his home at his expense (Cunningham 1957:501).

"So long as the United States government permits the importation, legally or illegally, of 500,000 or more Mexican nationals each year, the earnings of farm workers cannot rise much higher than the present levels!"²⁴

Much of the debate concerning the value of the bracero program has revolved around the effects of importation of Mexican nationals on the domestic labor supply and the supposed necessity for bracero labor.²⁵ A common statement is that workers in the United States will not do work for which it is necessary to stoop or kneel, and that the use of bracero labor is, therefore, imperative (McWilliams 1950:286). At the March 1963 hearings concerning the Mexican farm labor program, Jeffery Cohelan, Representative from California to the House, dismissed this argument as a fiction of the growers' imaginations. He said:

Growers say that domestic workers cannot be found who will do stoop labor. I say that growers should first give this theory a stiff test--and that this should be done without the assurance that if they fail, braceros will be rushed across the border to fill their needs. The easy availability of foreign labor acts as a damper on any sincere recruiting program ([14]:90).

Helen Gahagan Douglas, speaking for the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, made a similar statement at the hearings:

I think it should be obvious to anyone who has examined the situation that the availability of Mexican contract workers is one of the chief reasons why efforts to improve the conditions of American farmworkers and thus to improve the supply of farm labor, have not kept pace with other developments in agriculture.

Later in her presentation at the hearings she added:

The use of braceros, through the years, has driven down wages in the crops they dominate and thus created an artificial labor scarcity, which has been used as a reason for more braceros and has caused a cyclical deterioration in conditions ([14]:145).

In back of much of this argument, however, is the fact that stoop-labor jobs often demand so much skill that it takes \$75 to \$100 to train a worker. Growers, therefore, want to employ only men who can be forced to return to the same job year after year, and this is not the case, supposedly, with domestic farm workers. Workers who are isolated from the general labor market, it is argued, will be the ones who return to the same jobs, and foreigners are considered excellent because of their isolation being insured through controlled importation and deportation (McWilliams 1950:287). The fact that Mexican nationals are isolated from the general labor supply of the United States and that they form a "controlled" source of seasonal labor cannot be denied. A comparison of contracting and recontracting figures for 1958-1962 shows that a sizable percentage of braceros actually are recontracted.

	<u>Contracted</u>	<u>Recontracted</u>
1962	282,515	46,011
1961	294,355	68,887
1960	427,353	68,401
1959	447,760	60,774
1958	418,976	55,140 ([14]:9)

Although he gives no source for his percentages, Fred Eldridge says that fifty percent of those applying for work in the United States become professional braceros (1957:64).

"We are convinced that exploitation of imported foreign nationals, which has been profitably practiced by the large commercial farm operators in the United States must be stopped."²⁶ There has been considerable question as to whom and what concerns in the United States the bracero program actually benefits. Although the plea throughout the 1963 hearings on the Mexican farm labor program was that there should be no discontinuation of the bracero labor importation because it would most hurt the small grower and farmer,²⁷ statistics show that less than one percent of all the farms in the United States hired all of the Mexicans contracted in 1962, and that the vast majority of the small family farmers hired no labor at all. Andrew J. Biemiller, director of the Legislative Department of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, speaking at the 1963 hearings, stated that over one half of all farms in the United States use no hired workers at all and most of the rest rely only slightly on them ([14]:146, 195).

It is argued that importation of Mexican nationals favors the large rancher over the small because he can afford trips to the border to contract men as he needs them and can send back workers if necessary (Thunder 1953: 599). It has been further said that the whole question of whom the bracero program actually benefits rests not so much on the size of farming operations, but on the type of crops produced. Strawberries, for example, and many other fruits and vegetables require rapid hand picking and are, therefore, crops which are more likely to require use of bracero labor ([14]:36).

McDonagh's article on attitudes toward farm laborers gives still further insight into the question of bracero labor. McDonagh found that ten percent of the hundred ranchers he interviewed felt that Mexican labor was more costly than domestic labor, twenty-nine percent believed that it was cheaper, and sixty-one percent felt that there was no difference in cost. When asked about the advantages of Mexican nationals over domestic laborers, forty-four percent of the ranchers felt that the braceros were more dependable, eighteen percent reported that bracero labor was more readily available, eighteen percent said that braceros were "not afraid of hard work," ten percent felt that Mexican nationals were "generally a superior type of person," and ten percent saw the chief advantage of bracero labor in that "the law cannot take them away." Other advantages reported were, "braceros will not strike," "they will not migrate," and "they are willing to take orders." In terms of efficiency, forty-eight percent felt that braceros were more efficient than domestic workers, thirty-eight percent reported that bracero labor was less efficient, and fourteen percent felt that there was no difference. McDonagh's findings show that the ranchers he interviewed assign the bracero the highest ranking of all groups of farm laborers.

McDonagh concludes that "the great chasm of social distance" between rancher and domestic migratory labor may account for the steady demand that a large number of Mexican nationals be maintained. Ranchers, he feels, have come to rely on the Mexican national as a dependable source of labor in an area of a fluctuating labor supply and perishable crops (McDonagh 1955:10-18).²⁸ The considerations discussed are extremely important to the whole question of the value of the bracero program and whether it will continue to be extended in the future. The repercussions of the program will receive further discussion later in this paper.

My wife and I, we talk. We agree. I will become a bracero for one year.²⁹

The important concern of this paper lies in the meaning of the bracero program to each man and to his family, and although much of the information regarding this aspect of the bracero question is sparse, it is possible, considering Mexican family patterns, to make certain inferences concerning the effects of being a bracero.

To Manuel Sanchez, as it must be to many men, the whole idea of coming to the United States as a bracero was one of adventure.

When Alberto saw the state I was in, he said, "Compadre, listen, I think we'd better get out of here. You're going to end up bad. We'd better go be braceros. Let's go to work across the border." He kept talking that way until he convinced me.

I just stopped by the house to ask my father for his blessing, and to put on an extra pair of overalls and my new windbreaker. At first, my father didn't want me to go, but he finally gave me his blessing. We went to say good-bye to my brother-in-law and compadre Faustino and the first thing we knew, he had latched on to us and came along. I said, "Okay, then, here go the three of us."

I had eight pesos in my pocket when we set out for California (Lewis 1961:190).

Within the "strong tradition favoring sex expression for the male,"³⁰ it would seem that becoming a bracero is, to many, directly an extension of masculine expression, of machismo. The entire bracero program is male dominated--the camps are camps for single men, the work crews are made up of men, and the men are transported in groups. Being a bracero is a masculine adventure to many, and although the experience is no fraternity picnic and in Manuel Sanchez' words, "Well, you have to get used to the fields. Qué bárbaro! Oh, it was hard, hard, hard," it is still, in many aspects, a kind of extension of men's night at the local cantina.

To have the male gone from the Mexican family as a bracero seems to be an extension of already existing patterns. Families of whom I have first-hand knowledge have managed to carry on in basically the same fashion as when the male was present. Mexican males quite often will be gone from the household for various reasons, and leaving the family to search for work in another area is rather an established pattern. Because so much of this data is from first-hand knowledge rather than from monographs or statistical sources, it is by very nature subjective. It may be that the families I have had contact with are atypical, but in the absence of the male, the women carried on as they always had, but often with more freedom and openness. Although the male had been the titular "head of the family" during his presence, during the times when he was not in the home, the family unit did not fall apart.

This then, is the end of the story of the Mexican National. He is home again. Unless he is very lucky, he has encountered ignorance, prejudice, and discrimination; he has learned what loneliness in the midst of a crowd can mean; he has suffered exploitation, abuse, and injustice. If he is lucky, the bracero may have returned to Mexico a little richer; if unlucky, he may be poorer. In either case he certainly is wiser (Galarza 1956:80).

Although there are those who claim that braceros serve as goodwill ambassadors for the United States, there are also those who claim the opposite. Joseph P. Lyford's article, "An Army of Ill-Will Ambassadors" (1957: 18-19), is an example of this feeling. Manuel Sanchez says the reverse. "The braceros I knew all agreed on one thing, that the United States was 'a toda madre.' That means it's the best" (Lewis 1961:338). Despite the cries of those who feel that the experience in the United States promotes more unfavorable attitudes toward the United States than positive attitudes, the evidence seems to demonstrate the contrary.

William Form and Julius Rivera, in evaluating a Mexican border village, found that a positive attitude toward the United States was associated with the amount of contact with American life, particularly contact as a bracero. One indication of the positive feeling toward the United States is the fact that twenty-five percent of their sample had returned to the United States for two or more times (1959:335, 339). The recontracting figures on page 55 above would indicate that something is quite positive about the experience in the United States, for in 1962 approximately six percent of the braceros recontracted, four percent in 1961, seven percent in 1960, seven percent in 1959, and eight percent in 1958 ([14]:9).

Robert M. Sayre, Acting Director of the Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs, United States Department of State, speaking before the House Sub-Committee on Migrant Labor, quoted immigrant visa issuance figures, which, he felt, indicated the positive effects of the bracero program. In 1955 there were 37,681 visa issuances and 53,684 in 1961; the pending applications for immigrant visas also showed an increase from 63,475 in 1961 to 140,511 in 1962. These figures indicate, however, a correlation with the decrease in yearly numbers of braceros admitted into the United States. As the number of braceros was almost halved between 1960 and 1961, the number of applications for immigrant visas greatly increased. In Mr. Sayre's presentation before the House sub-committee he stressed that the bracero program was valuable in promotion of understanding between the United States and Mexico ([14]:39-41). The following quotation from Simpson's Many Mexicos clearly shows the positive aspects of the bracero program reflected through a man who was once a bracero in the United States:

Those I talked with had nothing but praise for the treatment they had received. At a road patrol station in the mountains of Oaxaca, the sergeant in command discovered that I was from California. "I worked in California for two seasons," he told me with obvious pride. "It was wonderful. I got to be a pruner in the orange groves of Anaheim, the best job they had. You have to be good to be a pruner, for the crop depends upon good pruning. They paid me seventy American cents an hour! Say, do you think you could get me back there?" (1960: 313).

A good bracero who does not spend his money foolishly can return with his pockets fat with dollars.³¹

One of the most persistent arguments in favor of the bracero program is that work in the United States provides the returning bracero with a large amount of capital which he could not have earned in a comparable period of time or under comparable conditions in Mexico. Repeated again and again is the statement that the capital earned in the United States, put to use in the

Mexican community from which the bracero comes, can provide him and his family with an entirely new way of life. The story of Rafael Tamayo from Ocotlan, Jalisco, is one of the many which are related in support of this justification of the bracero program. In Rafael Tamayo's words, "I came to America because my family and I are very poor. I am a campesino. I earn seven pesos a day. . . ." With the money Rafael earns as a bracero, he hopes to return home, go to a patrón near Ocotlan and rent land. "I will raise garbanzos and corn," he says (Eldridge 1957:63). In his report before the House sub-committee, Robert M. Sayre quoted the average annual per capita income in many Mexican areas as \$100; the average remittances sent home by each bracero total, according to his figures, at least \$100 ([14]: 39).

It seems obvious that the bracero program does bring capital rewards in a shorter period of time than would be possible if the worker were to remain in Mexico. The question, however, lies in the actual value of these relatively large sums of money that are earned in the United States. Although there are significant earnings for each bracero, what is done with the money and what effect does working in the United States actually have? Returning to the Rafael Tamayo discussed above--he has hopes of renting land when he comes back to Mexico. Chances are, his work in the United States will have given him the money, not to change or transform his life in Mexico as many champions of the bracero program would have one believe, but to live in relatively the same manner with a little more capital. He will sharecrop or rent land, in all probability, because land is hard to purchase in Jalisco, and it is likely that he did the same before he worked in the United States--the difference will most likely lie in the amount of land sharecropped or rented.

In the majority of the cases, the money earned as a bracero in the United States must partially go to pay back the money and the interest on the money which was originally borrowed for the trip to the recruitment center and perhaps for payment of family living expenses during the male's absence. Although this is largely speculation, it would seem that a great deal of the money earned in the United States does not actually find its way into the Mexican economy in ways which the champions of the program would hope. Because the spending pattern of the village Mexican is quite opposed to the Puritan ethic, it seems safe to imagine that a large percentage of the money brought home from working in the United States is spent on gifts, on drinks, and on entertainment for the Mexican village, and that it often does not find its way into capitalistic ventures.

Taylor's information from Arandas would seem to indicate that this speculation has validity. He writes that the economic status of the great majority of those returning to Arandas after having worked in the United States was practically the same as it had been before they had gone. He says that many spent their money in ways which made no permanent change in their status. The practice of many, returning to the village, was "to come to Arandas, stay without working until their money was gone--drinking, dancing, etc.--then to return to the United States; but they are ragged now" (1933:58). Gamio Leon also adds confirmation of this pattern. Some are overwhelmed by the environment to which they return, he says. They spend all their savings paying debts, in celebration of the town's saint's day, or in drinking (1961:30).

It can be argued that the money goes to a specific group of people in Mexico, and therefore has more far-reaching and more intensive effects than the statistics would indicate. Gilberto Flores-Munoz, Mexican Minister of Agriculture, in a speech to a farm organization meeting in Culiacan, said that the bracero program was directly responsible for creating a middle-class farmer in Mexico ([14]:300-301). Success stories abound in Baker's article, "Braceros Farm for Mexico" (1953:3-5ff). He feels that the "agricultural revolution" which is taking place along the western coast of Mexico, particularly from Nogales to Sinaloa to Nayarit to Guadalajara, is largely due to the braceros who, after completing their contracts, have returned to use their earnings to go into farming for themselves in Mexico. He tells of Pablo Ramos of Obregon who spent a few years as a contract laborer in California, and came home with money and experience. With government aid he bought undeveloped land, cleared it, and now grows rice and wheat. Indications of his extreme success are his tractor, thresher, disc plow, new Chevrolet pickup truck, and his land plane.

It would seem that in spite of these examples of capitalistic dreams come true, pieces of the complete story of the effects of the bracero program are remarkably missing. Although it may very well be true that the program has telescoped and expanded effects not directly in proportion to the capital gained in the United States, it seems that all of the necessary data concerning what is actually done with the money is not present. A few stories of success and a general impression of the spending patterns of the Mexican villager are not enough. It seems that a thorough investigation of the men who have worked in the United States as contract laborers and how they have actually used their money when they returned home is imperative before this issue can be settled.

It seems quite likely and certainly is documented that a certain percentage of the braceros do invest their money in ways that mean a real economic or social gain in their favor. There certainly are men who return home to invest their money in sharecropping or renting a larger proportion of land, who are able to save enough to afford to marry, to buy a house, or to open a small business,³² but it would seem that there are also many men who return home to find that they have no real lasting economic gain to show for their work in the United States. They have, perhaps, gained social status because of the large amounts of money they have spent in buying drinks for the village locals at the cantina, but in terms of long-range, economic upward-mobility, they have little to show. Before a statement such as Robert Sayre's, declaring that sudden loss of the dollar income of Mexican workers would be a serious blow to their family income ([14]:40) can be made, it would seem that a much more thorough study of the real use made of bracero earnings and the actual importance to Mexican families be carried out.

A further economic aspect of bracero earnings lies in Mexican balances of international payments. Although it has been claimed that bracero earnings form an all-important part, Cline says that the remittances from braceros actually constitute a minor but constant element in Mexican balances of payment. Table I shows earnings from tourism, frontier transactions, and bracero remittances from 1953 through 1958. Tables II and III are included for comparison with Table I showing bracero remittances.

TABLE I
EARNINGS FROM TOURISM, FRONTIER TRANSACTIONS, AND BRACERO REMITTANCES
1953 - 1958
(\$ million)

Period	Tourism/Frontier		Bracero Remittances*	
	Amount	Percent of Total Income	Amount	Percent of Total Income
1953	313.6	31.0	33.7	3.3
1954	342.6	32.3	27.9	2.6
1955	349.9	27.5	25.0	1.9
1956	508.2	36.2	37.8	2.7
1957	591.5	42.1	33.2	2.4
1958	559.6	40.3	35.7	2.5
1959 (9 mos.)	480.6	45.0	22.2	2.0

*In 1962, the Bank of Mexico indicated bracero remittances of \$37 million ([14]:39).

Source: Cline 1962:297.

TABLE II
NET NATIONAL INCOME, 1950 AND 1957

	Amounts (in million pesos)		Percent	
	1950	1957	1950	1957
Primary Activities Agriculture	11,864	19,665	21.5	24.2
Secondary Activities Mining, Petroleum, Industrial	15,375	21,646	28.8	27.1
Tertiary Activities Commerce, etc.	28,027	38,783	49.7	48.7
Totals	55,266	90,094	100.0	100.0

Source: Cline 1962:349.

TABLE III
GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT AND NATIONAL INCOME,
1948 - 1959
('000 million pesos)

Year	Gross National Product			National Income	
	Monetary Terms	Real Terms	Rate of Annual Growth (real)	Monetary Terms	Real Terms
1948	31.7	36.1	---	28.8	32.4
1949	35.2	37.6	4.0	31.7	33.9
1950	41.5	41.5	9.4	37.5	37.5
1951	51.8	44.5	6.8	46.8	40.2
1952	58.3	45.0	1.1	52.0	40.1
1953	56.3	44.4	-1.3	50.2	39.6
1954	66.5	47.8	7.1	59.2	42.6
1955	84.0	52.5	8.9	74.8	46.7
1956	94.0	56.0	6.3	84.0	50.0
1957	103.0	58.0	3.4	92.0	52.0
1958	114.0	60.6	4.3	101.8	54.3
1959	122.0	63.4	2.4	109.0	56.8

Source: Cline 1962:349.

"For many, the experience in the United States vale nada."³³

The impact of the time spent in the United States by braceros can certainly be evaluated in terms other than monetary ones. It is interesting to see that the opinion regarding the learning experience afforded braceros by their time spent in the United States differs just as much as that regarding the economic impact of the bracero program. The opinion that the time spent in the United States represents a period of intensive learning, learning which is then put into use in the bracero's community, is expressed by Verne Baker.

Writing about the great advances in agriculture along the Pacific coastal regions of northern Mexico, Baker states that it is the braceros, returning from work in the United States, who are rapidly taking the lead in applying the new methods they have learned in the United States (1953:3). He reports that Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California have profited most by the returning braceros, for it is here that they can most easily put into use the techniques of irrigation, crop planting, and so forth that they have learned working in areas of similar climate in the United States. (Because most bracero labor is used in California, Texas, and Arizona, areas where land and climate and crops are similar, great amounts of learning take place and are put into use when braceros return from these areas to Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California.)

Practically all of the men have learned some English and have had the experience "equivalent to an intense vocational agriculture course" (Baker 1953:3, 5).³⁴ On the other hand, there are those who feel that while

the experience of being in the United States and working here is certainly valuable in terms of exposure to new ways, it is often of little or no importance in the original Mexican community once the bracero returns home. As Taylor says, something is certainly learned by the wide experiences in the United States, but he stresses that the outstanding fact in Arandas is that the knowledge gained was not put to use (1933:59).

Writing nearly thirty years later, Carlos Gamio Leon expresses views very similar to those of Taylor. In the new environment of the United States, the bracero is practically obligated to change his "material life" for the better. He is exposed, in the work camp, to beds, furniture, milk, meat, bread, and shoes which may not have been part of his daily experience in the village from which he came. Braceros also have new experiences with tools and intensive cultivation of crops, but Gamio Leon feels that the bracero is really not suited for any sort of educational role in his home community. In the first place, the average time spent by a bracero in the United States is 2.9 months,³⁵ and this is too short a time for any long-lasting changes to take place. Gamio Leon also stresses that the tasks performed by braceros are generally simple, endlessly repeated ones which teach little about all-encompassing farming techniques which could be put into practice in Mexican villages. He also feels that the braceros do not have sufficient economic resources for putting many of the innovations learned through their experience in the United States into practice in their home communities (1961:30).

To substantiate his position, Gamio Leon gives the example of one bracero he met in the United States and subsequently visited in the bracero's home village. He was surprised to find the man "plowing fields in Mexico and wearing short trousers and sandals, eating chili and torillas and beans, and living in a little hut scarcely different from the rest, even though he had amassed some savings in the United States." The man explained that his parents and almost all of his neighbors lived in this fashion, and not wanting to be nor enjoying being different, he had gone back to the old customs. When he had returned from the United States, people in his village had ridiculed his new ways of doing things and the fact that he spoke in English. (Gamio Leon does say that this particular man was able to have a small influence on farming methods, for some of the villagers imitated a few of his innovations [1961:30].)

Taylor reports that he was more impressed by the relatively small degree of change in attitudes and ways of living of those returning to Arandas from the United States than by the material change which the experience sometimes produced in the economic condition of individuals. Because braceros often work with men who also speak no English and have relatively little contact with English speakers in the United States, Taylor notes as a "conspicuous index of the lack of effective contact with American culture," the high proportion of people returning to Arandas who could speak practically no English. As one informant said, "I didn't learn English because I worked with puros Mexicanos."

Taylor concludes that it was not so much the hostile pressure from the community (possibly excepting religion) that caused those returning from the United States to fail to affect the culture more markedly, as it was their usual inability to make effective contact with American culture

when in the United States (1933:55). It is men who come to the United States as braceros. They stay in relatively isolated camps, generally only with other braceros, and their length of time in the United States is certainly limited. The tasks which they perform are difficult and tiring, and there is little time for contact with Anglo customs. Taylor stresses, as does Gamio Leon, that men coming back to Mexico generally lack sufficient economic power to put new ideas into effect. He adds that the great difference in physical and economic conditions makes it extremely difficult to apply methods learned in the United States in the Mexican village community.

From the recent vote in the House of Representatives,³⁶ it seems that the bracero program is going to be extended for one year. Although an extension has been voted each time the twelve-year-old Public Law 78 has come up for reconsideration, those opposing the bracero program continue to be extremely vocal. The evils in the regulation of the conditions of the program have largely been removed. As a result of the reports of Ernesto Galarza and others, the abuses in the program have been checked and reform measures enacted, the most important of which, perhaps, is that of denying bracero labor to any employer who is found to be violating the conditions of Public Law 78.

The main criticisms against the bracero program come from those concerned with domestic farm labor. Although there are those who feel that American farm workers are beyond concern and should get out of agriculture and into industry if there ever is to be any hope of improving their condition (Eldridge 1957:64), there are equally as many who feel that the bracero program is directly involved in the poor conditions of domestic farm laborers.

Rebecca Smaltz of the National Consumers League stated this latter position very strongly before the House Sub-Committee on the Mexican Farm Labor Program. "Public Law 78 perpetuates a system of colonialism which solves no long-run problems for the imported foreign worker, degrades him as well as the domestic worker he replaces, and lessens the stature of the United States around the world" (1963:197). A common retort of the growers is that they would be unable to find reliable domestic labor to do the jobs now done by bracero labor. The reply to this reasoning is very clearly stated by Cohelan, as quoted earlier, that only when growers offer domestic laborers the same conditions as those offered the braceros, offer domestic laborers a fair wage, and know that the government will not rush bracero labor into the United States the minute that growers report that no domestic labor is available, will the domestic farm worker have any chance of proving himself.³⁷

The House sub-committee hearings are filled with the reports of those who feel that the existence of an infinite supply of labor from Mexico depresses wages to a level at which American domestic laborers cannot compete. By lowering wages, the program encourages migration of domestic farm workers out of the bracero dominated areas. An example of this effect was given by Henry B. Gonzalez, Representative from Texas to the House. He questioned why domestic labor is recruited from Southwest Texas to work in Wisconsin when growers feel that the domestic laborers are unsuitable for work in Texas. Domestic laborers are driven north, he contends, because they are not offered a decent wage in Texas, and bracero laborers are available to fill the necessary jobs in Texas at the prevailing low wages ([14]:

319). The whole argument on the part of the growers seems to be a cyclical one. It would seem that those who testify that the need for bracero labor in the United States will continue as long as the program, itself, continues are correct. The whole program is a self-perpetuating one, especially as it affects the existing wages in the areas where bracero labor is used, for bracero labor has no other choice than to work for the price offered by the employers.

From reading the reports of the hearings concerning migrant labor, it would seem that the bracero program does tend to make conditions of American domestic farm labor more difficult. Although it may not be true that braceros serve as a kind of "slave labor" as many report, it is correct that the Northwestern states that have almost stopped using bracero labor have been able to find a readily available supply of domestic labor at the times when it was needed and at prices which were agreeable to both employer and employee. The entire bracero program is under intensive scrutiny, and it seems possible that the numbers of braceros brought into the United States will continue to decrease as they have over the past few years. Whether the program continues or is dropped, there is a great need to answer many questions in order to evaluate its effects adequately.

What specifically is done with the capital brought home from the United States by the individual bracero? What innovations learned from working in the United States are actually put into practice in the local community? Is the money earned by braceros actually concentrated among a specific percentage of the population in such a way as to make the effects of the bracero program actually more intensive than the statistics would indicate? There are considerations which cannot be specifically debated because of the paucity of the kind of personal data necessary.

The bracero certainly has an economic importance for Mexico, and being a bracero generally means economic gain for the individual Mexican. However, the lasting effects of the program are not as considerable as one might be led to believe, and this is largely due to the community organization of the areas in Mexico to which the braceros return. As the economic condition in Mexico continues to improve, and perhaps through such programs as Adolfo Lopez Mateo's efforts to offset loss in United States bracero demand by stepping up land distribution and colonization programs, the bracero program may cease to have a significant economic importance for Mexico. An excellent summation of the present status of the bracero program is Eldridge's statement: "Countries with high standards of living find themselves short of unskilled labor; those with low standards usually have such labor in surplus. The bracero seems to be the answer" (1957:64).

NOTES

¹Editor's note: In the interest of textual continuity, bibliographical entries of corporate or anonymous authors have been alphabetized and numbered. For example, ([16]:236, 238) appears rather than ("Migration--Admission of Agricultural Workers into the United States" 1948:236, 238). These numerical entries precede alphabetical entries in the bibliography.

²Informant from Arandas, Jalisco (Taylor 1933:40).

³Slang term for braceros ([18]:44).

⁴Day laborers. Term generally refers to those who come to the United States to work.

⁵After World War I, the immigration act of 1917 forbade admission of workers under contract, but provided for temporary admission to the United States to seek employment ([4]:16).

⁶An excellent coverage of the bracero program during World War II is Robert C. Jones' book Los Braceros Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos Durante el Periodo Belico. He lists the number of braceros during 1942 as 4,203, those for 1943 as 52,098, and those for 1944 as 62,170. As of July 15, 1944 California had received the most braceros (35,280), Montana 4,434, Washington 4,332, Oregon 3,670, Colorado 3,335, Idaho, 2,410, Michigan 2,006, Arizona 1,850, Nebraska 1,495, Minnesota 1,299, Wyoming 961, Nevada 691, Utah 689, N. Dakota 432, S. Dakota 300, Kansas 298, Wisconsin 191--to give an idea of the distribution of workers. In the winter of 1944-45 there were 27,000 braceros in the United States (Jones 1946:26).

⁷Term for illegal entrants into the United States from Mexico. Word is derived from the fact that many swam the Rio Grande from the Mexican to the United States side, and therefore had wet backs. For an account of the history of wetback labor and the need for it in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas see Stilwell 1947:14-17.

⁸For a table showing the numbers of Mexicans located in "illegal status" in the United States from 1949 through 1962 see ([14]:47ff).

⁹A comprehensive account of Mexican agricultural conditions can be found in Lucio Mendieta y Nunez's El Problema Agrario de Mexico, 1959.

¹⁰President Dwight D. Eisenhower, White House Press Release, March 16, 1954.

¹¹Bracero labor is used primarily with fruits, nuts, vegetables, and in some areas with sugar beets and cotton rather than with field crops which are thoroughly mechanized (Eldridge 1957:64). For tables on employment of braceros by state see ([14]:27, 28).

¹²Informant from Arandas, Jalisco (Taylor 1933:48).

¹³From report prepared for Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor (Mayer 1961:35).

¹⁴Braceros were guaranteed, under Public Law 78, a minimum wage of fifty cents an hour, employment for at least two-thirds of their contract period, free transportation to their job, and various housing advantages (Mayer 1961:34).

¹⁵Manuel Sanchez (Lewis 1961:328).

¹⁶This certificado or permiso is a document which states that the man is of good background, is unemployed, and owns no land given him by the government which he should be farming. The mayor has received, via the governor of the state, a quota from Mexico City. The Mexican government issues quotas to the various states based on the monthly needs furnished by the United States government. Along with this document, the prospective bracero must also have a paper showing that he has completed his compulsory military training (Eldridge 1957:63).

¹⁷Literally, bite. The socially acceptable bribe that is so much a part of the political and governmental processes of Mexico.

¹⁸Braceros come from all twenty-nine states and the two territories of Mexico ([14]:40).

¹⁹These permits are called libres and are issued by the Presidente of Empalme. They state that the man in particular is in transit from a state permitting recruitment of bracero labor and has been in no trouble while in Empalme. To facilitate "prompt issuance" of such a permit, it is "suggested" that the bracero work for the town three days without pay (Eldridge 1957:63).

²⁰At the recruitment center, the man is checked for aptitude and given a brief security check to see that he has no criminal record and that there is no indication that he has been a member of a "front organization." He is measured, fingerprinted, vaccinated for smallpox, and given American papers and a copy of his contract. Of the 450,000 Mexicans who passed through the three recruiting stations in 1956, only .046 percent were rejected for all reasons (Eldridge 1957:64).

²¹These centers are maintained by the United States government, but are paid for by the farmers and growers in the United States ([17]:488).

²²Less than 2 percent of the prospective braceros were rejected at the five reception centers during 1956 (Eldridge 1957:64).

²³Ernesto Galarza's report, Strangers in our Fields, carefully documents the abuses of the contract terms. These include those in housing, wages, and food, and his report notes several instances of attempts made by braceros to organize and the subsequent suppression of organization by employers and the blacklisting of braceros who complained or had been involved in any sort of organizational efforts.

²⁴President H. L. Mitchell of the National Farm Labor Union ([10]:5).

²⁵Hank Hasiwar has written a very impassioned article (1951:23-5ff) about the displacement of American farm workers in the Imperial Valley, California, by braceros.

Speaking on KPFA, Emma Gunterman of Gridley, California decried the use of braceros because they displace the domestic farm workers ([2]).

²⁶Mitchell 1949:20.

²⁷According to this argument, the small grower or farmer is less likely to have the necessary monetary funds to afford a more mechanized source of labor, and any creation of a labor shortage, e.g. termination of the bracero program, would cripple the smaller farmers ([14]:36).

²⁸The chief disadvantages of bracero labor reported by the growers are also of interest. Thirty-two percent felt that provision of housing was the chief disadvantage of bracero labor, 16 percent listed bookkeeping and red tape, 12 percent felt that the language barrier was the greatest disadvantage, 12 percent spoke of the transportation costs, 8 percent of the problems of occupational training, 8 percent spoke of the braceros fear of climbing tall date trees, and 4 percent listed the costs of compensation insurance.

²⁹Rafael Tamayo (Eldridge 1957:63).

³⁰For a further discussion of machismo and the Mexican male, see Paz 1961:65-88, "The Sons of La Malinche," and Ramos 1962:54-72, "Psychoanalysis of the Mexican."

³¹From the Evening Star, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1962 ([14]:69).

³²For example, "Toni Barranco came to the United States as a bracero, picked lemons for six months and returned to Mexico with \$500 in cash. With this money he was able to get married and to buy a house. Now Toni has a new job and is living the good life" ([7]:28).

³³Informant from Arandas, Jalisco (Taylor 1933:60).

³⁴Simpson, too, has favorable remarks concerning the effects of the bracero program. "Thousands of returning braceros brought to all parts of Mexico new ideas, new techniques, new habits. One bracero I talked with had saved more than a thousand dollars, with which he was going to buy a tractor for the use of his village. Braceros remember the good food and the abundant markets they found here. Each goes home with as many large bundles of clothing as he can carry" (1960:313).

³⁵Under the terms of the bracero program, a man is not allowed to work in the United States longer than a three-year period with one contracting ([14]:49).

³⁶For a coverage of the present status of the bracero program see: [3] and [12].

³⁷It is often said that the Mexican National is offered more than the domestic worker--for example, the Mexican National is guaranteed subsistence unless he is offered at least sixty-four hours of work in a two-week period, and the domestic is not given such a guarantee. Unlike the domestic worker, the Mexican National, if not paid by the employer what is due him, is guaranteed payment by the United States Government, and the government brings suit against the farmer ("Migrant Labor" 1959:37).

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