



THE FUTURE IN THEIR HANDS

Making Mexico's Foreign-Educated Elite

RACHEL GRACE NEWMAN

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Rachel Grace Newman



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This book is dedicated to my parents, Stacie Wallace and Keith Newman

*Y también a mis suegros, Elba Guadalupe Martínez Ibarra
y Enrique Francisco Martínez Pérez*

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Introduction

In Mexico City, October 1942, twenty-three young Mexicans assembled at a ceremony to celebrate their upcoming journey. The group, made up of mostly men and a few women, included doctors, engineers, natural scientists, and social scientists. Soon these scholarship recipients would travel north for graduate study in the United States. For now, they listened to congratulatory speeches, including one given by a role model, a foreign-educated Mexican. Manuel Sandoval Vallarta, a physicist trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), declaimed in triumphant style. He told the students that they could usher their nation into a better future. By going abroad, they would contribute to “the enhancement and progress of the patria” with “new knowledge that they will later put to the service” of Mexico. This was “a task whose transcendence cannot be exaggerated,” he added, for “the place that Mexico will occupy in the world tomorrow, is in your hands.”¹

According to Sandoval Vallarta, these students would advance individual prospects and the nation’s fate via foreign study. He claimed that the carefully chosen scholarship winners were special, deserving, and patriotic. His speech reached an audience of so “many Mexicans prominent in various professions and in education” that seating proved inadequate. Sandoval Vallarta indirectly addressed, too, the reading Mexican public and officials of the Mexican state. Six local newspapers reported on the event and transcribed his words.² If today Sandoval Vallarta’s claims read as commonplaces, we must remember that past generations in Mexico did not always view student mobility as politically appealing, or even politically salient. His words were far from perfunctory rhetoric trotted out for a valedictory ritual. This was a political articulation of his vision for the nation’s destiny, a set of ideas intended to change cultural narratives and spur new policies.

For over a century, some in Mexico have worried that study abroad denationalizes Mexican youth or harms Mexican sovereignty. In countries like Mexico, locals and outsiders alike speak of a *foreign-educated elite* to define, and usually critique, the allegiances of political leadership. The term implies that people with a similar educational profile govern in the same way, whether in accordance with foreign (usually US or European) ideologies or in alliance with foreign interests. These are assumptions. Mexicans educated abroad have never been politically homogeneous. Furthermore, foreign-educated Mexicans have played many kinds of roles in their home country; not all are working at the highest levels of governance. Across many fields and with varying levels of influence, some Mexicans of the middle and upper classes share the experience of having completed their education in Europe or the United States. They are scientists, writers, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, professors, and, yes, politicians. The ubiquitous yet exclusive phenomenon of Mexican study abroad is indeed rich with political significance but in much deeper ways than most people realize. Instead of asking how particular foreign-educated leaders govern, we can ask why it is that the Mexican state, among its myriad functions, is committed to sponsoring study abroad for a lucky few. This book considers where foreign-educated Mexicans come from and how public funding for foreign education makes and reproduces a nation's elite.

The book's central argument is that middle- and upper-class Mexican youth, along with their families, strategically navigated political tides over many generations to ensure that the Mexican state would nourish their ambition to study abroad; they thus shaped the formation of the Mexican state as insistent citizens, pushing for access to a specialized benefit. Rooted in Mexico's unequal society, the politics of study abroad are also inextricable from debates on how one builds a modern Mexican state and nation in an unequal world where knowledge and power are centered elsewhere. The state only gradually bought into the idea that developing Mexico required educating Mexican talent outside the nation, an idea that asks citizens to think of international scholarships as an investment in the national future. The Mexican state learned to see scholarships in this way by extrapolating the strategies of elite families to apply to a larger, national collective. When we attend to the social history of study abroad, we find that for middle-class families seeking stability, and wealthier clans hoping to secure their lineage, study abroad also served as an investment in the future. The politics of study abroad are the elite politics of self-preservation and self-justification, even as they also impinge on questions of sovereignty and nation.

When citizens used scholarships to fund their educational sojourns abroad, they created a political space where young elites and their families engaged with the Mexican state, and this engagement cannot be explained simply as corruption. Clientelism, though present and important, was not the only logic guiding selection of scholarship recipients. Class-based articulations of need and political arguments about the nation and the future also figured in elite claims making.

Aspirants to scholarships knew about the possibility of corruption, but they believed that other kinds of criteria still mattered and presented their qualifications. They shaped the political meanings attached to the benefits they sought: to make individual journeys to study abroad a sign of nationalism, a marker of merit, and a justification for status.

In examining citizens' role in shaping the Mexican state institutions that offered scholarships for study abroad to young Mexicans, this book reconstructs the rise of international scholarship programs from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. To an extent, that history maps onto the usual political turning points that scholars use to organize this period.³ Elite families sent their children abroad from the earliest days of Mexico's independence, and their reasons for doing so were rooted in the context of a struggling postcolonial nation. As part of the top-down modernization that characterized the Porfiriato (1876–1911), the Mexican state offered a handful of scholarships to the best students. In the wake of new national imperatives and revolutionary discourse introduced by the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the state continued this small-scale practice of scholarship granting with little organization and no overarching policy to speak of. But in the state- and nation-building years of the 1920s and 1930s that followed the revolution, a new political culture offered the opportunity to justify or vilify study abroad, especially when it was paid for by the state.

After 1940, as the state shifted away from radical, agrarian-focused revolutionary policies toward development and more moderate rhetoric, supporters of study abroad enjoyed newfound receptivity to their vision for foreign-educated Mexicans, exemplified above in Sandoval Vallarta's speech. Formalized scholarship programs, which systematized, institutionalized, and expanded the availability of this aid to students, took root in the 1940s and blossomed between 1970 and the early 1980s. This late-century blossoming coincided with the well-known era of high state spending, a last-ditch effort to prop up a struggling economy and an increasingly unpopular ruling party. Now, having fully bought into narratives like that of Sandoval Vallarta, the Mexican state glossed the scholarship programs, built in response to elite hopes and anxieties, as sound national investments in Mexican development and sovereignty.

Its title inspired by Sandoval Vallarta's lofty vision, *The Future in Their Hands* shows how generations of state officials, and citizens, turned again and again to international scholarships to spur national transformation. The book's subtitle, *Making Mexico's Foreign-Educated Elite*, emphasizes a process of creation, because these elites were not born foreign educated. In a very unequal country, they were heirs to privilege. Guided by their families, they opted to study abroad as a strategy to further their ambitions and solidify their status. Many of them did so with funding from the Mexican state. Like other students going abroad, Sandoval Vallarta's audience of scholarship recipients might have wanted to serve their nation, but they also wanted recognition for their unique worth, better jobs, and good

salaries that would help them support their families. They wanted to be comfortably part of Mexico's elite, and foreign education was a means to that end. From the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, elites exploited political turning points to entrench and grow what has become a remarkably durable state apparatus for international scholarships. Foreign-educated elites shaped Mexican policy to serve their ambitions and paved the way for future generations to study abroad too.

FOREIGN-EDUCATED MEXICANS AND POLITICS IN MODERN MEXICO

Since the turn of the twentieth century, private and government actors based in the United States and the United Kingdom pursued geopolitical dominance by sponsoring the elites of other nations and colonies to study in their universities. This was "cultural diplomacy" that would enhance the "prestige" of US and British centers of knowledge. One way to encourage (and regulate) these students was to fund them with scholarships.⁴ An early, influential initiative was the Rhodes Scholarships (dating to 1901), while in the United States, the Rockefeller Foundation and other private efforts from the early twentieth century preceded the US government's Fulbright program, created in 1946.⁵ Besides bestowing recipients with specific knowledge, these programs claimed to increase international understanding or promote development in scholarship recipients' home countries. Liberal capitalist nations were not alone in pursuing global influence in this way. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union competed with Western powers to train Third World students, including those from Mexico.⁶ Yet the history of scholarships has fallen through the cracks of various subfields like the histories of science, education, diplomacy, and migration, none of which has fully claimed international scholarship programs as a topic of importance. Some "histories" of programs like the Rhodes or the Fulbright tend toward triumphalism. They evaluate programmatic "success" rather than critically historicizing student exchange.⁷ Latin American case studies on student mobility, usually analyzing small groups connected to a particular discipline or scholarship program, are continually emerging.⁸ Important works on Mexico by Sarah Babb and Diana Méndez Rojas have tackled such questions as the role of foreign education in shaping the Mexican discipline of economics and the transnational power dynamics of the Rockefeller Foundation's collaborations with the Mexican state in the field of agricultural science.⁹ Scholars of Latin American cultural diplomacy like Elena Jackson Albarrán reveal the hemispheric nature of exchange in the twentieth century, analyzing the politics of artistic and educational collaborations funded by governments and non-state actors.¹⁰ I am curious about study abroad as a mechanism for knowledge production in Mexican history, across disparate fields from science to the arts. Why has it been so natural, for so long, to send Mexico's "best" to study abroad?

It is no secret that many of Mexico's prominent statesmen, public intellectuals, cultural figures, and academic giants studied abroad, and this was particularly true in the late twentieth century. Political historian Roderic Camp estimates that over half of the country's "power elite" in that era was foreign educated.¹¹ While foreign-educated Mexicans' political trajectories capture attention, few ask how or why politicians obtained their foreign education. To reconstruct that national (indeed transnational) history across many decades proved a challenging research task. Primary sources were dispersed, for there was no single state institution to follow; various branches of the Mexican state offered scholarships through the decades. I also traced Mexican student mobility through US institutions and archives. The sources I found led me into the histories of everyday life, privilege, and the family, as well as the history of scholarship programs per se, to explore what made study abroad desirable and feasible for elite young Mexicans.

For decades, the value of a foreign education and the politics of Mexico's foreign-educated elite have been treated as self-evident. In this kind of thinking, common in certain Mexican circles and particularly among foreigners observing Mexican politics, we find assumptions: that people trained at great universities abroad are better politicians; that Mexicans with specialized knowledge can use it to benefit fellow Mexicans. In 1982, *The New York Times* dubbed new President Miguel de la Madrid "Mexico's Harvard Man," highlighting his US formation to communicate that De la Madrid represented a different type of leadership: rational, technical, competent.¹² As if studying abroad transformed Mexicans in a predictable way, writers inside and outside the academy invoke foreign education as a self-explanatory epithet.

Critics of study abroad make a parallel assumption. Since the 1920s, some Mexican nationalists have been deeply concerned about threats to sovereignty that might result from sending youth to study in the United States. Mexican philosopher of science Eli de Gortari, writing in 1963, averred that *norteamericanos* wanted to steal as much highly educated Mexican talent as they could and that the scholarships they offered for young Mexicans to attend US universities had that nefarious purpose. De Gortari considered these US scholarships "the kind of 'help' we should not accept."¹³ He assumed that US geopolitical designs would inevitably realize their desired impact on Mexican scholarship recipients.

Even today, the biographical fact of a foreign education can become grounds for easy political typecasting as a neoliberal sellout. The best-known foreign-educated Mexicans of the past century were the three Ivy League presidents of the 1980s and 1990s: Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Ernesto Zedillo, who led the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) away from economic nationalism. But these three men do not represent all foreign-educated Mexicans. As Camp, who has exhaustively documented the composition and formation of Mexico's elite, cautions us, we should be wary of using "foreign student experience" to explain technocratic politics.¹⁴ Individuals' politics were not determined by their foreign education.

Foreign-educated Mexicans of the twentieth century were ideologically heterogeneous. There were nationalists and neoliberals, conservatives and leftists. There was Francisco I. Madero, revolutionary hero, trained at the Sorbonne and Berkeley in the late nineteenth century, who led a successful movement against authoritarianism espousing liberal politics. Slightly younger than Madero were the Columbia-educated anthropologists Moisés Sáenz and Manuel Gamio, who became architects of postrevolutionary nationalism and *indigenismo*. Historian-economist Daniel Cosío Villegas studied in Europe and at Harvard in the 1920s, then became an advocate for Mexico in international forums in the 1930s and later an independent-minded critic of the mid-century Mexican state. He was also an extremely successful builder of institutions, notably, the Fondo de Cultura Económica and the Colegio de México. Cosío Villegas's contemporary, Ramón Beteta, was a proud University of Texas Longhorn who served as secretary of finance and was widely known for his corruption. The US Department of State viewed him as unfriendly to the United States, unlike the ambassador to the United States, Antonio Espinosa de los Monteros, who had also studied in the United States.¹⁵

Toward the later part of the twentieth century, the ranks of well-known Mexicans educated abroad swelled, but they did not become politically homogeneous. Take the case of Harvard MA recipient Ifigenia Martínez, cofounder of the left-wing opposition party Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), which challenged the same 1980s PRI that was led by fellow Harvard alumni.¹⁶ As I finished this book, the Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena) party continued to dominate Mexican politics, as it had done since 2018. Under Andrés Manuel López Obrador (commonly referred to as AMLO), foreign-educated Mexicans populated numerous cabinet positions.¹⁷ AMLO's protégée, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, an environmental engineer who did research at UC Berkeley (with a scholarship), was elected to the presidency in 2024.¹⁸ This list of foreign-educated Mexicans suggests that we should pause before attributing leaders' political positions to their educational pedigree.

It is true that students' ideological commitments could play into the choice of where to study, which seems to be particularly the case for Mexican students going to the Soviet Union. But this is different from saying that Soviet universities made them Communists: in fact, in many cases they had militated on the left in Mexico and already were card-carrying Communists.¹⁹ Students had plenty of nonideological reasons to select the study destinations that attracted the vast majority of Mexican students since the nineteenth century, namely, the United States and Western Europe. For example, Sandoval Vallarta had wanted to study in England, but in 1917, as he and his family evaluated options in the middle of World War I, he ended up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, instead of the University of Cambridge.²⁰

Moreover, foreign-educated Mexicans were not merely porters of ideology. They also were multilingual, intercultural intermediaries who secured resources for the Mexican state and advanced Mexican ideas in international settings, as

illustrated by historian Christy Thornton.²¹ During his twenty-five years studying and teaching at MIT, Sandoval Vallarta translated research from Spanish to English, connected physicists throughout the Americas, and acted as a scientific and cultural “go-between,” as documented by historian Adriana Minor García.²² Scholars of science and expert knowledge are also uncovering the global networks of Latin American expertise. Many Latin American experts, often trained outside their home nations, remained highly mobile throughout their careers as they connected with far-flung disciplinary counterparts, including colleagues in the Soviet Union and other so-called Second and Third World nations.²³

If there is a common political commitment among foreign-educated elites, it is a commitment to directing state resources to produce more such elites: to train Mexican youth abroad, in their own image, on the state’s dime. Throughout the twentieth century, arguments in favor of student mobility, such as Sandoval Vallarta’s, frequently came from foreign-educated individuals. Sandoval Vallarta’s rationales for young Mexicans to study abroad were also self-serving. Foreign-educated Mexicans’ rhetoric in favor of study abroad, marshaled to support a new generation, conveniently legitimated what power or prestige they had managed to carve out for themselves. Sandoval Vallarta, for his part, built a lasting legacy as a national scientific hero in Mexico.²⁴ I turn now to the institutions that produced so many generations of foreign-educated Mexicans and the politics of benefit-seeking in the twentieth century.

STATE FORMATION AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY ABROAD

In the history of scholarship programs, we find little violence, some degree of corruption, and not much in the way of radical ideology. On the other hand, there was bureaucracy, frustration, pleading, rhetorical flourishes, and paternalistic bestowing. It was often banal, but Mexico’s scholarship programs were absolutely political. And the recipients of these scholarships were not the kinds of students we tend to read about in histories of twentieth-century Mexico. When Mexican students have captured the interest of historians in recent years, it is usually because they were political activists, often facing state surveillance and repression.²⁵ Scholarship-seeking students did not collectively protest, organize, or militate, as did some of their peers in Mexico’s institutions of higher learning, mostly to protest against injustices in their own schools and universities but sometimes to call national politicians to account. Yet students getting a foreign education had an agenda, and they shaped Mexico’s political trajectory through the cumulative effects of their interactions with the state.

This book emphasizes the role of elites themselves in creating state scholarship programs. It explores how citizens engaged with those institutions and in so doing, made the state what it is today. Alongside state institutions, I often discuss aspiring

students angling for scholarships, young people studying abroad, and their family members. Foreign-educated Mexicans appear as the architects of important international scholarship programs, making policies to regulate a kind of mobility that was part of their own lived experience. While some of the individuals in this book are still well known and all were privileged in the Mexican context, most are not household names. But in the aggregate, these individuals made an impact on the state: not by challenging it, or by running it, but by using it.

For several decades now, Mexican historians interested in state formation have attended to the role played by ordinary Mexicans in making the apparatus that would govern them. Research focuses on the impact of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which ended one-man authoritarian rule, empowered a new political class, and enacted a remarkably progressive constitution. Evidence abounds that the postrevolutionary Mexican state was a co-creation of the powerful actors from above and the people from below, in which the state enjoyed legitimacy and achieved stability and the popular classes had some channels to push back and air grievances.²⁶ We also know this state was violent and repressive throughout the twentieth century. State surveillance and state violence targeted individuals, social movements, and others organized in groups considered threatening.²⁷

Invoking the term *dictablanda* to describe a state with an “enduring mixture of both democratic and authoritarian elements,” historian Paul Gillingham finds that these apparently incongruous attributes indeed coexisted, especially when we look at the local level.²⁸ However, Gillingham and others also insist that the state did not have the power or the resources to violently repress all opposition.²⁹ According to Benjamin Smith, all governance was done “on the cheap” because tax revenues were quite low in mid-twentieth-century Mexico. The federal government was not well resourced but rather resourceful: “Corruption and forced rural labor” could produce results that tax revenue might have otherwise purchased, and this was a low-cost way to win support that did not require more robust “coercive and co-optive powers.”³⁰

I contend that international scholarship granting was a site for achieving rule and legitimacy among Mexico’s privileged social groups. In the cases where the federal government allocated some of its limited resources, we can expect these outlays to be instrumental, strategic investments to secure support from certain constituencies. The state offered “the material incentives of social reform and the political incentives of jobs for the boys” to the Mexican population across classes in the 1920s and 1930s, then tended more toward development projects targeted to collectives after 1940.³¹ As the state moved away from more radical redistributive policies, it still reserved select benefits for individuals, binding them to the state apparatus as beneficiaries. In other words, governance on the cheap still channeled resources to some Mexicans, such as those who enjoyed scholarships to study abroad.

Even when benefits were available, whether a scholarship, a veteran’s military pension, a bracero contract, or financing for a new refrigerator, the state never

offered enough aid to satisfy demand.³² Under the relevant laws or rules, a citizen might be qualified or entitled, but this too had to be proved, and it also might not be enough to win the desired benefit. In short, the state's provision of limited benefits opened up a fraught space for citizens to make cases for their unique worthiness. I see benefit-seeking as a key site for studying how citizens interact with the state and exploring what kinds of politics emerge in seemingly apolitical contexts. The pursuit of individual benefits need not be ideological, nor does it lend itself to collective organizing. Are these sites in which all political back-and-forth, even when citizens register dissent, nevertheless bolsters the legitimacy of the state?

Throughout the twentieth century, the Mexican state cared about the appearance of legitimacy, and citizens embraced this interest and appealed for benefits accordingly. However, corruption was a real possibility. Officials could use their power to mediate access to benefits in order to enrich or empower themselves. Historian Alberto García, who researched the local governments in western Mexico charged with distributing contracts to would-be braceros, found that these municipal officials "routinely ignored" the stipulated selection practices, selling contracts or dispensing them to further their own political interests.³³ Corruption had contradictory effects for those who practiced it: it could shore up their position, but when too blatant, corruption could actually weaken the accused government.³⁴

As one of these selective benefits offered by the Mexican state, scholarships to study abroad represent a unique case study. One reason is their longevity: it is a benefit that has been available from one part of the state or another since the nineteenth century. Another reason is their unusual political malleability. For decades, scholarships were not seen as political at all, and once the political relevance of study abroad consolidated by the mid-twentieth century, this benefit survived through varied ideological seasons. And finally, Mexican aspirants to scholarships have long been able to get a similar or even superior benefit from somewhere other than the Mexican state. Despite its interest in regulating student mobility, the Mexican state was never the only institution offering scholarships or the only force creating discourse about what studying abroad meant. US institutions have played a particularly important role as alternatives and complements to Mexican scholarship programs. And US campus communities and mainstream media shaped the Mexican politics of study abroad, circulating flattering narratives about foreign-educated Mexicans that the Mexican state and, understandably, foreign-educated Mexicans themselves have eagerly taken up. US institutions have complemented Mexican efforts to train a select few citizens abroad, and US discourse helped Mexicans explain why their state should invest in a foreign-educated elite.

Bolstered by institutional and media rhetoric at home and abroad, scholarship aspirants and recipients profoundly influenced the workings of the very state benefit they wanted and sometimes gained, to make sure that they would have access to scholarships and that people with their credentials would be rewarded. In studying how this process played out over the decades, this book is also able to

reveal new dimensions of the social and cultural history of elites and their family contexts in a changing Mexico.

ELITE YOUTH, ELITE FAMILIES,
AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF MEXICAN PRIVILEGE

My research yielded new insights about the everyday imperatives that drove privileged groups' engagement with the Mexican state. In *The Future in Their Hands*, I argue that elite young people, both men and women, played a crucial role in shoring up privilege and providing stability within family networks. Elite citizens pursued knowledge not only for its own sake, or only as a sign of political legitimacy or cultural capital, but also in the pursuit of material benefits. Scholarships proved appealing and useful for young people and their families as a source of income. And study abroad served as an investment not just for the nation but also for families, who navigated degrees of uncertainty fighting for their place in Mexican society's upper echelons.

By examining mobile youth as integral parts of family structures, the book expands our understanding of transnational youth in the twentieth century. Historians David Pomfret and Richard Jobs contend, and I agree, that "youth" was not a strictly defined biological or chronological demarcation: it was a social, cultural, and political identity that implied belonging to a "vanguard" and possessing "agency." They envision youth as a "collective distinguished from the larger 'adult' social order" that was "connected across distinctively youthful networks." They assert that youthful mobility stemmed from youths' freedom, which came from being independent (not a child) but not overly burdened by responsibility (not an adult). Transnationally mobile Mexican students inhabited that political-cultural-social category of youth, but I found that they were not "freer" for being young. Their mobility did not take them "beyond the family and other adult institutions."³⁵

On the contrary, familial considerations conditioned young Mexicans' transnational trajectories. From the nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century, the mobility of privileged Mexican youth was a family affair, even when families were not paying for it. As I consulted primary sources, from petitions to fellowship dossiers, looking for the voices of students, I found mothers and fathers writing letters to Mexican officials asking for scholarships on their children's behalf. Looking for unencumbered youth, I read of scholarship recipients asking for additional funds to cover emergencies involving the wives and children they brought abroad. I learned that Mexican students abroad remitted money home to parents and other relatives. Families appeared in public conversations about study abroad too. Pundits opining in the newspapers questioned the morality of Mexican parents sending children abroad (as in one critique in the early 1930s) or excoriated the paltry scholarships insufficient for students who already had children of their own (in a critique in the 1970s). I discovered that understanding

these young people required me to situate them as members of families. As social historian John Gillis observed in his study of youth cultures in modern Europe, an analytic focus on youth must still attend to the ways that adults, and the structural conditions of their time, “affect the way youth plots its social, economic, and cultural strategies.”³⁶ While studies of youth-specific movements, organizations, and cultural practices sometimes decenter the institution of family, the family is essential to the story of Mexican student mobility and the development of international scholarship programs.³⁷

Mexican transnational families and communities have existed for quite some time, and historians are teaching us more about how kinship ties, generational divides, and gender roles played out across borders. Recent scholarship on Mexican labor migrants considers how those left behind maintained love and urged responsibility from those who migrated and how those who left nurtured or neglected ties to home. Scholars like Ana Elizabeth Rosas, Miroslava Chávez García, and Mireya Loza have shown that Mexicans far from home were not free from their families either, nor were families left behind “free” of those who migrated. Migrants were marked by gender and class, and they belonged to social worlds that shaped their itineraries. Migrant families had some power to make demands on their loved ones on the other side of the border.³⁸

What sets the families discussed in this book apart from most Mexican families, and indeed what distinguishes internationally mobile students from most migrants, is their social class. Student mobility, a form of elite migration, is notably different from the movement of poor and working-class Mexicans, as we would expect.³⁹ Through the twentieth century, student and laboring groups of Mexicans in the United States appeared to contemporaries as ontologically distinct categories. Columbia-educated Mexican researcher Manuel Gamio, writing about Mexican migration to the United States in the early 1930s, excluded professionals, political exiles, artistic types, and students from “the immigrant class we consider our problem.” People like himself were not objects of study.⁴⁰ With different roles to play in the body politic, labor migrants and students were viewed as separate populations and managed by different state institutions. *Braceros* were farmhands, literally, “arms.” By the 1960s, students became brains, in danger of draining, that is, of abandoning their home country to take higher-paying jobs in the United States or Europe.⁴¹

Though elite Mexicans have migrated to the United States since the nineteenth century, this relatively small group has not attracted sustained interest from historians, who have understandably focused on the poor and working-class majority of Mexican migrants.⁴² When mentioned, elite migrants’ experiences serve to point out the racist, classist valences of US anti-Mexican discrimination, because lighter-skinned, better-dressed Mexicans were usually treated better.⁴³ My work affirms this unsurprising finding, but it also explores the situations in which elites, too, faced discrimination. I also critically consider how they responded to threats

to their status while abroad. In asking what elites believed was necessary for a highly educated young person, what treatment and comforts they aspired to, and what kind of diminishment they feared, this book considers Mexican class politics playing out far from home.

Labels like “middle class” and even “wealthy” do not refer to uniform sets of attributes consistent across time and space. To be meaningful for historical inquiry, class categories must be defined for particular historical moments and specific contexts. Besides using indicators like income, occupation, or place of residence to define the lower, middle, and upper classes, scholars of Latin American history emphasize shared cultural values, or shared lived experiences, to characterize class groups.⁴⁴ For this book, the relevant categories are “middle class” and “upper class.” Neither category refers to average or typical Mexicans: as historian Louise Walker emphasizes, through the twentieth century, average Mexicans were poor.⁴⁵ This book deals with a privileged realm. The popular majority had no chance to win international scholarships that middle- and upper-class Mexicans could qualify for.

Latin America’s middle classes were preoccupied with education and by extension, merit. Historian Barbara Weinstein has argued that merit connotes an “achieved status,” something earned and not “inherited,” which sets the middle classes apart from those who were born into good fortune, which they might well not deserve.⁴⁶ In Mexico, writes Soledad Loaeza along similar lines, the middle classes sought prestige through education, again because they were not born to pedigreed status. This “justified [the middle classes’] aspirations to social mobility and their claims to political leadership.” Education, rather than family lineage or even wealth, implied that the middle classes’ position owed to their achievement, or in other words, their merit, thereby rationalizing their privileged status.⁴⁷

Yet these privileged citizens were insecure. For the popular classes, insecurity was expected, as was proximity to destitution. But for elites, insecurity was more of an existential condition. They did not fear starving but becoming indistinguishable from the masses. Middle-class status was a “house of cards” that could be toppled by an economic downturn, a job lost, or a benefit cut, and these were all realistic threats to worry about in twentieth-century Mexico.⁴⁸ Gamio, an early scholar of Mexican migration and a foreign-educated Mexican himself, documented the testimony of a Mexican student at New York University in the 1920s that showed just how easy it was to fall from privilege. The student was expelled after three months because of his limited knowledge of English. Upon losing his student status, he soon lost his on-campus job and then spent several weeks “peniless” and barely subsisting on “ten cents worth of bread a day, and water.” Finally, he found himself living much as the rest of New York’s immigrants: periodically unemployed, working in poorly paid factory jobs, and subject to discrimination for being a foreigner.⁴⁹ Walker calls this insecurity “fundamental precariousness,” and Brian Owensby evokes middle-class fragility as “the knife’s edge between a

hope for stability and the reality of social unsteadiness.⁵⁰ Seeking stability was a fundamental middle-class impetus, and besides their symbolic or political utility, educational opportunities pointed toward a surer future.

Historians of class in Latin America agree that we cannot study class identities without considering questions of gender. Both the category of transnational youth and the category of student are “overwhelmingly gendered male,” but neither category explicitly, or totally, excludes women.⁵¹ Women and girls studied abroad from the nineteenth century through the late twentieth century, albeit in smaller numbers than the men and boys who did so. Susie Porter, writing about middle-class women employed by the Mexican state, reminds us that women’s class status often depended on their relationships with men, making the details of job title, income, or educational indicators insufficient to accurately place them in the social pyramid.⁵² Along these lines, women and men who studied abroad bore distinctive family responsibilities and were unequally able to fulfill those duties. At the same time, we should not overdraw gender difference. Women who studied abroad harbored aspirations essentially similar to those of men: to have families, to contribute to their nation, to achieve middle-class stability, and to enjoy a modicum of prestige.

In this book, when I refer to “privileged” or “elite” Mexicans, I am speaking about the middle and upper classes *together*.⁵³ Mexican students abroad came from families that could be categorized in either of these social strata, and in many cases, their circumstances revealed just how blurry the borders between the top and the middle could be. Elite lineages contained wealthier and shabbier households, and these relatives were still united by kinship despite visible disparities.⁵⁴ For their part, the elites in this book rarely used explicit class labels. Though imperfect, the divide between family-funded and scholarship-funded students roughly indicates difference in class background. The wealthiest families could afford to send children abroad at their own expense. Other families, while unquestionably privileged in Mexican terms, could not afford foreign tuition, so if their children went abroad, it was because they had a scholarship. The scholarship as an identifier of middle-class belonging points to both the material conditions that necessitated the aid and the symbolic meaning of prestige, which scholarships also communicated: they were granted on the basis of merit, not need.⁵⁵

My definition of “elite/privileged” intentionally encompasses internal variation to highlight what the middle and upper classes shared: the ability to accrue merit and access meritocratic systems. Most of them also shared a white or mestizo identity.⁵⁶ This class and racial background aligns with the norms for knowledge workers and experts across the Americas, as historians Andra Chastain and Timothy Lorek note.⁵⁷ In a study of over three hundred Mexican intellectuals active from 1920 to 1980, Camp found that 94 percent came from a middle- or upper-class family.⁵⁸ Knowledge, education, and racialized class status were inextricably bound together in twentieth-century Mexico. To understand the significance of

foreign education in Mexico, we must acknowledge that this practice makes and remakes Mexican privilege and interrogate how this happens.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Well before the group of US-bound Mexican students sat before Sandoval Val-larta in 1942, and in fact long before the physicist departed for his own studies at MIT in 1917, generations of Mexican elites studied abroad, virtually all supported by the private fortunes of their families, not the state. The first chapter reconstructs the elite culture of mobility in nineteenth-century Mexico to show how families opted to study abroad as a strategy to protect the future of their lineages. Families insisted that this was the only reasonable option for educating their scions, and this narrative of necessity would shape public discussions, and later national policy, about international student mobility through the twentieth century.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 did not bring an end to student mobility, but it did bring changes in political culture that forced citizens and the state to conceive of student mobility differently than before. I discuss the era of revolutionary nationalism from 1920 to 1940 in the second and third chapters. As Mexico redefined what nationalism meant after a social revolution, young people and pundits took to the press to debate how the state might use scholarships for study abroad for the collective good and whether sending young people to the United States or Europe was a good thing at all. Critics of study abroad did not prevail, and chapter 3 helps explain why: continued demand for foreign education among elites led these privileged citizens (and their parents) to lobby for the “favor” of a scholarship. Aspirants contrived new political rationales to make a nationalist case for study abroad that also upheld elite social norms and nourished clientelism. Merit was the capacious political logic that individuals used to pursue such varied ends.

At a moment of transformation in Mexican politics around 1940, important institutional changes taking place reshaped Mexican student mobility. The period 1940–70 is characterized by a concerted state push for modernizing development and the institutionalization of scholarship granting, as I explore in chapters 4 and 5. To help us understand the “soft” side of the *dictablanda*, I consider this period in which increasing numbers of privileged young citizens enjoyed scholarships. Mexican and US state actors, as well as the press and Mexican students themselves, elevated study abroad to a topic of national importance and lionized the figure of the *becario*, or scholarship recipient. As the nationalist case gained adherents, institutions systematized and expanded scholarship offerings that created more opportunities for young Mexicans to study abroad.

During this institutionalizing mid-century era, as I argue in chapter 5, elite demand for scholarships to study abroad was still driven by the pursuit of stability and privilege. Middle-class precarity, and the important role young people played in sustaining family networks, made international scholarships doubly desirable:

as income now and an investment in better-paying careers later. Gender and family relationships shaped the lived experiences of students and their relationships with scholarship grantors. Frustration about the insufficiency of stipends and the postgraduate opportunities actually available to returning students revealed the limits of the celebratory narrative about patriotic Mexicans securing the nation's future.

The book's sixth and final chapter considers how the Mexican state ultimately established a very durable, institutionalized apparatus for granting international scholarships in its national scientific agency, created in 1970. In its first decade of existence, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología prioritized scholarships for study abroad to build scientific sovereignty in Mexico. Grappling with public concerns about brain drain, state officials designed the scholarship program both to facilitate student mobility and to regulate it. The kinds of frustrations that earlier generations of students had complained about now became national problems requiring policy solutions.

The work of international scholarship granting has been part of Mexico's science policy since 1970 and up to the time of writing. I reflect on the very end of the twentieth century in the book's epilogue. Following a devastating economic crisis in the 1980s, Mexican scholarship offerings contracted, but they did not disappear. By the 1990s, the Mexican state awarded more scholarships than ever before. While most of these were for domestic study—a reflection of just how much Mexico's own higher education system had grown—opportunities for foreign education remained available from the state's Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología. Neoliberal austerity did not dismantle all parts of the state with equal zeal, leaving behind programs designed to reward a select few with international scholarships. The framework built during the 1970s, itself resting on the foundations laid by many generations of elite Mexicans, survived into the current millennium even as the state writ large was shrinking.

The political discourses of the past century, despite their ideological variability, ultimately advanced a vision of Mexico's future in which the need for foreign knowledge would never disappear. Today, about fifteen thousand students from Mexico are enrolled in US institutions of higher education each year.⁵⁹ Europe is an important destination, too, for thousands of Mexican students.⁶⁰ Not all outbound Mexican students receive funding from the state, but many thousands do. While this book focuses mainly on Mexican students bound for the United States and sometimes on those headed for Europe, Mexican knowledge production has had other global linkages.⁶¹ For example, Mexican universities have long received students from other countries, especially from elsewhere in Latin America. The Mexican state has even funded some of these foreign students with scholarships.⁶² I was one of them. From 2010 to 2011, I received a scholarship to work toward a master's degree at the Colegio de Jalisco. However, my trajectory, a US citizen enrolled at a Mexican research institute, was unusual. As has long been true, Mexico sends

more students to study elsewhere than it receives from other parts of the world. This book shows why Mexico's outbound student mobility is so enduring and why study abroad has attracted generations of Mexican youth. Their desire keeps pressure on the state to continue underwriting elite student mobility, with scholarship programs financed by the nation that benefit only a few.

Mexican Elites, Education, and Mobility in an Unequal World, 1876–1910

During the long rule of authoritarian modernizer Porfirio Díaz, the Mexican state sent at least 124 students and professionals abroad for further study and training. Porfirian officials were investing in the future of their own educational system. On returning to Mexico, these musicians, engineers, and educators were expected to improve Mexico's national schools, ensuring that their curriculum, equipment, and instruction matched the level of foreign institutions.¹ The state's competitive impetus sought to combat the notorious preference for foreign professionals, especially in fields like engineering, to fill jobs in Mexico. Even the Porfirian government sometimes passed over its homegrown engineers for public works projects.² But if Mexican schools could be improved by bringing back knowledge from abroad, perhaps Mexican-educated professionals could compete. To this end, the state invested in educating a small number of Mexicans abroad. That group included men and women.

Only a handful of the young Mexicans who received a foreign education enjoyed scholarships. During the Porfiriato, the era defined by Díaz's presidency, 1876–1911, privately funded student mobility was far more common among the Mexican upper classes. Historian Mílada Bazant estimates that a "majority" of aristocratic Mexican youth received a foreign education at the end of the nineteenth century.³ Most of the time, parents paid for tuition, travel, and living expenses. This chapter analyzes the rationales and practices emerging from family-financed student mobility that, I argue in this book, are key to understanding the later history of scholarships granted by state and non-state institutions. Here I focus on Mexican elites' deeply held belief in the stabilizing, enriching promise of foreign education, so strong it was felt as a necessity. This elite article of faith would later inform national policy and justify international scholarship programs. The

twentieth-century story of state-funded scholarships cannot be told without the nineteenth-century story of elite educational mobility, which is above all a story about family and the reproduction of social privilege.

From Mexico's independence in 1821 to the outbreak of revolution in 1910, the country's elites agreed about the obvious value of foreign education for the ruling class. Even as officials expanded public education for the Mexican population as a whole, elites maintained that study abroad was necessary for their own sons and daughters. I refer to this claim as the "necessity narrative." As Scottish-born Madame Frances Calderón de la Barca wrote during her 1830s stint in Mexico, elite Mexicans presented study abroad as an unfortunate, unavoidable solution to a problem. It was impossible to provide youth with "a thorough education" on Mexican soil.⁴ Treating "necessity" as an expression of elite cultural mores rather than an objective fact, I explore the elite values and practices and the social, political, economic, and cultural landscape of the nineteenth century that led elites to feel and articulate this need, although educational opportunities were not absent or even lacking in Mexico.

I contend that the most important reason that nineteenth-century elites sent their children abroad was their firm belief in foreign education as a strategy for stabilizing and enhancing family status. I examine this belief in the postcolonial context that shaped emerging norms and practices of mobility: geopolitical disparities that subordinated Mexico to European nations and the United States and the rigid but not unbreakable social hierarchies of Porfirian Mexico whose roots were in the colonial period. Elite culture dictated the way that families responded to the changing structural conditions in which they did business, raised children, and imagined futures. I argue that the necessity narrative is an artifact of that culture rather than a credible assessment of actual educational opportunities at home. In doing so, I unfold the social realities that gave rise to powerful ideas about what study abroad meant to families, later extended to apply to the Mexican nation.

STUDY ABROAD AND MEXICAN ELITE FAMILIES BEFORE THE PORFIRIATO

After Mexican independence, the country experienced myriad instabilities: regime changes, civil war, multiple and devastating foreign invasions, and painfully limited economic growth. Alongside major disruptions to everyday life and business as usual were vexing questions of political culture and the meaning of nationalism in a country whose colonial past was still so close at hand. As in other parts of Latin America, sometimes it was the experience of leaving the fractious homeland that pushed thinkers to articulate what was unique to places like Mexico, conceiving ideas of nation from without. Early nineteenth-century exiles came from creole families of the colonial upper classes, and they wrote about their journeys and imagined futures for Mexico from abroad.⁵ As a group, elite Mexicans

were quite mobile internationally, fleeing political duress or traveling for study and business. Aristocratic families navigating the vicissitudes of the mid-nineteenth century used mobility to weather instability with their honor and fortunes intact. Even elites who never left home were often connected to Europe or the United States. Their entrepreneurial ventures channeled foreign capital to Mexico. Their leisure and consumption involved imported habits, objects, and comestibles. Elite intellectual production often disseminated and translated foreign ideas.

If it seems logical for Mexico's postcolonial elite to have sent children to study abroad, we should remember that there were, in fact, educational opportunities in Mexico, even if what was available did not replicate every program of study to be found in Europe. Many elites availed themselves of these secondary and higher education options. Some institutions dated to the colonial era. Writing of his 1803 visit to Mexico City, Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt wrote that "no city on the new continent, including those of the United States, has such exceptional and solid scientific establishments." He admired more institutions than he had space to name, but the School of Mines and the Academy of Fine Arts earned special mention.⁶ New institutions were created in the first years after independence, too, despite turmoil and economic doldrums. A military college founded in 1822 prepared civil engineers. From the 1820s to the 1840s, scientific and literary institutes were founded in many regional capitals, providing secondary education and professional training.⁷

But elite families did not necessarily *want* to send their children to local institutions. Humboldt was surprised to find "Indians or Mestizos next to whites" at the Academy of Fine Arts, where "the son of a poor artisan competes with the children of the great lords of the realm." Humboldt interpreted this egalitarian space as a sign of hope for the democratizing power of education, but he was clear about the broader picture of hierarchy and disdain. The racial diversity in this late colonial school struck the Prussian as "quite amazing in a country where the nobility is so inveterately prejudiced against the castes."⁸ One way to avoid that proximity was to leave New Spain. In the eighteenth century some elites sent children to the mother country across the Atlantic and in the years just before independence, to England.⁹ As Calderón de la Barca observed in the 1830s, postcolonial elites continued to look east (or north) for educational opportunities.¹⁰ They preferred schools in Germany, England, France, and the United States.¹¹

As historian Karen Racine has observed, many Spanish American leaders of independence sent their own children to study in Europe, especially London. These destinations were the very places where the leaders had lived as plotting insurgents and where some found themselves again in exile after independence. Mexico's short-lived emperor, Agustín de Iturbide, placed his many children in English and French schools before returning alone to Mexico, where he was put to death in 1824. Writing a letter of advice, Iturbide encouraged his eldest son to cultivate his intellect and character while studying in England in order to become

“a good son, a good brother, and a *good patriot*.”¹² A few years later, another of his sons enrolled at Georgetown University, which had received its first Mexican student in 1822.¹³ Later, elites fled Mexico after allying with the losing side in one of the many struggles that roiled Mexico in the nineteenth century. In 1860, Georgetown University received the son of notable Otomí army officer Tomás Mejía Camacho, affiliated with the Conservatives who were losing power just at the moment young Ignacio Mejía headed for Washington.¹⁴ Even after the Liberal project prevailed following the War of the Reform, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada headed to New York City when he was ousted from the presidency. One of Lerdo de Tejada’s nephews would study abroad during his uncle’s exile. With entire clans abroad, studying while in exile was both convenient and strategic, for their foreign education would only serve the family’s interests down the line, whether they remained abroad or returned to their forsaken homeland when it was possible to do so.

Mexican elites involved in trade moved across oceans and borders not to escape but to build fortunes. Some families invested in study abroad as one piece of a broad strategy to entrench their status by capitalizing on the wealth-generating opportunities brought by modernization. To protect their position in a hierarchical society, families pursued in microcosm what the Porfiriato achieved in national terms: economic modernization without altering the structure of the Mexican social pyramid. For those clans with flourishing international family businesses, parents desiring to equip the next generation with technical knowledge sought professional education for their sons. This marked a shift from elite practices prior to independence, in which patriarchs recruited humbler nephews to run the family business while preparing their sons for more prestigious positions in government and the church.

Now families wanted their sons to study engineering and other modern fields of knowledge. One early example of technically oriented educational mobility was Esteban de Antuñano, born in 1792, who studied in Spain and England before becoming a merchant. Antuñano came from a family involved in textile production, and he later “introduced the hydraulic machinery of Lancashire cotton mills to his own factories.”¹⁵ In the late 1850s, Primitivo Cásares y Galera, scion of a Yucatecan *hacendado*, attended Harvard, where he studied engineering and explored the latest agricultural machinery that could serve the family enterprise. His family was already one of the wealthiest in the Yucatán Peninsula, and their early investments in modernizing henequen production would pay off decades later.¹⁶ Parents saw the practical utility of foreign knowledge and skills in the modern, international enterprises these young men would take into the future.

Families could use the same networks built for business to send children abroad, as the story of the Madero family illustrates. Born in 1849, Francisco Madero (father and namesake of the better-known hero-martyr of the Mexican Revolution) went to Antwerp as an adolescent in the 1860s. At that time, the family business was closely connected with capitalists in the United States and Europe. English clients agreed to pay for three young members of the clan to attend the

Institut Supérieur de Commerce. At this commercial school in Antwerp, students took courses in English, German, and Italian correspondence, and Francisco Madero would have added these languages to his mother tongue, Spanish, and his fluent French. He also studied “commercial arithmetic” and “bookkeeping,” as well as “commercial geography” and “history of commercial products.” This was an investment by his father’s clients in the Madero enterprise. Practicing the same technical skills he was studying, young Francisco dutifully kept accounts of his expenses and relayed them to his father. Though the patriarch had not studied abroad himself, preparing his son abroad advanced his vision for the enterprise: keeping the business in the family and making sure the family was technically prepared to run that business.¹⁷

Other families, without the sponsorship of foreign business associates, absorbed the costs of education abroad precisely because they expected a return on the investment. Given the elite Mexican preference for all things foreign in taste and everyday practice, there was cultural capital to accrue through study abroad too. But this was more nuanced and practical than it sounds, for studying abroad trained competent intermediaries who could court and cultivate access to foreign capital. As historian Víctor Macías-González found for Mexican students attending Stonyhurst College, an English Jesuit institution, there were plenty of pragmatic reasons for an elite family to invest in foreign education. For the 150 Mexican students who attended Stonyhurst in Lancashire during the Victorian era, it was a family investment of £150 to £300 annually to prepare young men for success in a globalizing world.¹⁸ Fluency in the English language and culture prepared them to hobnob and make deals with the foreign capitalists with whom they would later collaborate. In fact, English and other European friends from Stonyhurst became part of their transnational networks.¹⁹

Even Mexicans trained abroad in more technical fields found their soft skills useful for business. Ricardo Segura, a Mexican mining engineer, studied at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the mid-1870s, and he lived with a fellow Mexican student, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, nephew of the recently ousted president. Rensselaer prided itself on its graduates’ contributions “to the increase and diffusion of science as well as its applications to the business pursuits of life,” and Segura was just such an entrepreneur armed with technical knowledge.²⁰ In 1878, as reported by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the young “gentleman” was in California researching mining equipment and contemplating whether to make his purchases from US or British vendors. Segura was a competent intermediary for international trade. As the article noted, elite Mexicans’ ability to speak English could not “fail to be of great benefit to them in business and the practical affairs of life.”²¹ Segura’s training as an engineer, too, prepared him to evaluate the mining equipment he was considering whether to buy.

For some Mexican families, traveling abroad was a kind of homecoming because they had Europeans in their own lineage.²² The Barrón Escandón clan, for

example, traced their ascent to a member of the “Irish gentry exiled to Spain.” This patriarch’s sons attended Stonyhurst in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and after the family settled in Mexico, they continued to send new generations to their alma mater: thirty-eight members of the family attended between 1800 and 1920.²³ Mexican elites’ sojourns abroad could reinforce a cosmopolitan family makeup, for young Mexicans had the chance to meet and marry Europeans, including members of the nobility.²⁴ It was possible to encounter foreigners closer to home as well. Though the total numbers of foreigners in nineteenth-century Mexico was small (less than one percent), they shared spaces with Mexican aristocrats and welcomed the chance to get closer to them. As historian Mark Wasserman notes, foreign investors had the best chances of long-term success when they put down roots by marrying into local families.²⁵

The children of marriages between Mexicans and foreigners had ties to multiple homelands that seamlessly integrated study abroad into transnational lifestyles. For example, Julio Pani, the son of an Italian doctor and a Mexican lady, was born in Mexico in 1842 and grew up in Europe. Pani studied engineering in Paris in the 1860s. While there, he met his future wife, Paz Arteaga.²⁶ She was from a powerful, cosmopolitan Mexican family, and she was raised by her uncle, a diplomat who represented Mexico in Spain and Europe. Pani and Arteaga married in London and then lived for a year in Pani’s ancestral home, Italy. Only then did the couple return to Mexico, settling in Aguascalientes. As one of their children later reminisced, they were cultivated, worldly individuals, “unusually talented” and with a “refined upbringing.” Pani spoke five languages and Arteaga, three.²⁷ They brought Europe with them to Mexico.

Like other privileged Latin Americans of the nineteenth century, Mexican families’ circuits went east across the Atlantic and north across the Gulf of Mexico, to Europe and the United States. Mexican elites traveled to the same places where the consumer goods they purchased were fabricated and the texts they read and admired were penned. They sojourned in the countries that were Mexico’s important trading partners. Families made decisions to send children abroad in the midst of lives already bound up with resources and knowledge located outside Mexico. These were the experiences of the elite Mexicans whose children would come of age during the Porfiriato.

CHOOSING TO STUDY ABROAD: ENTRENCHING THE NECESSITY NARRATIVE DURING THE PORFIRIATO

During the Porfiriato, elite families continued to subscribe to the necessity narrative of study abroad even as the range of educational options at home in Mexico expanded. As I argue in this section, this was not paradoxical. By the late nineteenth century, study abroad, already common and strategic, became even more important as a marker of elite status *because* more Mexican youth could

access education at home. Study abroad was a deliberate choice made by elite families that revealed their disdain for the quality of knowledge and people in Mexico's schools.

During the 1880s and 1890s, Mexico's economy was booming as a result of foreign investments; US investments in particular would grow from \$30 million in 1883 to over \$500 million at the turn of the century.²⁸ Historians of the Porfiriato emphasize that remarkable economic growth, spurred by capitalist development and modernization of infrastructure, sharpened social divides within an already unequal Mexico. With poor Mexicans bearing the brunt of "progress," elites reaped the benefits of the Porfirian economy. Among the ways to spend a new fortune was on education. In Monterrey, writes historian Juan Mora-Torres, "self-made entrepreneurs" made sure their offspring were not only rich but richly credentialed with foreign degrees.²⁹

All things foreign were valuable to Mexican elites, which made sense. Foreign capital dominated Mexico's most important economic sectors, "mining, transportation, and agriculture," and elite Mexican businessmen clearly needed and welcomed foreign capital as well as technology to sustain and grow their own enterprises. Mexican elites viewed this investment from abroad as a boon to their interests as businessmen, aristocrats, and politicians, as Wasserman points out.³⁰ Whether learning French or English, studying engineering, or making lifelong friendships with foreigners, there were economic advantages for young Mexican elites to accrue by studying abroad.

More Mexican students were going abroad at the end of the nineteenth century than in decades past, and Bazant posits that the United States was beginning to replace France as an educational destination.³¹ US Americans approved of this shift. "In years gone by," announced the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1878, "it was the fashion for wealthy Mexicans to send their sons to Europe to be educated; but now it is becoming a duty that they should be educated at home or in the United States in preference to other foreign countries." This statement, certainly not based in quantifiable data, came from Ricardo Segura, the above-mentioned Mexican "gentleman" and engineer in San Francisco on business who was US educated himself.³² The *Chicago Tribune* reported in 1891 that "several thousand Mexican youths of the better families are being educated in the United States," though this, too, was a rough estimate.³³

As "the better families" chose US and European destinations, Mexico could boast of a remarkably abundant array of schools to prepare youth for modern careers in law, engineering, and other fields. By the end of the Porfiriato, all but four of Mexico's twenty-nine states had one or more preparatory schools.³⁴ Provincial families, like the Panis of Aguascalientes, availed themselves of these opportunities close to home, but the most notable place for pre-professional education was in the capital: the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (ENP), created in 1867. This national public institution aimed to train cadres of professionals and statesmen,

and many prominent men of the Porfirian era were graduates.³⁵ In fact, state officials would have had little trouble finding fellow ENP alumni among their colleagues: Camp tabulated that by 1905, 37 percent of first-time officeholders under Díaz had attended the ENP.³⁶ Women attended this institution, too, though in small numbers.³⁷ For those interested in private secondary education, there were European-style institutions in Mexico, such as the Liceo Franco-Mexicano, and foreigners, especially the French, often directed and staffed these schools.³⁸

After completing secondary education, Mexican youth had options to continue their studies in their homeland in a number of fields. In 1875, there were professional schools for pharmacy (9), engineering (10), medicine (11), seminary (24), and law (39), in addition to two music conservatories and a school of fine arts.³⁹ As these figures suggest, law was the most popular professional career in this era. Notably, it was also a field in which study abroad was not an option: those aspiring to practice law in Mexico needed to study in Mexico.⁴⁰ In 1910, Mexico celebrated a signal educational achievement that brought its numerous professional schools together into a national university, today's Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

Yet as Mexican education became more "thorough" (to borrow Madame Calderón de la Barca's word), there was no concomitant decrease in interest in study abroad. In fact, it was common among elite families to continue sending their children to Europe or the United States. But was it necessary? Though Porfirian elites were xenophiles and the Porfirian leadership admired European thought and models of governance, those in the highest ranks of power in this era were not European educated. Neither Porfirio Díaz nor most of his inner circle of his supporters had studied abroad. Such an education was not required to win political positions. Díaz rose to power because of his military accomplishments, but he was also trained as a lawyer. Porfirian officeholders were far more educated than the average Mexican, and college degrees became increasingly *de rigueur* at the end of the Díaz era.⁴¹ Among Díaz's political supporters, though, this education mostly took place in Mexican institutions.⁴² In the group of eight científicos closest to Díaz, despite numerous family connections to Europe, only one had studied abroad: José Yves Limantour, the most powerful of the científicos.⁴³ As Macías-González emphasizes, Stonyhurst graduates held positions of influence and prestige: some were formal and informal representatives of Mexico in Europe; one was the mayor of Mexico City and later a senator.⁴⁴ But in general terms, study abroad was not required for Porfirian Mexicans to obtain power or to ascend socially.

For some elite families of the Porfiriato, the option of study abroad felt natural in part because they had a *tradition* of doing so. It might cause little surprise that both the above-mentioned Italian Mexican, French-educated Julio Pani and the elder Francisco Madero, trained in Antwerp, sent their eldest sons abroad. In the 1880s, Camilo Pani Arteaga spent several years in the United States, returning with an engineering degree after studying in several institutions, including

Washington University in St. Louis and Yale University in New Haven. The younger Francisco Madero, before leading a revolutionary uprising against Díaz, made his first sojourn to Maryland at just thirteen years old, spent his adolescence in Paris, then studied at the University of California in 1892.⁴⁵ The Madero and Pani families, like so many other elite Mexican families, chose to send their children to study in Europe and the United States, but the particularities of each clan's choice reveal the range of factors that shaped educational decisions.

For the staggeringly wealthy elite like the Maderos, there was no concern about cost, meaning several children could all study abroad. The younger Francisco Madero, the eldest child of a large family, was accompanied from adolescence by his younger brother Gustavo. Madero ultimately became a mentor to numerous siblings and young relatives who would follow in his footsteps (he encouraged dedication to academic work and modest living). The whole Madero clan was highly mobile, its members crossing oceans and borders to pursue education, leisure travel, and business opportunities through the 1890s and the last years of the Porfiriato. By 1901, there were no fewer than four Maderos attending MIT.⁴⁶

Wealthy Mexican students like the Maderos caught the eye of US observers throughout the nineteenth century. As a national group, Mexicans stood out as exotic in most regions of the United States, but what was remarkable about Mexican students was precisely their eliteness, which was easily legible to US journalists. Reporters mentioned that students were wealthy, with "aristocratic," "cultured" lineages and personal connections to political power.⁴⁷ Journalists construed their ability to dine lavishly and sport fine clothing as signs of their fortunes and status.⁴⁸ Back in Mexico, Porfirian society deployed these very markers of diet and attire to demarcate boundaries of class, so students' consumption choices were deliberate.⁴⁹ Students often achieved the intended effect of dazzling their US audience. For elite families, the ability to study abroad in and of itself, comprising tuition and living expenses as well as costly international travel, was a powerful consumption choice too.⁵⁰ So while Francisco Madero was abroad studying undeniably relevant subjects (commerce, like his father had studied in Antwerp, and agriculture) for the family enterprise, the sheer fact of these sojourns made it clear that he was already quite wealthy.

More marginal elites could spend far beyond their means while abroad, garnering the easy credit that came from seeming aristocratic, even if their pockets were empty. This was just what Camilo Pani and his fellow ne'er-do-well José Dávalos got up to while studying abroad in the late 1880s: spending lavishly, racking up debts, and fleeing at the opportune moment. Significantly, they spent their money on fine clothing, so central to communicating elite status. Even their vices connoted patrician heritage: allegedly Pani would "call for a bottle of champagne, and, to show his contempt for the cost, pour the contents of the bottle into a cuspidor if convenient, if not on the carpet, and immediately liquidate the damage."⁵¹ Pani and Dávalos went into debt to afford the markers of aristocratic belonging.

Eventually, they got caught and garnered two articles in *The New York Times* in 1888 for these misadventures (“Yale Is Well Rid of Them,” the *Times* stodgily declared in one headline).⁵²

Pani’s case reveals that among the elite, having social, cultural, or political capital did not always mean having sound family finances. His father, Julio Pani, who also tended toward dissolution, was learned but not enterprising. The family’s wealth, tied up in land, came from Camilo’s mother, and it was not enough for the family to live in luxury.⁵³ Why would this family send their eldest son abroad, then, if the costs were unaffordable? To answer that question, we can consult a memoir written by Alberto Pani, Camilo’s younger brother.

Alberto Pani remembered that during the Porfiriato, Mexican society treated its sharp class divisions as natural categories of inherent difference. The social convention for educating wealthy youth abroad was unequivocal. “For the rich,” he wrote, “upon reaching the end of primary instruction there were only two paths: remaining ignorant or continuing one’s studies abroad.”⁵⁴ With multilingual, erudite parents, the Pani children would not have been left uninstructed, so there was only one real option, studying abroad. However, Alberto’s own story belies this prescription. Alberto and his younger brothers attended professional schools in Mexico City. Only Camilo studied in the United States. So the supposedly binary choice of ignorance or study abroad, as he framed it, obfuscated reality. There was, too, the viable option of study in Mexico. Ultimately, Alberto Pani became the most renowned of his siblings.

If local study was viable, it came with drawbacks: the country’s public schools were too *déclassé* for the tastes of the aristocracy. As Mary Kay Vaughan argued, the institutions of the Porfiriato were accessible to the middle classes, for whom the expanding education system served as an engine of social mobility. This made public education less appealing to the wealthy. In fact, Vaughan surmised that middle-class Mexicans, too, opted for private education if they could afford to do so.⁵⁵ The Porfirian middle classes aimed to be indistinguishable from their social betters, but at least some members of the aristocracy balked at inhabiting spaces, such as public institutions for professional and higher education, where they could be confused with their social inferiors.

Though public institutions were directed by elites, peopled with many young aristocrats, and virtually inaccessible to the popular classes, they were still socially heterogeneous. The ENP provided scholarships to students from provincial Mexico struggling to afford “room and board and books.”⁵⁶ Aspiring cash-strapped lawyers could study law without paying tuition if they could find a “rich godfather” to cover the fees charged for examinations.⁵⁷ Engineering students from humble families could win scholarships on the basis of merit and character.⁵⁸ Several Mexican states provided scholarships for their local youth to attend professional schools in the capital.⁵⁹ Furthermore, with their notoriously bohemian

student culture, Mexico City's public institutions also fostered nineteenth-century styles of youthful rebellion, which involved, among other things, consorting with members of the lower classes.⁶⁰

Thinking back to Alexander von Humboldt's observations about white creoles' disparaging treatment of mixed-race Mexicans, we must also consider racial prejudice when considering elite rejection of Mexican public education. White, aristocratic Mexicans might have seen foreign study as a modern way to announce elite status and claim racial superiority. In a time when the political class included a fair share of newcomers to the aristocracy, families perhaps also chose to send their children abroad to mark them as social superiors to the current leadership. Benito Juárez, who was Zapotec (and thus subject to anti-Indigenous racism) and born into poverty, was perhaps the most spectacular story of social ascent, one that began with his hard-won education.⁶¹ Porfirian elites might have wanted their children to be better educated and more refined than Don Porfirio himself, who was mestizo. Other future Porfirian luminaries similarly transcended their origins through education, and like Juárez, they managed to study only because they also worked, scrimped, or received scholarships to attend Mexican institutions.⁶² But rags-to-riches stories did not produce political legitimacy. Starting out rich was better. And study abroad marked a privileged origin.

Status was at stake in educational choices, at least partially clarifying why the cash-poor parents of Camilo and Alberto Pani chose foreign education for their eldest son. But family decisions are nothing if not personal, even though context matters. In Alberto's memoir, he explains that Camilo was sent away as a form of discipline. Some Mexican parents believed that foreign institutions' rigor could corral children resistant to parental authority or at least provide a setting in which misbehavior happened out of the view of their own social circle. In the mid-1870s, the Franco-Mexican Limantour family sent their twelve-year-old son to an English Jesuit school, reportedly for disciplinary reasons.⁶³ Well before his antics in New Haven, Camilo Pani was a tempestuous youth whose behavior so worried his mother that she was "obliged to send him to a school in Chicago as boarding student." This was according to Alberto, articulated in the logic of the necessity narrative. Once abroad, Camilo only compromised his parents further. He "escaped" from the boarding school to study civil engineering elsewhere, "wandering hither and thither from many colleges and cities in our neighboring country." From the United States, Camilo made "many urgent demands for money," creating tight situations for his mother, who nonetheless "always miraculously satisfied" her son's requests.⁶⁴ We already know the *Times's* version of this story. But there is a happy ending. Camilo ultimately earned his degree, had a productive career, and settled down. His mother's plan was successful.⁶⁵

Besides elitism or the expectation that foreign schools provided better discipline, the ideologies regnant in the capital's schools might have repelled more

conservative elites. The ENP was particularly polarizing and faced constant critiques for its commitment to positivism. The school was led by the French-educated Gabino Barreda, who infused the curriculum with the positivist ideas he had learned across the Atlantic.⁶⁶ Some even linked students' bad behavior to the curriculum, which had failed to instill morality in these depraved youth.⁶⁷ Reportedly, one student was sent from Durango to Princeton to avoid Mexico City's public institutions, with their "positivist atheism."⁶⁸ But with robust enrollment at the ENP and growing numbers of graduates in positions of power, such radical opposition to positivism could not alone explain elite families' choice to go abroad.

At least sometimes, parents chose foreign Catholic educational institutions for their children, but my sources do not make clear whether a particular religious affiliation was central or incidental to parents' choices. Macías-González's work on the Jesuit Stonyhurst College does not suggest that it was Catholic education so much as the cultural and social opportunities that parents sought out. Gender norms surely played an important role in determining the kinds of schools desired by parents. Parents might have found religious education more important for girls than boys. In the early 1890s, Francisco Madero's younger sisters attended a Catholic girls' school in San Francisco, while Madero and his brother Gustavo studied at the University of California across the bay. One of the Madero girls' schoolmates was another aristocratic Mexican young woman, Sara Pérez, whom they would introduce to Francisco and who eventually became his wife.⁶⁹ Schooling choices for daughters marked families' social distinction: institutions closer to home involved *déclassé* social mixing. As historian William French has noted, new schools founded for girls and women in Porfirian Chihuahua specifically targeted the middle classes and produced virtuous housewives to be both able and willing to do chores. These female students were clearly not members of the local elite.⁷⁰

For families who could easily afford study abroad, like the Maderos, and perhaps more urgently for those who could barely afford it, like the Panis, the choice to opt out of Mexican public education probably felt straightforward. The Mexican elite located the apex of knowledge as well as the ultimate marker of social status outside the country where they lived. This form of Mexican privilege came from outside of Mexico.

Once abroad, elite Mexicans wanted foreigners to read them as the "best class of Mexicans," as an Atlanta journalist described a group of six young Mexican students in 1894. As the flattering remark illustrates, Mexican elites sometimes managed to make just the impression they intended while they were abroad. These particular young men were "fashionably dressed like progressive young Americans," and this, along with other aristocratic markers, identified them as superlative members of their nation.⁷¹ But such identification did not occur in all cases. Mexican elites were not always treated as racial fellows by US or European

observers. Mexico's subordinate position in global hierarchies could threaten even the most princely Mexican scions when they were far from home.

ELITE MEXICAN YOUTH ABROAD: NAVIGATING
THE GEOPOLITICS OF CLASS, RACE, AND GENDER

The six strapping fellows whose garb and comportment attracted a reporter's notice in 1894 were students of engineering at Lehigh University. While they traveled by train from Pennsylvania to Mexico to commence their summer vacation, they made a scene at the Atlanta rail depot by loudly singing the Lehigh fight song. Surprised Atlantans at the depot reacted with fear, believing the "handsome," "fine-looking," and even "muscular" young men were warriors. As vigorous exemplars of masculinity, the Mexican students' ruckus alarmed onlookers because they could not be easily identified racially. In this case, their undeniable eliteness, paired with proximity to whiteness, shielded them from the force of Jim Crow; any fears were quickly dissipated once people realized they were college students.⁷² But US and European individuals who encountered Mexican students did not always respond positively to their Mexican nationality, even for the noticeably rich.

As hypermasculine figures of questionable whiteness, Mexican elites in the United States and Europe were typecast as sexually dangerous figures. In 1888, *The New York Times* reported that in addition to his debts, Camilo Pani left behind an unhappy lover in New Haven, and when he fled, he was bound to rejoin another lover in St. Louis. These details appeared in the reporting of the scandal because they affirmed US readers' existing prejudices about Mexican men's sexuality. Pani was lucky that his romantic interests did not attract further scrutiny. In 1897, Gabriel Calzada, a student at Bridgewater State Normal School in Massachusetts, was arrested and committed to an insane asylum after pursuing a woman student at the institution, with whom he was "smitten." The *Boston Daily Globe* reported that Calzada "accosted her[,] . . . knelt down before her and addressed her in most endearing terms." This drew the attention of law enforcement. Later, local physicians declared him insane as a result of too much studying.⁷³ His public, unrequited overtures caused alarm to onlookers and police, who viewed him as a foreigner and racial other.

US stereotypes about Mexico were already well entrenched in the late nineteenth century, particularly after the US invasion of Mexico in the 1840s.⁷⁴ An 1893 newspaper article describing a Mexican medical student who was the victim of assault called him "a dapper little fellow" who "prides himself on his fine attire." A fellow classmate threw peanut shells at him during a lecture and then knocked out the Mexican student in a fight.⁷⁵ Mexican students found themselves in dangerous, humiliating situations even when they were not being accused of anything, targeted simply because they were Mexican. In 1903, a Mexican student was tarred and feathered by classmates at the Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College.⁷⁶

In Europe, Mexican students could also face racism. As Macías-González found for the boys at Stonyhurst, their aristocratic status in Mexico did not prevent the English from “racializ[ing] them as non-whites.” School authorities scrutinized their English fluency and accents, and classmates targeted those with darker skin tones for harassment. Racist notions of Latin American masculinity also affected Mexican boys at Stonyhurst. As the school became increasingly selective over the course of the nineteenth century, authorities discouraged applications from “prospective Hispanic students aged 12 years or older.” Stonyhurst’s leadership considered these boys sexually deviant and threatening to the school’s reputation. They feared boys would produce “morally and racially suspect children” with white English mothers. So at Stonyhurst, only younger boys from Latin America, who could still be molded to British standards, would be considered.⁷⁷ The British and US Americans shared stereotypes of a menacing Latin American masculinity that limited opportunities for Mexican boys abroad despite the privilege they enjoyed in their homeland.

To be sure, prejudice and even violence against Mexican students did not compare to the kinds of racism experienced by working-class Mexicans in the United States. As historian Rachel St. John found in the cross-border community of Nogales linking Arizona and Sonora at the turn of the twentieth century, white US Americans readily mingled with elite Mexicans while demeaning other Mexican nationals who were poorer and darker.⁷⁸ A few years later, during the Mexican Revolution, early US efforts at border control involved starkly different treatment of poor and elite Mexican children, finds Ivón Padilla-Rodríguez. Particularly relevant here is that Mexican youth bound for US schools were welcomed precisely because they came from wealthy families and thus were unlikely to “become a public charge.”⁷⁹ The nineteenth-century newspaper reports mentioned above, which constructed an image of the fantastically rich Mexican student, surely played into the elitist application of immigration policy on the border.

While unable to entirely escape anti-Mexican prejudice, elite Mexican students who got into trouble had an easier time getting out of it precisely because of their class and racial privilege. Camilo Pani suffered no long-term consequences for his notorious behavior while in the United States, and he went on to embrace the discipline he had shunned during his years abroad. He became a successful civil engineer and architect in Mexico.⁸⁰ For Calzada, whose romantic rejection had led to an arrest, the authorities’ decision to send him to an asylum instead of a jail and the curious diagnosis of a “Brain Overtaxed by Study” might have been an attempt to diminish the harm to Calzada’s reputation.⁸¹ In 1909, a seventeen-year-old Mexican student at Swarthmore College was accused of petty theft, and his status as “a member of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of Mexico” must have helped his case. The boy, only recently arrived in the United States, did not speak enough English to communicate with law enforcement, so Mexican embassy staff interpreted for him.⁸² Publicity elevated the risk to his reputation,

but it also ensured the boy's good treatment and access to the best aid. Supported by Mexican diplomats, he might well have fully recovered from the embarrassment to take his place in Mexican high society. In any case, other young men and women of similar background were heading abroad to begin their own studies. In what was surely an undercount, the US government tallied 223 Mexican students in the United States, making Mexicans the fourth-largest national group of foreign students in 1913.⁸³

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century, elite Mexican families turned to study abroad when things were going well and when things were going poorly. Study abroad had practical benefits for family enterprises and cultural appeal for a social class with close ties to Europe by blood and by taste. Studying abroad signified belonging to the upper crust. These factors moved families to invest in foreign education even when it strained their finances and exposed their lineages to places where Mexican elite status was fragile. Even aristocratic Mexicans' privilege was attenuated by the weak place of Mexico in global imaginaries of whiteness, knowledge, and power.

Whether parents were trying to rein in an unruly child, avoid contact with the middle class in Mexican schools, or prepare a son with skills on the cutting edge of technical fields, the choice to send a child abroad might not have *felt* like a choice at all. The narrative of necessity meant that parents did not need to explain why a beloved child had to study in Europe or the United States. If they chose to rationalize their educational preference, any reason (technical, disciplinary, entrepreneurial, linguistic, etc.) was more than enough. My contention here has been that Mexican elites of the nineteenth century, especially during the Porfiriato, believed that international mobility to global centers of power helped them achieve all kinds of ends. And along with this belief came a sense of need: an inexorability. The focus here has been on Mexican elite cultural beliefs surrounding this form of mobility. The remaining chapters explore how these beliefs have shaped debates about what state-sponsored international scholarship programs meant for the nation and the policies that resulted.

Sovereignty, Revolutionary Nationalism, and Study Abroad, 1920–1940

In 1920, revolutionary General Álvaro Obregón stood before an audience of “intellectuals” in Puebla. Although not a highly educated man himself, the general had unassailable military credentials (he had given a limb for the revolution) and plenty of political capital.¹ Now campaigning for the presidency, Obregón gave an impromptu speech. With the era of devastating civil war over, he had to translate revolutionary legitimacy into electoral victory. The revolution had left many parts of Mexico in shambles, and not all of its heroes survived. After leading the motley coalition that brought down Porfirio Díaz in 1911, Francisco Madero became a martyr in 1913. Power changed hands several times after Madero’s assassination. Warring factions convened in Aguascalientes and hashed out a world historic, progressive constitution in 1917. Venustiano Carranza, leading Mexico as Jefe Supremo and then elected president, was murdered in 1920, opening a path for his promising subordinate, Obregón, to rise to power. Now, standing before Puebla’s leading lights, the campaigning general described his vision for what came after destruction and loss. He spoke about Mexico’s future and the generative revolution he wanted to lead.

Obregón’s big idea was a study abroad program. He called for the government to send “virgin intellects” abroad to acquire knowledge that they could bring back to Mexico. Betraying his military bent, Obregón explained that these returning intellects would wage a “battle to the death” against “the ignorance and backwardness in which we live.” Obregón imagined possibilities for national uplift in an international field of rivals.² The means to that end was foreign education for a select few.

This plan was not innovative. Porfirian officials had sent students abroad. As revolutionary violence persisted through the 1910s, some Mexican students still enjoyed state support to study in Europe and the United States. In fact, as Obregón addressed his audience, there were young Mexicans abroad on government scholarships. But Obregón ultimately did not elevate study abroad to a place of importance in the postrevolutionary agenda. Whether international scholarship programs could fit into revolutionary policy would be uncertain. From 1920 to 1940, two decades of revolutionary state and nation building following civil war, high-level Mexican officials did not present a political rationale for international scholarships, although they continued to grant them.

As this chapter shows, revolutionary nationalism—a set of ideas and principles about what the nation was and what it stood for—proved challenging to fit around efforts to train Mexican youth abroad. The era's project of remaking Mexico involved dramatic transformations: redistributing wealth and equalizing the populace; uplifting and homogenizing the masses through public education; strengthening Mexican sovereignty; and establishing its independence on an international stage. That last objective especially mattered because the United States, so cozy with Porfirio Díaz, had invaded Mexico more than once in recent years. In revolutionary Mexico, could the traditional, elite practice of sending children abroad possibly serve the national interest? In the 1920s and 1930s, Mexican officials signed off on international scholarships, and they sent their own children abroad, but they offered no answers to these questions about sovereignty and foreign education.

The absence of state discourse left the topic open for Mexican citizens and interested parties from the United States to argue their viewpoints in the press. This chapter analyzes these public conversations to understand how study abroad, an old phenomenon, acquired new, contested meanings in the political landscape of revolutionary Mexico. Mexicans disagreed about how foreign study changed young people and whether those changes were salutary or harmful for the nation. What they agreed on was the significance of the matter: nothing less than Mexican sovereignty was at stake.

Revolutionary nationalism was used to both decry and defend study abroad. During the 1920s, Mexicans debated the virtues of study abroad. Then the 1931 murder of two Mexican college students in the United States brought student mobility to the front pages of national newspapers. Some Mexicans called for a complete end to study abroad. However, despite its symbolic power, the nationalist case against study abroad failed to halt Mexican student mobility. Revolutionary nationalist culture provoked vehement suspicion of foreign (especially US) influence, but the emergent values of the Mexican Revolution included an ultimately more powerful impulse to modernize the nation. Study abroad lost its controversial edge over the course of the 1930s. Modernization was more appealing than

turning away from the world on principle and renouncing the chance to import the ideas and skills that Mexico's "virgin intellects" could acquire abroad.

POLITICIZING STUDY ABROAD, 1919–1931

As the dust of the revolution began to settle, public education was central to state building. Mexico's new constitution enshrined the universal right to primary education, and the state invested in making sure children in the country's remotest reaches would have their own schoolhouses. Schools would teach literacy, which was clearly useful for a modern citizenry. But public schools were quickly enlisted to teach far more than basic literacy and numeracy. In the 1920s, state officials innovated ways to instruct young citizens in new ways of being. One of teachers' tasks was to seed nationalist feeling and develop a sense of a shared identity to supersede ethnic or local forms of belonging. It was no accident that the young teachers sent out to do this work were called cultural missionaries. Education was about evangelizing, recruiting true believers in the nation and the revolution, and forging loyal supporters of the state.³

Higher education was another matter. Mexico's National University was known for its elitism, and the university community had not always fallen on the progressive side of revolutionary struggles. The university itself, founded in 1910, was one of Porfirio Díaz's final achievements, although it was not born whole. Instead, it amalgamated Mexico's various national professional schools. José Vasconcelos, one of the architects of Mexico's cultural revolution, became rector of the National University in 1920, and he took the opportunity to excoriate the students for being useless dandies. Intellectuals had to get their hands dirty if they wanted to serve the revolution. If they were not working alongside the people, they were part of the problem.⁴

Nevertheless, the National University kept training the nation's elites through the 1920s, and it was a noticeably cosmopolitan space. From its 1910 founding, the university's leadership aimed to make the institution internationally connected and globally relevant. At the university inauguration held that year, representatives of US and European universities attended. Emissaries from Berkeley and the Sorbonne served as "godmothers" for the new Mexican center of learning.⁵ The revolutionary government of Venustiano Carranza advertised its interest in Mexicans studying abroad, especially in the United States.⁶ In 1919, Carranza decreed that Mexicans and foreigners with degrees from other countries could have their studies reaccredited in Mexico.⁷ University officials attributed this decree to a "current of international sympathy" favoring cultural exchanges. They hoped for more exchanges with US and Latin American universities.⁸

There was strong interest on the US side too. During the revolutionary struggle, actors as varied as the US consul based in Tampico, Mexico, and US-based Quakers argued that Mexico-US student exchange could heal some of the tensions

stemming from US interventions during the revolution.⁹ By the end of the 1910s, a group of influential US academics and philanthropists were deeply invested in the idea of cultural exchange, especially involving students, as a tool for promoting peace and, conveniently, international trade. The Institute of International Education, a private organization that welcomed foreign students to US universities, was founded in 1919 to further these goals.¹⁰ At least some Mexican academics were sympathetic to the US internationalists' vision. Embracing the notion that friendly interpersonal ties could collectively reshape international relations, a Mexican professor welcomed the president of the University of Arizona. He hoped that the mutual ignorance of Mexico and the United States could be made to "disappear" through exchanges between Mexican and US students. "Little by little," he claimed, "they will come to feel affection and esteem for each other, and in the long term, this care and mutual respect will benefit not only humanity in general but also the respective countries and even the individuals themselves."¹¹ Whether or not they believed in the rhetoric, many at the National University embraced the chance to connect with a global network of scholars and universities.

As academic relations between Mexico and the United States developed, the bilateral relationship deteriorated. After his speech announcing plans for a program to send Mexican students abroad, Álvaro Obregón won the 1920 election, but he failed to secure official recognition from the US government. The US Department of State conditioned recognition on Mexico formally agreeing to concessions protecting US citizens' property and investments, particularly in the oil industry, which they believed were threatened by the terms of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. President Obregón did not acquiesce to US demands that would breach Mexican sovereignty, but he did not want to antagonize the United States either. As the lack of US recognition created economic and political problems for Mexico in the early 1920s, Obregón was still seeking rapprochement.¹² Perhaps, some thought, the binational relationship could be mended not by diplomats but by students.

In Mexico, public conversations about this possibility began in 1920, thanks to a widely publicized scheme for a student exchange program between Mexico and the United States. This was not the first US scholarship announced to Mexican students, but its zealous US promoters brought it into the national spotlight.¹³ Spearheaded by Will A. Peairs, a manager of a pharmaceutical company, the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation was created in 1920. It was formally backed by the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico, newly organized itself, which brought together prominent members of the US business community in Mexico City. The foundation planned to send US citizens to Mexico to familiarize themselves with Spanish and local culture in order to be more effective international businessmen. But the foundation was more invested in sending Mexican students to the United States. That part of the initiative proved quite interesting to the Mexican public.

The Mexican American Scholarship Foundation aimed to send “deserving young men” to the United States for higher education, technical training, and industrial apprenticeships, all to improve Mexico-US relations and promote binational trade. The foundation argued that Mexico needed educated individuals to modernize the economy and to increase demand for consumer products. The scholarship program would strengthen the Mexican middle class, which could not afford to study abroad without assistance. US-educated Mexicans would help Mexico take advantage of its natural resources, incidentally the same resources that US businessmen hoped to export. The foundation would cooperate with Mexican educational officials to “help to select the candidates for scholarships and apprenticeships.”¹⁴ Women were not included in Peairs’s plan, although they already made up a sizable minority of Mexican students in the United States at that time: a 1919 count of foreign students in US colleges identified 261 Mexicans, of whom at least 28 were women.¹⁵

Peairs acknowledged that the scheme served US interests. When promoting the scholarship program in the United States and seeking donations from US exporters, Peairs emphasized that a more educated Mexican populace meant a larger consumer market for US products. “For as education progresses, so will new desires be created,” he explained. Any Mexican young man who had studied or trained in the United States would “become a loyal subscriber to our schools, our commercial institutions, and an active helper toward better understanding.”¹⁶ Peairs sought but did not obtain public endorsement from the US government, which had not recognized Obregón’s government and did not want to suggest in any way that it might do so.¹⁷ Rebuffed by his own government, Peairs pressed on with his strategic philanthropic venture.

In 1920–21, Peairs promoted the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation in Mexico and received extensive coverage in the Mexican press, which intensified when he gained a powerful Mexican ally.¹⁸ Peairs met with Obregón in April 1921, obtaining the president’s promise of “any kind of assistance to help him carry out his laudable enterprise.”¹⁹ Obregón offered “active cooperation” from the Mexican government in the form of travel expenses for students and the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation’s representatives.²⁰ Obregón’s support could have stemmed from his earlier interest in sending Mexican students abroad. Peairs’s plan was a way to do that without bearing the full cost. But more importantly at this political juncture, Obregón valued a zealous US ally, even if he was a private citizen, because the president was actively courting the US business community: maybe they would pressure US lawmakers to recognize his government.²¹ Publicly, Obregón did not clarify what made the student exchange plan “laudable.”

The Mexican press began to raise questions about the endeavor. The editors of *El Universal* and *Excelsior* initially supported Peairs’s plan. But even those who applauded Peairs’s motives did not believe that study in the United States was inherently useful. Peairs had not specified what Mexican students would study

while in the United States. Journalists argued that Mexican students applying for the scholarships should study “practical” subjects, namely, commerce and agriculture, rather than the law, medicine, or engineering degrees that most applicants for the scholarship preferred.²² While Mexican engineers had long studied abroad, some with government funding, journalists claimed that the traditional professions did not serve the national collective even if those career paths appealed to young people. In fact, a few years later, a survey found that over 40 percent of Mexican students in the United States studied engineering, but there were few students pursuing law, medicine, commerce, or agriculture.²³

Gabino A. Palma, a Mexican student and journalist in New York City, weighed in on the question from abroad. He held a scholarship from the Mexican government first authorized by Carranza. The Mexican American Scholarship Foundation plan opened a space for him to transmit his opinions and personal experiences in the form of policy recommendations. Writing in *El Universal*, Palma opined that the government ought to prioritize scholarships for those studying “utilitarian” topics, for “collectively, the Nation benefits more” from knowledge related to using natural resources and expanding Mexican infrastructure. Less useful were the contributions of students “who come back bringing reports of a concert, an exhibition, or a reading.”²⁴ If the collective were to benefit from selected individuals studying abroad, the government needed to scrutinize the ideas students were absorbing and transmitting back to Mexican audiences. Curiously, Palma’s personal orientation was toward the humanities; he was a writer and poet, though not a good one. But more than intangible foreign modernity absorbed in cultural forms, what Palma prescribed for the nation was knowledge concretely useful for modernization.²⁵

According to Palma, Mexican students abroad were significant political actors no matter what they studied, for they served as de facto national representatives. This meant that the government ought to carefully select students for scholarships (there was no way to control the quality of students sent abroad by families who financed their education themselves). While Mexican scholarship recipients like himself “supposedly represent or belong to the cream of the crop,” Palma did not believe that this standard was always met. He called for “the strictest and most just selection possible” because these students “will be in contact with the future leaders of the country where they study.” In an early evocation of the idea featured in this book’s title, Palma presaged leadership for these foreign-educated Mexicans: “They themselves will be called upon to direct our country’s future destiny.”²⁶ Palma also endorsed the idea that study abroad had some bearing on the strength of the bilateral relationship and on Mexico’s global image.

As Mexican pundits debated the foundation’s scholarship plan, the press attacked the supposition at the root of the project. Peairs and other US internationalists of the day believed tensions in the Mexico-US relationship resulted from mutual ignorance, overgeneralizations, and grudges (Mexicans needed to get over

the Mexican-American War). Therefore, open-minded Mexicans and US Americans, given the chance to form more accurate, personal impressions of the other country, could change the tenor of the relationship. Joining the conversation in the Mexican press, lawyer and former politician Querido Moheno questioned these assumptions. Moheno had spent time in the United States as an exile and had even published a volume on his observations on the country, of which he found little to admire.²⁷ Still, Moheno did not categorically oppose Mexican students going to the United States and actually praised US universities. Yet he argued that long-standing inequality in the Mexico-US relationship meant that improving Mexican perceptions of the United States (to be achieved by sending students north) would make little difference. If Peairs was “hoping to put an end to the causes of friction and conflict between the two countries,” the solution was “not to make Mexicans get to know Americans, since things do not depend upon us: undoubtedly, what would be better is to make sure that they [US Americans] really knew us [Mexicans].”²⁸ Calling for clear-eyed recognition of Mexico’s place in the bilateral relationship, Moheno dismissed the premise of Peairs’s venture.²⁹ Cultural exchange would not ameliorate geopolitical inequality.

Moheno centered Mexican sovereignty in subsequent discussions about the student exchange initiative. *Excelsior*’s editors now reacted to the scholarship plan with greater skepticism. Mexican institutions lacked opportunities for students to learn the most modern techniques in agricultural or commerce, so “our youth,” argued the editors, should “study and learn wherever these subjects are taught, whether in Yanquilandia or another country.” The editors abandoned the idea of student exchange as a path to friendly relations and assumed that antagonism between Mexico and the United States would remain. Mexico should thus seize the “opportunity for our youth to get to know the neighboring people to the North, which tomorrow may be our enemy and which will exert a preponderant influence upon our country for a long time.” After all, the editorial concluded, it was better to know one’s enemy in order “to win or avoid defeat.”³⁰ Sending students abroad was rather a pragmatic, even cynical way to give Mexico a geopolitical advantage.

As these debates took place in the Mexican press, the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation garnered more public support in the United States and claimed to have 150 “definite offers of free tuition” for Mexican youth from US colleges and universities.³¹ Things seemed to be going well, but the project fizzled. There is no evidence that the foundation ever granted scholarships, and no sources mention the project after 1921.³² But in the following years, similar US endeavors materialized and financed Mexican students. The bilateral relationship remained tense, but in 1923, the United States at last granted diplomatic recognition to Mexico after negotiating for some protections of US private interests in Mexico, although not the constitutional reforms desired by the United States.³³ With formal relations resumed, Mexico’s National University and Ministry of Public Education proved to be willing partners for US educational institutions, often taking the role of

selecting scholarship recipients or offering supplementary funding.³⁴ These jointly sponsored programs provided for a very small number of students to study in the United States, sometimes with stipulations about the student's gender (there were programs specifically for women) or area of study. Peairs's and the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation's failed attempt thus paved the way for actual scholarship opportunities for some Mexican students.

Nevertheless, the questions raised in these early debates established that Mexico ought to be cautious about student exchange, as it would be advantageous for the nation only under certain conditions. Besides naming more and less useful disciplines to study abroad, student journalist Palma had identified an optimal Mexican student to go abroad: a young man who had completed *preparatoria* or a university degree. Younger students would denationalize abroad. Mexican women would be corrupted by loose US morals (he would not have disputed Peairs's exclusion of women). The ideal candidate had to be both flexible enough to learn things and Mexican enough not to Americanize. He should not marry a US American woman, who would inevitably prevent his return to Mexico. Age, gender, and nationality were all part of these questions about who should study abroad to benefit the nation.³⁵ According to his criteria, Palma was the perfect candidate to make a patriotic contribution. In the years ahead, this kind of self-serving discussion of student mobility would characterize many foreign-educated Mexicans' rhetoric. In 1924, Mexican student Ramón Beteta, recently returned from the University of Texas, also declared that US education was most useful for Mexicans already educated at home. The two countries' systems were distinct and complementary. Foreign-educated Mexicans' experience with cultural difference made them indispensable visionaries, with an informed, cosmopolitan perspective that allowed them to pinpoint areas for transformation. In the broadest sense, Beteta endorsed study abroad as a tool for modernization.³⁶ This created an important role for Beteta himself to play, and indeed, he would go on to prominence in his later career.

But not everyone agreed about exactly what age, education level, or other characteristics defined the Mexican youth suitable for study abroad. In 1931, the rector of UNAM, Ignacio García Téllez, drew a line between susceptible, overly malleable students and those ready for study abroad at the conclusion of professional education. In a public speech that mostly emphasized the harms of study abroad, the rector allowed that graduate students could go abroad. They could seek the most advanced scientific knowledge without foreign influences harming their Mexicanness. García Téllez underscored the value of what the National University, which had recently won autonomy and thus became UNAM, had to offer. For professional education, he encouraged Mexican parents to send their students, not abroad, but to his university. The rector mentioned the dangers of denationalizing, never returning to Mexico, or returning as a kind of foreigner unassimilable to Mexican culture and unsuited to working in the national context.³⁷ While a dozen

years earlier, UNAM publicly endorsed an international understanding argument for student exchange, García Téllez now affirmed nationalist arguments against study abroad while creating a kind of loophole for the university to continue to send students to foreign universities. This was convenient since UNAM had been sponsoring Mexican students abroad for the past decade, and there was demand for more of these opportunities. Responding to the rector in the campus magazine, UNAM students argued that it would be absurd for Mexico to waste the opportunity to learn from neighboring nations.³⁸

After the Mexican Revolution, public debates about the role of study abroad made a conditional case for this formerly private educational practice to become a national policy priority. With more or less enthusiasm, and usually with caveats, studying abroad could be good for the nation. Then two Mexican students were murdered in the United States. In the wake of such violence, what arguments could be made for study abroad?

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MEXICAN NATIONALIST CASE AGAINST STUDY ABROAD

In June 1931, three young men from Mexico were driving back home after finishing the academic year at the US Midwestern colleges where they studied. The students, all in their early twenties, came from prominent families from the state of Michoacán. Two of them were nephews of the current Mexican president, Pascual Ortiz Rubio. In Oklahoma, two deputy sheriffs saw these students and wondered if they “might be Italians or Spaniards.” To US Americans, Mexican elites were hard to classify racially: their whiteness was suspect. Having noticed these ostensibly Mediterranean strangers, the sheriffs then spotted one of the students urinating on the road. The deputy sheriffs stopped to investigate.³⁹

Searching the students’ vehicle, the officers noticed the pistols and shotgun the young men had acquired for protection on the long drive to Mexico. The students may have believed that the officers, who were not wearing uniforms, were bandits.⁴⁰ They did not aim the weapons at the officers, but as one officer tried to remove a pistol from one student’s lap, the other assumed his partner was at risk and fatally shot two of the students. The young men who were killed were Manuel García Gómez and Emilio Cortés Rubio. Salvador Cortés Rubio survived the encounter.

Before 1931, violence was not among the dangers that Mexican commentators presaged for students abroad. But in the United States, public recognition of Mexican students’ elite backgrounds did not always shield them from anti-Mexican prejudice. Since the nineteenth century, some Mexican students faced racism, as noted in the previous chapter. During the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s, US students attacked Mexicans on their campuses in response to the events of the ongoing war. To racist US Americans, Mexican students became stand-ins

for Mexico. At Notre Dame, in 1914, eleven Mexican students were “thrown into the river” and “badly treated” by their classmates. The Mexican consul worried that “such outbreaks of National feeling,” that is, anti-Mexicanism in the United States, would result in similar mistreatment of other Mexican students.⁴¹ Yearbook entries for Mexican students featured supposedly friendly, collegiate ribbing that entrenched anti-Mexican stereotypes and referenced political events in Mexico. In 1915, the editors of Columbia University’s yearbook offered the faint praise that student Carlos Contreras was not “as turbulent as his native land.”⁴²

In the US South and Southwest, Mexican students, despite their privileged status, experienced even more discrimination: a 1925 survey of foreign students in the United States reported “antagonism to Mexicans and dark-skinned students” in southeastern states.⁴³ An engineering student reported his struggles to secure lodging in San Antonio in 1928.⁴⁴ Though there are no reports of Mexican students being physically harmed in the 1920s, white US Americans perpetrated many kinds of violence against working-class Mexicans in those years.⁴⁵ Beginning in the 1920s, US government officials “took tough interventionist action” against lynching cases with Mexican victims, although they had previously done little to bring justice, precisely because this violence created diplomatic tension with Mexico.⁴⁶ Perhaps no one anticipated lethal violence from US law enforcement against Mexican students, but the unexpected was not unprecedented.

After the students were killed in June 1931, US President Herbert Hoover, Department of State officials, and local and state authorities in Oklahoma quickly issued statements of regret and promised to fully investigate the events. International relations with Mexico were on their minds. For months, newspapers in both countries covered the scandal, and prominent Mexican and US figures penned editorials decrying the events.⁴⁷ This coverage noted what newspapers and officials in the other country were saying. Reporters considered what this violence meant for the bilateral relationship.⁴⁸ There was even a popular *corrido* composed about the incident called “La Tragedia de Oklahoma” that was recorded in August 1931.⁴⁹ The *corrido*’s lyrics mention the scale of the scandal and refer to US press coverage and Mexican fury.⁵⁰ Outrage even moved people to demonstrate, relocating the conversation from written exchanges to congregations of bodies in public space. Mexican students in Ciudad Juárez protested in the central plaza and in front of the US consulate to demand justice.⁵¹ The slain students’ funerals, held in Morelia, attracted hundreds, including members of “all social classes,” and there was a “veritable mountain” of funerary wreaths sent from all over the United States and Mexico.⁵²

Both deputy sheriffs involved with the murder went to trial, but to the dismay of officials and the public in both countries, they were acquitted. Many deplored the outcome as a sign of impunity and injustice. According to historian Abraham Hoffman, the immense public support for the student victims, something rarely extended to working-class Mexicans, had to do with the students’ elite pedigrees and familial ties to the president.⁵³ This was undoubtedly true. The editors

of *Excelsior* wrote after the deputy sheriffs' acquittal, "The double murder caused a sensation in Mexico and the United States not only because one of the victims was a close relative of our country's president, but rather because they were peaceful young men, well-educated, with perfect conduct, incapable of committing any kind of affront. . . . [T]hey were both distinguished guests and students with outstanding behavior."⁵⁴

For the Mexican public, racialized hatred in the United States insulted the integrity of the Mexican nation. In addition to their membership in the Mexican elite, the victims' youth and student status further signified their primordial innocence (along the lines of Obregón's "virgin intellects"). The students' privileged background thus exacerbated the US violation of Mexican national sovereignty and dignity. A journalist warned Mexican parents of the mortal peril of study abroad: "Send your children to study in the universities on the other side of the Río Grande. They will either come back learned, or as cadavers, like the ones they sent back to us a few days ago."⁵⁵ The long-standing elite tradition of sending youth abroad now seemed unwise.

Mexican commentators argued that this tradition was a noxious practice inherently harmful to the nation. Less than two weeks after the young men were killed, Chamber of Deputies member José María Dávila of Baja California addressed Mexican radio listeners with the pointedly titled speech, "Education Abroad as a Suction of Our Wealth," which garnered further press coverage and reached even more Mexicans.⁵⁶ Dávila decried the treachery of Mexican parents who chose to send their children abroad. "Too many rich *rancheros* and mediocre merchants" aspired to turn their children into cosmopolitans. Young men sent abroad became "dandies who speak a foreign language badly and their own language even worse," failing to achieve sophistication and denationalizing to boot. Young women returning from foreign schools lost their Mexican femininity, for they returned knowing how to play tennis but were "ignorant of the flavors of our national dishes." These de-Mexicanized youth no longer followed national standards of propriety and "criticiz[ed] our ways of life." Dávila decried the promiscuity, bacchanalian parties, and excessive alcohol consumption at US universities as signs of a toxic cultural milieu antithetical to Mexican morality. This echoed concerns raised a decade earlier by Gabino Palma, who had speculated about the differentiated effects of study abroad on Mexican youth depending on their age and gender.

Dávila, unlike Palma, categorically rejected study abroad. His arguments even attacked the parents of the murder victims and President Ortiz Rubio, whose own sons studied abroad and were classmates of the surviving victim, Salvador.⁵⁷ There was no possibility of a nationalist argument for study abroad for this legislator.⁵⁸ The "suction of wealth" referenced in the title of his speech was the Mexican money spent on US college tuition, money that would be better channeled to creating new schools in Mexico whose students would have "no alma mater but our flag and no pride other than that of knowledge and patriotism."⁵⁹

Six months after the murder, the scandal returned to Mexican headlines once again. The governor of Oklahoma had considered paying an indemnity of US\$5,000 to each of the families of the murdered students but decided that a scholarship was more appropriate.⁶⁰ This was the logical extension of the idea, now widespread among US cultural and policy elites, that study abroad improved international understanding. In December 1931, Oklahoma's governor announced that in memory of the slain youth, two scholarships would be created for Mexicans to study at the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. The scholarships, publicized in Mexico as an expression of "regrets to the Mexican nation for the death of the students," would include the cost of tuition and a living stipend.⁶¹ The Oklahoma sponsors planned for the Mexican president to choose the recipients.⁶² But the Oklahomans made sure that their offer received press coverage in Mexico even before communicating with Ortiz Rubio.

Mexican newspapers harshly criticized the proposed scholarships. The title of the editorial said it all: "A Fistful of Gold in Exchange for Their Blood!" But in case anyone missed it, the editors reiterated that this "golden offering . . . cannot stanch the blood of the victims nor placate their ghosts."⁶³ Forgiveness and justice were not for sale. A Mexican student organization wrote an open letter to President Ortiz Rubio, published in *El Universal*. The Oklahoma proposal constituted "one of many forms of psychological penetration, a phase of American imperialism in our country," the students wrote. They explained that they had long publicly opposed "Mexican student emigration to the United States," yet they had observed that "prominent Mexican officials disregard our colleges and universities and send their children to study in Yankee universities."⁶⁴ Public opinion quickly foreclosed the possibility of accepting Oklahoma's olive branch, instead ratcheting up nationalist outrage as Mexican students attacked the elite preference for study abroad. Ortiz Rubio's private choices were under the magnifying glass. He was not alone. Former presidents Plutarco Elías Calles (who still reigned supreme in Mexico) and the now-deceased Obregón had also sent their sons and daughters to study in the United States. There were rumors that Ortiz Rubio's sons would leave their college for another in Canada.⁶⁵ Ortiz Rubio sent a response to the students published in *El Nacional*, the officialist paper, agreeing with the reasoning in their petition, and he officially declined the scholarships the next day.⁶⁶ The scholarships were never created, and the murder of Emilio Cortés Rubio and Manuel Gómez passed into oblivion.⁶⁷

In the context of revolutionary nationalism, this scandal forced Mexicans to ask what it meant to send youth to a country where they faced violence and discrimination. Oklahoma's memorial scholarship symbolized US regret as well as the continued interest in an amicable Mexico-US relationship. The scholarships were an invitation for Mexicans to categorize the violent deputy sheriffs as atypical, for internationally minded US officials and citizens repudiated the murder and the murderers' acquittal. But if Mexican and US public opinion coincided in denouncing the incident, many Mexican observers did not share the US hope of

pressing forward and encouraging more students to go north. Mexican critics of the scholarship offer triumphed when Ortiz Rubio declined the Oklahomans' overture. But this success did not imply any real change in the state's willingness either to grant its own scholarships or facilitate scholarships offered by foreign institutions. And certainly, officials and elite families did not stop sending their own children abroad. Study abroad was so appealing that even Salvador Cortés Rubio, the student who had witnessed the murder of his cousin and friend and survived, chose to return to his US college in fall 1931.⁶⁸

Between 1931 and 1940, study abroad ceased to be a topic of public controversy as a consensus around its usefulness emerged even if its nationalist potential remained fraught. This might seem surprising, for revolutionary nationalism certainly did not diminish during the 1930s. Many scholars see the political developments of this decade as more, not less, radical than those of the 1920s. It was in the 1930s, under President Cárdenas, that the state moved to the left, nationalized the US-dominated oil industry, incorporated peasants and workers into the newly formed ruling party, and ramped up land redistribution.

Still, relations with the United States were warmer on balance, for the Good Neighbor Policy now guided US approaches to Latin America, encouraging US officials to at least create the appearance of nonintervention and to further friendly inter-American ties. US Ambassador to Mexico Josephus Daniels, whose tenure coincided with the Cárdenas presidency, often approved of Cardenista reforms and did not prioritize the US business interests so ferociously protected by some of his predecessors. Even the oil nationalization of 1938, though unpopular in Washington and anathema to US oil interests, did not bring an end to diplomatic ties.⁶⁹ While tensions remained in the bilateral relationship, the threat of US intervention seemed far less menacing in 1940 than it had twenty years before.

Meanwhile, as the US government aimed to generate a feeling of unity throughout the Americas, study abroad grew more and more appealing as a tactic of cultural diplomacy. The US Department of State intensified its symbolic support for student exchange in the Americas beginning in 1933.⁷⁰ At the 1936 Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace in Buenos Aires, representatives from the region signed an agreement on educational and academic exchange.⁷¹ This led to the creation of new agencies in the State Department dedicated to cultural relations in 1938. So the governor of Oklahoma's scholarship offer actually foreshadowed US interest in scholarships at the national level.

As US diplomacy in Latin America was shifting tactically, Mexican nationalism was more fervent than ever. However, through the 1930s, Mexican state institutions began to publicly endorse the value of study abroad, and student movements that had lobbied against study abroad were instead petitioning for access to international education. No change in presidential rhetoric, or a policy handed down from on high, spurred this growing acceptance of study abroad. Instead, as the

Oklahoma tragedy disappeared from the headlines, mid-level state officials and students themselves simply found foreign education too appealing to pass up on principle.

In 1934, Mexican students in the United States faced an appalling situation that seemed guaranteed to stoke nationalist ire and revive bitter memories of the Oklahoma tragedy. This time, there was no lethal violence, but the racism was overt. While completing practical engineering training in Texas, five students from UNAM were barred from entering cafés on the basis of their Mexican nationality. After returning to Mexico, the students denounced this act of discrimination. They were especially incensed that they had been excluded even though they were obviously students: they arrived in buses prominently marked with the name of their university.⁷² In other words, if it was bad to treat Mexican labor migrants this way, it was even worse if discrimination targeted students. The US Department of State was contrite.⁷³

Though not on the scale of public response to the Oklahoma tragedy, Mexican student groups in the capital rallied, “condemned U.S. imperialism,” and called for a student strike and protest.⁷⁴ Days later, the *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria* (FEU; University Student Federation) proposed organizing a strike and protest to express their indignation. Another idea raised was launching a “boycott against Texan students who come to Mexico.”⁷⁵ The boycott cleverly undercut the US cultural diplomacy chestnut that student exchange promoted international understanding. But their tactics and demands stopped far short of condemning Mexican students going to the United States. Even the staunchly nationalist FEU did not bring up the Oklahoma tragedy. They would punish US racism by excluding the notorious Texans, but they did not question why Mexicans went to study in the United States. In fact, despite their politics, these students wanted to study in the United States themselves. Several Mexican student organizations sought out opportunities for international education during the 1930s.⁷⁶ In 1936, the FEU’s president negotiated with university officials to obtain fifteen scholarships for UNAM students to study technical subjects in the United States and Europe.⁷⁷ By 1939, student members of the *Sociedad Estudiantil Socialista* (Student Socialist Society) at the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros*, which trained primary school teachers, sent a list of demands to the Secretary of Education that included “12 scholarships for graduates to study abroad, preferably in Europe or North America.” The students believed that international scholarships advanced their group’s objective: “For education at the service of the people.”⁷⁸ As loosely defined as socialism was in Mexico in this era, a request for scholarships from a leftist group would have been unthinkable just a few years before.

Officials at UNAM and in the government were starting to think differently about international scholarships too. In 1936, the university’s *Departamento de Acción Social* announced that it would send the best students from each

department to study at “first-rate foreign universities” for a three-year period. Quite unlike any earlier announcement of scholarship programs, an UNAM official now made sure to explain the purpose of the new program in nationalist terms. Countries that supported student mobility both improved international relations and the educational preparation of youth involved, and “as a result, these countries advance in general.” It was only logical that Mexico pursue such an opportunity.⁷⁹ UNAM was beginning to embrace study abroad as a tool for national progress, emphasizing that it required the best Mexican students and the best international universities.

By the late 1930s, federal agencies publicly announced their own programs for study abroad. Describing plans to send a social worker, a home nurse, and a doctor to the University of Cleveland in 1938, the Ministry of Public Welfare (Secretaría de Asistencia Pública) noted that the employees’ studies would be covered by funds from the Lotería Nacional, “thereby fulfilling the social mission for which [the lottery] was created.” The employees were required to resume work in this ministry upon their return. According to this reasoning, scholarships contributed to a “social mission” benefiting the Mexican people.⁸⁰ Thus, scholarships could be part of nationalism: these benefits were appropriate state policy in agencies charged with some of the most politically, symbolically significant realms of the revolutionary state. Even the Banco Nacional de Crédito Eijdal offered scholarships for agricultural students—the children of *ejidatarios*—to study cotton classification techniques.⁸¹ The *ejido*, a form of collectively owned land that was the centerpiece of revolutionary redistribution of wealth, would be worked by US-educated Mexicans, funded at the state’s expense. Even though President Cárdenas made no pronouncements in favor of study abroad during his time in office, various parts of the federal bureaucracy seized on international scholarships to advance their specific mandates.

Whether prompted by scholarship offers or injustices committed against students abroad, Mexican debates about foreign education consistently came back to the question of the nation. Some Mexicans thought that sending young people to study outside Mexico could not serve the national interest. Why educate youth in the very countries that imperialistically extracted Mexican wealth? Why expose young people to foreign ideas and habits that might erode their *mexicanidad*? For these critics, student mobility eroded Mexican sovereignty. The 1931 Oklahoma tragedy laid bare the risks that Mexican citizens, privileged or not, inevitably faced in the United States. But it was a scandal that, as scandals do, simmered down. By the late 1930s, many Mexicans were convinced that generous scholarships for study in the United States could actually help “plow the fertile furrows of [Mexican] nationality” when worthy students tackled topics of importance to the homeland, as a journalist wrote in *El Nacional*.⁸² Parts of the Mexican state, if not the very heights of power, ratified the belief that the nation would benefit from the

international education of a selected few, a notion that had been highly contested in the previous decade.

CONCLUSION

While state-sponsored scholarships were not a revolutionary invention, the revolution changed the political stakes of these programs. After initial public support from Obregón and more US offers to bring Mexican students to its campuses, revolutionary leadership avoided public comment on scholarships or even the practice of studying abroad. After the Oklahoma tragedy, nationalist opposition to anti-Mexican violence forced the state into a public hardline stance against a particular scholarship offer. But sustained opposition to study abroad, whether among the public or within the state, proved unviable and fleeting. True, there would be clamors against Yankee imperialism over the years. Even in the late 1970s, foreign-educated Mexican agronomists defended themselves against accusations of having “sold out” to the United States, where they had studied.⁸³ But since the 1930s, the emergent consensus was that study abroad was more useful than harmful. It was too hard for detractors to argue against the value of foreign knowledge. In the next decades, the frameworks of modernization and development gained more traction, and nationalism reoriented to the conciliatory rather than the inflammatory. This would make it easier to link foreign knowledge to national transformation.

The debates that would persist into the mid-twentieth century, and beyond, were not about whether the state should provide scholarships or whether Mexicans should study abroad. Instead, later debates were about the details. Which young people should study abroad? At what point in their educational trajectory? What disciplinary formations would be most useful for Mexico? How could the state ensure that these people contributed to the nation? As was already evident in 1921, even those who supported study abroad insisted that academic mobility ought to be carefully managed.

There was another reason that any plan to halt academic mobility was doomed to fail. Young, upwardly mobile Mexicans desired a chance to study abroad, and they clamored for access to any scholarships on offer. Querido Moheno, the Mexican pundit who in 1921 responded skeptically to the Mexican American Scholarship Foundation, was well aware of this. He noted that the forty scholarships supposedly available would never meet demand from Mexican youth. Nor would “400 or 40,000,” he exclaimed. The Mexican middle class was “dying of hunger,” and middle-class youth lacked access to quality education, so obviously “there would be no lack of candidates for those scholarships.”⁸⁴ The next chapter, attending to the hyperboles of elite desires, turns to these candidates and their strategies to win the chance to study abroad.

International Scholarships, Merit, and the Right to a Favor, 1920–1940

In 1931, immediate backlash followed when the Mexican press announced the Oklahoma scholarship for two Mexican students to study at the state's Agricultural and Mechanical College. Student groups and journalists swiftly condemned the gesture. But in the days between the scholarship announcement and the furious editorials, a few young Mexicans took an interest in Oklahoma's offer. Sixteen-year-old Felipe Benicio Rosaldo, an engineering student in Mexico City, clipped the article announcing this opportunity and gave it to his father. The newspaper indicated that the Mexican president would choose the recipients. Felipe wondered if the president would pick him. Maybe it would help if his father, Luciano, a former lieutenant colonel in the Mexican infantry, put his son's name in the hat.

With no instructions and no application form, Luciano Rosaldo crafted a petition, exercising his legal right to communicate directly with state power and receive an answer (not necessarily a favorable one but an answer). In the early 1930s, many Mexican citizens still wrote to presidents as if they ruled by divine right, but Luciano preferred a somewhat revolutionary tone. "Respectable Functionary," he addressed the president. Then he asked for the scholarship, a "favor," for young Felipe.¹ In a postscript, he listed three references, including Adalberto Tejeda, the governor of Veracruz.²

Tejeda and the other references could not speak to Felipe's academic achievement or his promise as a student. Rather, the men named were Luciano's most powerful friends. Trying to aid his son, this father understood the request for a favor as an exchange: Felipe would study abroad, and President Ortiz Rubio would curry goodwill from an influential politician, Tejeda. Tejeda, in turn, got to help Luciano, his underling, and thereby secure his future loyalty. In short, the Rosaldo

family assumed that clientelism, an “interest-maximizing exchange” between state actors and their subordinates, organized the distribution of scholarships.³

This assumption was reasonable. In the preceding decades, Mexico’s statesmen and strongmen built influence through carefully cultivated networks of allies threaded together by the distribution of favors. Clientelist exchanges were not necessarily illegal. But they obeyed a logic that was much older than the revolution, and older than the modern nation-state, about mutual obligations between ruler and ruled. Those relationships looked very different from the kinds of broad-based rights enshrined in the 1917 Constitution. A “favor” was never an entitlement owed to all citizens: favors were granted only to people who were special and distinctive.⁴ But Luciano Rosaldo had missed an opportunity in his petition to make the case that his son had the “right” to a favor from the president. Luciano neglected to mention that Felipe might eventually serve Mexico with his Oklahoma education.

On the same day that the Rosaldos wrote their letter, another young resident of Mexico City crafted his petition in the hope of winning the same scholarship. This petitioner wanted “to have the opportunity to do something for [his parents] and for the *patria*.”⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s, many petitioners bolstered patriotic promises by underscoring that they were uniquely capable and therefore could make an outsized contribution to the nation. In other words, they had merit. One father, writing on behalf of his son studying chemistry in Germany, noted that the young man had already achieved “results that bring honor to my family and to the *patria*.” On his return to Mexico, he would contribute “a store of technical knowledge that few Mexicans have brought to their country to date.” This would surely “compensate many times over” what the country could give to the young chemist now, a scholarship.⁶ His merit could be put to use later for the collective good.

This chapter considers how those desiring the chance to study abroad, something clearly unnecessary for basic survival and hard to anchor in revolutionary imperatives, rationalized their supposed right to a favor. Clientelism was a flexible mode of engaging the state that allowed clients to articulate highly personal narratives, and elite Mexicans eagerly used this channel to pursue favors. Within this framework, citizens generated political ideas about merit. Merit mattered deeply to elite citizens, not because it replaced clientelism, but because it fit so well in those personal exchanges. Merit would justify the apportioning of rewards to the already fortunate.

Merit was not a new idea in the 1920s and 1930s but had a long political history in Latin America. Nevertheless, the peculiarities of the postrevolutionary era made its use especially remarkable. In that moment defined by the impetus for social leveling, official rhetoric “rejected the division of society into classes” and “had to accomplish everything in the name of everyone,” as historian Jean Meyer writes.⁷ Merit-based allocation of rewards did not obey the logic of expanding rights and equalizing the citizenry. It allowed those who could not claim

membership in the popular classes to explain what they had to offer to the polity and why they warranted more comforts than the average Mexican. Strivers deployed merit to pursue rewards from the state, advancing an appealing narrative that justified privilege and thus entrenched extant hierarchies. Just a few years later, state officials accepted these kinds of arguments as truth, arguing that international education for the most talented, educated youth was an urgently needed modernization policy.

In the postrevolutionary era, privileged Mexicans conceived of merit as esteemed lineage and loyal service, or what I call “heritable merit,” as well as excellence or talent in a specific area of knowledge, which I refer to as “disciplinary merit.” The logic of merit presumed that this quality was unevenly distributed among the population. Merit was not for everyone. It was concentrated in an exceptional, small group of individuals. Presenting themselves as one of these meritorious individuals, with arguments and evidence, ambitious Mexicans engaged state actors in deeply personal, vertical relationships. Funds to study abroad allowed young Mexicans to do something long associated with the aristocracy, to enjoy an education that they could not have otherwise afforded. Scholarships freed recipients from the indignity of performing low-wage labor in conjunction with their studies. Scholarship recipients and aspirants believed that they deserved this benefit because of their merit, which was ultimately inextricable from their class status.

PRIVILEGED PRECARITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

During the first postrevolutionary decades, families privately financed most of the Mexican youth who studied in Europe and the United States, much as wealthy lineages had done since the early nineteenth century. This tradition appealed to the revolutionary political elite. The daughter of President Plutarco Elías Calles (r. 1924–28), Ernestina Calles, attended Columbia University in 1926.⁸ She and her brothers were the first members of their family to receive a foreign education, a sign of their lineage’s ascent to the political class.⁹ The striving citizens writing to President Calles in the 1920s seeking international scholarships hoped that foreign credentials for themselves or their children could launch a similar upward trajectory.

International scholarships were not a revolutionary innovation. Since the Porfiriato, Mexican national schools sent Mexicans abroad to observe practices in foreign institutions, study for degrees, complete practical training, and bring back the tangible material and intangible know-how to modernize professional education at home. The Mexican students abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including both scholarship recipients and family-financed students like Francisco Madero and Camilo Pani, did not all possess limitless wealth. Alongside extraordinarily rich members of the Madero clan were students faking wealth like Pani or scraping by like the Urquidi brothers.

As recounted by Bazant, the three Urquidi Márquez brothers all managed to study engineering abroad, despite their family's limited ability to afford foreign education, thanks to income from the government and sacrifice. The eldest, Francisco, born around 1874, left for Paris to study engineering in 1895.¹⁰ He received a scholarship of 50 gold pesos from the Mexican government, which was then reduced to silver pesos worth only half as much. Scholarship payments were often irregular, so Francisco turned to his brother Manuel, studying in Philadelphia, for help to make tuition payments. As the youngest, Juan Francisco, wrote to his older brother Francisco, studying in the United States meant leaving behind the comforts of home, but he was motivated to "become something in this world, an engineer, for example." Soon enough, Juan Francisco enrolled at MIT, following the advice of the French-educated Francisco who urged his brother to become an engineer in the best place in the world to do so, the United States. The brothers even wrote to each other in English. Francisco struggled to get by in France, but he still offered to send "franquitos [francs]" to his younger brother across the Atlantic.¹¹ These brothers were elites, but they had to share funds to get by.

During and after the Mexican Revolution, petitioners for international scholarships straddled the blurry divide in the Mexican social pyramid between the middle class and the elite. Of course, a wealthy person from a well-known lineage was easy to distinguish from a threadbare clerk or schoolteacher. But elites' class position was also fragile, fortunes and reputations being as easy to lose as to keep.¹² In the period 1920–40, Mexico's upper class experienced particular instability, both economic and political.¹³ Living in postrevolutionary Mexico were cash-poor aristocrats whose assets had been expropriated as well as revolutionary heavyweights like Calles, who were not born to power or prestige but had risen through the ranks. These figures had some combination of social, cultural, or economic capital but never enough of all three.¹⁴ Their class position required active maintenance as they tried not to disappear from the society pages or sought to maneuver their way onto them.

Middle-class Mexicans living through political and economic crisis cherished the material security, from steady jobs to affordable goods, that allowed them to consume "decently" according to their class-informed expectations.¹⁵ In fact, the expanding state bureaucracy led to the growth of the middle classes as more families could count on income from government salaries.¹⁶ However, these salaries were not necessarily high, nor did they ensure economic security.¹⁷ Agronomists claimed to need and deserve more money to live than did the campesinos they worked with, even as these state employees decried exploitative hacendados and supported land redistribution.¹⁸ A 1930s assessment of military officers summed up their dissatisfaction with their salaries: "Everyone considers that what has been done for him is very little or nothing—that he deserves a great deal more, that the president only concerns himself with the Indians, and with laboring men whom he has literally showered with favors."¹⁹ Despite the rhetorical emphasis on social

leveling in postrevolutionary Mexico, the middle classes continued to believe that they were entitled to more than what the average Mexican might access.

Mexican institutions continued to play this role as an engine of social mobility after the revolution. Agronomy students in the 1920s “anticipated a great deal from their degrees and professional titles, beginning with security for themselves and their families” in the form of stable government jobs with opportunities for advancement.²⁰ The connections students made while finishing their education could prove crucial. Miguel Alemán, president of Mexico from 1946 to 1952, met most of his important allies while he was a student in the 1920s struggling to make ends meet, waiting in vain for cash from his father.²¹ Education was clearly related to social mobility, but students on the way up lived with uncertainty as they nurtured their great expectations.

Study abroad, even with a scholarship, was out of the realm of possibility for most Mexicans, so the request itself suggested that the petitioner was of at least middle-class origin. The middle classes made up only a small fraction of the population. The average Mexican was neither middle-class nor elite but simply poor. According to one study using Mexican census data, the upper and middle classes constituted respectively just 1.4 and 7.8 percent of the population in 1895 and 1.1 and 15.8 percent in 1940.²² Despite the notable growth of the middle classes, being middling still meant being privileged. Scholarship petitioners sought the most exclusive form of higher education available to Mexican youth: something more costly than professional education in Mexico’s own institutions, which remained inaccessible to most citizens.²³ Yet the pursuit of an international scholarship can be read as a middle-class project because it was unnecessary for those wealthy enough to study abroad at their parents’ expense. International scholarships were uniquely appealing to those who hoped to ascend in society.

To win a scholarship, then, was to join a highly selective group. The government gave out very few international scholarships, compared to the more common types of favors sought by citizens: jobs, military pensions, or domestic scholarships. There is no reliable data on how many international scholarships were granted in the 1920s and 1930s; I estimate a range of forty to eighty per year, granted variously by the National University/UNAM, the Ministry of Public Education, and the president. Precise counting is impractical, perhaps impossible, because the state struggled to tabulate or organize its own information on the students it was sponsoring. The document shown in figure 1, illustrating an early impulse to systematize, reveals that the SEP paid out scholarships despite poor recordkeeping on the recipients. In 1924, the SEP requested that its *pensionados* (as scholarship recipients were called at the time) submit information that a more efficient bureaucracy would already have captured.

Carlos Pérez Guerra’s form shows that officials wanted to know who their *pensionados* were, including date and place of birth and parents’ names, and what it was they were doing abroad.²⁴ Pérez, twenty-four, was studying mechanical and

DATOS DEL ALUMNO PENSIONADO.

Nombre y apellido paterno y materno Carlos
E. Pérez Guerra

Edad y lugar de origen 24 años Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México.

Nombre de los padres o tutores Maria N. Vda. de Pérez Guerra.

Escuela en que hacen sus estudios Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

Indole de los mismos Ingeniería Mec. y Quim.


Tiempo que falte para terminarlos un año

Mes en que empieza y finaliza el año académico.
Octubre, Finaliza en Junio

Fecha en que se les concedió la pensión.
En 1920 a 1921

Domicilio. Stanford Univ. Stanf. Calif.
Stanford Univ. 5 de Mayo 1924

FIRMA. P. E. Pérez Guerra



 II-89

FIGURE 1. Information form submitted by Carlos Pérez Guerra, student at Stanford University, to the Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1924. Source: AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder "Carlos E. Pérez Guerra." Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación.

chemical engineering at Stanford University, and he neatly completed the form for officials. In this attempt to centralize data in Mexico City, the SEP enlisted official Mexican emissaries abroad to "supervise" pensionados. Pérez, for example, was under the watch of the consul general in San Francisco, whom he impressed with his dedication to his studies.²⁵

In this uneven, murky "system" of international scholarships, a notorious form of state inconsistency was the amount of different students' stipends. In 1921, Gabino Palma, who received a scholarship originally granted by Venustiano Carranza, highlighted this injustice in a letter to Mexican officials. As he publicly

opined about the politics of study abroad in national and international terms (see chapter 2), Palma waged a personal struggle to secure what he thought he deserved from the Mexican state. One of his complaints was that other Mexican students were receiving a scholarship five times greater than his own, and he denounced these “unequal conditions.”²⁶ Evidence suggests that he was not necessarily exaggerating. Even in the late 1920s, the National University’s scholarship recipients received anywhere from US\$30 to US\$300 monthly.²⁷

The number of scholarship recipients, though hard to pinpoint, was certainly small. Indeed, the total number of students going abroad in these years was small, too, with just 200 to 300 Mexicans enrolled in US colleges and universities in a given academic year (see appendix 1).²⁸ Mexican universities were not producing large numbers of professionals either: historian David Lorey found that there were only around 300 new professional graduates annually during the first decades of the twentieth century, although that number increased after 1927.²⁹ Even in this context, international scholarships were desirable. Recipients attempted to parlay their connection with the state into a government job, suggesting that some viewed scholarships as a path to state employment.³⁰ In this era, there were a few visible examples of cosmopolitan, credentialed Mexicans serving the public, including key architects of new visions of Mexican nationalism like Manuel Gamio and Moisés Sáenz, both trained at Columbia University.³¹

Spurred by desires for social mobility, Mexican citizens penned letters to seek a favor from the state. In the 1920s and 1930s, they could not claim membership in the revolutionary blocs of peasants or workers that the state was publicly bound to serve. Those who aspired to social mobility competed against each other and did not collaborate despite their similar interests. In their petitions, they underlined their individual, unusual worthiness, political utility, and potential to contribute to national well-being.

THE POSTREVOLUTIONARY “ECONOMY OF FAVOR”: HERITABLE MERIT AND ELITE NEEDINESS

The relationship between clients—aspiring or current scholarship recipients and their families—and patrons, who were state officials, was largely carried out in written correspondence. Two closely related narrative strategies in these petitions can be categorized as elite neediness and heritable merit. Elite neediness refers to students’ inability to access certain material or cultural markers of status that privileged Mexicans claimed were indispensable. Heritable merit was status by birth and demonstrable loyalty to an individual patron. The notion that those who were born to privilege had a right to special treatment undergirded both strategies. Moreover, petitioners assumed that their letters would be read by sympathetic officials who identified with their aspirations to consume, socialize, and even study in accordance with the decency expected of future professionals.

Heritable merit openly preserved social hierarchy and exalted those already close to those in power. As Alejandro Cañeque has shown, in the New Spanish “economy of favor” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, enlightened rulers were expected to generously distribute rewards to vassals, and some favor seekers and political theorists called for merit, understood as noble lineage and purity of blood, to be considered when allocating scarce resources such as political offices or land.³² Loyal service to leadership was another kind of merit in the economy of favor, in which a legitimate, just ruler was duty-bound to grant favors to steadfast vassals.³³ This kind of merit served as a currency of exchange between patron and client, and one place to see these negotiations playing out is in the petition.

By the early twentieth century, petitions were a widely used, and quite old, official channel for the ruled to make all manner of requests to the ruler, whether in monarchies, empires, or republics.³⁴ In Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America, the language of supplication persisted past the end of monarchy and into the national period. But nineteenth-century petitions provided ordinary Mexicans a space to wield rhetorical techniques (including imagery and groveling), reveal legal knowledge and political fluency, and otherwise demonstrate civic competence.³⁵ Into the twentieth century, few petitioners passed up the opportunity to affirm their patriotic commitment to the Mexican nation, which was easy to say and hard to disprove.³⁶ To a degree, petitions affirmed the legitimacy of the revolutionary government by demonstrating citizens’ belief in the good faith of government officials. Grievances were not publicly denounced but discreetly channeled to state actors assumed to be responsive and sympathetic.³⁷ In the Mexican case, the right to petition required petitioners to make their requests “in writing, peacefully and respectfully.”³⁸ But in the 1920s and 1930s, the promises of the revolutionary project informed new kinds of demands from citizens eager to claim newly available rights and opportunities, leading to large numbers of petitions reaching government offices.

The patchy institutional framework for international scholarship granting meant that direct entreaties were the only way to solicit aid: there was no impersonal, bureaucratized alternative (filling out forms only came after winning support). Still, international scholarships were a licit state benefit. And favor granting is in some cases not corruption but a constitutive part of the official’s job.³⁹ Citizens knew that they had the legal right to a petition and an official response, but they also knew that officials exercised discretionary authority when considering petitions. Petitioners from all social classes addressed state actors as more than representatives of the government mechanically executing the law of the land.⁴⁰ Historian Aymara Flores Soriano has shown that Mexico City parents petitioning education authorities in the 1930s for need-based scholarships sought to demonstrate not only that they were poor, but that they were honest, honorable, and dignified.⁴¹ Petitioners seeking international scholarships similarly crafted petitions to sway officials to use discretionary powers on their behalf.

In the 1920s and 1930s, nearly all petitioners mentioned or even personally dispatched their social connections to demonstrate their appeal as potential clients of the government official they addressed. This strategy was not unique to elites, but what distinguished elites from members of the popular classes was the clout of the people they knew. For example, Rafael Zendejas Camargo's brief 1938 petition for a scholarship to study in Chicago listed his relatives in official posts and a protector who happened to be the uncle of Cárdenas's wife.⁴² In providing evidence of social capital through name dropping or letters of recommendation from powerful allies, petitioners used the petition's flexible format to communicate their class status to officials.

Another common approach was to liberally apply the language of paternalist supplication. For example, in 1922, María N. wrote to ask for a special travel stipend to allow her son to visit her from abroad during the summer vacation. Her petition was directed to Vasconcelos, then secretary of education. María N. was a widow, and her son, Carlos Pérez Guerra, studied mechanical engineering at Stanford University (his information form, including a small portrait, is shown in figure 1). She appealed to Vasconcelos not as a generic citizen but as a mother yearning to see her child, and as a widow. She mentioned that her son already enjoyed Vasconcelos's "protection" and that thanks to the secretary's "well-known benevolence," María N. had been able to see her son during previous academic breaks.⁴³ Letter writers of all social classes knew that the officials who would receive their requests saw themselves as patriarchs, and this meant that they could be flattered or called to duty by presenting them with an opportunity to protect the weak.

Both young people and their parents also wrote frankly about financial need, an impediment to the personal betterment they desired. Of course, their privations (i.e., lack of comforts properly required by the privileged) lacked dramatic urgency when compared to those who were starving or dispossessed. Still, elites believed that their peculiar neediness was an effective argument to deploy in pursuit of a state benefit. This line of thinking was similar to that of middle-class residents of Mexico City in 1915–16 who petitioned the municipal government for access to state-run stores with regulated prices. Those petitioners emphasized that they were needy but did not shy away from revealing their class status; one asked for access to the special stores "to obtain a wardrobe to decently present ourselves." As historian Susanne Eineigel notes, the very objective of buying clothing (rather than food, which was often in short supply during the revolutionary period) revealed that their desperation came not from hunger so much as the fear of "loss of social and class distinction."⁴⁴

For students abroad, financial "need" was both objectively variable (some places were more expensive than others) and entirely subjective. What students "needed" clearly emerged from class-inflected ideas about living standards, consumption practices, and paid work. While abroad, Mexican students had to cover a variety of expenses, some predictable and some less so: tuition, travel, room and

board, books, clothing and sundries, and healthcare. A 1916 guidebook for Latin American students on studying in the United States estimated that the minimum monthly cost of living would be about \$25 in rural areas and \$50 in large cities. With this budget, approximately equal to the amount of many monthly stipends, the guidebook claimed, students should be able to pay for dormitory housing and meals in the cafeteria or they could seek room and board with “a respectable family.”⁴⁵ The problem was the additional cost of tuition, which in the United States ranged from \$40 to \$500 yearly in this era.⁴⁶

International scholarships did not cost the Mexican state much because there were so few granted, but the individual expenditure on students abroad was much higher than that of, say, the salary of a rural teacher.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Mexican students constantly asked their scholarship sponsors for more money, and they described debts and the need to take on paid work as evidence that their stipends were inadequate. In 1920, Ernestina Medina Alvarado, a young teacher taking classes at Columbia, reported that two-thirds of her \$50 monthly stipend went to her tuition. She took on paid work to cover her expenses.⁴⁸ Francisco Romandía, who studied engineering at Cornell University, wrote to Calles after his \$120 monthly scholarship from the SEP was stopped in 1923. For months, Romandía had continued to study while he worked “outside the university for several hours each day,” but in the nine months since his stipend was canceled, he incurred \$597 in debt, owing money both to Cornell and to the owner of a local restaurant.⁴⁹ Medical or dental services, costly and unexpected, also strained the budget of government scholarship recipients. Finally, the stipends themselves were disbursed irregularly and could be abruptly canceled; this was a sign of general bureaucratic chaos and budgetary limits in this era, as public employees’ salaries were also unreliable.⁵⁰ Relief came in 1923 when President Obregón issued a statement clarifying that a 10 percent reduction in the salaries of public servants would not include student pensions, for “the amounts that they are assigned are so limited that they barely cover their needs.”⁵¹ Even the state admitted their scholarships were paltry.

Young men and women seeking scholarships argued that as students, they should not work. Some studious youth apparently felt strongly about complete dedication to their coursework.⁵² But students were also concerned that taking menial jobs would threaten their social status, for in early twentieth-century Mexico, middle-class identity implied being free from “the fate of manual labor,” as one education official put it in 1900.⁵³ Indeed, a Mexican engineering student at Northwestern University in 1905 explained that, to the surprise of a foreigner like himself, “poor” US college students worked menial jobs to pay tuition and living expenses, performing such tasks as “waiting tables, washing dishes, tending cows, disposing garbage, etc.” Such work would be anathema to Mexican “society youth.” This student worked to fund his studies, and he urged other Mexican youth to follow his example, but he was unusual in his enthusiasm for manual labor.⁵⁴

Gabino Palma saw things quite differently. Writing in the national paper *El Universal* in 1921, he warned that it was not feasible to combine studies abroad with paid work. Financial resources were a prerequisite. Students without access to family wealth would end up quitting their studies, working in degrading jobs, and holding significant debt.⁵⁵ These thoughts came from his personal experience studying in New York City with a scholarship. Palma faced the relatively common predicament that his stipend payments did not arrive on time. When he wrote to José Vasconcelos to complain, Palma described what he had endured while waiting to receive his money.

I have had to prepare my own food at home, and to wash and iron my own clothing to be able to pay for my studies, sacrificing ALL kinds of social enjoyment, including events at the colleges which I so needed for cultural orientation, because I could not cover my expenses. I have had to work in hotels and factories, and I have had to hear the crudest phrases uttered to me in my life, just to earn a dollar to support myself.⁵⁶

This resembles the “whining tone” Richard Graham finds in some nineteenth-century Brazilian correspondence from clients to patrons that reflected “both a keen sensitivity to the imbalance of power between [them] and a belief in its injustice.”⁵⁷ Palma found it scandalous for someone of his social status to face these indignities. The complaints presume that a young man from the middle or upper class should have enough cash to outsource household chores. He should finance his social activities, and he should not perform manual labor. Without intervention from Vasconcelos, Palma feared plunging to a reduced social station if not actual poverty.

Scholarship holders assumed that the officials reading their letters would find it moving to know that elite leisure practices were unaffordable to them. Ignacio Herrerías, a student protégé of Plutarco Elías Calles, wrote many letters to his protector calling for aid to live the comfortable lifestyle of a student with disposable income.⁵⁸ In 1920, Herrerías, who had worked as a journalist, went to New York City to study with a government scholarship facilitated by Calles.⁵⁹ In 1921–22, he regularly wrote to his protector to ask for his scholarship to be extended or increased. The money, he explained, was needed to cover books and classes but also vacations and social activities.⁶⁰ He eventually included an itemized budget when he asked for a higher monthly stipend. Of his monthly pension of \$150, he had only 71 cents left over, “not even enough to go to the theater.” He added that he needed money for a new winter coat: he had worn out the one he purchased the year before with money sent by Calles.⁶¹ Calles did not grant his protégé’s every wish, but he did cover unexpected medical and dental fees for Herrerías and some of the sundry comforts that he desired. Perhaps Calles recalled his own youth marked by uncertain material circumstances that seemed mismatched to his social station.

Elite neediness was premised on a sense of distinction. Mexico’s elites believed that different activities and consumer items were appropriate for different people

and that most Mexicans did not require what elites needed. Similarly, the idea of heritable merit held that certain individuals were unusually deserving because of their remarkably loyal service to a superior. This merit was a kind of credit held by the client that could be redeemed for rewards from the patron. For example, in 1911, after serving as the military doctor for Francisco I. Madero's forces during the earliest revolutionary insurrection, Salvador Ramos wrote to Madero asking for a scholarship to study medicine in the United States. After Madero's triumph, Ramos had not sought compensation for his expenses and professional labor since he "felt satisfied with my work, having fulfilled my sacred duty as a Mexican." He now sought a reward in the form of a scholarship.⁶² His loyalty to Madero qualified him for it. A decade later, Ignacio Herrerías, Calles's protégé, served his patron as a competent political attaché. Herrerías sent reports, translations, and clippings of press coverage about Mexico to Calles, and he offered to provide translations of political science articles.⁶³ Describing a presentation he hoped to give in New York, with slides to publicize the revolution's achievements, Herrerías promised Calles that when he showed the slide with Calles's image, he would emphasize Calles's commitment to the working classes.⁶⁴ This kind of faithful service, like Ramos's dedication to Madero, was specific to one man and his government.

But others conceived of service as something given to the nation rather than to one national leader. This vision of merit meant that rewards were owed to the meritorious not by a single politician or official but by the nation writ large. A peculiarity of the colonial economy of favor that survived through the national period was the notion that favors should be justly distributed not only to loyal vassals but also to their offspring. In other words, merit, as something that an individual could accrue during a lifetime, was also passed on to the next generation: it was heritable. Among various ideas about what entitled elites to viceregal favors such as land grants, some argued that the conquistadors' descendants "should be preferred to the other candidates, as the dignity acquired by the father for the services rendered to the republic is inherited in the same way as blood is inherited."⁶⁵ Following the same logic, at the end of the Porfiriato, individuals claiming to be related to the Mexican heroes of independence, Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos, requested jobs, aid, and pensions on the basis of their illustrious ancestors' paramount sacrifices.⁶⁶ This meritorious service was on behalf of a polity, not to an individual ruler.

Acts of merit represented credit extended by citizens to the nation for which meritorious citizens and their descendants could request repayment. Family members of the revolution's heroes received state support in the 1920s and 1930s. In one case, the pension was specifically intended to educate the niece and nephew of Obregón in 1928, after his assassination. Living in Los Angeles where they were cared for by their older sister, Obregón's young relatives received a scholarship of 60 Mexican pesos until 1933, when their stipend was reduced by half. At that time, their older sister asked President Abelardo Rodríguez to restore the aid to its original amount.

She reminded him that the children were “*sobrinos carnales* [nieces and nephews by blood]” of Obregón, “who rendered such important services to the Patria.” Now she asked that the president serve as their “protector.”⁶⁷ The nation was in Obregón’s debt, and with the hero now gone, it was his descendants who had to be repaid in the form of a scholarship to study in the United States.

When his most important need arose, Herrerías, who made so many requests to Calles for winter coats and spending money, turned to heritable merit to make his case. Seeking a scholarship for his older brother in 1922, Herrerías described the family’s unfortunate fate and specified the nation’s debt to the family. His father, a war correspondent, was assassinated by Zapatista troops during the revolution. “This misfortune completely ruined my family’s prospects,” he wrote, not least because being a fatherless child meant growing up without the breadwinner’s income. Herrerías sought to extend his protector’s largesse from himself to include his brother. Their father’s patriotic sacrifice during the revolution had prevented the elder Herrerías from “quietly dedicating [his efforts] to raising and educating his children,” so the slain reporter’s sons now turned to the state for help. It would be an act of justice for the revolutionary government to act as their provider in the stead of their martyred father.⁶⁸ Calles did not grant the favor.⁶⁹ Still, Herrerías evidently viewed heritable merit as a promising narrative strategy to extend his patron’s protection to another son of a revolutionary hero.

Some petitioners assumed that a relative decline in their families’ financial circumstances during the revolution constituted a kind of meritorious sacrifice. This was a creative way of presenting the kind of elite downward mobility common during this period as an injustice requiring remedy. In 1931, when José Garza y de Gárate requested a scholarship to study law in France from President Ortiz Rubio, he suggested that this support from the state was “a compensation for the services rendered by my father” during the revolution. As the consul in Brownsville from 1913 to 1920, José Z. Garza’s commercial enterprises had failed while he attended to his diplomatic duties.⁷⁰ Garza y de Gárate thus framed his elite neediness as the unfortunate, though reparable, result of his father’s loyalty. He believed he had inherited that merit and could cash it in for a scholarship.

Espiridión Otero of Huatabampo, Sonora, writing to Cárdenas in 1938, claimed that his son needed a scholarship because of the family’s sacrifice as victims of revolutionary policy aimed at redistributing wealth. He called the president “the only father I have left in this world to beg for help,” but Otero was a man of some means: he had financed his son’s education in Guadalajara and Mexico City, and he belonged to the local political elite.⁷¹ Still, Otero could not afford to pay for his son to study in the United States because a piece of property he owned and planned to sell had been expropriated and granted as ejido lands. “I do not hate or condemn that redistribution, if it benefits more than one family, magnificent,” he clarified, “but what I do hate and will always regret is that [the loss of the land] should cause my son to interrupt the studies that he has only just begun.”⁷² Without directly questioning land

reform, he framed his willingness to see his own wealth redistributed as a sacrifice worthy of recompense. This was a bold argument to make to Cárdenas, who had made agrarian reform the signal project of his presidency. Otero did not get what he asked for. Nevertheless, the attempt shows how elite Mexican citizens deployed heritable merit in innovative ways to bolster their class status.

Though I have discussed strategies separately, in their missives petitioners combined various approaches to appeal to officials to see what might stick. There was little to lose by mentioning one's proximity to those in power. In fact, some elites had close enough connections to those granting scholarships that they or their relatives could make the request in person. In 1922, Arnulfo Figueroa y Rosete, studying engineering in California, sought an increase in his scholarship from US\$30 to \$100 monthly. In addition to penning petitions, he dispatched his aunt to speak personally with Secretary of Education Vasconcelos on his behalf.⁷³ Some years later, a close ally of Cárdenas, Juan de Dios Bátiz, personally asked the president for a scholarship for his son while attending a social gathering.⁷⁴ Like the president, Bátiz was politically committed to popular uplift and was in fact the director of a newly established polytechnic institute intended to educate the children of peasants and workers.⁷⁵ And yet, like other recent arrivals to the higher echelons of Mexican society, Bátiz wanted a prestigious foreign education for his own lineage. Soon the younger Bátiz was off to the University of Texas, his father having obtained the scholarship from Cárdenas, and he renewed it in 1941 thanks to President Ávila Camacho, who was also a friend.⁷⁶ Clientelism was alive and well.

But as a 1939 petition makes clear, many aspirants to government scholarships felt that clientelism alone was not enough to make the case for a favor. Daniel C. Manjarrez, who had a robust connection to Cárdenas, nevertheless characterized his desire for a scholarship as the product "of mature reflection and the desire to prosper, not just for my own benefit which would be stingy, but also if it is possible, for the benefit of the collective in which I live."⁷⁷ Petitioners suggested that their foreign study was good for something more than their own, class-inflected sense of well-being and dignity. They highlighted their social standing, not pretending to be more humble than they were. They enumerated the precise nature of their want, which was not hunger but the inability to keep up appearances. For elite petitioners, meriting a reward for talent, service, or the national well-being was perfectly compatible with the notion that they deserved more, too, because they were not ordinary Mexicans. Merit was for them a birthright.

DISCIPLINARY MERIT AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AS A NATIONAL INVESTMENT

Disciplinary merit was skill, talent, or excellence in a particular field of practice or knowledge. It could be forged through deeds and proved by evidence, and it was not an inherited characteristic but one that had to be deliberately acquired

and externally verified. When evoking disciplinary merit, petitioners claimed that they could serve the nation as talented individuals with demonstrable skills in a discipline. Study abroad made it possible for an individual to sharpen those skills to better contribute to the homeland. In the logic of disciplinary merit, it made sense for the nation to invest in promising individuals by supporting their extraordinary education.

While the preoccupation with loyalty and patriotism stretches back to the early modern economy of favor, disciplinary merit more closely corresponds to later developments in political thought in the Spanish Empire. In the eighteenth century, Bourbon authorities construed merit as “talent, skill, knowledge, and virtue,” and these were earned rather than innate attributes, as Mónica Ricketts has written.⁷⁸ Candidates for crown-appointed office had to demonstrate their merit with special records that enumerated their educational profile and work experience; in fact, “Spanish Americans quickly adapted to the new rules by sending elite children to the Peninsula for education.”⁷⁹ Though study abroad was once an elite family strategy to obtain this kind of merit, by the Porfiriato, officials distributing scholarships for study abroad selected students who already possessed disciplinary merit: the most promising students in artistic and technical fields, from painting, sculpture, and music to engineering and agricultural studies.⁸⁰ To seek these scholarships, some petitioners promised that they would be useful to the nation in the future, promising future service rather than calling in the nation’s debts to them and their families for past service and sacrifice. The idea that suitable education rendered children “useful to the nation” already circulated in Spanish America in the eighteenth century.⁸¹ Petitioners harnessed this idea and presented evidence of their excellence in a specific, useful field of knowledge or practice in order to qualify for the opportunity to serve.

Though archival evidence is limited, it seems that disciplinary merit mattered to Porfirian officials even behind closed doors. For example, Ernesto Rivas Elorriaga came to the attention of the Secretaría de Justicia e Instrucción Pública in 1903 when the Mexican ambassador in Washington recommended Rivas for a scholarship to continue his mechanics studies in the United States. Rivas had recently graduated from Mexico City’s Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios para Hombres, and the ambassador explained that Mexico lacked the “necessary workshops” for the young man to further his preparation. He made no comment about Rivas’s worthiness, only asked that Rivas be granted a scholarship since he “was recommended by a person I desire to serve.”⁸² This was clientelism at work. However, the ambassador’s recommendation was not enough to win funding for Rivas. The Secretaría de Justicia e Instrucción Pública immediately wrote to the Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios para Hombres and asked for information on Rivas’s background.⁸³ The school’s director unfavorably ranked Rivas in comparison to three others who had recently graduated from his program, noting that unlike the school’s own recommended candidate, Rivas had won no prizes and had lower

grades.⁸⁴ Records do not show how the matter was resolved.⁸⁵ Yet even with the Mexican ambassador to the United States as a personal reference for Rivas, officials were still concerned with establishing his disciplinary merit according to the standards of his school.

After the revolution, government officials continued to scrutinize disciplinary merit, although their methods hardly precluded clientelism from influencing selection. In 1925, the SEP promulgated regulations that acknowledged the personalist nature of scholarship granting in the first lines. The stipulated procedures were only to be used in “cases involving students about whom the Secretary has not formed a personal opinion.” Yet the regulations did more clearly define disciplinary merit by specifying areas in which students had to excel to win or keep their scholarships: behavior, effort, and academic progress. Students desiring scholarships in Mexico’s own institutions had to prove economic need, while students hoping to study abroad did not, although the latter group had to prove their language skills in an exam and complete the available courses of study in their field in Mexico. This was because study abroad, according to the memorandum, was for *perfeccionamiento*, referring to the highest level of learning in a given area.⁸⁶ Qualifying for an international scholarship meant demonstrating disciplinary merit, and students needed to continually evince this quality in order to keep their stipends.

These new regulations, equivocal as they were, encouraged officials to note their use of merit as a criterion in awarding stipends.⁸⁷ Mexican consuls, charged with disbursing stipends and supervising the behavior of scholarship recipients, also kept track of academic achievement.⁸⁸ Writing in 1928 on behalf of another Calles protégé, the consul in Boston noted that “of the 26 Mexican students studying the same program” at MIT, the young man in question was “the most hard-working and stands out notably from the rest for both his effort and knowledge.”⁸⁹ When defending the interests of Mexican youth abroad before other state officials, consuls believed that assurances of merit were efficacious.

Making a similar assumption, scholarship aspirants provided qualitative proof of merit in testimonials, which could serve a dual purpose: a recommendation from a powerful individual could substantiate a claim to merit and demonstrate one’s social capital. Yet most letter writers were certain that powerful connections alone could not win them scholarships for study abroad. In 1939, the aspiring linguist Filiberto Gómez wrote to Cárdenas to ask for a scholarship to continue his graduate studies at the University of Chicago. Gómez remitted a thick dossier with evidence of his merit, compiling so many documents that he included a table of contents.⁹⁰ Samuel Martínez, a violinist seeking to continue his studies in the United States, sent a collection of laudatory clippings along with recommendations from cabinet ministers and the artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.⁹¹ Other petitioners were already public figures. Angélica Morales, an internationally renowned young pianist supported by Vasconcelos and other education officials in

the 1920s, sent her sponsors biographical profiles published about her, including one by renowned poet and critic Juan José Tablada.⁹² Petitioners showed that their talent was publicly recognized in Mexico and abroad, where their skills exemplified Mexican greatness for an international audience. Tapping into the state's project to create a national Mexican aesthetic, these artists sought resources by arguing that they were cultural exemplars and ambassadors for the nation. They hoped to demonstrate their utility to the state writ large as well as their ties to intellectuals already close to the state.⁹³ Petitioners' belief in the power of disciplinary merit led some to include recommendations from individuals who were "nobodies" in the Mexican political sphere but were well acquainted with the petitioners and their area of expertise.⁹⁴

Some petitioners deployed merit-based claims in ways that undermined the legitimacy of clientelism as a political practice to get state resources. They argued not only that merit mattered but also that personal connections were irrelevant if favors were to be distributed legitimately. Sonoran father Espiridión Otero, who in 1938 sought out Cárdenas's help to send his son to study abroad after a piece of his land was expropriated, addressed the question of merit directly. He listed his son's grade point averages and class rank, and he described his son's "outstanding effort and behavior and achievement." Yet in the petition, Otero explained that he had not collected letters of recommendation on his son's behalf. This omission was intentional, and he offered the following reason: "In February 1911 I saw that all of the eleven scholarship recipients supported by the state of Sonora in the Colegio de Agricultura de Juárez were the children of the rich[,] . . . but according to reports they were the students who most lagged behind and had the worst behavior." There was no problem with distributing favors to the privileged, he claimed, but the recipients needed to be worthy, not only well connected.⁹⁵ Otero pointed out that he could have procured a recommendation from a relative who was a general but deemed this was "not necessary in the current circumstances." He declared, "My greatest recommendation is my own son," by which he meant that the most convincing evidence of merit was Otero's intimate knowledge of his son's scholarly temperament. Otero explained that as a young boy, his son would cry when he could not attend school.⁹⁶ His request was denied for the oft-stated reason of budget limitations.⁹⁷

In the mid-1930s, Moisés Sáenz secured a scholarship for his son Josué, who was pursuing a doctorate from the London School of Economics. Sáenz himself studied at Columbia University, where he earned a doctorate in 1920; in the following decade, he held important posts in the postrevolutionary government and served as secretary of public education in 1928. In 1936, he was appointed Mexico's ambassador to Peru.⁹⁸ Sometime later, Josué's scholarship was canceled. The ambassador wrote a letter to Cárdenas explaining his request for a "favor [*gracia*]." Sáenz surmised that the reason for the cancellation was his appointment to a diplomatic post, which came with a government salary that he had not enjoyed

when the scholarship was first granted. I have no evidence of any regulation prohibiting the children of government employees from holding scholarships or any internal correspondence among officials concerning nepotism.⁹⁹ Still, Sáenz worried that his son's scholarship appeared to be only a favor to himself and that this was not becoming to the officials involved. Perhaps Sáenz believed that public attitudes toward clientelism were changing, tending to preference for purportedly fairer methods of distributing favors.

Sáenz explained that his position in the government or lack thereof was not "the only reason" that his son Josué had been awarded a stipend. Rather, according to Sáenz, Josué's scholarship was granted on "the merits of his request in light of his studies and work." We know from other sources that Josué had succeeded in his education so far. Born around 1916, Josué attended Mexico's top institution of secondary education, the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria*, and he earned a degree in economics from Swarthmore College around 1936.¹⁰⁰ His father noted that his diplomatic salary (recently reduced due to budget cuts) and social obligations as ambassador did not allow him to support Josué. That this situation could be read as grave only makes sense when we understand this as the predicament of elite neediness. Here the necessity narrative, or the claim that foreign education was in some sense indispensable for young elites, appears as a commonsense fact. Sáenz assured Cárdenas that Josué would soon complete his dissertation and return to Mexico "to offer his services to you and to the Country."¹⁰¹

Josué was lucky. Cárdenas's private secretary informed the elder Sáenz that the "*Señor Presidente* himself, desiring to grant your request [*obsequiar la solicitud de usted*], sent orders to the Ministry of Education."¹⁰² We do not know which tactic convinced Cárdenas to extend support to Josué Sáenz, and it is possible that his father's political stature played the decisive role in this positive outcome. That could explain the language of gift-giving in the secretary's note. The scholarship was a favor that might secure the continuing loyalty of the Sáenz family. Even as citizens and other state actors argued that the proper way to distribute scholarships for study abroad was to determine worthiness, for those in power, stipends remained useful as discretionary rewards. But Ambassador Sáenz saw his own political capital as a liability in the family's attempt to fund their son in London. He explicitly rejected the possibility of using his own status to bolster the request for a scholarship.

Whether it was his father's connections, his own merit, or some combination that moved Cárdenas to grant the favor, Josué Sáenz went on to build a comfortable professional life and enjoyed international recognition. He earned his doctorate from the London School of Economics, and by 1940, he was teaching at UNAM; he held various government posts over the next decade. At age thirty-one, he even spoke on behalf of Mexico at a prominent event in New York City. The *Herald Tribune's* profile of the young economist called him "a builder of the new Mexico."¹⁰³ Mexican officials were already beginning to take to the idea that

the nation needed, rather desperately, individuals with qualifications like those of Sáenz. But in the 1920s and 1930s, before high-level rationales and well-organized programs for international scholarships existed, Mexican citizens wielded merit idiosyncratically and creatively, suggesting ways to square the favors they desired with national transformation.

CONCLUSION

Luciano Rosaldo's petition for the Oklahoma scholarship, made on behalf of his son in December 1931, reached the president in just one day. As executive staffers processed the incoming correspondence (which mystified them, since the Oklahoma governor had not told Ortiz Rubio about the scheme), a second letter arrived from Rosaldo. This new missive was an apology. Surely because Rosaldo read all the negative press on the Oklahoma scholarship, he realized that the petition for his son was a terrible political faux pas. The day before, his son's "perhaps unjustified wish" to study in the United States had moved him to write in haste, but he realized that the scholarships were an insult to the nation. In his second letter, he withdrew the earlier petition and begged for forgiveness.¹⁰⁴

That moment in the wake of the Oklahoma tragedy was an unusually bad time to angle for a scholarship, at least this one that was uniquely toxic to nationalist sentiments. But in the years before and after, Mexican youth and their families were arguing in myriad ways that the foreign education they wanted actually fortified nationalist ends. Like Rosaldo, they were glad to name drop and play up any clientelistic appeal they had, but they yoked international scholarships to national progress. And there was another narrative avenue that Rosaldo and his son could have tried: the claim that after studying abroad, young Felipe would contribute much to the nation as a top-notch electrical engineer.

Without any official rhetoric about the place of international study in national policy for citizens to tap into, petitioners in the 1920s and 1930s assumed that would-be patrons evaluated the merit of those seeking favors. Their holistic vision of merit did not disappear in the following decades, nor did top-level, discretionary favors.¹⁰⁵ Writing to President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines in 1956 in the hope of a scholarship, one young citizen named her contacts in the Mexican government, specified her educational experience, articulated her desire to serve her people, and revealed the exigencies of her needy mother before entrusting her humble case to Ruiz Cortines's "magnanimous heart and indisputable understanding."¹⁰⁶ After all, could it really hurt one's chances to craft a multipronged rhetorical performance of worth? Why not flatter? As Mexico modernized, those strategies still seemed viable, reflecting continuities in political culture and perhaps, too, a lag between how citizens thought they could obtain benefits and how these benefits were actually distributed.¹⁰⁷ Or citizens knew that the rules on paper did not show you how to win the game and get the prize.

Nevertheless, not long after Cárdenas left office, lower-level state officials would codify a narrower vision of merit that centered disciplinary achievement and promised to reimagine the political meaning of international scholarships as more than convenient bones to throw. Scholarships could be a tool for transformation, a realm ripe for state policy. At the same time, concerns about maintaining privilege were embedded in the project of national modernization that gained steam in the 1940s. The state adopted the very ideas that highly educated Mexicans had already been using in their petitions that linked their self-interest with national uplift. First privileged strivers, then policy makers reimaged scholarships not as mere favors but as an investment in the national future, making institutionalized support for study abroad politically justifiable even as social inequalities persisted.

Mexican and US Institutions Building Mexican Expert Cadres, 1940–1960

In the mid-twentieth century, more young Mexicans than ever before studied abroad. By 1950, over 800 Mexican students enrolled in US institutions; by 1960, this group numbered nearly 1,500 and by 1970, more than 2,600. Adding Mexican students in Europe, the total number was significantly higher.¹ During this period in Mexico, the nationalist, developmentalist case for study abroad gained traction. Even former President Cárdenas publicly endorsed study abroad in 1955. Dismissing worries of unwanted foreign influence, he claimed that it was in Mexico's national interest to take advantage of "the investigation, knowledge, and experience of modern technique, whatever country it may be coming from."² During his presidency, Cárdenas tacitly supported study abroad when he personally distributed scholarships as favors, though without a public-facing rationale. Beginning in the 1940s, the Mexican state invested in forming Mexican experts by paying for young citizens to study abroad, using explicitly merit-based, systematic selection. Scholarship recipients, once referred to generically as *pensionados* because they received regular state aid, became universally known as *becarios*. The word, from the Spanish term for scholarship, *beca*, turned the possession of a scholarship into a marker of identity.

This chapter argues that Mexico's push to produce expert cadres, though a nationalist project, ultimately constituted a binational effort. US financial and discursive backing of Mexican study abroad complemented the Mexican state's own investments in international scholarships. The United States did not impose this project on Mexico: it was a homegrown impetus to transform the nation, nurtured by the elites' long-standing practice of studying abroad. Those elites now lobbied for state support with increasingly sweeping rhetorical innovations. Simultaneously,

US officials invested in cultural diplomacy to recruit influential Mexicans as supporters of the United States. These officials believed Mexican experts would bring modernization and economic prosperity to their country, staving off challenges to liberal capitalism. By collaborating with US institutions, the Mexican state pursued its policy objectives while paying for only some of the scholarships for the next generation of foreign-educated Mexicans.

Harnessing US dollars was important because the mid-century Mexican state was not especially powerful or wealthy. In fact, as historian Benjamin Smith points out, the Mexican federal government struggled to collect tax revenue, leaving the nation's coffers poorly stocked just when development projects required massive state outlays. From the 1940s to the 1960s, the federal government achieved an appearance of state power and political stability "on the cheap." The *dictablanda*, or soft authoritarian regime, was strategic rather than strong, selectively using force and efficiently deploying what resources it had. Coercion, targeted and discreet violence, and corruption characterized the *dictablanda* at the local level. Nationally, the state used its power over print and audiovisual media to churn out patriotic discourse and performance in order to consolidate its cultural hegemony. Finally, the state mediated access to resources, from permits to *bracero* contracts, to build coalitions.³ Mid-century Mexican development relied on a "decentralized funding system" in which the federal government, state and local governments, and citizens themselves bore the cost of projects for which the national state took credit.⁴

I contend that another way to decentralize funding was to harness resources beyond the national territory. Through Mexico's central bank, Banco de México, the state paid for some scholarships while letting the gringos pay for others. While Mexican state actors did not control those collaborations, US institutions depended on Mexican intermediaries, who had some influence in the selection process. What is more, the Mexican state and allied media could then point to the scholarship recipients as an incontrovertible sign of Mexico's modernization and the state's efficacy. In an era when the veneer of power was at least as important as whatever lay underneath, these representations of Mexican success were an affordable way to convince the population that the state was doing what it promised.

This chapter analyzes the scholarship program run by the Banco de México, alongside other, functionally similar scholarship programs financed with public and private US dollars. The US State Department channeled funds to Mexican youth to study in the United States through a binational cultural institute in Mexico City, and the Rockefeller Foundation offered scholarships through collaborations with Mexican institutions. Mexican and US programs alike aimed for these US-educated youth to return to Mexico, practice their specializations, and modernize their country. As one Rockefeller scientist phrased it, the aim was "to cultivate personnel" much as agronomists were "seeking and testing seeds and methods"

to increase agricultural production.⁵ So, too, could Mexico's human capital meet the demands of the twentieth century through careful nurturing. Mexico's central bank, the US government, and an international philanthropic giant collaborated to produce foreign-educated expert cadres for Mexico. The Mexican state impetus for expert formation effectively harnessed available US resources, public and private, and trained more experts than the Mexican state could have afforded alone.

US media also contributed to the Mexican state's efforts to produce foreign-educated citizens at no state expense. With dazzlingly triumphant language about Mexican students in the United States, US newspapers proclaimed that these budding experts were deserving, laudable envoys of their nation. This aligned with contemporary Mexican efforts to stoke nationalist fervor among its citizens through the media, thus "engineering grassroots consent" through "cultural control."⁶ Mexican students abroad now had nationalist symbols to justify their sense of worthiness and the associated status they thought they deserved.

MID-CENTURY SCHOLARSHIP INSTITUTIONALIZATION AS BINATIONAL COLLABORATION

Many more Mexican youth would win support for study abroad in the mid-twentieth century than in decades past. In this transition from the economy of favor, Mexicans who wanted a foreign education benefited from political transformations in national and international arenas. The Mexican state began to value expertise. Officials argued that the state apparatus and the nation's well-being required professionals with training not available in Mexican universities. At least some state actors reframed international scholarships as modernizing investments with value to the collective. In addition, US institutions concerned with modernization and forging geopolitical allies abroad settled on the idea that foreign countries needed US-trained and US-friendly native experts.

In Mexico, the state had invested in certain kinds of expertise, albeit on a small scale, since the Porfiriato, sending talented engineers, teachers, sculptors, singers, and musicians for advanced training abroad to bolster the status and technical capacity of Mexican educational institutions.⁷ Building sovereignty with know-how from without, Mexican leadership during the Porfiriato (1876–1910) and the revolution (1910–17) sent students and professionals abroad. Expert formation accelerated by the mid-twentieth century, and during the Cold War era, technocrats and professionals wielded knowledge and skills to direct deliberate, structural transformation in Mexico.⁸ Throughout Latin America, experts wanted to enhance sovereignty and nationalism even as they pursued elements of foreign modernity.⁹ In Mexico, experts, who often had US and European credentials, were closely connected to the state. They mediated between the state and the people, whose vernacular knowledge was devalued in favor of academic degrees.¹⁰ On

the job, experts engineered dams, designed welfare programs, vaccinated the poor, distributed hybrid seeds, and otherwise changed much about daily life on the ground. Experts also mediated between the state and foreign institutions, as did Mexican agronomists who worked for the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture.¹¹

Foreign-educated Mexicans were in demand as employees for some state bureaucracies. For example, economists, trained in public and private Mexican institutions, studied abroad and then went to work for the Mexican government. As Sarah Babb has written, with few formally trained economists available to fill technical and administrative roles in the state bureaucracy, young foreign-educated Mexicans with those credentials quickly rose through the ranks. Josué Sáenz (whose father, Moisés, had fought for his funding in the late 1930s) “became director of the Department of Credit of the Finance Ministry in 1946.”¹² As expertise per se gained value in the eyes of state officials, some asked how to produce suitable experts deliberately, through concerted state action—in other words, how to develop cadres of foreign-educated Mexicans.

The first Mexican state institution to use scholarship granting to build expertise—not just to dispense handouts—was the Banco de México. Created in 1925 to make monetary policy and regulate credit, the bank was part of a broader initiative to put the revolutionary state’s finances in order and reduce its substantial debt. It struggled during its first decade through political upheaval and the Great Depression. But after 1940, with new state emphasis on industrialization under President Manuel Ávila Camacho, the bank expanded its role beyond monetary policy to deliberately stoke national development. The formal purpose of the bank’s scholarship program was to train experts to serve “the country’s most vital and legitimate interests.”¹³ Specifically, the Banco de México aimed to fill gaps, focusing on knowledge areas lacking specialists to support “the country’s needs.”¹⁴ This language suggested that the bank’s officials could indisputably ascertain national “interests” or “needs,” just the sort of apolitical framing deployed by experts to shore up their own power. Confident that they alone could chart the right course for Mexico’s future, bank officials assumed that Mexico needed more people like themselves, that is, foreign-educated experts, to guide development.

Starting in 1944, the central bank’s newly created Office of Industrial Research granted scholarships, drawing financial support from the Mexican Ministry of Finance and a banking industry group as well.¹⁵ The bank increased the budget for scholarships and adjusted the set of disciplinary priority areas several times between the mid-1940s and the late 1950s. Program officials valued banking economics and scientific fields that could be applied to industry and agriculture. But the bank was open to sponsoring people in other disciplines, leaving funds available for “unspecified” fields to accommodate well-prepared applicants.¹⁶ Later, the question of how much power the state had to prioritize certain disciplines over others would become more problematic (see chapter 6).

Foreign-educated Mexicans played a major role in advocating for and directing state efforts to train a new generation abroad. Their technical profile distinguished them from the country's most powerful leaders of the time, who were *licenciados*, or lawyers. Starting with President Miguel Alemán (1946–52), licenciados dominated political offices previously held by military generals of revolutionary renown. But Alemán and his successors lacked technical background in the disciplines deemed critical for development, from the social sciences to the natural sciences, as well as applied fields like veterinary medicine and engineering. With licenciados at the state's helm, disciplinary experts in lower levels of the bureaucracy oversaw scholarship programs.

The four central bank officials who created and administered this first systematic scholarship program had studied in England or the United States: Gonzalo Robles, Eduardo Villaseñor, Víctor Urquidi, and Daniel Cosío Villegas.¹⁷ The latter three were experienced spokesmen for Mexico in global forums as some of the first Mexicans trained in economics who became architects of Mexican economic policy. Urquidi was born abroad in 1919 to a Mexican father, Juan Francisco Urquidi (mentioned in chapter 3).¹⁸ The elder Urquidi had studied at MIT during the late Porfiriato, and Víctor attended the London School of Economics. He, too, had a scholarship from the SEP, arranged in the way we would expect for the 1930s: through personal intervention from his cousin, an official in the Ministry of Finance. The scholarship had come at a time of family financial problems, and Urquidi depended on it. When he got a year's worth of stipends as a lump sum of £140, it was more money than he had ever had at once. He spent most of it on London nightlife.¹⁹ Despite his cosmopolitan upbringing, Urquidi still experienced the racist derision sometimes directed at Mexican elites abroad. In 1944, a British official presumed that he could not be a truly capable economic or policy thinker because he was Mexican.²⁰ Now, at the Banco de México, he and other Mexicans with similar credentials had the chance to systematically prepare larger cohorts of Mexicans like themselves. This was a program with a systematization ostensibly unlike the economy of favors that had financed Urquidi's own studies.

US programs offering scholarships to study abroad augmented the Banco's effort. Since the early twentieth century, US philanthropic and other nongovernmental boosters of hosting foreign students in the United States connected their cause to world peace and international understanding. Private US actors and groups had called for scholarships for Mexican students since the 1910s, and their initiatives gained notice in the Mexican and US press. In the 1930s, State Department officials began to publicly support and then fund projects of cultural diplomacy through the creation of the Division of Cultural Relations in 1938 and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in 1941. Inter-American relations were reframed with metaphors of warm, interpersonal relations, supposedly horizontal rather than hierarchical, and cultural relations fit well with this narrative.²¹ The State Department supported exchanges of materials (books, films,

art, and music) and people (students, teachers, scholars, and leaders). There was, of course, a clear US geopolitical objective at the core. Officials believed that in the aggregate, people-to-people exchanges would bolster the military alliance and economic cooperation between Mexico and the United States. In the years leading up to and during World War II, cultivating these friendly relations was understood as a way to combat German, Japanese, and Soviet influence in the Americas.²² But as the war drew to a close, US officials articulated longer-term goals for cultural relations. Fighting Communism soon became another reason to educate pro-US, pro-democracy Mexicans in US colleges. They were looking for becarios who demonstrated “potential leadership” so that on returning to Mexico, they would “help establish a climate of opinion favorable to the United States” as soon-to-be-influential Mexicans.²³

US officials believed that US-educated Mexicans could build more durable friendly ties with Mexico than any propaganda could achieve. While propaganda could generate goodwill superficially, any benefits were ephemeral. Student exchange, by contrast, would yield rational understanding between the Mexican and US peoples. One US official described their hopes for the US-educated Latin American student (gendered male, like the majority of these students were) on his return to his home country: “He will have learned that the American people are friendly, freedom-loving, and fundamentally opposed to imperialism. He can enlighten his own countrymen on that point.”²⁴ As Víctor Urquidi remembered it, being called “unfriendly” by US diplomatic officials was “the worst thing Americans can say about a Mexican, because the officials ‘wanted to be loved by everyone.’”²⁵ The efficacy of student exchange programs was hard to measure, but the State Department’s enthusiasm persisted.²⁶ By 1956, an official claimed, “There is hardly a phase of the U.S. Mission in Mexico to which the exchange program does not in some way contribute”; in other words, exchange was an “enlightened and essential” measure to promote Mexican development in accordance with US political and economic interests.²⁷

However, the State Department worried about the optics of cultural diplomacy, given the widespread (and reasonable) suspicion of US motives throughout Latin America. After all, the US Central Intelligence Agency was funding groups that supported Latin American intellectuals who favored liberal capitalism over communism.²⁸ While the US Embassy and its staff were closely involved with the scholarship program, the embassy kept a certain distance from the selection of recipients. As elsewhere in Latin America, US officials delegated cultural diplomacy work in Mexico to a separate organization—a cultural relations institute—to avoid accusations that scholarships were a tool of US imperialism.²⁹

Thus came about the Instituto Norteamericano-Mexicano de Relaciones Culturales, or the Cultural Institute, as it was known to English speakers. Founded in 1942 in Mexico City, it was the sixteenth institute of its kind in Latin America.³⁰ The Cultural Institute was a binational effort that was, at least on paper, directed

by Mexican citizens though funded by the US State Department. Its Mexican leadership included many prominent political figures and intellectuals with a cosmopolitan background, including several foreign-educated Mexicans like Manuel Sandoval Vallarta, the MIT-trained physicist who enthusiastically sent off the institute's first becarios in 1942.³¹ The idea behind the Cultural Institute's program was this: Worthy Mexican and US citizens would spend time in the neighboring nation, where they would learn to understand each other's culture and society better. Officials believed that face-to-face interactions and personal familiarity with real US Americans would inevitably dispel any Mexican antipathy to the United States, so that these now-US-friendly Mexicans would spread their positive impressions to other Mexicans.³²

Although it was funded by the US government, the Cultural Institute depended on Mexican political and logistical support to achieve its diplomatic purpose. Mexican collaborators could offer perfumed nationalistic flourishes to mask the Yankee stench clinging to the endeavor. Sandoval Vallarta, bidding farewell to recently selected scholarship recipients in 1942, enjoined the "señores becarios" to "never forget that you are Mexicans."³³ The institute's 1944 charter stipulated that Mexicans would have a two-thirds majority on the board of directors, and the selection committee named by the board also had a Mexican majority.³⁴ The Mexican intellectuals involved with the Cultural Institute, whether on its board or committees or as dues-paying members, had clout: positions in the Mexican state, impressive professional accomplishments, or a cosmopolitan background. Many were foreign-educated.³⁵ From the beginning, the Cultural Institute enjoyed the Mexican press's support, receiving favorable coverage in the officialist *El Nacional*. Other major papers regularly reported on available scholarships and named those who received them.³⁶ The Cultural Institute never formally partnered with the Mexican government, and Mexican collaborators faced questions about how independent the institute was from the US government.³⁷ Still, between the mid-1940s and the 1960s, the Cultural Institute maintained close if informal connections with Mexican state power.

Mexican members of the Selection Committee brought public prominence as well as recognized disciplinary merit to their work.³⁸ The committee made its first decisions in September 1942, recommending twenty candidates whose names were passed on to the US Embassy to send to the State Department for the final cut. The winners were publicly awarded at the Benjamin Franklin Library in an event, described in the opening pages, featuring several prominent Mexican intellectuals and a member of the embassy staff.³⁹ During the rest of the 1940s and 1950s, the Cultural Institute received applications and made selection recommendations for scholarships offered by the Institute of International Education (IIE), financed by the State Department, but it also performed this work for other US scholarships.⁴⁰ The Cultural Institute awarded scholarships to perhaps a few dozen students each

year. The US effort to exude benevolence and fairness hinged on putting Mexican talent in the spotlight and using merit-based criteria to guide selection.

Working alongside US state actors, the Rockefeller Foundation gave the most substantial stipends to Mexican students it sponsored to study abroad. The Rockefeller's mandate in Mexico, as elsewhere in the world, was broad and ambitious: It was committed to "human progress" in general and "the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge" in particular.⁴¹ The foundation believed that expert cadres were essential to these ends. In Latin America, over 1,700 budding scholars enjoyed Rockefeller scholarships during the period 1917–62.⁴² During the 1920s and 1930s, Rockefeller initiatives in Mexico focused on public health, supporting small numbers of Mexican doctors and other health workers to study in the United States.⁴³ Shifting away from public health in the 1940s, the foundation's most important effort in Mexico, as elsewhere, turned to developing modern agriculture. As historians Tore Olsson, Joseph Cotter, and Diana Méndez Rojas have explored, the Rockefeller's Mexico Agricultural Program was an unequal partnership between the philanthropic giant and the Mexican state, but Rockefeller's US scientists were not all-powerful. Besides the significant financial and logistical support contributed by the Mexican government, Mexican intermediaries and allies, and their political projects and personal interests, profoundly shaped the Green Revolution's trajectory in Mexico.⁴⁴

The foundation and the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture collaborated in running agricultural research centers, training new agronomists at those centers, and sending Mexican becarios to the United States (and occasionally elsewhere) to earn graduate degrees in fields ranging from entomology to soil science and veterinary medicine. From the 1940s to the early 1970s, the foundation sponsored 214 Mexicans for study abroad in agronomy.⁴⁵ It also ran several smaller programs to train Mexican experts in medicine, natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. These programs also relied on Mexican intermediaries by partnering with specific institutions, such as the Colegio de México, to identify candidates and develop staff.⁴⁶

With distinctive yet complementary projects, the Banco de México, the Cultural Institute, and the Rockefeller Foundation were never formal collaborators. Yet together they financed foreign education for a new generation. In this multi-institutional, binational landscape of scholarship offerings, savvy aspiring becarios could seek funding from multiple sources. Some did so because paltry stipends failed to cover expenses, a problem discussed from the becarios' perspective in chapter 5. From the perspective of the Banco de México, which specifically offered supplementary funding so that winners of other scholarships could cobble together enough to afford the sojourn, US scholarship programs functioned as useful partners that furthered the broader goal of producing larger cadres of Mexican experts. Another sign of the fundamental compatibility of the Banco, the

Rockefeller Foundation, and the Cultural Institute, the crossover becarios speak to the essential similarity in their apparently different selection practices.

COMPOSING EXPERT CADRES:
HOW INSTITUTIONS CHOSE THE BECARIOS
OF THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

In my research, I struggled to count how many people received scholarships as favors in the 1920s and 1930s because those scholarships were disorganized and discretionary in the first place. By contrast, the institutional grantors of the mid-twentieth century left much clearer records of the becarios they sponsored. Mexican newspapers announced the names of scholarship winners, along with their prior study in Mexico, US destinations, and areas of specialization. The Banco de México published information about all of its becarios after administering a survey on their employment, publications, and other accomplishments. These useful sources, reflecting a general tendency of the mid-century world to produce almost too much data for historians, reflect commitments to systematization.⁴⁷ To varying degrees, these institutions kept records to document the long-term impact of their work. Lists of becarios conveyed the individual importance that institutions vested in each becario. Mexico's growing expert cadres were neither massive nor faceless but rather comprised a knowable set of discrete specialists who warranted individual recognition. Visibility reinforced the notion that becarios were uniquely valuable Mexicans, a trope explored later in the chapter. Here I analyze becarios as a collective to understand what kinds of study these institutions supported and what criteria they used to select becarios.

The Banco de México sponsored over 500 becarios between 1944 and 1959. In a 1961 directory, the central bank produced a kind of Who's Who of Mexico's expert cadres. After systematizing the directory's brief CV-like sketches of becarios, I created a data set of the 380 becarios who went to universities abroad and analyzed this group. The individuals were mostly men and mostly graduates of universities in Mexico City. Among the Banco's becarios heading abroad, three-quarters went to the United States, a fifth went to Europe, and most of the rest went to other parts of Latin America. A majority of those going abroad did not earn a degree, but those who did typically pursued a master's degree.

Becarios in the United States (a group I refer to in the following description) studied at many different universities, but their top destinations were Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and MIT. Becarios came from all over Mexico, but those born in the capital were overrepresented. About half of the US-bound becarios were UNAM graduates. Only about 9 percent were women.⁴⁸ In Mexican institutions, the fields of health, literature, social work, pharmacy, and biology had higher proportions of women than the university as a whole.⁴⁹ But those were not priority areas for the Banco de México. Its low percentage of becarias reflected the

hypermasculine technical fields emphasized in its program; the ratio of women to men was lower than the proportion of women students at UNAM at this time.⁵⁰ Of the broader group of Mexican students in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, between 14 and 26 percent were women.⁵¹

The Cultural Institute, choosing recipients for several scholarship programs but without a strongly technical focus, may have been more inclined to award opportunities to women. Among the Cultural Institute's 1943 scholarship winners, about 3 in 10 were women, but this is only a snapshot of a single cohort.⁵² The Rockefeller Foundation awarded fellowships almost exclusively to men for its program in agronomy, a discipline in which very few women trained. For fields like chemistry and international relations in which more women received training, some becarias made it through the selection process.

In the mid-century era of institutionalized scholarships, the Banco de México had criteria and procedures on the books, in line with the institutions' developmentalist motives that so clearly framed scholarships as investments. The Banco de México initially published advertisements in newspapers to find candidates, suggesting an open selection process. However, by 1946, they found that of a "total of just 24 applications," "11 were moderately workable, since the majority of applicants were people who lacked sufficient technical preparation, or were not graduates, or requested scholarships only as a means to travel, or completely lacked knowledge of the English language." The Banco launched "a new recruitment policy" to search for candidates personally by contacting universities, industrial firms, banks, and technological experts. It found that this more direct recruitment yielded "a minimum of unprepared or unserious people."⁵³ By the late 1950s, the Banco explained that it would "seek out, when it is necessary, candidates for scholarships in specific fields" and that applications supported by public and private institutions received "special attention."⁵⁴ It asked applicants to "offer reasonable guarantees that, once the term of the scholarship has concluded, they will return to [Mexico] to apply the knowledge and experience acquired abroad." Relationships with Mexican institutions were useful proof that aspiring becarios could find a job when they came back.⁵⁵ While the Banco outlined apparently strict merit requirements like grade point average and language fluency, the criteria themselves left open loopholes for exceptions. What is more, applicants had to have already broken into research or government circles to be competitive. When it came down to it, institutional affiliations still meant having influential personal contacts. More systematic processes for choosing becarios in the mid-twentieth century did not preclude clientelism.

Indeed, the Banco managed to select former President Cárdenas's son, Cuauhtémoc, for a study tour of European government and private firms in the late 1950s. A becaria selected, Concepción Reza, was the daughter of a current Banco employee.⁵⁶ Was this fair? That a Banco official tasked with choosing recipients might readily advance the candidacies of applicants whose fathers he knew

personally or who were famous would not have surprised anyone. Corruption was rampant as well as varied in mid-twentieth-century Mexico, and not all of the forms it took were illegal.⁵⁷ If anyone criticized the Banco for awarding benefits to the kin of its own employees or powerful politicians, there was an excellent defense: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Concepción Reza possessed the credentials stipulated for selection. There was nothing to hide, so they were included in the directory.

Merit coexisted with vague, subjective criteria used by all three major scholarship programs. The Banco reserved the right to disqualify otherwise viable candidates who had “bad academic, professional, family, social, or civic background.”⁵⁸ The Rockefeller Foundation’s methods for selecting its becarios relied on US Americans and their Mexican contacts to personally identify and recommend candidates based on their impressions. The foundation did not treat expert potential as something measurable, like a test score or a grade point average. Instead, merit was a holistic quality, and those trusted by the foundation could intuit its presence in a candidate. From the Rockefeller’s perspective, cohorts of well-qualified native experts, deemed to be in short supply in Mexico, had to be carefully developed and selected for excellence.⁵⁹

In the Agricultural Program, personal selection was possible because the foundation’s scientists worked closely with Mexican trainees, recent agronomy graduates employed at the joint Mexican-Rockefeller *Oficina de Estudios Especiales*. After working in the *Oficina* under the US scientists, interns “who survived the most rigorous tests of intellectual ability and practical performance were given the opportunity to expand their education, mostly in universities in the United States.”⁶⁰ Rockefeller staff reckoned attributes such as promise using imprecise methods.⁶¹ One Rockefeller employee described a candidate as a “truly outstanding young potential scientist[,] . . . a very intelligent lad with a lot of good motivating genes.”⁶² Rockefeller officers described scholarships for study abroad as a way to “reward” the “best interns.”⁶³ After using personal, subjective methods to scrutinize candidates, foundation officers subjected becarios to paternalistic oversight during their studying abroad.⁶⁴

The Cultural Institute’s selection process was avowedly impressionistic if not as hands-on. True, its published calls for applications in Mexican newspapers and its use of an English-language exam as a first step toward candidacy suggested objectivity in the selection process.⁶⁵ But those who passed faced evaluation of “their personalities, their general educational and intellectual levels, and their ability to represent their own country accurately while in the United States.”⁶⁶ Only after successfully passing through this filter were students invited to formally apply for scholarships.⁶⁷ These steps eliminated many students from consideration. As the Cultural Institute sought candidates for the La Guardia Scholarship program, created by New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in 1944, the director rejected fifteen of twenty-three applicants after personally interviewing them.

Insufficient English skills, uncertainty about future plans, poor academic records, and failure to meet general requirements were all grounds for rejection.⁶⁸ The Cultural Institute had plenty of leeway to choose becarios for personal and political reasons under the rubric of merit-based selection. With clientelism still possible and discretionary methods available to those tasked with choosing becarios, aspects of the pre-1940s economy of favor endured within the more systematic selection processes.

However, the most objective-seeming criterion was the most powerful factor restricting scholarships to privileged Mexicans. This was educational attainment, in the form of an undergraduate degree and language skill, which all three programs required. For aspirants applying with the Cultural Institute, formal requirements included a university degree from a Mexican institution, completion of all available education in Mexico in their area of study, and adequate knowledge of the English language.⁶⁹ The Banco de México likewise expected successful candidates to have completed all training available in their discipline in Mexican universities to qualify for its scholarships. Even the Rockefeller's personal, network-based method of identifying candidates only included students with college degrees. Thus, merit-based selection restricted access to international scholarships to the graduates of Mexican universities. One did not need an uncle related to the president to stand a chance, but viable candidates had already passed through the successive layers of Mexico's education system well before they applied to go abroad. English-language requirements further impeded participation, a problem that both the Banco de México and the Rockefeller Foundation tried to remedy by sending their candidates for English lessons at the Cultural Institute's Benjamin Franklin Library.⁷⁰ Still, becario cohorts could be no more inclusive or diverse than the student population of Mexican universities, which were hardly representative of the national youth population.

Ultimately, in the mid-twentieth century, despite more available scholarships with ostensibly fairer selection procedures, the institutions studied here created homogeneous expert cohorts. While women were not excluded, nor were members of the popular classes, preferences for academic achievement, institutional credentials, and, in some cases, technical disciplinary orientations made those social groups less likely to qualify. Chapter 5 explores this problem from the students' perspective. For now, we turn to the discursive contributions made by US media that elevated becarios' prestige on both sides of the border.

MAKING MEXICAN NATIONALIST EXEMPLARS IN THE UNITED STATES

Let us return to the October 1942 ceremony honoring twenty-three Mexican becarios chosen by the Cultural Institute. We know about the overblown speech they heard from Sandoval Vallarta. The performance reduced mexicanidad to its

most banal formulation, a modern, officially sanctioned version that Gillingham describes as “anodyne,” “fuzzy,” and “depoliticize[d].” The US State Department paid for the scholarships and the tea service. The ambassador deemed the event an unqualified success. Simultaneously, the ceremony advanced the Mexican state’s project of winning over the masses through nationalist spectacle.⁷¹ But what did this mean for the students?

They got a drawn-out moment in the spotlight. A US diplomat introduced each one by name, and “the students thereupon took their places on the platform,” where two becarios “spoke briefly concerning their gratitude and their intentions of making the most of their opportunities.” Mexican journalists reporting on the ceremony for *El Universal*, *Novedades*, *El Nacional*, *Excelsior*, and *Tiempo* would publish the full list of winners; some articles named individual fields of study and US destinations. Some of the becarios even appeared with the US ambassador in a silent newsreel filmed a few days later.⁷² Just for being selected, they got recognition and plaudits. Considering the state’s control of Mexican media in this era, particularly *El Nacional*, the flattering write-ups were practically an official congratulation from the government (which was not paying for the scholarships).⁷³ The becarios must have felt extremely important when they set off for their graduate studies in the United States.

Many Mexican students would enjoy similarly adulatory treatment once they reached their study destinations abroad. The young physician Raúl Pérez made it through the selection process overseen by the Cultural Institute to win a LaGuardia Scholarship, offered by the New York municipal government. Like many other Mexican students in the United States, Pérez caught the attention of a local reporter seeking a human interest story. Pérez was a true humanitarian with a patriotic calling. He studied hard and lived humbly in the International House near Columbia University. He smoked and fretted late into the evening. He felt guilty. Dr. Pérez felt pushed to acquire as much knowledge as possible while in New York City, but he felt an equal and opposite pull to return home, where “his countrymen need[ed] his hands, and his help.”⁷⁴

This sketch reproduced US stereotypes about Mexico as a backward place with “jungles” and a distinct lack of modern experts. But the reporter situated educated youth like Pérez in a frame different from the needy “millions of his countrymen.” As one of the select few, he carried a heavy burden. For that, he deserved recognition as a nationalist expert. This public narrative of the laudable, patriotic Mexican expert adhered to students in the United States. It served US geopolitical aims, Mexican nationalist objectives, and students’ aspirations. The narrative reinforced US superiority; it was the locus of modern knowledge that Mexicans had to leave their homeland to access. Elevating future experts above the masses, the trope justified Mexican elites’ disdain for working-class paisanos.

Ultimately, this narrative ennobled scholarship programs, paving the way for commonsense admiration of studying abroad. That admiration, in turn, preempted

questions about the efficacy or fairness of study abroad. Student mobility became an obvious strategy to pursue all kinds of goals. The nineteenth-century necessity narrative, advanced by elite families, evolved in the twentieth century into a potent transnational trope endorsed by states and institutions. Now many US Americans and Mexicans agreed that expert formation was a good way to spend state or humanitarian resources.

Relatively ordinary US Americans consolidated these ideas through interpersonal contacts with Mexican students. Despite the popularity of “things Mexican” among some circles in the United States since the 1920s, the average US American apparently knew little about Mexico. A 1943 WNYC radio program featured a Mexican student in order to point out that he was a thoroughly modern young man, not a “dashing caballero with a wide sombrero,” as the host quipped. This “guest-envoy” was the perfect person to dispel stereotypes for listening New Yorkers.⁷⁵ Mexican students reported fielding questions about Mexico that revealed just how ignorant the US college students were of the country to the south.⁷⁶ Mexican students were highly visible on the campuses where they studied and even attracted attention from local communities excited to welcome Mexican visitors and learn from them. Local civic and religious groups throughout the United States invited Mexican students to be featured in Mexican- or Latin American-themed events. In small towns where Mexican diplomats or artists might never set foot, Mexican students at the local college took on the role of spokespeople for their nation. For example, in 1941, the Phidian Art Club of Lena, Illinois, organized a Mexican banquet and had Laura Molina, a student at nearby Frances Shimer College, deliver “a short talk about her native land” that “delighted her audience with her vivid picture of Mexico” and impressed her listeners with her “very pleasing personality.”⁷⁷ These events played out the trope of hemispheric friendship by presenting actual Mexicans as friendly ambassadors. The highest compliment paid to Mexican students by their host communities was to say that the person was a “credit to Mexico.”⁷⁸ This assessment underscored their role as national representatives. As distinguished guests of middle-class, professional US citizens, students confirmed their own status as social peers of their audiences.

Beyond the work of teaching Mexico, some Mexican students were asked to embody and perform *mexicanidad* in a very literal sense. Before one becaria began her studies in the United States in the mid-1950s, people in Mexico told her to be sure that she knew some Mexican regional folkdances. She was not a professional dancer but a natural scientist, with scholarships granted by both the Cultural Institute and the Banco de México. Other Mexicans told her that people would ask her to perform dances. Sure enough, she was asked to present a Mexican dance during an international festival. Later, the scientist had her family in Mexico send her some traditional outfits to use for these performances. Remembering these student years, she described herself as “a novelty, as a Mexican” in a region with relatively few Mexicans, whether students or workers.⁷⁹ As a unique

representative of her country, this scientist found herself advancing binational aesthetic relations.

In one case, a Mexican graduate student formally represented Mexico as a diplomat. In 1945, at only twenty-three years old, Gloria González Garza y Vásquez Tagle was appointed vice-consul in Boston, where she also studied political science at Wellesley. González's appointment drew the attention of the *Christian Science Monitor*, which published a profile and her portrait. González's physical appearance and youthful appeal were a big part of the story. Her trendy collegiate outfit of "sweaters, tweeds, socks, and saddle oxfords" dominated the visual (figure 2). But the profile emphasized, too, that she had won her diplomatic post by competitive examination and that she received a scholarship.⁸⁰ In contrast, her aristocratic pedigree was more of a fun fact than a focal point of the story. Compared to nineteenth-century US reporting on Mexican students (see chapter 1), this portrayal focused on disciplinary merit rather than inherited status, although students' sartorial choices remained salient to journalists.

National identity certainly mattered to the students themselves too. When writing about their intentions, aspiring becarios mentioned the desire to contribute to the Mexican nation. This might have been instrumental in scholarship applications, but some remarks from foreign-educated Mexicans whom I interviewed seemed sincere. Gillingham, whose analysis of mid-century state-sponsored nationalism emphasizes its instrumentality, acknowledges that ordinary Mexicans were not necessarily opposed to nationalist performances or discourses.⁸¹ It could be that becarios' love for the nation was deeply felt even if they also benefited from the positive image of Mexican students abroad. One becaria met her future husband, also Mexican, while they were studying in the United States in the early 1960s. She told me in 2016 that a shared commitment to their country had brought the couple together. The other Mexican students in their coterie talked often of the future and what they hoped to achieve when they went back to Mexico. Those goals for the nation were what had motivated them to travel abroad in the first place, she explained.⁸²

A Mexican student from one of Mexico's wealthiest families recalled a gathering of Boston-area Mexican students around 1960 and meeting a young Mexican man studying at MIT. The MIT student asked about a good place to go skiing. He replied with a harsh "scolding." "You're an imbecile," he told his compatriot. "You came to study in MIT, a great institution, and your parents are paying for this, and it costs a lot of money. It's very important for your country. Forget about skiing, and focus on what you have to do."⁸³ He policed his classmate's priorities, arguing that elite leisure had no importance compared to his patriotic duty. Even though neither of them needed scholarships, they too could make a nationalist contribution through their foreign study.

Mexican identity was also salient in shaping students' everyday practices and sociability while abroad. As several of my interviewees described, Mexican



Associated Press

A Wellesley College graduate student, Miss Gloria Gonzalez-Garza Y Vasquez-Tagle is the new Mexican Vice-Consul in Boston. She won the post after a month-long series of examinations in her native Mexico.

FIGURE 2. Newspaper portrait of Gloria González Garza, student at Wellesley College and Mexican vice-consul in Boston, 1945. Source: "Wellesley Grad Is Vice-Consul of Mexico Here," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 19, 1946, 4.



FIGURE 3. Yearbook portrait of the Club de México at the University of Texas, 1948. Source: *Cactus Yearbook* (1948), University of Texas, 288. Texas Student Media, camh-dob-038551, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Courtesy of Texas Student Media/*The Cactus*.

students sought out the company of fellow Mexican students in informal settings to enjoy Mexican food and celebrate Mexican holidays.⁸⁴ Most US campuses had few Mexican students, so gatherings were small. But at the University of Texas, there was a Mexican club (figure 3).⁸⁵ Other Latin American students at Texas complained that the Club de México was “nationalistic and cliquish,” indicating the intensity of their Mexican identity to the point of exclusion.⁸⁶

Mexican students’ informal gatherings and more formal organizations were not expressly political. Instead, they were oriented to leisure and sociability, emphasizing nationalist performance and elite belonging. For example, a 1940s invitation from a New York City Mexican student group, written in English and Spanish, was itself a careful aesthetic rendering of patriotism. It reached invitees tucked inside a card carefully adorned with a tiny Mexican flag. The pole was painted on the paper, and a small red, white, and green ribbon was glued to the card. The planned event was a dance at the International House, featuring a Mexican flag ceremony and the presence of three Mexican diplomats as guests of honor, including Ambassador Antonio Espinosa de los Monteros, who had studied in the United States in the 1920s. In case the precious invitation and A-list guests did not communicate the formality, the invitation specified that this was a black-tie affair.⁸⁷

Planning impeccable high society events or donning professional attire for the Club de México group photo, Mexican students in the United States conceived of their national identity in terms of their elevated social status. They drew a sharp, categorical line between themselves and working-class Mexicans,

their humbler compatriots who were also arriving in the United States in growing numbers. After Mexican labor migration slowed during the 1930s due to the Great Depression and the large-scale repatriation and deportation of many Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans, millions of Mexicans migrated north in the mid-twentieth century. In an era of labor migration that included both legally contracted *bracero* guest workers and irregular migrants, *becarios* occupied a fraught position as privileged members of a stigmatized national group. But rather than generate solidarity among migrants of different classes, Mexican students' vulnerability to anti-Mexican racism only made them double down on their elite status. To be confused with a labor migrant was a great offense to the striving *becario* abroad.

Mexican students expressed sympathy for laboring Mexican migrants but did not see them as their own kind. Pressed to speak about Mexican Americans, the student Concepción Reza attributed the discrimination these migrants faced in the United States to both general prejudice against people of color and their poverty. Mexico, writ large, was in some sense responsible for this situation since "we don't take care of those people" from the lower classes who migrated north. Her diction distanced her from the group of which she spoke.⁸⁸ Others were explicitly elitist and racist. A *becario* described a Mexican American student at UCLA whom he disliked: "He looks uneducated and . . . low, at least for me[;] . . . he's dark and he has curly hair [and] . . . he's shorter than I am."⁸⁹ Spelling out notions of racial difference among those of Mexican descent, this student defined an educated appearance in terms of middle- or upper-class status, light skin, and physical traits linked to whiteness, namely, straight hair and tall bodies. Indeed, most available photographs of Mexican students abroad depict people with light skin.

But when abroad, Mexican whiteness was a liminal kind of whiteness, in which privileged racial status depended on attire, comportment, and context. In his memoir, a Mexican student who had a summer job working with *braceros* in the 1940s, Edmundo Flores, told a supposedly humorous story in which he was mistaken for a *bracero*. The reason, he claimed, was that his summer tan and worker's attire made him look like a *bracero*, not a student (which was clearly an elite, white/*mestizo* identity). Flores was treated poorly by the Mexican consul he was visiting, until the consul learned who Flores "really" was.⁹⁰ Decades later, Flores recounted the story of mistaken identity, presuming that his readers, fellow elite Mexicans, would find his predicament absurd because they, too, believed that workers and students were categorically, even congenitally different. Stark class divisions between the popular classes and elites in Mexico remained salient in the United States.

During the decades of *dictablanda*, with inputs from Mexican and US institutions and media, a particular image of the Mexican student abroad became mainstream: a promising, patriotic expert-in-the-making. As a no-cost public relations campaign for scholarship programs, media coverage normalized the

positive yet vague commonplaces that still cling to discussions of Mexican students abroad today, celebrated as unofficial ambassadors or exemplars of Mexico's new generation.

Even the most serious observer of Mexican students abroad during this period, anthropologist Ralph L. Beals, could not abandon faith in the intrinsic good of study abroad. Beals was known for his work on Indigenous communities in Mexico, but he turned his attention to Mexican students in the United States to explore questions of cultural change on his own campus.⁹¹ Based on extensive interviews and surveys with Mexican students studying in Los Angeles in 1952–53, Beals's findings called into question just how much Mexican students were really won over by the American way of life. The published report noted students' keen observations about US hypocrisy, materialism, and chauvinism. Nevertheless, Beals concluded that "student exchange" was "the best way of improving United States–Mexican relations," words, moreover, spoken by one of his Mexican informants.⁹² Becarios recognized that these narratives about study abroad, international ties, and Mexico's future benefited them as individuals and pleased the institutions supporting them with scholarships.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that after 1940, the institutional and cultural landscape of scholarship granting shifted away from the ad hoc, tacit practices of the 1920s and 1930s. Mexican and US institutions systematized scholarship offerings and valorized disciplinary merit in their candidates. With US dollars contributing to the Mexican state's objective of training cadres of Mexican experts, students aspiring to study abroad had more opportunities than in the past. They embraced a nationalist vision that served Mexican state and US internationalist visions. Being a *becario* came to denote expertise and patriotism, the *becario* being a Mexican student eager to return to serve the homeland with specialized knowledge. With institutions, money, and discourse enhancing the importance of Mexican study abroad, the Mexican state's own efforts to prepare youth abroad were bolstered by outside support, a binational configuration of governance on the cheap during the *dictablanda* era.

The *becario* identity was not overtly politicized. But a sense of *becario* privilege—a social status deserved by the unusually meritorious—informed the project of developing Mexican talent abroad, singling out promising youth for special treatment. As the princely Mexican students of the nineteenth century had discovered during their foreign sojourns, US and European societies did not always hold them in esteem for their social status. Mexicans abroad in the mid-twentieth century were no less concerned than Porfirian aristocrats with lifestyle and family maintenance on the home front. After all, putting the "good of the

nation” and other abstract niceties aside, becarios had practical concerns. They had career aspirations and networks of kin. They had bills mounting and standards to keep up. They were members of the middle classes, and with that privileged belonging came material imperatives for their households, their careers, and even their visions of the future. The next chapter explores the becarios’ political agenda, the pursuit of middle-class stability.

Becario Politics and the Pursuit of Middle-Class Stability, 1940–1970

An interviewer with Ralph Beals's research team investigating Mexican students in the United States questioned a young woman attending the University of California, Los Angeles, Concepción Reza Inclán. Reza was studying economics with support from two scholarships, one from the Banco de México and another awarded by the Cultural Institute. Initially, she was reluctant to open up to her interviewer, but she became more candid over the course of several conversations in 1952–53. Just before she returned to Mexico, the interviewer asked Reza about her aim in studying abroad. She replied, "To get a good job in the field I like, and to work hard in order to get something done, especially [something] that can be useful to my own country. That's about all."¹ She had to say something about deploying her skills on behalf of Mexico. That would have been obvious to any becario in the mid-twentieth century. But Reza also spoke of her desire for personal success and satisfaction. After all, she was a young person with ordinary concerns: family, work, and money.

This chapter argues that in the mid-twentieth century, the imperatives of middle-class self-preservation defined becarios' political agenda. To an extent, institutional grantors understood those imperatives, but they did not always support becarios' pursuit of privileged stability. I locate the root of becario expectations in the realities of Mexico's burgeoning, insecure, and ambitious middle classes. Reza's generation of becarios worried about the present and their future, despite triumphalist public discourse about Mexico's future resting in their hands. Gendered and racialized hierarchies, across Mexico and the United States, conditioned the strivers' hopes and anxieties, which in turn shaped the politics of getting by and getting ahead. I contend that the struggles and tensions of everyday life and social reproduction are part of the history of expert formation. The mid-century

binational effort to produce national expertise in order to modernize Mexico must be written as a social history as well as a history of geopolitics, knowledge, and governance.

Louise Walker calls for historians to recognize the complexity of the Mexican middle classes, a politically heterogeneous group whose demands and expectations shaped twentieth-century Mexico, using cultural, economic, and political history approaches. She highlights the significance of middle-class subjectivities and ordinary practices—what they aspired to, purchased, or worried about—to explain how this group challenged the state in the late twentieth century.² Along these lines, this chapter maps out the becario anxieties of the mid-twentieth century to illuminate an overlooked realm of everyday politics in the years of Mexico's so-called Miracle and its *dictablanda*.

To understand the politics of that era, Gillingham invites scholars to explore beyond the “dissident glamor” of overtly political movements; he calls for us to consider “silent majorities” and not only in “moments of rupture.”³ Similarly, scholars like Walker and Jaime Pensado aim to decenter the 1968 student movement, which culminated with shocking state violence against students in Tlatelolco. Pensado reminds us that student politics did not begin in 1968 and also that the longer history of activism is inseparable from the class and gender position of students in Mexico City's universities and *preparatorias*. Walker notes that not all student activists were radicals: reform-minded moderates, too, called for change without aiming to shed their own class privilege.⁴ While foreign-bound becarios were unusual, given that only a few middle-class university students studied abroad, their politics were probably far more typical than those of the highly visible, organized activists on the left and the right. Mexican students going abroad neither organized collectively nor militated. They had no polarizing ideological commitments, and they engaged the Mexican state (and other institutions) not as dissidents or supporters but as users. They were not asking for institutional change but rather individual exceptions to rules or, quite often, nothing else than more money. Yet these students did have politics: self-interested preservation.

“A good job in the field I like,” as Concepción Reza put it, might seem a reasonable thing to hope for, and indeed the Mexican middle classes expected upward mobility.⁵ Young people studied abroad to pursue distinction and obtain the most desirable jobs in Mexico. But middle-class security was no modest ambition. Becarios wondered whether high-paying, prestigious jobs really did await them in Mexico, and more than their individual success was at stake. As contributing income generators and care providers to their families, becarios were hardly unencumbered youth when they traveled abroad. Even though they were students or dependents of institutional largesse, becarios were adults, and some had dependents of their own. A scholarship could make family support easier or harder to provide, but the responsibility was inexorable, as was the power of dollars over pesos. Men and women had different financial and care responsibilities,

but gendered family roles exempted no one from obligations to kin. Becarios' anxieties were deeply personal and yet were clearly determined by their elite but precarious position in Mexican society and the position of Mexico in a global context. To guide us through the middle-class background of becarios and to see how questions of gender, family roles, and the Mexico-US racial landscape played out in the uncertainties of individual lives, we follow the stories of Concepción Reza and other becarios.

GROWING UP MIDDLE-CLASS IN THE YEARS OF THE MEXICAN MIRACLE

Before Reza's interviewer began to pepper her with questions, she performed one of those quintessential rituals of modern life: she filled out a form about herself. She was born in 1928. Her family lived in Mexico City. Reza's father, an agronomist, worked for the government, the Banco de México. Like her older brothers, Reza attended public schools in Mexico City in the 1930s and 1940s. As an adolescent, she studied at Mexico's Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, where countless leaders had made connections and readied themselves for college. Reza then studied economics at a brand-new private university, the Instituto Tecnológico de México. She completed her college coursework in 1951. Reza and her brothers were now all university graduates: an accountant, an engineer, and an economist. When Reza provided this information on the form, she drew neat brackets around her family members' names and marked them as "professionists [*sic*]" and "Middle Class."⁶

How did Reza know her family was middle class? She might have thought about income and occupation, variables often used to define class groups. A father who was a working, white-collar professional was one sign of her middle-classness. He had a salary and formal employment. He did not perform manual labor. His wife, Reza's mother, was able to dedicate herself to reproductive labor in the home, as was normative for women, though impractical for most Mexican families. The family did not sustain itself from inherited wealth, steward a lucrative enterprise, or wield great political power as a wealthy clan might.

When Reza's parents were born at the end of the nineteenth century, fewer than one in ten Mexican households were middle class. By 1950, when Reza was in college, one in five Mexican households could be counted as middle class.⁷ We should take these figures with the caution that any calculations about class groups depend on how we define *class*. As historians begin to seriously study the Latin American middle classes (long neglected, posits Walker, for political reasons), they continually reject simple, transhistorical, or cross-cultural indicators to delineate them.⁸ However we measure them, the middle classes in Mexico increased proportionally over the twentieth century; it is also clear that *middle class* did not mean *average* or *typical* in a nation mostly populated by impoverished people.

Reza might have also thought about class status in cultural terms. In addition to income and work, “middle class” could refer to a lifestyle and set of consumer habits.⁹ In Mexico City, where Reza grew up, this meant residing in a sufficiently large dwelling, equipped with modern consumer goods, in certain neighborhoods. Living “decently” was the aspiration, and the material trappings of middle-class life were thus assigned moral value: separate bedrooms for the parents, the sons, and the daughters indicated a family’s virtue and proper sexuality. Decency meant living in ways visibly different from the poor urban majority and, ideally, far removed from them spatially too. Places Reza frequented, like the tennis club for the families of Banco de México employees, would easily have qualified as “decent.”¹⁰ While adhering to norms of decency, Reza’s life as a young woman allowed her some amount of freedom. Her parents allowed her to go to the tennis club alone, and though they did not like her short hairstyle, they could not do much about it.¹¹

Middle-class children in major urban centers, like Reza, had the greatest chance to soak up the rapidly changing political culture surrounding childhood. Postrevolutionary governments treated children as not just future citizens, but active, crucial political subjects in their own right. Young people in the 1930s had the chance to engage in civic life and even represent Mexico in international settings. Children in the capital, like Reza, had far more access to these opportunities than their rural counterparts.¹² Mass culture targeted children as a valued audience, and messages transmitted on the radio and in films emphasized children’s inherent worth and right to love and leisure.¹³ In short, Reza had enjoyed modern amenities, opportunities, and ideas from the time of her birth. This would have been similar for most other becarios chosen by institutions like the Banco de México, the Cultural Institute, and the Rockefeller Foundation, all of which awarded scholarships exclusively to university graduates.

Indeed, Mexican families most clearly announced their belonging to the middle class through education, but it also mattered which school you attended. As educational opportunities increased through the first half of the twentieth century, more children got the chance to join the middle classes. During Reza’s youth, the size and range of university offerings in Mexico expanded greatly. The number of students receiving professional degrees each year grew significantly: from an annual average of under 600 in the late 1930s to over 4,000 annually by the early 1960s.¹⁴ And these were just the students who completed their degrees. By the mid-1960s, there were over 115,000 university and preparatory students in Mexico City, a population that had “quadrupled” since 1942.¹⁵ New institutions, public and private, were founded both in the capital and in regional cities in the 1930s and 1940s, and more would come in the following years. In Mexico City, the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), an initiative of Cárdenas and Juan de Dios Bátiz, began preparing engineers and other technical professionals in 1937. In 1940, a cultural center led by Spanish exiles became the Colegio de México, a public research institute for the social sciences and humanities. Reza’s alma mater, the Instituto Tecnológico

de México, was founded in 1946, just one year before she enrolled, as an initiative of private industry leadership seeking to train professional talent for their sector. Slightly later, in 1960, the Centro de Investigación y Estudios Avanzados del IPN (known as Cinvestav), a public research institute offering graduate training, began offering its first courses, along with scholarships to allow students to study full-time.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Mexico's national public university, UNAM, and the IPN saw their campuses and student populations grow considerably.¹⁷

However, these educational options were not equally prestigious or socially diverse. UNAM, long criticized for its elitism, still had a predominantly privileged student body in the early 1960s.¹⁸ The IPN had a much different class profile. A student who attended in the 1950s remembered that "the overwhelming majority of *politécnicos* were from the working class or what could broadly be described as a lower middle class on the verge of upward social mobility."¹⁹ Students attending normal schools in the mid-twentieth century (which prepared teachers, though their degree was not equivalent to that of a university at that time) often came from extremely impoverished backgrounds, as Tanalís Padilla has noted.²⁰ Agricultural schools, too, drew students from humbler social origins.²¹ It is possible that Reza's father, Ernesto Reza Rivera, an agronomist, had experienced social mobility himself. Though agricultural science was not a road to riches, agronomists could gain relative stability as government employees.²² Ernesto Reza had worked for the agricultural ministry earlier in his career, before taking employment with the Banco de México.

Despite differences across universities, historian David Lorey has argued that Mexican citizens, and politicians, connected Mexican higher education to national modernization. That process would lift up the entire population and give everyone access to "the economic development promised by leaders." One university administrator, also a sociologist, claimed in 1962 that "the peasants of yesterday are today's workers, and the workers' children can be professionals." He connected social mobility to the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, alluding to the peasants and workers the revolution was meant to serve while allowing for their descendants to enter white-collar professions. The university was, as Lorey puts it, "both a real conduit of upward mobility and an important symbol of social mobility and status."²³

At the private Instituto Tecnológico de México (later, ITAM), Reza did not encounter students from less privileged backgrounds, though she was funded by a scholarship.²⁴ Her university had a few "boys of the richest families of Mexico," who had "lots of money, and they had cars[;] . . . that small group [was] on top." She put herself, and most of the other students, "in the second line socially," and there was no class below the middle-class majority. The two groups, wealthy and middling, were friendly with each other.²⁵ As noted in the introduction, there was permeability of stratifications at the top of the social pyramid in these kinds of spaces, where varyingly privileged Mexicans socialized and were socialized side

by side. More important than the distinction of being middle class or wealthy was the shared identity of not being part of the popular majority.

As the daughter of a government employee living in the nation's capital, Reza's upbringing resembled many middle-class childhoods around the world in the mid-twentieth century. But in Mexico, as elsewhere, mid-century families were deciding whether to raise their daughters much the same as their sons or to prepare them for a distinctively feminine life. In Mexico, the archetypal middle-class woman was a housewife, and the moral politics of women working outside the home were under debate. In 1951, Mexican sociologist José Iturriaga lamented the "family disintegration" caused by mothers' participation in the workforce.²⁶ On the other hand, as historian Susie Porter explains, it was hardly unusual for middle-class women to work outside the home. By this era, several generations of middle-class women had labored in certain feminized, white-collar professions such as teaching and government employment. Not all Mexicans saw this as cause for alarm; some even celebrated working middle-class women as a sign of modernization.²⁷

When Reza decided she wanted to study economics, not chemistry as her father hoped, "he didn't like it very much, but he accepted it." Her parents reacted similarly to her plan to study in the United States. Reza thought her parents' attitude was unusual but not unique.²⁸ Women remained a small minority among Mexican college students, and many families steered the education of sons and daughters differently. In fact, the proportion of women students actually declined over the middle decades of the twentieth century: the major expansion of university education chiefly offered new opportunities for men.²⁹ One in every six students at UNAM was a woman in 1959; the figure would rise to one in four by 1970.³⁰ This gender ratio matched the overall proportion of Mexican women students going to the United States. According to the IIE, women made up 14 percent of all Mexican students enrolled in US colleges in 1940 and about 23 percent in 1965 (see appendix 1). Qualitatively, women's educational mobility was visible enough to stand out to a foreign observer. Writing in 1957, a US scholar noted that "the sons and daughters of middle-class families" sought the chance to study abroad to improve their personal job prospects and to contribute to Mexico's development.³¹

With two scholarships and some savings, Reza had reaped all the benefits of her middle-class upbringing, so that in her early twenties, she did not have to ask for additional support from her family. Her family, in turn, did not expect her to remit money to them. Reza's youthful independence owed in part to her father's stable white-collar work, but it was also a product of her position in the family: she was no one's provider. However, other becarios were deeply enmeshed in their families' collective strategies for survival. They could only countenance a sojourn abroad if they could provide material or caregiving support to kin while they studied. As daughters and sons of widowed or unemployed parents, nephews or brothers-in-law of needy relatives, or breadwinning fathers of growing broods,

these becarios angled for more support from institutional sponsors. We turn to this family agenda, shaped by the middle-class values of gender and generation, in the next section.

“WEIGHED DOWN BY FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES”?
PLACING BECARIOS IN FAMILY NETWORKS AND
UNDERSTANDING THE GENDER ROLES OF STUDENTS

The Rockefeller Foundation provided the highest stipends available to Mexican students going abroad. It also spent a lot of money on keeping track of its becarios, and its officers left behind ample records representing countless hours of skilled professional labor. Typically consulted by scholars interested in the intellectual and political influence of the foundation on experts elsewhere in the world, the Rockefeller Foundation’s archives unexpectedly opened a window into the realm of family life and domestic economies. I used these collections to reconstruct becarios’ family networks in the mid-twentieth century that shed light, too, on becarios in general. Becarios highly valued their family ties and duties, and the Rockefeller Foundation dedicated more resources to becarios who had more responsibilities. But there was a condition: extra support only went to becarios who conformed to the foundation’s vision of middle-class family and gender norms. Young married fathers stood an excellent chance of garnering both an appealing scholarship package and additional discretionary support to sustain their families while studying abroad. In contrast, becarios who supported their parents, siblings, or other kin faced more scrutiny and secured fewer resources from the foundation. Further, foundation officers frowned on any family ties that a becaria might have, reflecting cross-border skepticism about women’s potential as career experts.

Married men who supported a wife and children received the most generous support from the Rockefeller Foundation. Living through the postwar US baby boom, Rockefeller officers expected Mexican experts-in-training to be male breadwinners providing for nuclear households, as was normative for the US middle class.³² To be sure, the foundation’s US officers viewed all becarios, including these breadwinning fathers, with paternalistic, infantilizing condescension. Still, the foundation provided a family allowance for a wife and children (glossed as “immediate” family).³³ Its scholarship program worked something like a social welfare program, allocating benefits to breadwinners according to need, which was determined by family size.³⁴ As historian Méndez Rojas discovered, foundation officers viewed male knowledge professionals with wives and children as secure targets for investment. Married men were more likely to finish their study programs, they thought.³⁵ So the Rockefeller Foundation granted scholarships in ways that entrenched the masculinity of expertise: if young men were going to become experts, they had to be compensated adequately enough to dispatch their manly duties to wives and children.

Breadwinners' allowances ranged from US\$125 to \$250 monthly, representing a substantial increase above the base stipend.³⁶ As one father of three wrote in 1963, "the Rockefeller scholarship is a lot better" than a grant he had been awarded from the Organization of American States, which he now planned to decline, and he noted the appeal of the Rockefeller family allowance.³⁷ Scholarships from the US government for Mexican youth did not include any such benefit, and in fact, those programs preferred single candidates since they did not have "too many economic obligations that would prevent them from taking advantage of the scholarship's benefits."³⁸ Even US graduate students had no access to the family allowances granted to Rockefeller becarios.³⁹ In addition to monthly family stipends, the foundation sent one-off payments to becario fathers in times of need. It was so common for children to be born to becarios abroad that the foundation had a set amount to cover labor and delivery expenses, \$400.⁴⁰

Without these policies and practices, the foundation would have struggled to recruit or retain the Mexican talent it wanted. In my sample of forty individual becarios in the Agricultural Program, over three-quarters had wives, and over two-thirds had children. In fact, the total number of becarios' dependents exceeded the number of becarios in the sample. Becarios who were fathers had an average of 2.4 children, some of whom were born during their study abroad. For becarios who received family allowances, the total income from the Rockefeller Foundation was on average double their previous salary. Take the case of one becario father, an economist pursuing a PhD at the University of Colorado. With an unusually large family (his sixth child was born as he began his studies in Boulder), this father was admittedly "somewhat joyless" and "weighed down by responsibilities," but he was doing all right financially.⁴¹ As he assured the Rockefeller office overseeing his scholarship, the family got by despite the challenges of raising six children under the age of eight.⁴² They could afford their \$115 in rent and utilities. The becario's salary back in Mexico had been equal to about US\$320, but his Rockefeller stipend and family allowance together totaled \$600 each month.⁴³ For married men considering study abroad, this allowance might have been an incentive to bring wives and children along with them.

The logic of the stipends, and the terms of their migratory documents, effectively prevented the families of male becarios from adhering to any model but that of the masculine breadwinner. The Rockefeller took care of visa arrangements for becarios and their dependents. Visas assigned to dependent wives did not allow the women to work, at least not in any formal position. Some wives did perform volunteer work or take classes, as was permitted.⁴⁴ For breadwinners, the foundation sometimes offered additional support in cases of need. The father of six, mentioned above, appealed to Rockefeller officers for help after racking up \$450 in bills at the local dentist (with many mouths to feed, there were many teeth to keep healthy).⁴⁵ The foundation sometimes turned down these requests, noting its reimbursements only applied to "emergency" expenditures.⁴⁶ Rockefeller

officers wanted their becarios to “feel some responsibility” for family medical bills and “make a genuine effort to contribute to their payment.”⁴⁷ They worried that becarios would be too comfortable letting an institution provide for their families on their behalf. That this would be a concern at all makes plain just how much the institution supported young male breadwinners.

Besides monetary support, the foundation offered logistical help and bent its own bylaws regarding mobility when family matters grew serious to help becario fathers finish their US studies. Offices closely monitored signs of marital disharmony, convinced that unhappy wives menaced their husbands’ career trajectories. They helped one becario transfer from Wisconsin to Texas when his wife’s doctor urged her to move to warmer climes so that the student, his wife, and their two children could stay together.⁴⁸ In another case, the becario’s academic adviser and Rockefeller officer joined forces to try to prevent the becario’s wife from filing for divorce.⁴⁹ When tragedy struck, Rockefeller officers tried to help. The foundation covered all expenses and provided time for a becario to return to Mexico briefly for the funeral when his infant daughter died of hepatitis.⁵⁰ The above becarios finished their degrees because the foundation offered flexibility in difficult times. While fatherhood was not a fundamental impediment to winning and keeping Rockefeller support, becarias who were mothers found neither financial support nor flexibility from the foundation, as we will see below.

Most Mexican students abroad, with and without scholarships, were men. Becarias, already unusual, attracted more interest and scrutiny from scholarship officials and the binational public. Concepción Reza garnered US interest even before beginning her graduate studies. After she reached the United States by airplane in 1952, Reza attended an orientation program at the University of Texas that paired international students with Texas student hosts. Local and foreign students served as friendly avatars for their nations and symbols of harmonious binational bonds: this was the fashion of the era. But Reza represented not just Mexico, but Mexican womanhood. Accordingly, a student journalist snapped her picture alongside the “co-ed” assigned to orient her to the United States or at least to US cosmetics (figure 4). Their shared activity was a lesson in lipstick.⁵¹ Her femininity was all that mattered here, not her graduate studies in economics.

Compared to this photograph, transcripts of Reza’s interviews at UCLA reveal more about who she was and what she cared about. But even her interviewer, a graduate research assistant to Beals, could not set aside the fact that his subject was a woman. “Respondent,” he began formally, drafting his field notes about their first meeting, “is quite pretty. Striking as a young Mexican type. ‘Morena.’ She has a very attractive smile. Soft low voice, petite.”⁵² Was this ethnography or a potboiler?

All Mexican students abroad were gendered bodies as well as experts in formation. This gendering tended to limit academic and professional opportunities for women but not for men. Méndez Rojas has posited that many women were discouraged from applying for support from the Rockefeller Foundation knowing

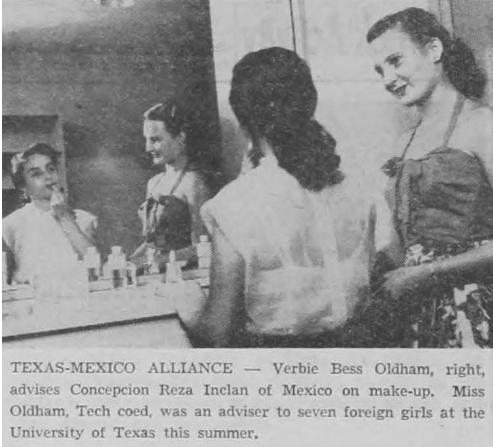


FIGURE 4. Campus newspaper portrait of Concepción Reza and Texan student, 1952. Source: “Tech Co-Ed Counsels Foreigners in UT ‘Get-Acquainted’ Program,” *The Toreador* (Texas Technological College, Lubbock), September 23, 1952, 2.

that they would face additional scrutiny because of their gender. University officials in Mexico and Rockefeller officers looking for candidates harbored serious doubts about women’s suitability as future experts, expecting that marriage or parenthood would naturally end their professional careers. Women applicants knew well that they would be asked about their marriage plans, and they knew there was only one strategic reply: No such plans.⁵³ When she was confronted by the marriage question from Rockefeller officers, one chemist tried to make her answer especially convincing. She professed to be “not interested in marriage and cited the fact that she was a little old to consider matrimony.”⁵⁴ Though men could be husbands and fathers of half a dozen children and still be viable experts, Rockefeller officers struggled to imagine that women could be experts as well as wives or mothers.

This limited imagination was not unique to the white, middle-class men working at the Rockefeller Foundation: it was normative in Mexico too. The marriage question for women candidates was also on UNAM officials’ minds. In the mid-twentieth century, demand for enrollment exceeded availability, sparking debates about which young Mexicans deserved a place. As historian Sara Luna finds, some wondered: Did it make sense to admit women who would “study but not practice” their professions? Mexican academic authorities argued that women did not have the same motivation for social mobility as men, since their material well-being did not depend on their career but rather on their marriage.⁵⁵ For their part, Rockefeller officers considered women “a risky investment” since they might well never practice the specialties they had been trained for if they married.⁵⁶ Marriage made male becarios more reliable and female becarias useless. Marriage wasted institutional investment in training women experts.

This was exactly how Rockefeller officers and US academic advisers responded to the news of becaria Minerva Morales’s upcoming marriage in 1965. “I suppose that one always takes a substantial risk in investing in the scholarly

development of teaching prospects of an attractive, intelligent woman like Miss Morales,” her adviser observed, adding that he still thought “the risk was worth taking.”⁵⁷ Her body, marked as feminine and appealing, and even her sharp mind (a good quality for a wife as well as a future researcher) had always been threats to her career. We recall the way that Concepción Reza’s interviewer described his informant, as a Mexican feminine ideal, a gendered body and voice. Such bodies were easily led away from expert trajectories. Morales’s adviser and the foundation assumed that wifely obligations would eclipse the professional responsibilities that were awaiting her in Mexico. A scholar of international relations whom the foundation had considered extremely promising, Morales might not have garnered the scholarship had she been married at the time of application. In the end, Morales left academia after her children were born, and she never returned to Mexico.⁵⁸

The cases of two mothers who did win scholarships still suggest that the foundation did not extend to mothers the support offered to becarios who were fathers. Catalina Sierra Casasús was divorced and, at forty, older than most becarios. She left behind her two adolescent children with relatives in Mexico (no family allowance was given). For her sociology studies at Columbia University in the mid-1950s, Sierra had a stipend that exceeded her previous salary at Mexico’s development bank.⁵⁹ She did well at Columbia, but she was called home to Mexico City when her son fell sick. The foundation offered no flexibility for her situation and withdrew her funding, and she was forced to give up her scholarship.⁶⁰ When she requested research funds from the foundation a few years later, she was chastised for having left her earlier studies unfinished.⁶¹ By contrast, becario fathers faced similar family challenges but received sympathy and financial support. The second case, researched by Méndez Rojas, shows that a successful becaria mother could only exist because of the perfect compatibility of her study plans with her husband’s career. Furthermore, the couple was wealthy enough to bring two full-time domestic staff members with them to Pennsylvania.⁶²

However much scholarship grantors discouraged women scholars’ ambitions, women did not see expertise and motherhood as incompatible. Concepción Reza, much to the consternation of her interviewer/admirer, had a very short answer to his question about why she would pursue graduate study in economics rather than dedicate herself to tending a home and family. She stated simply, “You can do both things.”⁶³ The interviewer found it preposterous that Reza could be an economist and get married and have children. What Mexican husband would accept that? She agreed that it would not be easy, but she imagined that a fellow economist might be willing to enter into a dual-career marriage.⁶⁴

What Reza herself emphasized in interviews was her academic work and the possibility of contributing to her country.⁶⁵ She understood herself as a crucial expert in formation, just like Mexican men studying abroad. Because she received

a scholarship from the Banco de México, she was captured in another kind of portrait, in the form of dry biographical data in the Banco's becario directory. We know that around 1959, when she was nearing thirty years old, Reza was indeed working in her field. She held the position of chief of the Economic Research Department at Nestlé México, and she lived in an apartment in Coyoacán.⁶⁶ My research did not reveal Reza's subsequent career trajectory or family choices. Other becarias' biographies suggest that she was right: you could be a mother and a highly skilled professional. Two foreign-educated Mexican scientists I interviewed, recipients of Rockefeller and Banco de México support, eventually married and became mothers during their long, distinguished careers in academia.⁶⁷

Normative notions about family and gender roles limited men becarios too. While the Rockefeller Foundation's officers accepted men's responsibilities as fathers, officers viewed what they called "other dependents" as "family problems." A Rockefeller agricultural scientist working in Mexico declared that the "demands" of candidates for family stipends far exceeded what was "logical or reasonable" for the foundation to cover. If each becario's education included support for a potentially infinite web of kin, fewer becarios could receive the foundation's resources, he grumbled.⁶⁸ Aspiring becarios funded by the Rockefeller Foundation had family commitments to parents, other elder kin, siblings, or families-in-law. In part, these obligations reflected the reality of middle-class status in Mexico: family networks could not sustain themselves (at least not in accordance with middle-class tastes) with the income from one breadwinner. Not all becarios could count on a paterfamilias to take care of the network while they were away studying. Instead, anyone who could work and contribute to the family's collective resources had a responsibility to do so.

Despite grumbling from its officers, the Rockefeller Foundation's application form included a space for the category of these "other dependents," and officers occasionally allocated funds to support becarios' parents, parents-in-law, siblings, or other relatives. In my analysis of becarios of the Agricultural Program, I found that 17.5 percent of becarios listed "other dependents," but the actual proportion was higher. Even when no dependents were mentioned on the application form, some becarios described their financial responsibilities to family in their communications with the foundation. It is likely that others sent money home without telling the foundation. Only a lucky few received family allowances for these "other dependents." The young Jorge Ibarguengoitia (who would later become a prominent humorist) was funded by the foundation to study theater in the United States in 1955. He was the only son of a widow. He negotiated with the foundation for an extra stipend to provide for his mother and aunt while he was abroad, garnering an additional \$80 monthly.⁶⁹ His successful negotiation bespoke the foundation's eagerness to support someone they considered especially promising, but the details of his situation reveal the kinds of obligations

typical of middle-class families, whose networks of responsibility exceeded the bounds of the nuclear family.

Reflecting the strength of those obligations, some becarios brought dependents other than wives or children with them, even if they received no additional allowance to do so.⁷⁰ For example, Sebastián Romero Cova brought his sister-in-law along with his family; he was her guardian. The young woman, perhaps his wife's younger sister, had lived with the couple for several years after her father's death and her mother's illness. "Her interest in the United States is of course primarily to be with us but then learn English to become a more efficient secretary down [*sic*] Mexico, and help her mother," Romero explained in a 1964 letter to the foundation.⁷¹ Trying to convince the foundation of his sister-in-law's noble plan for self-improvement and filial devotion, Romero laid bare just how many of his kin benefited from his becario income.⁷²

Even when the foundation did not allocate additional funds, becarios who lived frugally could still send money home. In an interview, one Rockefeller becario told me that he did just this in the early 1950s; his family was lower middle class, and he had previously attempted to cross into the United States to work as a *bracero*. Later, when studying in the United States, he survived on sandwiches and raw eggs. But he sent remittances.⁷³ Women did this too. A Rockefeller becaria in chemistry sent \$100 dollars, or 40 percent of her stipend, home to her parents each month in the early 1960s.⁷⁴ In Mexico, that remittance amounted to nearly half of a typical middle-class monthly income.⁷⁵

Becaria Minerva Morales revealed a family responsibility that troubled foundation officers even before her engagement broke their hearts. As a young single professional woman, she was a crucial contributor to her household income; she lived with her parents prior to her study abroad. Her fellowship of \$300 monthly was less than her previous teaching salary at the Colegio de México, about \$380. So she asked the foundation for an additional \$50 to \$80 to remit to her parents. The Rockefeller officer who reported on this conversation registered disapproval: "It seems that upon her obtaining a regular income her father slackened off in his own [work]."⁷⁶ The foundation refused Morales's request. For violating family gender norms held by the US officers, the Morales family warranted reduced investment.

While the foundation could not stop becarios from using their stipends to send money home, its philanthropy, intended to improve collective well-being in Mexico by preparing capable cadres of experts, ultimately helped some emergent experts' families far more than others. The officers enforced US middle-class, patriarchal values that only equivocally welcomed women's participation in knowledge creation. Among the becarios, all women and men from less wealthy families were viewed skeptically by foundation officers, who conceived of Mexico's future experts as comfortable men responsible only for nuclear households. The Rockefeller's becarios were, in fact, especially lucky because even without additional support they earned higher stipends than any other institution's becarios.

But Rockefeller becarios' family commitments were ordinary, not strange, in the middle-class milieu of mid-century Mexico.

"A LITTLE CAR TO GO TO WORK AND COME BACK":

LO DECOROSO AND BECARIO EXPECTATIONS

Narratives about the value of experts justified investment in Mexican study abroad, but these narratives also shaped the social demands of the expert class that was in formation. Scholarship recipients, already marked as valuable people, had high expectations for their return to Mexico. The "good job" that Concepción Reza and other students aspired to had several qualities. It would make use of their advanced training abroad and provide the tools needed for career success. It had to pay decently. Students and their supporters frequently used the Spanish word *decoroso* to describe salary expectations, a term that encapsulated their contradictory aims of modesty and distinction.⁷⁷ *Decorosamente* virtually meant "in a middle-class way": "with decency but without luxury." And when *decoroso* described a job or salary, the word meant "not humiliating or shameful."⁷⁸ Decent or proper remuneration was about worth and pride, not just a figure on a paycheck. It was about status. The root word, *decoro*, denoted "honor, respect, reverence owed to a person by birth or dignity."⁷⁹ This resonates with colonial notions of merit as a heritable quality. The aspiration to middle-class life was not really so humble after all. Becarios hoped for widespread social recognition and respect for their expertise as well as creature comforts.

Beals and his assistants asked their interviewees about their aspirations, and the answers came down to middle-class stability and status. One informant "would not return to Mexico unless it is on his own terms. He wants a decent salary, well-equipped lab, and recognition."⁸⁰ For her part, Reza had no interest in working for the Mexican government, an employer closely associated with the middle classes, even though her own father worked at the Banco de México, a government institution. But she "wouldn't like it," she explained, "because payment is too low and it doesn't give you much prestige."⁸¹ Other students expressed similar concerns about university teaching and thus were not interested in poorly remunerated academic careers. One wanted "to live without luxury, but without too many frustrations."⁸² A graduate student in meteorology put his aspirations a little more precisely. "I don't want to be a rich man," he clarified, "but I would like to have a little car to go to work and come back."⁸³

These replies apparently evince modesty. In fact, their expectations for status and income on their return revealed great ambition and a desire for special treatment. Significantly, in these years, despite widespread belief in universities as engines of social mobility, higher education was no guarantee of good professional jobs for young Mexicans. Historian David Lorey notes that "universities were clearly producing graduates at a rate well above the rate of job creation for

professionals in the Mexican economy.”⁸⁴ Now more people had access to opportunities, such as university training, that had been rarer achievements in earlier decades. It became harder to stand out. Competition for professional jobs left many behind despite economic growth and an expanding state bureaucracy. Despite high expectations nourished by narratives about savior-like foreign-educated patriots, many becarios experienced career frustrations on their return, with less of an advantage than they imagined. Their dissatisfaction was but a personal disappointment at mid-century, but it would transform into a widely accepted structural “problem” by the end of the 1960s that would define Mexican scholarship policy from the 1970s on.

For its part, the Rockefeller Foundation wanted to control which Mexican institutions would hire their becarios and put their skills to good use. But institutional plans for human capital did not always appeal to the becarios themselves. One becario, Aristeo Acosta, was concerned while preparing for his return to Mexico in 1961. He could not be assured of an “adequate” salary or equipment for his research, according to his US adviser. The adviser was dismayed that his Mexican student “has been asked to return to a somewhat routine plant breeding position” with no raise. He wished to retain Acosta as a staff member in his own laboratory until an appropriate position opened up in Mexico.⁸⁵ Neither Acosta nor his adviser could envision someone like him in an ordinary research job. Their alternative proposal ruffled feathers at the Rockefeller Foundation, and the student earned scorn from none other than Norman Borlaug, so-called father of the Green Revolution.⁸⁶ But Acosta did return to Mexico.⁸⁷

The return to Mexico could mean returning to old workplaces or pursuing something better, with no guarantees of success. A year after his study tour, the playwright Jorge Ibarguengoitia asked the Rockefeller Foundation for another fellowship because he had no paying work for the coming months; this time, his request was denied.⁸⁸ He still had his aging relatives to think of, but his studies in the United States did not bring immediate solvency back home. Edmundo Flores, who worked with braceros and saw himself as categorically different from them, was disappointed when he finished his studies in Wisconsin and went home to Mexico. He believed that his local networks had disintegrated while he was gone. His search for a suitable job, which he called “the conquest of Mexico,” was slow and frustrating. “Every job offer I’ve had has been ridiculous, and the most surprising thing is that my would-be bosses get angry when I turn them down. They want me to start from the bottom,” he complained in a 1948 letter.⁸⁹

Invoking the conquest of Mexico perpetrated by Spanish foreigners against Indigenous Mexicans, Flores suggested that he was made foreign by his study abroad. The image also masculinized his process of job hunting back at home. Indeed, returning students sometimes were called traitors to the nation, *malinchistas*. This Mexican insult demeaned its target by association with the Indigenous woman Malinche who aided and slept with the conquistadors. Another

cosmopolitan Mexican of the mid-twentieth century, Octavio Paz, defined this “contemptuous [term] recently put into circulation by the newspapers to denounce all those who have been corrupted by foreign influences.”⁹⁰ So perhaps Flores’s choice to make himself the conquistador was a way to avoid being called a malinchista. Eventually, Flores postponed his personal Conquest of Mexico. Instead, he leveraged his foreign credentials to find work in international organizations rather than seeking Mexican employment.⁹¹

If studying abroad was seen as a kind of national betrayal, this could explain the reluctance of Mexican employers to hire foreign-educated compatriots. In the early 1950s, an anonymous former becario, an agronomist who studied in the United States, narrated the travails he faced on his return. He and his wife were filled with warm, patriotic anticipation before returning to Mexico, but everything that happened after crossing the border was a disappointment. He tried to get jobs and got the runaround. He was accused “of being malinchista,” a terrible insult to someone as proudly Mexican as himself. Potential employers told him he was “asking for a fortune” and that “having been abroad ‘had gone to [his] head.’” But he wanted only “a proper salary” to cover “pressing need.” He returned to the same job he had held before studying abroad—the ultimate denial of the value of his US credentials in the eyes of other Mexicans.⁹²

Of course, returning becarios also found success when they returned home. Some organized into alumni clubs to find camaraderie with fellow foreign-trained Mexicans. They celebrated themselves and how well they were all doing. Graduates of the University of Texas (UT) met at a restaurant in 1947 to honor Ramón Beteta, a Longhorn who was now Mexico’s secretary of finance. He had called fellow UT alumni, including more recent graduates, together “to remember times gone by, the joys and heartaches of the life of the Mexican student abroad.”⁹³ In the early 1950s, there were about ten such clubs for different US universities, and each had fifty to sixty members.⁹⁴ The “most active” club was for MIT graduates. They actually raised funds to give a scholarship to a Mexican student to attend their beloved alma mater.⁹⁵ Around this time, the US embassy attempted to create a larger club for former becarios who had studied in the United States. In their analysis, this project failed because former scholarship recipients were so successful that they had little spare time to devote to the organization.⁹⁶ What was a disappointment for the embassy signaled, perhaps, that many foreign-educated Mexicans, sooner or later, found a place for themselves at home, and they kept busy. Or, hoping to avoid being called malinchistas, former becarios knew better than to jeopardize their mexicanidad by associating themselves with the embassy.

Still, there were enough complaints about the problem of unhappy returns to warrant attention in a small study conducted by the Banco de México. In 1952, two former becarios of the Banco investigated what struggles agronomists (funded by the Banco and the Rockefeller Foundation) faced on their return. They found that nearly three-quarters of former becarios faced difficulties that included lack

of suitable equipment, a sense of disconnection from their professional context, and low salaries.⁹⁷ Perhaps thinking of their own expectations when returning from study abroad, the authors wrote, “It is essential that researchers be able to live *decorosamente* and that they are free of economic worries. The great benefactors of humanity should not live in conditions of absolute poverty.”⁹⁸ Their recommendation traded in extremes, with foreign-trained agronomists as paragons who suffered through the worst privations (plenty of Mexicans did live in “absolute poverty,” but not anyone in their study or anyone mentioned in this book). Performing modesty, the “great benefactors of humanity” did not expect great privilege, but they did warrant a little esteem. And a little car, to go to work and come back.

CONCLUSION

Middle-class Mexicans who aspired to become *becarios* had immediate and long-term aims in mind. A scholarship to study in the United States could yield income right now and a better job in the future. The power of dollars over pesos and the prestige of US and European degrees over Mexican ones, made scholarships for study abroad extremely appealing. Students realized the paradoxical situation of studying abroad in an era of nationalism. While at UCLA, Concepción Reza joked about how Mexicans reacted to foreign degrees. She made fun of their traitorous preference, their *malinchismo*. “Oh! He went to the States! Oh! He studied in the States, and he must know it,” mocking the reaction of her countrymen to people like herself, she laughed. “And you get better jobs,” she explained, “yes, they pay you more. That’s a bad thing, but what can you do?” She thought Mexican education was excellent and the preference for US degrees unwarranted. But she was still there at UCLA, trying to improve her own prospects.⁹⁹ Two governments had invested in her. The arrangement worked well enough for Reza, but not all *becarios* could get by on a stipend when families depended on their labor or contributions to household income.

Educated, middle-class Mexican men and women in their twenties and early thirties had many kinds of responsibilities to their kin. Those responsibilities shaped their choices about studying abroad, taking scholarships, and administering their stipends. A Rockefeller scholarship was a great boon to men with young families and to some single individuals who could scrimp and remit. Surely many women were dissuaded from professional ambitions, including study abroad, because of gender norms in Mexico and elsewhere. Perhaps those who were already mothers did not even bother applying for scholarships.

Thinking about their longer-term prospects, middle-class Mexican students, men and women, aspired to well-paid and well-regarded jobs. Some foreign-educated Mexicans would handily achieve this, and in their leisure time

they gathered around fellow foreign-educated Mexicans to reminisce and send more Mexicans to their alma maters. Others returning to Mexico would struggle to get what they thought they deserved. There was no certain triumph after studying abroad. By the late 1960s, the fate of Mexico's most educated citizens transformed into a national issue ripe for policy solutions.

Managing Student Mobility with Science Policy, 1970–1982

In the late 1960s, as economic growth slowed and political fractures deepened, Mexico's youth continued to seek higher education. More young people than ever before flocked to the country's universities. As in the past, a small subset of these young people sought further distinction by studying abroad. Between 1970 and 1981, the number of Mexican students attending US colleges and universities nearly tripled, reaching close to 8,000 just before Mexico's economic crisis of 1982 (see appendix 1). Some students were funded by their own families, as many had been since the nineteenth century. Others sought scholarships. The group of aspiring becarios was numerous enough to warrant the publication of multiple guides and directories on the many available scholarship opportunities.¹

One of these guides, penned by European-educated, Mexican chemist Guillermo Etienne, celebrated youth's "healthy desire" for foreign education and offered advice about how to get a scholarship. When the guide was published in 1971, so many institutions offered scholarships that any strong student who really wanted to go abroad could get funding, claimed Etienne. But to his regret, Mexican "play-boys," so well funded that they tended toward dissipation, wasted these scholarships. Etienne concluded, "It would be very advisable to delegate the responsibility of controlling *all scholarships from the state and from the community* to a single institution."² Increasingly, Mexican officials agreed with Etienne that scholarships were a resource that needed to be carefully managed and coordinated for the good of the nation. Etienne's guide reached students just as a Mexican institution took a leading role in regulating student mobility.

The Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (Conacyt; National Science and Technology Council), a federal agency, was created in 1970.³ It was born in an era when government officials eagerly used public spending to spur economic

development. Though not the first government body dedicated to science, Conacyt was intended by state officials to be different from its “anarchic” predecessor: its efforts and resources would be rationally managed and coordinated.⁴ Conacyt was tasked with directing Mexico’s science policy to unleash “a new revolution, a technological one,” and lead Mexico into “economic and social maturity” as a “fully industrial society.”⁵ It funded scientific research projects and equipment purchases, supported new research centers, and negotiated bilateral agreements for exchange programs with other countries. It also published several periodicals with wide circulation and even had television programming.⁶

But its most important sphere of action was preparing a steady supply of Mexican experts. Expert formation was central to Conacyt’s mission and was its biggest budget item. Between 1971 and 1980, virtually half of Conacyt’s spending went toward scholarships, glossed as “human resource” development. Mexican experts, created by advanced study, would be the revolutionary vanguard, leading the charge to vanquish underdevelopment and welcome the nation to its industrialized future. In the midst of astronomical public spending, Conacyt benefited from Mexico’s access to global credit. In 1977 and 1980, Conacyt received loans from the Interamerican Development Bank in the amount of \$20 million and \$40 million, respectively, which went primarily to scholarships.⁷

Conacyt directors were themselves experts, the US-educated beneficiaries of earlier Mexican scholarship initiatives.⁸ One of these men was Edmundo Flores, the Wisconsin-trained economist who worked with braceros and was mistaken for one of them. He was the third director of Conacyt (1976–82). During the directorships of Flores and his predecessors, Conacyt granted scholarships to students working toward master’s and doctoral degrees or students taking specialization courses, technical training courses, and thesis writing. Significantly, a majority of these scholarships went to students enrolled in Mexico’s own institutions, but international scholarships dominated public attention. Within just a few years, Conacyt became the top institutional grantor of international scholarships for Mexican youth. By 1976, it reported that it granted about 70 percent of all scholarships available in Mexico.⁹ The Mexican government allocated ever larger budgets to the new agency.¹⁰ By 1982, over 26,000 Mexicans had received scholarships from Conacyt.¹¹

Already in 1975, Conacyt was clearly the main place for Mexican youth to seek scholarships. Guillermo Silva, a young chemical engineer wanting a scholarship to study physics at UC Berkeley applied to Conacyt, but believing that a powerful supporter would boost his chances, he wrote to a high-level staff member of President Luis Echeverría Álvarez. Silva explained that his aim was “idealistic, it might even sound a little exaggerated, but I am convinced that it is the best way to serve the Patria, the Community, and myself.”¹² He was padding the petition with a commonplace, of the kind wielded by aspiring becarios for half a century.

But Silva’s words actually encapsulated a problematic tension that confounded Conacyt through its first years. What happened when the individual interests of

future experts and the national interest were incompatible? Who decided what becarios needed and what the nation needed from them? Having assumed responsibility for forming the technological vanguard, the state took on thorny problems about the value of experts to the nation. These problems were not new, but in the 1970s they became national policy issues. Those possessing the most-needed knowledge for Mexican development, nearly always educated abroad, were the brains of the body politic. If these brains were unhappy, they would take their knowledge to countries where they could earn more money and more respect. Thus “brain drain” entered public discourse to denote the supposedly urgent problem of foreign-educated Mexicans wanting more than Mexico could give. Conacyt aimed not only to manage its becarios but also to steer the careers of former scholarship recipients, called *exbecarios*. This term affixed experts’ linkage to Conacyt as a permanent identity, retained by foreign-educated Mexicans even after their scholarships expired.

This chapter argues that the fear of losing experts determined Conacyt’s international scholarship programs in the 1970s. In ways never seen before, Conacyt endeavored to regulate and control the production of foreign-educated experts via scholarships. The time was right. The state was making overtures to the middle classes, and science and development were on the minds of policy makers worldwide. Though glossed as science policy, Conacyt’s scholarship program created migration policy too. Its sphere of action encompassed selecting becarios, financing mobility, and regulating the career choices of *exbecarios*. Ultimately, Conacyt had little ability to tightly control student mobility or provide adequately for returning becarios.

BRAIN DRAIN ANXIETY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CONSEJO NACIONAL DE CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA

Though small-scale national scientific agencies dated to the 1930s in Mexico, only in the late 1960s did high-level officials put their weight behind the effort to create a robust institution.¹³ But I begin the story of Conacyt’s genesis with a would-be forerunner framed not as a science agency but as a scholarship agency. Several years before Conacyt was signed into existence, three Mexican senators proposed creating the Instituto Nacional de Becas. This false start previewed some of the challenges that went into founding Conacyt regarding the relationship between becarios and the Mexican state. The failed effort also reveals that science, as a framework for a certain kind of development policy making, was key to bringing resources and backing to Conacyt.

The proposed Instituto Nacional de Becas in 1961 was meant to systematize and centralize the many kinds of scholarships students might win from the Mexican government. The institute was meant to remedy the confusing array of scholarship options that lacked coordination and gave the state little opportunity to direct its

becarios into the type of work that served state objectives. The senators underscored that higher education was by no means the birthright of Mexican citizens. Winning state support for that “privilege” obligated lucky citizens to render their services as the state saw fit, they argued.¹⁴ Luis Weckmann Muñoz, an SEP official and a Mexican representative to UNESCO, was the obvious choice to review and critique a draft version of the proposed law. Weckmann, a historian and former diplomat, had studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Sorbonne, and he might have held a scholarship or two during his youth.¹⁵

Weckmann, reviewing the law, was conflicted about the Instituto Nacional de Becas. The senators’ plans to strictly control exbecarios’ labor struck him as “totalitarian” as well as impractical. But he was convinced that the state should be developing the nation’s cadres of highly educated professionals. Some kind of state planning was required to ensure that Mexico’s future needs would be met.¹⁶ He agreed that what the state spent on individuals’ higher education was an investment in them, and the beneficiaries were obliged to repay the investor. The law did not pass, and the failed bill fell into total obscurity.¹⁷ But the questions raised by the senators and the doubts raised by Weckmann would resurface just a few years later when Conacyt took shape.

Conacyt succeeded where the Instituto Nacional de Becas had failed, even though the new institution granting scholarships possessed all the same sticky points as its never-realized antecedent. Conacyt was framed not as a scholarship-coordinating agency, but as a science policy-making agency. This helped sidestep turf wars with the SEP and countless Mexican educational institutions. Focusing on science harnessed the considerable global momentum around increasing state investment in science and the need for science to be governed. As elsewhere, in Mexico, development was the effort to modernize and uplift through projects of infrastructure, public health, and education, all led by highly skilled experts.¹⁸ Development was a planned, deliberate evolution in pursuit of greater sovereignty, one that had been gaining adherents in Mexico since the 1930s.¹⁹ The Banco de México’s scholarship program, created in 1944 (see chapter 4), marked an earlier linkage of development to international scholarship programs that prepared experts in priority fields.²⁰ Through the 1960s, Mexican officials came to believe that *scientists* had a crucial role to play in development.

Mexican philosopher of science Eli de Gortari, writing in 1963, celebrated the recent flourishing of scientific research in his country. Mexican scientists had more advanced training than in the past and now garnered compensation that was, in his words, “decoroso.” Nonetheless, de Gortari called for accelerating the pace and efficiency of scientific development. He linked this imperative to the legacy of the revolution and the promise of uplift for the Mexican people.²¹ At a 1967 summit of the Organization of American States (OAS), member states including Mexico committed to increasing scientific independence, namely, by training more and better experts.²² Mexican observers warned that in global terms, their country had

a worryingly low number of researchers for the size of its population.²³ Across the region, as the OAS members agreed, this problem demanded national policy solutions. Mexico needed to catch up to countries like the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, which had already established agencies to manage science policy.²⁴

As the cult of science was becoming hegemonic over the course of the 1960s, Mexican researchers were exploring the consequences of what they considered insufficient investment in human capital. Dating to the 1950s, human capital theory posited that states could invest in education to reap concrete, dramatic economic gains, from “increasing productivity” to “creating an egalitarian distribution of wealth.” As Lorey explains, academic and governmental circles in Mexico in the 1960s and 1970s cited human capital theory to justify huge state expenditures in higher education, making universities accessible to more Mexicans than ever before.²⁵ But just as human capital could be created, it could be lost or stolen by out-migration of highly skilled citizens. Influenced by global conversations about “brain drain,” a term first used for the emigration of highly skilled workers from the United Kingdom to the United States, Mexican academics considered whether brain drain, or *fuga de cerebros*, was a Mexican problem too.

Quantifying brain drain was challenging for social scientists of this period. Few referred to actual numbers of educated Mexicans purportedly leaving. A US study found that the United States admitted about 60 Mexican scientists and engineers as immigrants each year in the early 1960s; this represented about one percent of all scientists and engineers entering the United States. In the regional context, these numbers were not high: in 1964, Canada sent almost 700, postrevolutionary Cuba sent over 200, and South America sent over 400 scientists and engineers.²⁶ Another US study focusing on student mobility and brain drain determined that in 1964, about 18 percent of male Mexican students in the United States intended not to return. Mexico ranked at no. 42 worldwide on this metric of “non-return,” just below France. In the hemisphere, Cuba, Haiti, Bolivia, El Salvador, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and British Honduras all ranked higher than Mexico.²⁷ While the figures and percentages above are not necessarily accurate, they suggest that in the 1960s, Mexican brain drain was not especially high in a global or regional context.

Mexican observers working with similar numbers took comfort in this. In 1967, Víctor Urquidí (one of the Banco de México economists who had run its scholarship program) and Adrián Lajous Vargas wrote that scientists were not emigrating from Mexico in any significant number, unlike the cases of “Argentina, Brazil, or Chile.” Urquidí and Lajous noted that Mexicans left the country to study but claimed that they “generally return[ed].”²⁸ Romeo Flores Caballero, professor of international relations at the Colegio de México, agreed with his colleagues. Unlike their counterparts in the Southern Cone, Mexican professionals lacked an “adventurous spirit; they are more nationalist,” he argued. Highly educated Mexicans reliably experienced social mobility and garnered “the respect of society in

general” in Mexico; ostensibly, this made emigration unnecessary.²⁹ He explained the low number of drained brains with sociocultural reasoning. For Urquidi, Lajous, and Flores Caballero, the matter was personal too: all had studied abroad and returned to Mexico.³⁰

By contrast, others were deeply anxious about brain drain. Flores Caballero’s reassuring text was published in a 1969 special issue of the magazine *Diálogos* on the topic of brain drain, which the editor deemed “one of the determinant facts of our time.”³¹ Alarmist perspectives insisted that Mexico was losing its most educated citizens. The problem was important not because of its verifiable scale but because of its political implications. In *Diálogos*, poet and literary critic Manuel Durán highlighted the case of “intellectuals who leave to study abroad but do not return.” Their “defection” constituted “a cause for alarm.” Durán argued that brain drain was the result of incomplete modernity in countries unable “to fully appreciate the value of intellectuals” and therefore “incapable of creating a suitable climate for them.” These societies valued “the idle aristocrat, the military career man, the tribal chief with archaic notions, the uncultured landowners, etc.” In such hostile circumstances, “we cannot expect intellectuals to sacrifice their careers and ambitions,” he concluded.³² Durán’s account of brain drain linked the phenomenon to social and cultural backwardness in Mexico, suggesting that unintellectual, unmodern individuals wrongly monopolized power and prestige. So even if brain drain was not measurable, anyone who believed in modernizing Mexico (who would not?) should care about this salient cultural problem. Durán, too, had studied abroad.³³

As conversations about brain drain attracted scholarly attention, the Mexican state inched toward leading international scholarship coordination. President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–70), who had participated in international conferences on science, tasked his assistant secretary of the presidency with a project to rethink Mexican science policy. That official was José López Portillo, who would serve as a cabinet secretary under Luis Echeverría and then become president himself in 1976. Though not a scientist, López Portillo did have a personal connection to the question of study abroad: he earned a law degree in Chile in the 1940s with a scholarship from the Chilean government.³⁴ In 1969, López Portillo met with scientists representing research institutions including the Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, a lofty-sounding but small and weak government body founded some years earlier.³⁵ The Instituto’s leadership would ultimately help design its successor, meant to achieve a coordinated science policy never before accomplished. After reaching an agreement that Mexico indeed required national science and technology policy, López Portillo asked the Instituto to conduct a formal study with recommendations for the president and funded the project.³⁶ In 1970, the results were published in a report that sketched out a plan for Conacyt, which would replace the existing, underfunded Instituto.

The report, titled *Política nacional y programas en ciencia y tecnología*, drew from consultation with over eight hundred scientists whose comments about the

state of research in Mexico informed their vision for Conacyt.³⁷ Foreign-educated and especially US-educated researchers led the project. Eugenio Méndez Docurro, president of the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Científica, served as the project's director. Méndez Docurro was an engineer who had earned a master's degree at Harvard in 1949 and later studied in Paris and London.³⁸ He oversaw seventeen committees covering different disciplinary and thematic branches of research. Individuals heading each committee held leadership positions in various branches of the executive, national research institutes, and academia, especially UNAM. Of these seventeen men, at least thirteen had studied abroad, ten of these in the United States. Committee heads had attended Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Brown, Oxford, and the Sorbonne, among other universities (see appendix 2). I determined that at least six studied abroad with scholarships, three from the Banco de México and one from the Rockefeller Foundation. Foreign-educated Mexicans and exbecarios designed the institution that would quickly become Mexico's most important source of scholarships for graduate education.

Proposing a powerful agency for science policy making, the report authors named as their first objective the training of more researchers and increasing the level of human resources.³⁹ The authors reported that "disorganization" characterized Mexico's "system" of scholarship opportunities for study in Mexico and abroad.⁴⁰ They called for a single institution to coordinate scholarships. This meant allocating scholarships for becarios to study disciplines that would promote "the nation's culture and development" rather than granting funding simply in accordance with "the applicants' wishes." The core principle for the new, coordinated scholarship program was to be closely aligned with "well-defined policy objectives."⁴¹ Development, after all, was planned transformation, not spontaneous evolution. Orientation had to come from the state's experts.

This could mean pushing becarios away from whatever they desired individually. But the report also proposed measures to ensure becarios' well-being. Scholarships should constitute enough funding "to be truly useful" based on studies of "conditions" in the country and institution where the becario would study, as well as the becario's economic situation and marital status. Perhaps the Rockefeller Foundation's family allowance had set a precedent for scientists charting how the Mexican state should treat the next generation of foreign-educated experts. The proposal called for "suitably remunerated job prospects in Mexico" for becarios and noted that the country had already suffered "a very serious loss" of researchers for this reason.⁴² In this way, the concern about brain drain was inscribed in the project that outlined and justified the creation of Conacyt.

When the new president, Luis Echeverría Álvarez, took office in December 1970, he quickly took up this project, following the report's guidelines.⁴³ That he would embrace the project was no guarantee: Mexican presidents do not always carry forward the initiatives of their predecessors. Echeverría had a pragmatic reason for supporting the new federal agency. While scholars were debating brain

drain and state officials were crowing about science in international meetings, the Mexican state was coming down hard on student activists. In 1968, the Tlatelolco massacre marked a new low for the regime's willingness to use violence against dissident citizens. Echeverría, well known as the architect of this state violence, took office with little support from middle-class youth and the intelligentsia. To win back this political sector, one that had grown demographically in recent decades, Echeverría invested heavily in higher education. He authorized major increases in UNAM's budget and created the multicampus Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City's peripheral neighborhoods. Echeverría presented himself as a friend to intellectuals, and state officials "courted" upwardly mobile Mexicans. The state appointed many highly educated Mexicans to government positions, in addition to creating educational and research institutions.⁴⁴

Scholars and observers have questioned whether Echeverría really believed in science. Was he simply seeking to co-opt students and the intelligentsia by founding an institution that would serve their interests?⁴⁵ Surely, understanding Conacyt's founding demands attention to both official discourse and *realpolitik*.⁴⁶ Importantly, while Conacyt was politically expedient for the president, he did not invent it on a whim. It was a collaborative effort that built on existing discussions about the importance of science for national development, discussions that had reached the executive level several years earlier (e.g., Díaz Ordaz's attendance at a scientific conference in 1967, before Tlatelolco). Scientists, not Echeverría, determined Conacyt's parameters, and many of those scientists were foreign educated. Conacyt would build up scientific cadres in a way that simultaneously served the nation and attended to the social needs of the highly educated, as defined by highly educated Mexicans themselves.

In December 1970, officials presented Echeverría's decree for Conacyt in the Chamber of Deputies. Speaking on behalf of Conacyt first was US-educated Secretary of Public Education Víctor Bravo Ahuja.⁴⁷ A deputy from the Socialist minority party raised the brain drain question, which he called the "pillaging of intellectuals" by the United States, the principal beneficiary of Mexico's investment in education.⁴⁸ Bravo Ahuja acknowledged that brain drain was a real concern, and he suggested that to confront the problem, Mexican "brains" needed work that closely aligned with their specialization, "in activities that are attractive to them." Only "intense development" in Mexico would make this possible.⁴⁹ This clever response honored *exbecarios'* individual aspirations and their idiosyncratic preferences while insisting that expert ambitions could only be satisfied through state intervention.

Lawmakers interrogated Conacyt representatives again two days later, when the Chamber of Deputies received Méndez Docurro, the former director of the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Científica who was soon to be appointed the first director of Conacyt. Another Socialist legislator questioned whether Conacyt should "make provisions for the future use" of researchers whose education it had financed, in which case Conacyt's proposed *bolsa de trabajo* (job

placement program) would not be necessary.⁵⁰ Méndez Docurro insisted that Conacyt's scholarship program was a "regulated, controlled plan" that would direct exbecarios to research priority areas while "respecting the becario's natural vocation." But he explained that guaranteeing suitable employment required the bolsa de trabajo as a preventive measure, given the uncertainties involved in educating researchers. Méndez Docurro described a "wide margin of unpredictability": "Perhaps it will not be possible to follow the controlled scholarship plan to the letter, perhaps becarios will drop out or fail, perhaps there will be structural changes in the institutions that previously committed to employing [them]." Méndez Docurro hoped the bolsa de trabajo would be "more or less temporary." The goal was for each young researcher to "turn to an existing agency connected with industry, services, and the higher education sector" for help finding "a job that is suitable [*decorosa*] for him, but more importantly, that it is useful for the institution and for the country."⁵¹ Individual preferences mattered but could not supersede the nation's needs.

The Socialist deputies had raised concerns about exbecarios' employment: How would Conacyt ensure that this sector's invaluable labor was fully harnessed for the collective good? These deputies belonged to the "loyal parliamentary dissent" for the government in power, and their questioning was not meant to scuttle Conacyt.⁵² But their scrutiny revealed the political stakes of this new agency: whether exbecarios' highly skilled work was "pillaged" by the United States or wasted in Mexico, Conacyt would have to answer for the fruitless investment in their education. The officials did not reject this mantle of responsibility. Rather, accepting these concerns as part of Conacyt's scientific policy making, Bravo Ahuja and Méndez Docurro emphasized that Conacyt needed to address exbecarios' expectations, informed by their class aspirations (i.e., everything had better be *decoroso*). This was crucial to controlling their mobility, to making sure they wanted to come home, and to making sure that they worked in Mexico where they were needed. Before it came into existence, Conacyt already aimed to regulate future Mexican experts and direct their international mobility.

CONACYT'S FIRST DECADE: SELECTING EXPERT CADRES AND MANAGING MOBILITY

Scholarship granting was the most important budget item for Conacyt in the 1970s. Conacyt promoted its scholarship programs and celebrated its becarios in its publications, including two widely distributed magazines. The bimonthly *Ciencia y Desarrollo* printed 700,000 copies per issue by 1981. The title of its other periodical, *Comunidad Conacyt*, tells us what the agency was trying to create. The federal agency aimed to engender feelings of belonging and connection among its becarios, Mexican researchers, and other members of the intelligentsia, with Conacyt at the center of this network of brains. An advertisement in one of these magazines

PARA QUIENES TIENEN...

... su licenciatura y desean ampliar su preparación científica, educativa y productiva, el Sistema de Becas - Crédito de CONACYT tiene en este año de 1980 las BECAS ACADEMICAS que les ayudarán a realizar sus propósitos profesionales en el campo de la Ciencia y la Tecnología.

INFORMES Y SOLICITUDES:

- Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología.
Departamento de Orientación,
Insurgentes Sur 1677, P.B.
México 20, D.F.
- Delegación Regional del CONACYT en el Sureste,
Calle 36-129 entre 31A y 31B
Buenavista, Mérida, Yucatán.
- Delegación Regional del CONACYT en el Occidente,
Colonias 221,
Edificio Torre La Paz, Cd. Sector
Juárez, Guadalajara, Jalisco.
- Delegación Regional del CONACYT en el Noroeste, Gral.
Treviño Poniente No. 409, piso 4
Monterrey, N.L.

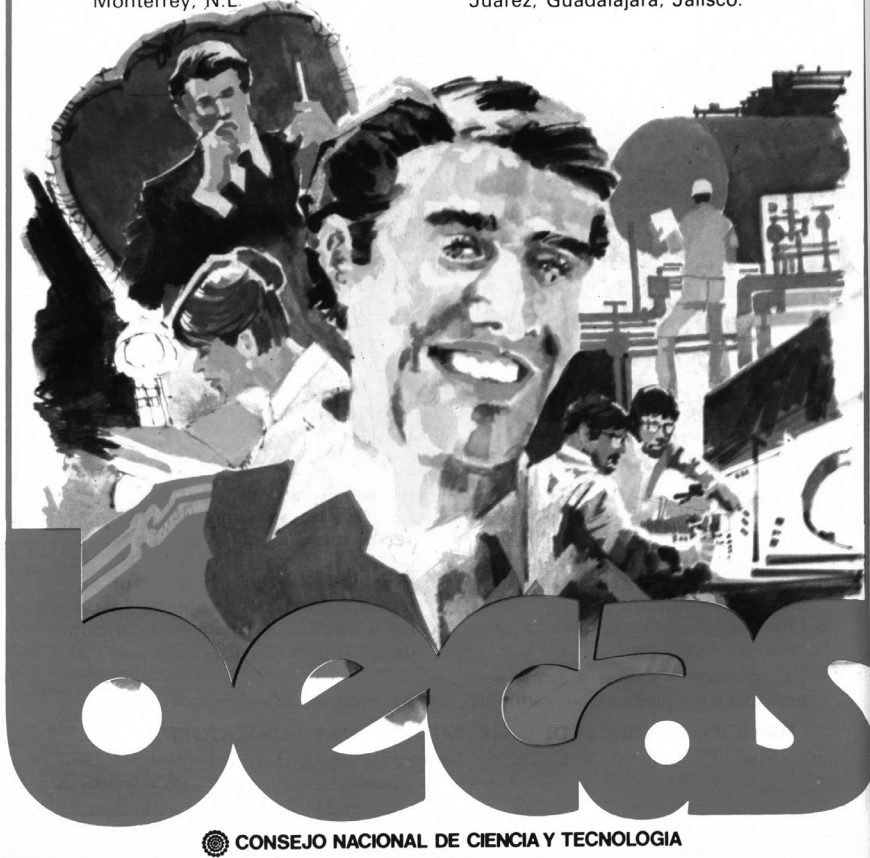


FIGURE 5. Illustrated advertisement for Conacyt's scholarship program, 1980. Source: *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 30 (January-February 1980): 58. Courtesy of the Secretaría de Ciencia, Humanidades, Tecnología e Innovación.

pandered to its readers: “The scientific researcher is one of Mexico’s great person-ages” who, “like many other professionals, works to be useful to Mexico, to be free, and to prosper along with his family.”⁵³ The advertiser, as well as Conacyt itself, targeted a middle-class, educated readership that was cosmopolitan (e.g., interested in Aeroméxico flights to Europe and classical music) and nationalist.

A 1980 advertisement for Conacyt’s scholarships in *Ciencia y Desarrollo* visualized what this aid purportedly would provide to becarios and to the nation. Becas were available to university graduates. The text emphasized that the scholarships would serve young people and “help them achieve their professional goals in the field of Science and Technology,” and the accompanying image showed becarios serving the nation as experts at work, absorbed in their research, depicting multiple modes of expertise with figures in different attire (a suit, a white lab coat, a coverall) and interacting with different technologies. Industry was visible, as one hard-hat-wearing expert worked with a storage tank. Perhaps this was part of an oil refinery, which would have been especially appropriate as Mexico enjoyed a short-lived oil boom bringing in tremendous revenue for the state’s coffers. Of the six human figures, five were presented as masculine and one as feminine, a ratio not far off from that of becarios to becarias funded by the agency. They were all putting their expertise to work, and as the large, smiling face in the middle suggested, they were happy.⁵⁴ As an official, public-facing representation of who becarios were and what they were supposed to do, this image is a unique visual source. Of course, it does not tell us who actually earned scholarships or what they went on to do.

While Conacyt kept dossiers on individual recipients and has made these available to its own researchers, I did not gain access to this archive when I spoke with officials in 2016.⁵⁵ To understand characteristics of becarios from this era, I use published data, which limits granular examination of specific cases. But available information sheds light on important questions such as the proportion of scholarships for study within Mexico and abroad. Not all Conacyt scholarships were for international study; many Mexican graduate students were funded to seek degrees or finish theses in Mexican institutions. The idea that Conacyt should promote graduate study within Mexico was as old as the agency itself: the 1970 report designing the agency called for funding more students domestically because the costs would be lower.⁵⁶ But this did not happen right away. Between 1971 and 1973, three in five becarios went abroad.⁵⁷ In 1974, a published list of Conacyt’s becarios showed that most were still going abroad, with only about 35 percent funded for domestic study. Of the internationally bound becarios, half were headed to the United States, a little over a quarter went to the United Kingdom, and most of the rest went elsewhere in Europe.⁵⁸

While international scholarships predominated during Conacyt’s first years, by 1975, a majority of scholarships went to students who enrolled in Mexican institutions.⁵⁹ In 1979, of Conacyt’s 4,533 current becarios, 54 percent studied in Mexico; 21

percent, in the United States; 8 percent, in France; 7 percent, in Great Britain; and 10 percent, in other countries.⁶⁰ The United States remained the main foreign destination, but the majority of becarios used their Conacyt scholarships domestically. A 1976 Conacyt report implied that international scholarships would eventually be phased out.⁶¹ However, though domestic scholarships were more numerous, they attracted less public attention. When reporting on the becarios selected in the summer of 1974, the press published an erroneous but telling headline indicating that the becarios were *all* going abroad when in fact over a third were not.⁶² For its part, Conacyt continued to emphasize the importance of bringing back knowledge from abroad. In 1978, an advertisement in *Comunidad Conacyt* announced scholarship offerings with the slogan, "Taking the best the world has to offer/To perfect what's ours."⁶³ That was the justification for the policy, but it was also an appealing invitation to aspiring becarios. They would be the ones to get "the best the world had to offer," which meant a sojourn abroad at the state's expense.

From the applications yielded by such advertisements, Conacyt used selection practices similar to those of the Banco de México. Committees of experts in their fields, not Conacyt bureaucrats, screened applications. At least as stated publicly, academic achievement and the importance of the applicants' area of study to current national priorities guided selection.⁶⁴ Conacyt awarded scholarships in a wide range of disciplines. Initially, engineering and the hard sciences predominated. Among its 1974 becarios, about one in five was specializing in administration, operations, planning, or industrial research, indicating a strong push to modernize Mexican industry and away from agricultural science. Only 16 of the 439 becarios in this group were agricultural college graduates. For those less inclined toward engineering, health, or laboratory fields of knowledge, there were still opportunities for scholarships. About 10 percent of the 1974 becarios were social scientists, including many economists, and 4 percent were studying library science.⁶⁵ A 1978 advertisement advised prospective becarios that they could study fields commonly associated with science and technology (biochemistry, agronomy, industrial engineering, etc.), but the social sciences, tourism, business administration, social work, and education were also included.⁶⁶ By 1980, social science and administrative science both had more becarios than the hard sciences.⁶⁷ Prior to 1977, a report admitted, "practically all applications to study any discipline were considered," but after that year Conacyt tried to align scholarships with priority areas established in multiyear plans. In 1982, Conacyt reported that 40 percent of those seeking scholarships came from the social sciences and administration, a fact that it attributed to "the country's educational structure."⁶⁸ Conacyt could not resolve pipeline problems just by making scholarships for graduate study available.

The mismatch between students' desired career paths and the state's priority disciplines weighed on Conacyt officials. As a 1976 report explained, Conacyt's scholarship program needed to do outreach to prospective becarios, providing information about the topics they might study and the most suitable universities to

TABLE 1 Last Mexican Institutions Attended by Conacyt Becarios, 1974

Institution/Institution Type	Number of Becarios
Regional public universities	133
UNAM	132
Private institutions	71
Instituto Politécnico Nacional	55
Regional technological institutes	22
Agricultural colleges	16
Other national public institutions	8
Unknown	2
Total	439

SOURCE: Data set created from “439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior,” *Excélsior*, August 12, 1974, BLT-AE-Mo4542 (1974). Data entry by Daniela Shia-Sevilla, analysis by the author.

pursue their education. Conacyt sought to orient “scholarship applicants’ demand.” Of course, its recommendations were not to be “mandatory” in nature, for “students will continue to select the areas of study that are most suited to their personal interests. However, they will have access to information that allows them to make a better-founded decision.”⁶⁹ The official who penned this document anticipated criticism that Conacyt was encroaching on Mexican youth’s freedom to choose their academic path. The coercive outreach plan may or may not have been implemented, but it reflects the tension between development logic and individual ambitions.

A new selection criterion, one that Conacyt had not borrowed from earlier scholarship programs, responded to the state’s priority of “decentralization,” or shifting resources away from Mexico City and toward provincial Mexico. Conacyt claimed to give preference to the graduates of regional universities.⁷⁰ At least among the 1974 becarios, there was a significant number of students who had studied outside the capital (and who were themselves, in all likelihood, from other parts of Mexico). There were as many becarios from regional public universities as there were from UNAM. Furthermore, graduates of provincial branches of Mexico’s newly created technological institutes also won scholarships (see table 1).⁷¹ The 1980 advertisement for scholarships discussed above listed regional Conacyt offices where aspirants could seek more information in Monterrey, Mérida, and Guadalajara besides the national headquarters in Mexico City.⁷²

As in earlier decades, women were not explicitly excluded from scholarship programs, but they participated in much smaller numbers than men. In 1974, women made up 19 percent of Conacyt’s becarios, doubling their proportion when compared to the Banco de México’s program during the 1940s and 1950s. Women were not being shunted into domestic study: Conacyt becarias were in fact slightly more likely to be studying abroad than were men. They were, however, concentrated in certain feminized fields: social sciences, chemistry and chemical engineering, health and medical sciences, and library sciences (here they were actually

TABLE 2 Top Fields of Study Among Conacyt Becarios by Gender, 1974

Top Fields of Study Among Women	Percent Women in Field	Top Fields of Study Among Men	Percent Men in Field
Chemistry and Chemical Engineering	20.7	Operations, Planning, and Industrial Research	17.9
Social Sciences	18.3	Physical Sciences	9.8
Health and Medical Sciences	15.9	Social Sciences	9.0
Library Science	12.2	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	8.7
N = 82		N = 357	

SOURCE: Data set created from "439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior," *Excelsior*, August 12, 1974, BLT-AE-Mo4542 (1974). Data entry by Daniela Shia-Sevilla, analysis by the author.

in the majority).⁷³ Table 2 shows the top four fields of study for women and men becarios in the 1974 cohort. This reflected gendered disciplinary tendencies at Mexico's own universities. At UNAM, feminized fields of study were also associated with higher proportions of women enrolled in 1968, suggesting that the gender imbalance among Conacyt becarios was at least partially determined by the educational pipeline.⁷⁴

On the other hand, thinking of the difficulties faced by earlier cohorts of women with family commitments to parents, spouses, and children, some newly minted Mexican graduates may have been discouraged or prevented from studying abroad with Conacyt funding. In the 1970s, becarias were never close to reaching parity with their becario counterparts. Still, women's participation eventually rose. A Conacyt report from 2001 notes that 30 percent of scholarships granted between 1971 and 2000 went to women.⁷⁵

There is a reason we know so much about a specific cohort of 439 becarios sponsored by Conacyt in 1974. That year, Conacyt provided what amounted to a directory of that cohort to *Excelsior*.⁷⁶ The newspaper then published the directory in its mind-numbing totality. This was hardly the first time that a scholarship program had offered such information about its becarios to the press. But the sheer number of Conacyt becarios was a sign of changing times. In 1942, when the Cultural Institute shared similar information about its sixteen becarios, the press write-up granted individual becarios a modicum of visibility. A generation later, Conacyt's hundreds-strong group meant each becario got less of a spotlight. *Excelsior* wasted no space on flowery praise of the recipients. Being on that list was like being in the phone book: people would find you only if they were looking for you.

But against the millions of Mexican baby boomers and the hundreds of thousands of them enrolled in higher education, the thousands of Conacyt becarios still represented a privileged group. Two Mexican social scientists studying becarios returning from study abroad between 1970 and 1976 determined that most (89 percent) came from the "middle strata," using parents' professions as

their indicator for class status. These recent exbecarios had “fathers who were professionals, [white-collar] employees, and merchants.” And as the study’s authors noted, exbecarios’ privileged origins made it possible for them “to resolve financial difficulties [while abroad] through family support and personal contributions.” Some would not have been able to complete their work abroad without these additional resources. The small minority of exbecarios whose fathers were workers, technicians, or campesinos were far more likely to work while studying abroad.⁷⁷

I could not get access to individual dossiers of the kind kept by the Rockefeller Foundation, so more details on the class position of Conacyt’s becarios remain hard to discern. Thinking contextually, the expansion of higher education in this era offered more lower- or middle-class youth the chance to qualify. But there is no reason to expect that the small group of Conacyt becarios would be representative of the broader university student population. Merit was a powerful filter to keep out the popular classes, and Conacyt was not overly concerned with economic need. In the early 1970s, Conacyt claimed to take economic need into account but only when two candidates were equally qualified. In these cases, Conacyt would conduct “a socioeconomic study” of the personal and family resources of the individuals under consideration. In 1980, questions of need were entirely removed from consideration.⁷⁸ Whether or not this short-lived provision was ever put in practice, it was never going to diversify the pool of becarios very much.

There were public, pointed criticisms during Conacyt’s first decade about the inadequacy of its scholarships for becarios with families, despite the fact that the agency theoretically provided family stipends.⁷⁹ Just after Conacyt’s creation, a leading Mexican physicist pointed out that graduate stipends were inadequate for young professionals who were becoming providers themselves.⁸⁰ Similarly, pathologist Ruy Pérez Tamayo denounced Conacyt scholarships as “totally insufficient” in 1981. Pérez Tamayo claimed that scholarships should be enough to prevent recipients from needing to work or otherwise be distracted from their studies. At the current scholarship rates, only becarios whose parents could support them could manage this. However, becarios were young adults (“over 25”) who were often starting their own families. These students were forced to seek outside work “to the detriment” of their scientific formation. He asserted that the officials who set scholarship amounts “would never agree to do their job full time for that amount of money.”⁸¹ Becarios had advanced this kind of argument for decades, but in the 1970s, public intellectuals like Pérez Tamayo took up their cause and reframed the personal complaint as a policy failing.

CONACYT’S CRITICS AND ANXIOUS POLICY MAKING

Wisconsin-educated economist Edmundo Flores got the top job at Conacyt as a consolation prize from newly elected President López Portillo in 1976. After months together on the campaign trail, López Portillo could not offer Flores what he wanted, a cabinet position as secretary of agriculture.⁸² Flores might

have seemed like a reasonable choice to direct Conacyt, for he had an advanced foreign degree, the expected expert credentials to head an agency that produced experts. But if anyone expected measured leadership from Flores, they were disappointed.⁸³ When he fielded the predictable question from the Mexican press about brain drain, he talked about tacos.

Flores dismissed the problem of brain drain and eschewed economic analysis of this national issue. Yes, people left for “three or four years” to study abroad, “but they come back,” he insisted; “the attraction of the taco always prevails.”⁸⁴ In another interview, he elaborated on this theory: “Any Mexican who has eaten a tortilla with lard and salt at six in the afternoon, is condemned to come back to die here.” Worries about brain drain, then, were “a little dramatic” in Flores’s estimation.⁸⁵

I find his remark less absurd than it might seem. Invoking the taco, Flores averred that brain drain, when disaggregated into the thousands of individual decisions made by foreign-educated Mexicans about where to live and work, could come down to personal preferences and attachments. But he also reminded the press—to no avail—that brain drain anxiety might have been as absurd as his theory of taco nationalism. Conacyt’s magazine, *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, published a study by two US researchers in 1979 that emphasized that the number of the most highly qualified Mexicans heading north remained small.⁸⁶ Much later, in 2001, a study estimated that only about 5 percent of all Conacyt’s exbecarios since its creation were “living and working” abroad. Among that small group, though, it was true that many of them had studied abroad.⁸⁷

But brain drain anxieties were especially acute in the 1970s, when many were convinced of the critical role of experts in shepherding development. Around the world, scholars were ranking nations by the number of scientists per 10,000 inhabitants. By those metrics, Mexico did not measure up, so policy makers, journalists, and researchers considered what might be done to ensure that highly educated Mexicans served the nation with their expertise. Although Flores did not believe there was a brain drain, the agency he headed had already been deeply shaped by brain drain anxiety. Those fears had contoured the form Conacyt took at its creation, and they continued to guide policy making through the early 1980s.

In public conversations during the 1970s, this was the worry: an exbecario with an unhappy return could decide to emigrate, resulting in a brain lost to the nation. Disappointed exbecarios were nothing new, but their problems were not seen as nationally significant before the late 1960s. Now that development policy had to fix the brain drain, Conacyt had the mandate to monitor and guide behavior of those who had formerly received its largesse. With no resources to distribute to them, how could they be monitored or shepherded? Was there a way to guide them when Conacyt admittedly struggled even to communicate with exbecarios?⁸⁸ Ultimately, the Mexican state would try to influence them by changing the terms of their scholarships, to more coercively direct educated young Mexicans’ post-educational paths. Its scholarships were not outright grants but loans (*becas-crédito*, literally, “credit scholarships”) that could be forgiven under certain

circumstances. The move to *becas-crédito* responded to the purported dangers of brain drain circulating in the Mexican press throughout the 1970s.

Before resorting to *becas-crédito*, Conacyt's plan to prevent brain drain was simply to help connect its *becarios* with jobs. In 1972, Conacyt created the *bolsa de trabajo* that Director Eugenio Méndez Docurro had described to the Chamber of Deputies as a temporary measure to ensure that *exbecarios*' skills were put to good use. Conacyt claimed that between 1971 and 1980, it had received 7,962 *curricula vitae* from *becarios* seeking employment and over 43,000 requests from employers seeking personnel.⁸⁹ Conacyt used *Comunidad Conacyt* to disseminate classified ads with job announcements for its *becarios*. The *bolsa de trabajo* was not phased out as planned and became a permanent service. The market for *exbecarios*' labor worked only if the Mexican state helped promote the very experts that it had created. The *bolsa de trabajo* also empowered Conacyt as a clearinghouse.⁹⁰ But this might not have been enough. By 1980, Conacyt required prospective *becarios* for degree programs to present a letter promising future employment, as the Banco de México had stipulated decades before.⁹¹ As many worried about the dearth of Mexican experts, employers hiring in Mexico did not seem to need that many people with specialized academic credentials, including foreign ones.

Some argued that even when foreign-educated Mexicans found jobs in Mexico, the demoralizing work environment encouraged brain drain. In 1971, economist Miguel Wionczek spoke with Mexican students in the United States and reported their belief that Mexico's professional gerontocracy kept young, talented Mexican doctors from doing interesting work in their home country. Mexican scientists who returned home found that administrative maneuvering took up large amounts of time, keeping them from their research. Wionczek warned, "A considerable number of young researchers rebel instead of giving in. And that rebellion becomes a definitive exodus."⁹² The "rebellion" was the rejection of the state's plan for these experts—putting their skills to the service of the nation. This logic attributed brain drain to individual desires for congenial professional environments.

However, in the early 1970s, politicians and the press advanced a more forceful vision of brain drain, reckoning it as a structural problem stemming from geopolitical inequality. Wealthy countries paid higher salaries than developing nations like Mexico, making it difficult to attract highly skilled individuals who could easily find work abroad. Brain drain was another "manifestation" of dependency, a popular theory of the day.⁹³ A leftist politician asserted that "brain drain" was really more of a "brain theft" perpetrated by "imperialist countries."⁹⁴

Along these lines, in March 1973, President Echeverría delivered a long address to Conacyt officials that the press called a "scolding." Echeverría insisted that Conacyt should promote Mexico's economic independence. As a Third World nation with the attendant challenges of underdevelopment, Mexico was especially dependent on the United States. To Echeverría's chagrin, Conacyt trained specialized personnel for transnational companies. Echeverría told Conacyt officials that once

becarios had been selected, they needed to “psychologically and ideologically prepare those whom we will send [abroad].” Mexico did not need technicians, trained abroad to use foreign machinery, to then act as agents for the foreign companies selling capital goods. Becarios needed to reflect more deeply about the “authentic transfer of science and technology” to Mexico instead of just “thinking about getting a job when they come back.” Echeverría expected nationalist renewal within Conacyt itself, demanding “a more revolutionary attitude” to replace the “romantic” approach taken so far. He stated emphatically, “We are not going to continue educating researchers or young becarios abroad as a mere developmentalist foreign investment that does not favor real, balanced development, with justice and guarantees of freedom that Mexico needs.”⁹⁵ These ideas were consonant with dependency theory, a radical Latin American form of development thinking that attributed poverty in the world’s periphery to the center’s extractive exploitation.⁹⁶

Harsh as the scolding was, during the speech Echeverría affirmed that Mexico would continue to send becarios abroad, and in fact, it would send more. Echeverría even apologized to his audience of “friends,” adding that Conacyt would soon be assigned more funding. After all, Conacyt was nothing less than “an instrument” of “national liberation,” or at least it could be if officials paid more heed to Mexican economists who could explain underdevelopment to them.⁹⁷ Unsurprisingly, Conacyt’s director, Méndez Docurro, was replaced not long after.⁹⁸ After calling the nationalism of Conacyt and its becarios into question, Echeverría kept support and resources flowing to the still-new state agency. This speech came in the midst of Echeverría’s controversial efforts to promote “shared development” by increasing public spending, a policy that curried favor with the left but was unpopular with business sectors and conservative groups.⁹⁹ It was a scolding among allies.

Conacyt’s first response was to trumpet its repatriation program, which would continue through the rest of the decade as a symbolic talisman against brain drain. In 1973, Conacyt reported that it had repatriated eleven Mexican scientists, most of whom were working in the United States.¹⁰⁰ Conacyt would pay for the return trip and the first year of the researchers’ salary. The repatriation achievement was announced just days after Conacyt had been publicly harangued by Echeverría: an opportune moment to publicize a bona fide accomplishment. Still, the Conacyt official speaking to the press, Raúl Ondarza, revealed that the repatriation effort faced major obstacles, acknowledging the agency’s impotence to reverse brain drain. Quite often, the official explained, Mexican scientists abroad “have already put down roots” in their foreign homes. Mexico had already “lost” them. Ondarza, a biologist who had studied at the University of Glasgow, framed Mexican scientists as social beings when explaining the challenge of luring them to Mexican institutions.¹⁰¹ He admitted that Conacyt could only “repatriate scientists who are generally single and do not have sentimental ties (wives and children in the country where they live), as is often the case.”¹⁰² Unsurprisingly, the only researchers Conacyt had in mind were men. The agency’s repatriation offer attracted a small

number of drained brains: between 1974 and 1981, it repatriated another seventy Mexican researchers. But members of the Mexican scientific community abroad seem not to have known much about this program.¹⁰³

A more substantive change in response to Echeverría's scolding was radical modification of the scholarship program. In a meeting with the president in July 1974, the second director of Conacyt, Gerardo Bueno Ziri6n, admitted that indeed "it was counterproductive that the limited resources at Conacyt's disposal should be used to train specialized personnel for the benefit of foreign companies."¹⁰⁴ Thus, the new system of *becas-crédito* would provide incentives for *exbecarios* to work in the sectors preferred by Conacyt officials. Instead of paying students an outright subsidy, Conacyt stipends were now loans. In this system, *exbecarios* who worked in Mexican academic or research institutions for as many years as they had enjoyed Conacyt's support would have their entire debts forgiven. If they worked in the public sector, Conacyt would forgive 50 percent of their debt. For those working in majority-Mexican-owned private companies, Conacyt would forgive 30 percent. For those who chose to work in foreign companies (including, presumably, those who chose not to return to Mexico), Conacyt required full repayment of the *beca-crédito*. This was quite a departure from the economy of favor.

This tiered system, Bueno Ziri6n explained, allowed Conacyt to direct talent toward work in institutions that would best serve science policy goals. "Respectful of the rights of the individual granted in our Constitution, no one will be prevented from working in the place that best suits his or her personal interests," he clarified, but the choice to work outside of research and academia came at a cost.¹⁰⁵ Conacyt reported that this scheme was successful: Bueno Ziri6n told the press in 1975 that only 1.5 percent of its *exbecarios* opted to work in transnational companies, 60 percent were employed in research and education, 30 to 35 percent worked in the public sector, and the remainder worked in Mexican-owned firms.¹⁰⁶

With the *becas-crédito* program in place, it was easier for Conacyt officials to claim that brain drain was not a problem, or at least not regarding its own *exbecarios*. But a revealing set of documents from 1976 suggests that Conacyt officials remained concerned about their ability to ensure that returnees would work in the academic and public sectors. That year, Conacyt learned that the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, which represented US business interests in Mexico, had created a program called "Fuga de Cerebros" to help foreign-educated Mexicans find work in their home country. The Chamber of Commerce sent a circular to Mexican students abroad letting them know that they could use its service to find work by submitting their information to be shared with companies it represented. The program would provide those companies with "a source of potential executives" by encouraging Mexicans to return to their country, "where their presence is so urgently needed," the circular explained. Students receiving the information were encouraged to publicize the opportunity to other Mexicans at their universities.¹⁰⁷ Citing nationalism and affirming the urgent need for

foreign-educated Mexican talent, the Chamber's circular echoed Conacyt's discourse. However, this program invited Mexican students abroad to contribute not as researchers in public institutions but as managers in foreign-owned firms.

The circular alarmed Conacyt officials. Director Bueno Ziri3n met with the Chamber's president to secure an agreement to cancel the program. Bueno Ziri3n explained that the state had invested a great deal in educating researchers despite "serious budget limitations," and these individuals had been trained to conduct research and teach. He added that among Conacyt becarios, there was "practically" no brain drain because of the terms of their scholarships. Still, the Chamber of Commerce's circular "could cause an internal brain drain," presumably by attracting Conacyt becarios away from research to work in the private, foreign-owned sector.¹⁰⁸ That outcome worried the Echeverr3a administration just as much as the researchers and scientists who did not return to Mexican soil. Implicitly, Conacyt doubted its ability to compete with a clearinghouse for the private sector, offering jobs that paid better than the positions Conacyt preferred for exbecarios. Under Flores, Conacyt would walk back this hostile stance toward transnational firms and the private sector in general, but the becas-cr3dito model remained in place through the end of the century.

Indeed, the continued calls for Conacyt to attend to the return experiences of Mexicans educated abroad revealed that the bolsa de trabajo, the repatriation program, and the becas-cr3dito scheme were not enough. Mexico was still inhospitable to the aspirations of its highly educated citizens, who were denied much-deserved "attention, opportunities, and rewards."¹⁰⁹ In 1978, *El Heraldo de M3xico* published an editorial lamenting the wasted investment in becarios whose preparation Mexico proved incapable of putting to good use. Returning to the patria with their "wealth of knowledge," quite often becarios undertook "a painful pilgrimage in search of employment, to no effect." Whether they moved abroad or stayed in Mexico working in jobs that did not utilize their specialized training, "the country's efforts to train these professionals turns out to be useless." For the editors, this was yet another example of Mexico as a "country of paradoxes": "It has a serious lack of skilled human resources, and the few who are available are not put to use." The newspaper called for Conacyt to resolve the paradox.¹¹⁰ After all, the state had raised this generation of becarios only to let the nation fail them.

CONCLUSION

In a 1983 opinion piece, a young economist described Conacyt's public reputation: "a financial aid agency for graduate students." Although the agency was intended "to be the great institution of Mexican Science and Technology," it was on its way to being nothing more than "the great giver of scholarships [*el gran dador de becas*]."¹¹¹ Conacyt had faced countless accusations of inept science policy making since its creation. It is true that by 1983, as austerity crept into the government,

state largesse was starting to seem more like a problem than a solution for national woes. However, it was a curious choice to denounce scholarship giving. For the more than 26,000 Mexicans who had received scholarships by the early 1980s, Conacyt's investment was hardly the worst thing about the federal agency. Perhaps the insufficiency of scholarships or the agency's bylaws were problematic, but scholarships were something people wanted from the Mexican state. For Conacyt, a reputation for generously distributing of benefits was far from an embarrassment. During its first decade, serving as the "great giver of scholarships" was its avowed, deliberate mission.

The state tried to direct youth toward studying and working in ways that the state deemed conducive for development. Officials designed, then rejiggered, Conacyt's scholarship program to push becarios toward certain decisions. In fact, dictating exbecarios' career and geographical moves proved challenging. The financial incentives that Conacyt offered, from relocation expenses to loan forgiveness, could not guarantee that exbecarios would behave in a certain way. It was not even clear to observers which factors determined former becarios' choices about where to live and work: Salaries? Respect? Tacos?

Becarios and exbecarios were a tricky target for development via scientific knowledge. The state could not regulate their individual choices enough to guarantee Conacyt's investment. Student mobility was not easy to manage from on high. What Conacyt could do, and what earned immediate goodwill, was *facilitate* student mobility by making resources available for scholarships. Conacyt turned young people into becarios. It did this in the context of high public spending in the 1970s. And remarkably, Conacyt would keep sending students abroad in the wake of the 1982 debt crisis, when the austerity cuts came and the state shrank. While Conacyt awarded far fewer scholarships during that "lost decade," this was only a reduction from the peak of the early 1980s: Conacyt was still funding about as many students as it had in the mid-1970s.¹¹² As soon as economic conditions improved in the 1990s, Conacyt made more international scholarships available. The broad contours of the scholarship ecosystem Mexico has today were set in the 1970s. This ecosystem has managed to survive, and sometimes thrive, through the stark political shifts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Epilogue

Toward the Unreachable Future

Enrique Beltrán was a foreign-educated Mexican and a man of the twentieth century. Born in the last years of the Porfiriato, he came of age during the revolution and became a scientist as a new state came to life in the 1920s. A microbiologist trained at Mexico's Universidad Nacional, Beltrán left his country in 1931 to earn a PhD in zoology at Columbia University. A Guggenheim Fellowship supported his studies.¹ On his return to Mexico, he worked for Mexican state institutions for many decades and taught countless students.² Beltrán lived through the eras and transformation traced in this book: revolutionary nationalism (1920–40), the push to modernize (1940–70), and the institutionalization of science (1970–82). He saw younger, more numerous generations become experts thanks to programs like those of the Banco de México and the Rockefeller Foundation and later Conacyt. The new cadres prepared first in Mexican universities and were dispatched abroad to realize their full potential. The 1970s were a good time for aspiring experts, for public spending, bureaucratic ballooning, and an oil boom let experts harness state resources through Conacyt's largesse. But the boom turned to bust. Mexico defaulted on its public debts in 1982, and a decade of austerity began.

In 1983, with his country at this inflection point of economic crisis and political change, Enrique Beltrán sat down for an interview. The conversation was meant to capture his unique perspective and invaluable advice for new generations of highly educated Mexicans. He was nearly eighty years old. And indeed he had counsel for those who might want to study abroad. Though he was foreign-educated himself, Beltrán saw no intrinsic value in studying outside of Mexico, he explained. His sojourn had been a means to an end: the pursuit of knowledge unavailable at home. For a young Mexican in the early 1980s who wanted to follow in his footsteps, he would *not* recommend study in Europe or the United States. “We are

already getting past this phase that all countries have gone through: going to seek knowledge in other places,” he declared. Mexico’s own experts could train their successors. And Beltrán had no patience for any Mexican experts who alleged that their country failed to compensate them adequately. That complaint was motivated by *malinchismo*. Mexican experts certainly could live “decorosamente” in their homeland.³ Beltrán believed that the future imagined by Mexicans throughout the twentieth century had already arrived. Expertise could be cultivated on Mexican soil, and experts could live and work decently in Mexican institutions. Mexico made its own knowledge and took care of its knowledge professionals. If you thought otherwise, or if you left to study or take a job in the centers of global power, you were not the kind of patriotic scientist that Mexico needed. Even an expert formed abroad thought so.

In the 1980s, it appeared that Conacyt, Mexico’s primary scholarship grantor for international study, agreed with Beltrán. While in the early 1970s more Conacyt scholarships were international than domestic, the agency had long promised that the balance would shift toward home. Between 1981 and 1988, Conacyt reduced international scholarships in both number and proportion: by that later date, only one in five scholarships were for international study.⁴ In the era when Ivy League-educated technocrats were steering the country in a new direction, thousands upon thousands of budding experts were being formed in Mexican institutions. In the decade after 1984, the number of Mexicans completing graduate programs in their home country doubled. By the mid-1990s, there were well over 13,000 Mexicans studying under the tutelage of Mexican experts in Mexican graduate institutions.⁵ Without the same prestige of foreign-trained fellow Mexicans, these homemade experts apparently represented the culmination of nationalist dreams of knowledge sovereignty.

Conacyt, for its part, supported the flourishing of Mexican graduate education in the last years of the twentieth century.⁶ From the time of Conacyt’s creation to 2000, over 88,000 Mexicans received a scholarship, and thousands of these recipients were two-time (or even more) beneficiaries. Through the 1990s, more women joined these numbers, becoming a majority of recipients by 2000.⁷ This growth followed neoliberal logic, as the state redirected resources away from “the people” writ large to instead target tightly defined, rigorously scrutinized sectors.⁸ Along with poor Mexicans seeking means-tested benefits, elite Mexicans aspiring to the neoliberal expert class had to prove their credentials to the state in hopes of winning their own benefits in the form of scholarships and stipends. In 1995, Conacyt raised its standards for *becarios* and aimed for “rigor” and “better results.”⁹ Proving merit not through flowery petitions but through transcripts and standard application forms, Mexico’s most educated citizens sought access to state funds notwithstanding the broader context of state austerity, and thousands garnered the rewards they sought.

Despite the proportional decline in granting foreign scholarships, the neoliberal state's expansion of higher education in Mexico did not spell the end of study abroad. At the end of the twentieth century, under a fifth of Conacyt's becas-crédito went to students attending foreign institutions.¹⁰ The relative decline of study abroad opportunities from Conacyt has continued to the present. In 2020, 87 percent of the over 84,000 scholarships administered by Conacyt went to students in Mexican graduate institutions. Just 4.3 percent were for study abroad.¹¹ But a tiny fraction is not zero. State scholarships for foreign study did not disappear. The year of the crisis, 1982, turned out to be a watershed moment in shifting Conacyt priorities toward domestic study, and this made the chance to study abroad even more of a select honor for an elite within an elite.

In the context of Mexican universities producing ever more graduates and large numbers of scholarships available for postgraduate training in Mexican institutions, study abroad retained its function as a marker and maker of distinction in the neoliberal era. Though Mexicans could now earn doctoral degrees in engineering, pedagogy, or history without needing a passport, foreign credentials remained a strategic asset for experts looking to stand out or simply snag a job at all. So the appeal of knowledge from without, always about social reproduction as much as the knowledge itself, remained relevant. In this sense, Enrique Beltrán's 1983 call for the new generation of experts to study at home, not abroad, ignored what had always driven young Mexicans' decisions about what kinds of education to pursue and where. Without removing the possibility of international education, Conacyt simply made it less accessible. Officials did not ask whether Mexico still needed foreign knowledge. Neoliberal leaders wondered about the "desirable proportion" of foreign to domestic scholarships, as Conacyt's outgoing director wrote in 2000.¹² Director Carlos Bazdresch, like most others commenting on knowledge production in the Mexican twentieth century, was foreign educated. He was the Harvard-trained appointee of Mexico's Yale-trained, Conacyt-funded president, Ernesto Zedillo.

Whether or not they could earn the same degree at home, Mexican students continued to seek education in the United States and Europe. In 1982, two social scientists, at least one of whom had studied abroad herself, suggested that fellow researchers had yet to truly "accept" that the accomplishments of Mexico's own scientists, working in Mexican institutions, were "valuable." Belief in the inherent superiority of study abroad was still shaping students' choices despite the state's recent investments in science at home.¹³

As a study of Conacyt's becarios found, between 1971 and 2000, there was a clear class difference between the recipients of its scholarships for domestic and international study. To be sure, virtually all these becarios were middle and upper class. But within that rarefied universe, those who studied abroad came from the *most* privileged of these elites while domestic study drew from the *least* privileged.

Access to foreign education then entrenched these differences. Among exbecarios, those who had studied abroad drew dramatically higher salaries than their Mexican-trained counterparts. In fact, researchers found that in the last decades of the twentieth century, foreign education was the most important variable in determining how much exbecarios earned.¹⁴

Given all this, on what grounds could the Mexican state continue to argue that international scholarships, as a regressive social policy, contribute to the good of all Mexicans? In the twentieth century, as different iterations of Mexican nationalism competed for legitimacy, students and officials linked study abroad to regnant visions about what the Mexican collective needed. Students used nationalism to make convincing arguments to state officials in the 1920s and 1930s, when there was no clear policy for international scholarship granting. Later, nationalism undergirded policies and institutions whose leaders assumed that any project to develop Mexico required training some Mexicans abroad.

But the practice of studying abroad was also vulnerable to nationalist attacks. After all, it meant leaving Mexican territory, sending Mexican wealth to foreign institutions, and exposing youth to prejudice and worse in countries disdainful of Mexico and Mexicans. When Mexican students were killed in 1931 on an Oklahoma highway, there were many who could be blamed. Besides the murderous members of US law enforcement, some denounced Mexican parents traitorously choosing to send their children away from the homeland. Was study abroad inherently damaging to the nation? Such claims have never stemmed elite desires to go abroad, but nationalist criticism has never disappeared either. By the 1960s, the specter of brain drain worried influential pundits despite limited evidence of an exodus of highly educated Mexicans. Tempting offers from richer nations could scuttle Mexico's investments in its future experts. Nevertheless, over the decades, more and more Mexicans took for granted that the country required foreign-educated Mexicans to achieve national transformation. Some nationalists of the early twentieth century, many middle-class Mexicans by the mid-twentieth century, and all neoliberals of the 1980s and 1990s shared this belief. Even the transition from PRI to opposition party governance in the new millennium did not threaten this article of faith. After all, social elites, with their long-held tradition of study abroad, remained at the helm.

More recently, former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018–24) and his appointed Conacyt director, María Elena Álvarez-Buylla, criticized the use of state funds to send young people abroad. Days after taking office, AMLO identified state support for study abroad as a policy ripe for change. In a morning press conference, he cast aspersions on Mexicans who had studied abroad only to acquire bad habits or tricks, "*malas mañas*."¹⁵ Álvarez-Buylla had similar credentials to those of past Conacyt directors: a US-educated scientist. But she seemed disinclined to prepare other young Mexicans in her own image. In February 2019, Álvarez-Buylla announced that Conacyt would stop sending so many

students abroad. Conacyt would reduce expenses as it sought “scientific sovereignty,” so Mexican students should study in Mexican institutions at a lower cost to the government.¹⁶ While the cancellation of international scholarships never came to pass, becarios, exbecarios, and the broader Mexican academic community expressed antipathy and anxiety in the wake of these threats. Conacyt’s very institutional future figured prominently in public debates following 2023 reforms to the agency, so the fate of international scholarships, among other programs, remains on people’s minds. State-sponsored student mobility is an awkward policy for Mexican nationalists, but so far, leaders have preserved elite youth’s access to that much-desired favor from their government.

In fact, just as I finished this book, President Claudia Sheinbaum transformed Conacyt into a cabinet-level ministry, the Secretaría de Ciencia, Humanidades, Tecnología e Innovación. The new ministry formally replaced Conacyt in January 2025, just after she took office. Befitting its unwieldy name, this ministry has an ambitious, multipronged mandate, including the provision of scholarships. The first secretary of the new ministry is a Mexican scientist with cosmopolitan credentials. Rosaura Ruiz Gutiérrez is a biologist who did postdoctoral work at the University of California.¹⁷ As of this writing, it is too soon to say whether the new science ministry marks a meaningful shift or a superficial rebranding. What will change for Mexican science policy in general and study abroad in particular is still unfolding. But understanding the new ministry requires critical histories of its immediate ancestor, Conacyt. This book argues that Conacyt’s role as the “great giver of scholarships” is a core piece of its institutional legacy.

While our understanding of student mobility, past and present, cannot but highlight the significance of Conacyt, we must also grapple with Mexico’s social history, of an unequal society where even the privileged fight for position, and its political history, of revolution and nationalism in a world where knowledge and power derived from connections to Europe and the United States. International scholarships, the product of this context, are tricky and fraught and perhaps inevitable. For the Mexican state, scholarships are policy that is hard to trumpet, hard to manage, and hard to roll back.

Though today it is a state function, international scholarship granting is rooted in social practices and cultural beliefs that date to the nineteenth century. This elite practice cannot be controlled or even effectively monitored by the state. Like other migrations, it evades the state’s grasp. Conacyt counted its becarios, but it could not prescribe their career trajectories. Students could always tap into resources available from their families, other scholarship programs, or their own labor to follow study programs that did not align with priorities at Conacyt. While Conacyt quickly became the top institutional provider of scholarships, it never served as the only source of funding for would-be foreign-trained experts. Future research on student mobility in neoliberal Mexico will inevitably highlight the role of other institutions, too, in facilitating student mobility: from binational efforts like the

Comisión México–Estados Unidos para el Intercambio Educativo y Cultural (COMEXUS), founded in 1990, which awards Fulbright–García Robles scholarships, to the private initiative Fundación México en Harvard (created in 1989), which supports Mexican students accepted to that singular university that trained quite a number of powerful Mexicans in the past half century.

Looking beyond Conacyt to the broader group of Mexican students abroad funded by their families and other scholarship programs, the proliferation of academic opportunities at home, and the economic collapses that have punctuated the past forty years of Mexican history did not bring an end to this educational practice. The crisis of 1982 and the economic doldrums that followed certainly reduced international student mobility. The number of US-bound students dropped during the 1980s but then recovered. By 1993, there were as many Mexican students in the United States as there had been in 1981, which was an all-time high (see appendix 1). Since the early 1990s, the number has increased even more, reaching 10,000 by the end of the millennium. In recent years, around 15,000 Mexican students were enrolled in US colleges and universities each year.¹⁸ Heading to the United States, Europe, or less traditional destinations in Latin America and beyond, total “outbound mobility,” or the flow of Mexican students leaving the country for various international destinations, was over 29,000 students in 2015–16.¹⁹ The most recent history of student mobility is a history of growth.

The Mexican state and other institutions created opportunities for middle-class youth to experience social mobility and excluded most young Mexicans from those opportunities with merit-based selection. And yet foreign-educated Mexicans and their allies claim that Mexico’s future depends on access to more powerful knowledge created abroad and experts to bring it home. Mexicans envision a day just ahead when merit earns rewards for remarkable talents in a more prosperous, enlightened country than in the past. In that always-arriving time and place, there is no pressing need to import knowledge and prestige accrued in other countries. Enrique Beltrán felt Mexico was already there in 1983, but others are still waiting. In the meantime, there is study abroad.

APPENDIX 1

QUANTIFYING MEXICAN STUDENT MOBILITY TO THE UNITED STATES

This book presents various figures on the total number of Mexican students in the United States during a given year. This data comes from five sources, all produced by institutions based in the United States. The first is a US Bureau of Education report on foreign student migration to the United States published in 1915. This only provides numbers for a single year, 1913, but it is the earliest count of foreign students in the United States to my knowledge. Unfortunately, the report does not explain how the Bureau compiled its statistics except to say that 275 institutions were included in the count.¹ The second source is a directory that attempted to list the names and nationalities of all foreign students in the United States in 1919, apparently by contacting all institutions of higher education. The Committee on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students (CFRFS) created this document by collecting information from US colleges and universities, but not all institutions responded. The directory included 261 Mexican students. A mimeographed page at the back of the copy of the directory at the Missionary Research Library at Union Theological Seminary had the totals for the year 1920–21.²

For the years 1921 to 1928, I used data from the Institute of International Education.³ The fourth source is a publication produced by the CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors*, which was issued yearly between 1929 and 1948 (except that no report was published in 1944).⁴ The CFRFS collected information from university registrars to calculate total numbers of foreign students by country. My figures for 1949 and the following years come from the last source, the IIE's "Open Doors" reports (1952 is missing). These reports are still released annually by the IIE. These were the direct successor of the CFRFS reports, but the IIE had an expanded list of institutions from which to solicit data. It also developed record cards on every foreign student from reporting colleges and universities that could be tabulated using IBM computers.⁵ By the mid-1970s, the IIE had started collecting a smaller amount of information from institutions and then creating a representative sample to analyze more

detailed aspects of the foreign student population. They also began extrapolating data, which is why numbers are sometimes round after 1974.⁶

In all cases, the methodology was to remit surveys to US colleges and universities asking them to provide information on their foreign students. However, institutions receiving the survey did not always provide the data, so actual totals were certainly higher than the figures provided in the sources, but it is impossible to say by how much, although tabulators tried to guess the actual totals periodically. Another problem inherent in the methodology is how US universities counted Mexican students. At a basic level, administrators sometimes listed all students from “Latin America” or “Central America” together without disaggregating by country.⁷ Further, university officials determined what country a student represented using a messy set of criteria that included race, nationality, mobility, and citizenship. The archetypal “Mexican student” resembled the individuals discussed in this book: students born and raised in Mexico who took up residence in the United States for the first time at the moment of their enrollment in a US college or university. As the IIE explained in 1928 when presenting their data, it sought “to include only bona fide foreign students; viz those students who have come to the United States from other countries for the express purpose of pursuing courses in our educational institutions and excluding the large number of students of foreign birth who are citizens or residents of this country.”⁸ In other words, they attempted to strictly include students and exclude other classes of migrants.

As early as 1936, the CFRFS sought to divide immigrants from temporary students in another way: “for the purposes of this census,” it noted in its report, “a foreign student is one born abroad, not of American parentage, who intends to reside permanently in his native land.”⁹ This meant to exclude those who were US citizens by birth or descent, presumably white, who happened to have grown up in other countries: “foreign students” was not meant to include individuals of US American heritage. The second part of this definition tried to distinguish between migrants who would return to their country of origin and those who had immigrated and would not return. The CFRFS acknowledged that the university registrars who provided their data were not always aware of their students’ future plans.¹⁰ Later in the twentieth century, following the advent of student visas, some universities distinguished between foreign nationals with US permanent residence and those with nonimmigrant visas, and the IIE began to keep track of this as well beginning in 1975.¹¹

Perhaps the most interesting complication of counting Mexican students was the question of whether place of origin, ethnic or racial identity, citizenship, or something else indicated Mexicanness. Alongside the Mexican students who had just arrived from Mexico to enroll in college, there were Mexican nationals who had migrated to the United States some time before beginning their higher education and had migrated with their families as children or adolescents to settle in the United States.¹² Two prominent US public intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, Carlos E. Castañeda and Ernesto Galarza, fit this category.¹³ They made their careers in the United States and were connected to Mexican American and Chicano political struggles and Latin American scholarly networks. Finally, there were also US-born individuals of Mexican descent who had US citizenship but might have been included by some university administrators in a count of “Mexican” students, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, when racialized understandings of citizenship were so pronounced that, for example, US citizens of Mexican descent were included in repatriation projects during the Great Depression.¹⁴ As Galarza remembered from his days as a student at Occidental College in Los Angeles in the 1920s, youth of Mexican descent either

embraced being “Mexicanos” (ostensibly, regardless of their country of residence or citizenship) or denied having Mexican heritage. Were students like him who identified as Mexicanos seen as foreign students or not? Galarza recalled that at Occidental, he was “a novelty” and “a curiosity” on a campus where few students had contact with Mexican-descended communities.¹⁵ As evidence of the possibility that citizenship might not determine ascriptions of foreignness, note that Puerto Rican students were counted in the CFRFS census of foreign students as of 1946 because though they were “politically U.S. citizens,” the report’s authors felt it was worth “having in mind distinctions of cultural background.”¹⁶ Still, Mexican-descended and others of Latin American heritage were not the most extreme case in this regard: in the 1930s, the CFRFS tabulated the presence of Asian Americans, admitting that they were US citizens, but they did not list numbers for students who were descendants of other immigrant groups.¹⁷ Clearly, “foreignness” was more than a legal status and was eminently racialized in this time period (and still today, in many ways).

With these caveats, the CFRFS and IIE data remains invaluable for getting a sense of the changing magnitude of Mexican student migration over time. Even if they left students uncounted and perhaps included students who were US citizens, their censuses capture the mobility of many privately funded students from Mexico whose stories are harder to track because rich archival sources tend to come from scholarship-granting institutions. This is also the only available historical data that specifically captures Mexican student migration. Mexican institutions did not attempt to produce their own counts of outbound student migration until very recently.¹⁸

In addition to quantifying the presence of foreign students in the United States, the CFRFS and the IIE also requested information from universities about their foreign students and included this in their annual reports: sex, age, funding source, and area of study, for example. Much of this data was not disaggregated by country, or at least not consistently. Of course, numbers could be inaccurate for the same methodological reasons listed above, but this data is still of interest. We can track the proportion of Mexican women students between 1935 and 1973 using data from *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (through 1948) and “Open Doors” (to 1973).

TABLE 3 Mexican Students Enrolled in US Colleges and Universities, 1913–2023

Year	Mexican Students
1913	223
1914	no data
1915	no data
1916	no data
1917	no data
1918	no data
1919	260
1920	no data
1921	319
1922	244

(Continued)

TABLE 3 *Continued*

Year	Mexican Students
1923	232
1924	198
1925	201
1926	188
1927	211
1928	269
1929	271
1930	315
1931	343
1932	298
1933	236
1934	212
1935	186
1936	185
1937	209
1938	222
1939	198
1940	244
1941	257
1942	358
1943	378
1944	no data
1945	364
1946	510
1947	631
1948	704
1949	825
1950	871
1951	1,185
1952	no data
1953	1,288
1954	1,247
1955	1,303
1956	1,358
1957	1,305

TABLE 3 *Continued*

Year	Mexican Students
1958	1,372
1959	1,356
1960	1,490
1961	1,080
1962	1,189
1963	1,312
1964	1,370
1965	1,463
1966	1,855
1967	2,009
1968	2,031
1969	2,501
1970	2,689
1971	2,501
1972	3,054
1973	3,586
1974	4,000
1975	4,620
1976	6,450
1977	5,170
1978	6,400
1979	5,650
1980	6,730
1981	7,890
1982	7,260
1983	5,600
1984	5,750
1985	5,460
1986	5,330
1987	6,170
1988	5,780
1989	6,540
1990	6,740
1991	6,650

(Continued)

TABLE 3 *Continued*

Year	Mexican Students
1992	7,581
1993	8,021
1994	9,003
1995	8,687
1996	8,975
1997	9,559
1998	9,641
1999	10,607
2000	10,670
2001	12,518
2002	12,801
2003	13,329
2004	13,063
2005	13,931
2006	13,826
2007	14,837
2008	14,850
2009	13,450
2010	13,713
2011	13,893
2012	14,199
2013	14,779
2014	17,052
2015	16,733
2016	16,835
2017	15,468
2018	15,229
2019	14,348
2020	12,986
2021	14,500
2022	14,541
2023	15,474

SOURCE: Data tabulated by the author from Capen, *Opportunities for Foreign Students at Colleges and Universities in the United States*, 57–58; CFRFS, *Directory of Foreign Students in the United States of America*; IIE, “Ninth Annual Report of the Director,” 16–18; CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1929–48); IIE, “Open Doors” (1948–2024).

TABLE 4 Mexican Students Enrolled in US Colleges and Universities by Gender, 1935–1973

Year	Total Mexican Students	Men	Women	Women as Percentage of Total
1935	186	165	21	11.3
1936	185	160	25	13.5
1937	209	192	17	8.1
1938	222	196	26	11.7
1939	198	171	27	13.6
1940	244	210	34	13.9
1941	257	206	51	19.8
1942	358	290	68	19.0
1943	378	305	73	19.3
1945	364	270	94	25.8
1946	510	377	133	26.1
1947	631	489	142	22.5
1948	704	521	183	26.0
1949	825	no data	no data	no data
1950	871	no data	no data	no data
1951	1,185	no data	no data	no data
1952	no data	no data	no data	no data
1953	1,288	1,027	261	20.3
1954	1,247	1,045	202	16.2
1955	1,303	1,072	231	17.7
1956	1,358	1,116	242	17.8
1957	1,305	1,089	202	15.5
1958	1,372	1,135	237	17.3
1959	1,356	1,159	197	14.5
1960	1,490	1,260	230	15.4
1961	1,080	806	274	25.4
1962	1,189	926	263	22.1
1963	1,312	1,034	287	21.9
1964	1,370	1,040	330	24.1
1965	1,463	1,129	334	22.8
1966	1,855	1,434	421	22.7
1967	2,009	1,562	447	22.2
1968	2,031	1,581	450	22.2

(Continued)

TABLE 4 *Continued*

Year	Total Mexican Students	Men	Women	Women as Percentage of Total
1969	2,501	1,912	552	22.1
1970	2,689	2,054	634	23.6
1971	2,501	1,811	633	25.3
1972	3,054	2,251	774	25.3
1973	3,586	2,691	928	25.9

SOURCE: Data tabulated by the author from CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1929–48); IIE, “Open Doors” (1948–74).

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ON INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE INVESTIGACIÓN CIENTÍFICA COMMITTEE MEMBERS, 1970

This table organizes information on the heads of committees created by the Instituto who laid the groundwork for Conacyt. The “Mexican Education” column identifies the Mexican institutions where the individual trained, and the “Foreign Education” column lists any universities attended outside of Mexico. Sources for each individual are indicated in the notes. The following abbreviations are used.

- Cinvestav: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politécnico Nacional
- ENA: Escuela Nacional de Agricultura
- IPN: Instituto Politécnico Nacional
- ITAM: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México
- MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- UNAM: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

TABLE 5 Biographical Data of Committee Heads, Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, 1970

Name	Committee	Mexican Education	Foreign Education	Professional Role, 1970	Institutional Affiliation, 1970
Acosta Velasco, Ricardo ¹	Agricultural Science and Forestry	ENA	none	Undersecretary of Agriculture	Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería
Alba Andrade, Fernando ²	Physical Science	UNAM	MIT	Director, Instituto de Física	UNAM
Ayala Castañares, Agustín ³	Marine Science	UNAM	Stanford	Director, Instituto de Biología	UNAM
Carrillo Castro, Alejandro ⁴	Administrative Structures	UNAM	none	Technical Secretary, Comisión de Administración Pública	Secretaría de la Presidencia
Casas Campillo, Carlos ⁵	Biological Science	IPN	none	Research Professor, Head of the Biochemical Engineering Department, Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Biológicas	IPN
Cetina Rosado, Raúl ⁶	Chemical Science	Universidad de Yucatán; UNAM		Researcher; Head of the Physics-Chemistry Department, Instituto de Química	UNAM
Díaz Arias, Julián ⁷	Development	IPN; UNAM		Adjunct Director	Nacional Financiera, S.A.
Díaz de Cossío, Roger ⁸	Engineering Science	UNAM	U. of Illinois	Science Coordinator	UNAM

(Continued)

TABLE 5 *Continued*

Name	Committee	Mexican Education	Foreign Education	Professional Role, 1970	Institutional Affiliation, 1970
Dovalí Jaime, Antonio ⁹	Energy Resources	UNAM	none	Director	Instituto Mexicano del Petróleo
González Casanova, Pablo ¹⁰	Social Science	UNAM; Colegio de México	Université de Paris	Rector	UNAM
Grabinsky Asz, Nathan ¹¹	Technological Applications and Industrial Development	unknown	unknown	Director of Industrial Research	Banco de México
Herrera, Ismael ¹²	Earth Science	UNAM	Brown	Director of the Instituto de Geofísica	UNAM
Ímaz Jahnke, Carlos ¹³	Mathematical Science	UNAM	University of Michigan	Professor in the Mathematics Department	Cinvestav
Massieu Helguera, Guillermo ¹⁴	Education	IPN	Oxford	Director General	Instituto Politécnico Nacional
Méndez Docurro, Eugenio ¹⁵	Directorship	IPN	Harvard	Secretary of Comunicaciones y Transportes	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes
Petricioli Iurbide, Gustavo ¹⁶	Economics	ITAM	Yale	Director General of Fiscal Studies and International Affairs	Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público
Valdés Gámez, Remigio ¹⁷	Communication and Control Science	UNAM	Princeton	Director of the Centro de Investigaciones Estadísticas y Cómputo Electrónico	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes

(Continued)

TABLE 5 Continued

Name	Committee	Mexican Education	Foreign Education	Professional Role, 1970	Institutional Affiliation, 1970
Zubirán, Salvador ¹⁸	Biomedical Science	UNAM	Harvard	Director	Instituto Nacional de la Nutrición
¹ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 310; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 7.					
² Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 254; Ortiz Salazar, “¿Quién es Fernando Alba?”					
³ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 333; Mendoza de Flores, “Trayectoria científica de Agustín Ayala-Castañares.”					
⁴ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 251; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 161; “Biografía,” Dr. Alejandro Carrillo Castro, accessed December 10, 2018, http://alejandrocarrillocastro.com/biografia/ .					
⁵ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 268; “Carlos Casas Campillo,” Colegio Nacional, accessed December 10, 2018, http://colnal.mx/members/carlos-casas-campillo .					
⁶ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 262; Romo de Vivar, “Dr. Raúl Remigio Cetina Rosado (1920–1999).”					
⁷ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 250; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 266.					
⁸ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 327; Banco de México, <i>Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios</i> , 106; Benítez Escudero, “Roger Díaz de Cossío.”					
⁹ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 150; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 277.					
¹⁰ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 274; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 402–3.					
¹¹ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 335.					
¹² Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, 315; “Dr. Ismael Herrera Revilla. Datos personales,” Geofísica UNAM, accessed December 10, 2018, http://mmc.igeofcu.unam.mx/iherrera/ .					
¹³ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 252; “Semblanza Biográfica del Dr. Carlos Imaz Jahmke,” Matemáticos en México, accessed December 10, 2018, http://matematicos.matem.unam.mx/matematicos-i-p/matematicos-i-p/imaz-j-carlos/451-semblanza-biografica-del-dr-carlos-imaz-jahmke .					
¹⁴ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 251; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 612.					
¹⁵ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 626–27.					
¹⁶ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, 249; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 656–57.					
¹⁷ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 328; “Remigio Valdés Gámez, Maestro y figura,” Comité Interamericano de Educación Matemática, accessed December 10, 2018, https://ciaem-reclumate.org/ciaem/?q=es/node/21 .					
¹⁸ Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, <i>Política nacional</i> , 301; Camp, <i>Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009</i> , 1032–33.					

APPENDIX 3

CONACYT BECARIOS IN 1974

In 1974, the Mexican newspaper *Excélsior* published a directory of 439 becarios who recently had been awarded scholarships. Across several pages, the text listed each becario's name, Mexican alma mater, destination university, degree program, area of study, and country destination. Research assistant Daniela Shia-Sevilla (Smith College, Class of 2021) captured this raw data, and I analyzed it. This appendix includes tables with some of this information, and the full data set is available on request. Table 6 shows the study destinations for becarios; table 7 (an expanded version of table 2) shows numbers of women and men in each area of study, as well as the percentage of all women and men specializing in that field.

TABLE 6 Study Destinations of Conacyt Becarios, 1974

Destination	Number of Becarios
Domestic (Mexico)	157
United States	139
United Kingdom	78
France	34
Europe, other	14
Americas, other	16
Elsewhere	1
Total	439

SOURCE: Data set created from "439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior," *Excélsior*, August 12, 1974, BLT-AE-Mo4542 (1974). Data entry by Daniela Shia-Sevilla, analysis by the author.

TABLE 7 Areas of Study by Gender Among Conacyt Becarios, 1974

Field of Study	Total Becarios	Women	%Women	Men	%Men
Operations, Planning, and Industrial Research	70	6	7.3	64	17.9
Social Sciences	47	15	18.3	32	9.0
Chemistry and Chemical Engineering	44	17	20.7	27	7.6
Physical Sciences	40	5	6.1	35	9.8
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	32	1	1.2	31	8.7
Agricultural Sciences	31	4	4.9	27	7.6
Other Engineering	27	0	0.0	27	7.6
Health and Medical Sciences	27	13	15.9	14	3.9
Biological Sciences	25	6	7.3	19	5.3
Administration	22	0	0.0	22	6.2
Metallurgy	20	1	1.2	19	5.3
Library Science	19	10	12.2	9	2.5
Computer Science	18	1	1.2	17	4.8
Mathematics and Statistics	12	2	2.4	10	2.8
Other	5	1	1.2	4	1.1
Total	439	82	100.0	357	100.0

SOURCE: Data set created from "439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior," *Excelsior*, August 12, 1974, BLT-AE-Mo4542 (1974). Data entry by Daniela Shia-Sevilla, analysis by the author.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. “Primeros becados a EE.UU,” *El Nacional*, October 25, 1942; “Mexicanos becados,” *Novedades*, October 25, 1942, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 59, Decimal file 1940, box 3836 (hereafter NARA-RG59-1940-3836).

2. G. S. Messersmith, US Ambassador to Mexico, to Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), October 28, 1942, NARA-RG59-1940-3836.

3. The standard periodization is usually Porfiriato (1876–1911), Revolution/Post-Revolution (1910–40), Mexican Miracle (1940–70), and a harder to name, still-understudied period of 1970s state ballooning followed by crisis and then neoliberalism through the end of the century. For a thoughtful argument about the crucial decade 1945–55, see Paul Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico: The Birth of a Strange Dictatorship* (Yale University Press, 2021); and for a key book on this last period, see Louise E. Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico’s Middle Classes After 1968* (Stanford University Press, 2013).

4. The history of international scholarships is still a relatively new area of inquiry. For a definition of scholarships that emphasizes mobility with “some form of learning as the primary goal,” see Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith, “Introduction: Conceptualizing the History of International Scholarship Programs (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries),” in *Global Exchanges: Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World*, ed. Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith (Berghahn Books, 2018), 2, 7.

5. On the Rhodes scheme, see Tamson Pietsch and Meng-Hsuan Chou, “The Politics of Scholarly Exchange: Taking the Long View on the Rhodes Scholarships,” in Tournès and Scott-Smith, *Global Exchanges*, 33–61. On US philanthropic internationalists and the US Department of State’s rather late entry into the scholarship game, see Liping Bu, *Making the World Like Us: Education, Cultural Expansion, and the American Century* (Praeger, 2003).

6. On Latin American students in the Soviet Union, see Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism After Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America*

During the Cold War (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 191–229. I found a list of 90 Mexican students enrolled at Moscow’s Patrice Lumumba University in the mid-1960s. Embajada de México Moscú, “Lista de mexicanos estudiantes de la Universidad ‘Patricio Lumumba,’” n.d., Archivo de la Embajada de México en la URSS (AEMURS), legajo 42, exp. 9. For works calling for a more expansive geography of Mexico’s connectivity relating to science and expertise beyond US and Western European networks, see Gabriela Soto Laveaga, “Largo Dislocare: Connecting Microhistories to Remap and Recenter Histories of Science,” *History and Technology* 34, no. 1 (January 2018): 21–30; Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Raúl Necochea López, eds., *Peripheral Nerve: Health and Medicine in Cold War Latin America* (Duke University Press, 2020); Gabriela Soto Laveaga, “Cold War Mexico in a Time of ‘Wonder Drugs,’” in Birn and Necochea López, *Peripheral Nerve*, 86–106.

7. Tournès and Scott-Smith, “Introduction,” 2–3, 8. A powerful invitation to take up that critical approach directed to diplomatic historians is Paul A. Kramer, “Is the World Our Campus? International Students and US Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (2009): 775–806.

8. An important volume bringing together new research on Latin American academic exchange is Sebastián Rivera Mir, ed., *Historias entrelazadas: El intercambio académico en el siglo XX: México, Estados Unidos, América Latina* (Colegio Mexiquense, 2020); see also Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism After Stalin*.

9. The emblematic example in English is Sarah L. Babb, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton University Press, 2001). Rich recent examples showing the role of the Rockefeller Foundation in shaping Mexican agronomy are Diana Alejandra Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional: Itinerarios de los becarios en Ciencias Agrícolas de la Fundación Rockefeller en México, 1940–1980* (Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora and Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2024); Anne-Emanuelle Birn, *Marriage of Convenience: Rockefeller International Health and Revolutionary Mexico* (University of Rochester Press, 2006).

10. Richard Cándida Smith, *Improvised Continent: Pan-Americanism and Cultural Exchange* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Elizabeth Schwall, “Coordinating Movements: The Politics of Cuban-Mexican Dance Exchanges, 1959–1983,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 97, no. 4 (November 2017): 681–716; Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Good Neighbor Empires: Children and Cultural Capital in the Americas* (Brill, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004709973>.

11. Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexico’s Mandarins: Crafting a Power Elite for the Twenty-First Century* (University of California Press, 2002), 153–54.

12. E.g., “Mexico’s Harvard Man: Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 1982, A6.

13. Eli de Gortari, *La ciencia en la historia de México*, 2nd ed. (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016), 550–51.

14. Camp, *Mexico’s Mandarins*, 204–7.

15. Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (SR Books, 2001), 178–80.

16. For an exhaustive reference on biographical data on Mexicans in politics, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 4th ed. (University of Texas Press,

2011); for the results of prosopographical analyses and interviews that went into creating that reference, see Camp, *Mexico's Mandarins*. Cosío Villegas and other foreign-educated Mexicans feature prominently in Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (University of California Press, 2020).

17. Ruy Alonso Rebolledo, "¿Quiénes integrarán el gabinete de Andrés Manuel López Obrador como presidente de México?" *El Economista*, July 1, 2018, <https://www.economista.com.mx/politica/Quienes-integraran-el-gabinete-de-Andres-Manuel-Lopez-Obrador-como-presidente-de-Mexico-20180701-0255.html> (accessed February 20, 2019).

18. She did research there while pursuing her doctorate at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM). Roberto Ortiz de Zárate Arce, "Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo," CIDOB, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, October 1, 2024, <https://www.cidob.org/lider-politico/claudia-sheinbaum-pardo>.

19. This study covers Latin American students in general, noting that Mexicans were one of the largest contingents among this group. Rupprecht does not provide nation-specific totals. In 1970, there were "964 Latin Americans" enrolled. Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism After Stalin*, 196–206.

20. Adriana Minor García, *Cruzar fronteras: Movilizaciones científicas y relaciones interamericanas en la trayectoria de Manuel Sandoval Vallarta (1917–1942)* (UNAM, Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte; Colegio de Michoacán, 2019), 42.

21. Thornton, *Revolution in Development*; see also Babb, *Managing Mexico*, 84–85.

22. Minor García, *Cruzar fronteras*, 30.

23. Birn and Necochea López, *Peripheral Nerve*; Andra B. Chastain and Timothy W. Lorek, eds., *Itineraries of Expertise: Science, Technology, and the Environment in Latin America's Long Cold War* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020).

24. His remains were interred in Mexico's Rotunda de las Personas Ilustres, where he rests among just a handful of other scientists. He is remembered, too, at the scientific and educational institutions where he made a mark. Minor García, *Cruzar fronteras*, 17–24, 153–74.

25. The key text that inspired many scholars to focus on cultural hegemony is Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Duke University Press, 1994); of many books that fit into this historiographical moment, the one that most influenced me is Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (University of Arizona Press, 1997).

26. See, e.g., Jaime M. Pensado and Enrique C. Ochoa, eds., *México Beyond 1968: Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies* (University of Arizona Press, 2018).

27. For this definition and further discussion, see Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 2–4; see also Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, "The Paradoxes of Revolution," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (Duke University Press, 2014), 1–43.

28. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 219.

29. Benjamin T. Smith, "Building a State on the Cheap: Taxation, Social Movements, and Politics," in Gillingham and Smith, *Dictablanda*, 260, 270.

30. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 190–91.

31. Thomas G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960* (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 144–66; Alberto García, *Abandoning Their Beloved Land: The Politics of Bracero Migration in Mexico* (University of California Press, 2023); Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 105–40.

32. Besides the most egregious corruption taking place in municipal, not federal, governments, what may have helped mitigate fallout from this was the possibility of unauthorized migration: rejected as braceros, Mexicans could still make their way north and find work. Corruption could also go the other way: aspiring braceros used fraudulent documents because the selection criteria struck them as unfair. García, *Abandoning Their Beloved Land*, 10, 20–22, 139.

33. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 204–5.

34. Pensado and Ochoa, *México Beyond 1968*. For an exception, see Sara Minerva Luna Elizarrarás, “Los universitarios: Expectativas de movilidad social en los ‘años dorados’ de la UNAM, 1954–1966,” *Trashumante: Revista Americana de Historia Social*, no. 18 (2021): 236–59.

35. Richard Ivan Jobs and David M. Pomfret, “The Transnationality of Youth,” in *Transnational Histories of Youth in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Ivan Jobs and David M. Pomfret (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1–7.

36. John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–Present*, Expanded student ed. (Academic Press, 1981), x.

37. For works focusing on Mexican student politics (mainly domestic in orientation), see Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Pensado and Ochoa, *México Beyond 1968*; Tanalís Padilla, *Unintended Lessons of Revolution: Student Teachers and Political Radicalism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Duke University Press, 2021). For a biography that addresses both parental and generational-cohort influences on one youth, see Mary Kay Vaughan, *Portrait of a Young Painter: Pepe Zúñiga and Mexico City’s Rebel Generation* (Duke University Press, 2015).

38. Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (University of California Press, 2014); Miroslava Chávez-García, *Migrant Longing: Letter Writing Across the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016); see also Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

39. Some social scientists use the term “student migrant” or “student migration.” Russell King and Parvati Raghuram, “International Student Migration: Mapping the Field and New Research Agendas,” *Population, Space and Place* 19, no. 2 (2013): 127–37; for an essay considering what migration histories, and even the label “migrant,” might offer the study of student mobility, see Rachel Grace Newman, “Pensar el intercambio académico como un flujo migratorio: El caso de los estudiantes mexicanos en Estados Unidos,” in Rivera Mir, *Historias entrelazadas*, 41–53; Sandoval Vallarta’s biographer, Minor García, *Cruzar fronteras*.

40. Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Dover Publications, 1971), 33.

41. Harzig and Hoerder write, “Some societies treat migrant human beings like body parts, commodified as instruments of work: as ‘hands’ or ‘braceros’ (arms) rather than as hearts and heads.” Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, *What Is Migration History?* (Polity, 2009), 4.

42. As historian Nancy Green explains, elites “have been largely absent from immigration history” because that field has been long “defined by mass labor migration.” However, elite migrants’ trajectories and behaviors can teach us about the ways that social class shapes migration. Nancy L. Green, “Elite Migration: Revisiting Class and Mobility,” *Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter* 46, no. 1 (May 2014): 1, 6.

43. Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916–39* (University of Illinois Press, 2008), 134–42; Julie M. Weise, *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 35.

44. These observations draw from A. Ricardo López and Barbara Weinstein, “We Shall Be All: Toward a Transnational History of the Middle Class,” in *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History of the Middle Class*, ed. A. Ricardo López and Barbara Weinstein (Duke University Press, 2012), 1–25; David S. Parker, “Taxonomy, Identity, Mode of Being, or Political Project? Epistemologies of ‘Middle Class’ in Latin America Since 1948,” in *The Middle Classes in Latin America: Subjectivities, Practices, and Genealogies*, ed. Mario Barbosa Cruz, A. Ricardo López, and Claudia Stern (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 384–404.

45. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 3.

46. Barbara Weinstein, “Commentary on Part I: The Making of the Middle Class and Practices of Modernity,” in Weinstein and López, *The Making of the Middle Class*, 108.

47. Soledad Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México: La querrela escolar, 1959–1963* (Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, 1988), 12–13.

48. Brian Owensby, “Epilogue: ‘Was It Worth Coming?’: The Global Drama of Middle-Class Lives in Latin America,” in Cruz et al., *The Middle Classes in Latin America*, 448.

49. Manuel Gamio, *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant: Autobiographic Documents* (Dover Publications, 1972), 190–94.

50. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 14; Owensby, “The Global Drama,” 445.

51. Jobs and Pomfret, “The Transnationality of Youth,” 10.

52. Susie S. Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker: Middle-Class Identity and Female Consciousness in Mexico, 1890–1950* (University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 14–17.

53. Historian of migration Nancy Green similarly uses “elite” to encompass the mobility of both the wealthy and the middle class. See Green, “Elite Migration,” 1.

54. For a case study of a single family whose various branches encompassed members of the “bourgeoisie and some middle-class sectors,” see Larissa Adler de Lomnitz and Marisol Pérez-Lizaur, *A Mexican Elite Family, 1820–1980: Kinship, Class, and Culture*, trans. Cinna Lomnitz (Princeton University Press, 1987) esp. 231, 236.

55. This approach aligns with the “triangulation” strategy described in Parker, “Epistemologies of ‘Middle Class,’” 400.

56. There are some exceptions. For Rockefeller Foundation scholarship recipients who were Mexican citizens of Japanese descent, see Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 126–38, 147–48, 156–58; on a Purépecha student who studied abroad three times between the 1940s and 1960s. see Rachel Grace Newman, “Transnational

Ambitions: Student Migrants and the Making of a National Future in Twentieth-Century Mexico” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2019), 196–201; see also Carlos García Mora, “Un etnólogo purépecha entre las antropologías mexicana y estadounidense,” in *La hechicería en Charapan, Michoacán*, by Pablo Velásquez Gallardo (Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2000), 9–108.

57. Andra B. Chastain and Timothy W. Lorek, Introduction to *Itineraries of Expertise*, 19.

58. Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (University of Texas Press, 1985), 81.

59. Institute of International Education, “Country and Area Facts and Figures 2024: Mexico,” Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, 2004, https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/student-mobility/.

60. Alma Maldonado, ed., *Patlani: Encuesta mexicana de movilidad internacional estudiantil, 2014/2015 y 2015/2016* (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, 2017).

61. Rivera Mir, *Historias entrelazadas*.

62. Sebastián Rivera Mir, “La experiencia de los centroamericanos becados en México (1922–1928): Entre carencias, vida académica y propaganda revolucionaria,” *Latinoamérica: Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 55 (2012): 185–214.

1. MEXICAN ELITES, EDUCATION, AND MOBILITY IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD, 1876–1910

1. The figure is for the period 1880–1912. Bazant notes that this count does not include some individuals who received scholarships, so the total is probably higher. But the small scale of the program is the important thing here. Mílada Bazant, “Estudiantes y profesores mexicanos en el extranjero, 1880–1912,” in *Cátedras y catedráticos en la historia de las universidades e instituciones de educación superior en México*, ed. María de Lourdes Alvarado and Leticia Pérez Puente (UNAM, 2008), 2:333–34, 350.

2. Engracia Loyo and Anne Staples, “Fin de siglo y de un régimen,” in *Historia mínima: La educación en México*, ed. Pablo Escalante and Dorothy Tanck Estrada (Colegio de México, 2010), 149–50; Mílada Bazant, “La enseñanza y la práctica de la ingeniería durante el Porfiriato,” *Historia Mexicana* 33, no. 3 (1984): 258–59, 281–83.

3. There is no source cited for this claim. Still, if it is only an impression, it is a telling one about how it was not unusual to study abroad during this era. Mílada Bazant, “Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero: El caso de los hermanos Urquidi,” *Historia Mexicana* 36, no. 4 (April 1987): 739.

4. Madame Frances Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (University of California Press, 1982), 236–37.

5. Beatriz Colombi, ed., *Cosmópolis: Del flâneur al globe-trotter* (Eterna Cadencia Editora, 2010); Ingrid Elizabeth Fey and Karen Racine, eds., *Strange Pilgrimages: Exile, Travel, and National Identity in Latin America, 1800–1990’s* (Scholarly Resources, 2000); Ana Rosa Suárez Argüello, “Imaginar la patria en la distancia: Cuatro viajeros mexicanos en Estados Unidos a fines de la primera república federal,” in *La construcción del discurso nacional en México, un anhelo persistente (siglos XIX y XX)*, ed. Nicole Girón (Instituto Mora, 2007), 71–107.

6. Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain, Volume 1: A Critical Edition*, ed. Vera M. Kutzinski and Ottmar Ette (University of Chicago Press, 2019), 278.
7. Anne Staples, "El entusiasmo por la independencia," in Escalante and Estrada, *Historia mínima*, 110.
8. Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, 275.
9. Karen Racine, "'The Childhood Shows the Man': Latin American Children in Great Britain, 1790–1830," *The Americas* 72, no. 2 (April 2015): 282.
10. Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico*, 236–37.
11. Bazant, "Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero," 739.
12. Racine, "'The Childhood Shows the Man,'" 287–91; quote on 290. Racine notes the emphasis is in the original.
13. Georgetown would enroll over forty Mexicans by 1871. See "Record of the Alumni of Georgetown, 1823–1871," University Archives, Special Collections, Georgetown University, fols. 228, 230.
14. Henri Minion, "Community in Diversity: A History of International Students at Georgetown University, 1789–1860" (BA thesis, Georgetown University, 2010), 73; Brian Hamnett, "Mexican Conservatives, Clericals, and Soldiers: The 'Traitor' Tomás Mejía Through Reform and Empire, 1855–1867," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20, no. 2 (2001): 197.
15. Racine, "The Childhood Shows the Man," 306; Charles A. Hale, "Alamán, Antuñano y la continuidad del liberalismo," *Historia Mexicana* 11, no. 2 (October 1961): 231.
16. César González Gómez, "Un estudiante de Harvard en 1858: El primer beisbolista mexicano en Estados Unidos," VICE Sports, April 3, 2017, <https://www.vice.com/es/article/bm9ap8/un-estudiante-de-harvard-en-1858-el-primer-beisbolista-mexicano-en-estados-unidos>.
17. It is uncertain whether Evaristo Madero attended a formal school or was educated by private tutors. Manuel Guerra de Luna, *Los Madero, la saga liberal: Historia del siglo XIX* (Editorial Siglo Bicentenario, 2009), 321, 471, 496.
18. Víctor M. Macías-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game: Informal Empire and the Mexican Experience at Stonyhurst College, 1805–1920," in *The Victorian World*, ed. Martin Hewitt (Routledge, 2012), 692–94.
19. Macías-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game," 700.
20. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, *Annual Register of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1875–76* (Wm. H. Young, 1875), 4, 16.
21. "Mexican Matters," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 22, 1878, 2.
22. E.g., Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, president, who was the son of a Spaniard. Friedrich Katz, "The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato, 1867–1910," in *Mexico Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 62.
23. Macías-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game," 695.
24. Víctor Manuel Macías González, "Le capital culturel et social de la communauté aristocratique mexicaine à Paris, 1850–1914," in *Les Français au Mexique XVIIIe–XXIe siècle: Savoir, réseaux et représentations*, ed. Javier Pérez Siller and Jean-Marie Lassus (L'Harmattan, 2015), 2:217.
25. Mark Wasserman, *Pesos and Politics: Business, Elites, Foreigners, and Government in Mexico, 1854–1940* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 6, 13–15.

26. Dates of birth and marriage and father's profession from Seminario Mexicano de Genealogía, "Genealogía de Julio Pani Letechipía," Geneanet, <https://gw.geneanet.org/sanc hiz?lang=es&n=pani+letechipia&oc=o&p=julio> (accessed October 20, 2022).

27. Alberto J. Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos: Exclusivamente para mis hijos* (Editorial Stylo, 1945), 3–7.

28. Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War* (University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 171.

29. Juan Mora-Torres, *The Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo León, 1848–1910* (University of Texas Press, 2001), 201.

30. Wasserman, *Pesos and Politics*, 7–13.

31. This claim seems reasonable, although we lack quantitative evidence for it. Bazant, "Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero," 739–41.

32. "Mexican Matters," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 22, 1878, 2.

33. "Mexico Is Full of Vim," *Chicago Tribune*, November 13, 1891, 10.

34. Loyo and Staples, "Fin de siglo y de un régimen," 147.

35. Jaime Pensado, "Between Cultured Young Men and Mischievous Children: Youth, Transgression, and Protest in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 28.

36. Roderic Ai Camp, *Political Recruitment Across Two Centuries: Mexico, 1884–1991* (University of Texas Press, 1995), 90.

37. Loyo and Staples, "Fin de siglo y de un régimen," 147.

38. Staples, "El entusiasmo por la independencia," 118–19; Justo Sierra, prominent statesman of the Porfirian era, attended this school in the early 1860s. Alfonso de María y Campos, "Porfirianos prominentes: Orígenes y años de juventud de ocho integrantes del grupo de los Científicos, 1846–1876," *Historia Mexicana* 134, no. 4 (1985): 624.

39. José Díaz Covarrubias, cited in Staples, "El entusiasmo por la independencia," 125.

40. Loyo and Staples, "Fin de siglo y de un régimen," 150.

41. Camp, *Political Recruitment Across Two Centuries*, 59, 85.

42. Jacqueline Rice, "Beyond the Científicos: The Educational Background of the Porfirian Political Elite," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 297–300.

43. During the same years of his European sojourn, Limantour's younger brother attended an English school for disciplinary reasons, as mentioned above. De María y Campos, "Porfirianos prominentes," 636–41.

44. Macías-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game," 702–3.

45. Stanley R. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero: Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (Columbia University Press, 1955), 6, 14–15.

46. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero*, 9–15; Bazant, "Estudiantes y profesores mexicanos en el extranjero, 1880–1912," 339–42; for biographical data on members of the clan, see Guerra de Luna, *Los Madero, la saga liberal*, 526.

47. See, e.g., "Mexican Matters," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 22, 1878, 2; "Mexican Students as Interpreters," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 21, 1884, 3; "Fifteen Mexican Students," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 11, 1891, 5.

48. "To Die in a Hospital," *Augusta Chronicle*, August 1, 1890, 2; "Mexican Students: A Half Dozen Bright Fellows from Lehigh Capture the City," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 23, 1894, 2.

49. Moisés González Navarro, *Historia moderna de México. El Porfiriato: La vida social*, ed. Daniel Cosío Villegas (Editorial Hermés, 1957), 383.
50. For a report emphasizing a Mexican elite family's mobility as a sign of its great wealth, see "To Die in a Hospital," 2.
51. "Dovalos [*sic*] and Pani," *The New York Times*, January 19, 1888, 1.
52. "Yale Is Well Rid of Them," *The New York Times*, January 16, 1888, 5.
53. Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos*, 5–7.
54. Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos*, 19.
55. Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 52–53, 70–71.
56. Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 2010), 135.
57. Anne Staples, "Fortuna vs. estatus: La movilidad social en el México decimonónico," *Historia Mexicana* 65, no. 4 (260) (2016): 1754.
58. Bazant, "La enseñanza y la práctica de la ingeniería durante el Porfiriato," 262.
59. González Navarro, *Historia moderna de México. El Porfiriato: La vida social*, 649.
60. Porfirian adults condemned students' worrisome habits, "drug and alcohol consumption, déclassé sociability, and sex." Piccato finds that these proclivities, though, "did not undermine respectable identities." In fact, they helped establish elite youth's masculinity. Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 141–42.
61. Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 93–97.
62. Staples, "Fortuna vs. estatus."
63. De Maria y Campos, "Porfirianos prominentes," 637–38.
64. Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos*, 8.
65. Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos*, 11.
66. Pensado, "Between Cultured Young Men and Mischievous Children"; Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*.
67. Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion*, 136–44.
68. Bazant, "La enseñanza y la práctica de la ingeniería durante el Porfiriato," 278.
69. María del Carmen Collado and Laura Pérez Rosales, *Sara Pérez de Madero: Una mujer de la revolución* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2010), 10–11.
70. William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 91–97.
71. "A Half Dozen Bright Fellows from Lehigh."
72. White US Southerners' reactions to Mexicans varied through the twentieth century, with examples of both "racial exclusion" and "racial inclusion." Weise, *Corazón de Dixie*, 8.
73. "Brain Overtaxed by Study," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 4, 1897, 9.
74. Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Harvard University Press, 2017).
75. "Mexican Student Knocked Out," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 24, 1893, vol. 128, no. 55, p. 3.
76. "Students Are Skipping Out," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 14, 1903, 12.
77. Macias-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game," 698–700.
78. Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 86–88.

79. Ivón Padilla-Rodríguez, “‘Under Close Guard’: The Policing and Confinement of Refugee Minors in the US-Mexico Borderlands (1915–1929)” (Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Bogotá, 2024).

80. “Ficha: López Cotilla 525—Casa Pani,” *Revisiones de Guadalajara* (blog), May 9, 2013, <https://revisionesgdl.com/2013/05/09/ficha-lopez-cotilla-525-casa-pani/>.

81. “Brain Overtaxed by Study.”

82. “Held on Theft Charge,” *Washington Post*, July 6, 1909, 11.

83. Samuel Paul Capen, *Opportunities for Foreign Students at Colleges and Universities in the United States* (US Bureau of Education, Department of the Interior, 1915), 57–58.

2. SOVEREIGNTY, REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM, AND STUDY ABROAD, 1920–1940

1. To be sure, Obregón’s lack of formal education did not mean he was unlettered. His biographer emphasizes that Obregón “loved literature and became an avid reader,” although he spent much of his youth occupied with hands-on work. He was also employed for a time as a teacher. Jürgen Buchenau, *The Last Caudillo: Álvaro Obregón and the Mexican Revolution* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 34–35.

2. “Los propósitos del General Obregón en el ramo de Instrucción Pública,” *El Universal*, September 17, 1920, 9.

3. The rich historiography of education in this period is synthesized in Loyo, “La educación del pueblo”; for a landmark study analyzing two regional cases as well as national education policy, Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*.

4. Universidad Nacional de México, *El movimiento educativo en México* (Dirección de Talleres Gráficos, 1922), 6, 8.

5. Javier Garcadiago Dantán, *Rudos contra científicos: La Universidad Nacional durante la Revolución mexicana* (Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1996), 34.

6. Garcadiago Dantán, *Rudos contra científicos*, 395.

7. Venustiano Carranza, “Acuerdo del C. Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos sobre revalidación de títulos y grados universitarios,” March 1, 1919, Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (AHUNAM), Fondo Ezquiél A. Chávez, Sección Universidad, Subsección Rectoría, Serie Normas, box 3, file 13, document 3, fols. 1856–59.

8. Universidad Nacional de México, *Boletín de la Universidad: Órgano del Departamento Universitario y de Bellas Artes* 2, no. 1 (December 1919): 6–8.

9. See US Consul in Tampico to US Secretary of State, September 23, 1913, Columbia University, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Archives, Series III: Division of Intercourse and Education, box 494 (hereafter CU, RBML); and “Scholarships for Mexican Students,” *Mexican Review*, 1916, 12.

10. Bu, *Making the World like Us*.

11. Universidad Nacional de México, “Discurso leído por el Sr. Prof. D. Joaquín Palomo Rincón dando la bienvenida al Sr. Dr. R. B. Von Kleinsmid, Presidente de la Universidad de Arizona, 4 de junio de 1919,” *Boletín de la Universidad: Órgano del Departamento Universitario y de Bellas Artes* 2, no. 1 (December 1919): 67.

12. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Lorenzo Meyer, *The United States and Mexico* (University of Chicago Press, 1985), 127–29.

13. Individual colleges, as well as larger organizations like the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the American Association of University Women, offered free tuition or stipends to Latin American students. The Pan-American Union reported that 35 colleges had such an offer by 1916, rising to 64 in 1919. See “Colegios y universidades de los Estados Unidos que ofrecen instrucción gratuita para estudiantes de la América Latina,” *El Estudiante Latino-Americano*, November 1918; J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948* (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State, 1976), 48.

14. American Chamber of Commerce, *Plan for Interchange of Mexican-American Scholarships, City of Mexico, 1920–1921* (1920), 3–7.

15. From my analysis of data in Committee on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students (CFRFS), *Directory of Foreign Students in the United States of America* (CFRFS, 1919).

16. O. K. Davis, ed., *Official Report of the Eighth National Foreign Trade Convention* (National Foreign Trade Convention Headquarters, 1921), 349–56.

17. Peairs sent a telegram to the White House after his meeting with President Obregón and offered a “full report” to President Warren Harding if it was desired. An officer at the State Department’s Division of Mexican Affairs worried that “such an endorsement coming from the President at this juncture would be interpreted in Mexico City as foreshadowing an early resumption of official relations between the two countries.” See Will A. Peairs to George B. Christian Jr., White House, Washington, DC, April 23, 1921; Memorandum from the Division of Mexican Affairs to the Secretary of State, April 23, 1921, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal file, box 7542.

18. For an early report that uncritically reproduced Peairs’s ideas about the value of student exchange, see “Las relaciones comerciales son los verdaderos lazos de unión y de amistad entre los pueblos,” *Excelsior*, February 18, 1920, 1.

19. “El Sr. Presidente recibió ayer a Mr. Will A. Peairs.” *El Universal*, April 13, 1921, 1. The future minister of public education, José Vasconcelos, then rector of the Universidad Nacional, also attended the meeting. See “El Señor Will A. Peairs no descansa en su afán de que el intercambio de alumnos entre México y Estados Unidos sea un hecho,” *Excelsior*, April 13, 1921, 7.

20. Davis, *Official Report of the Eighth National Foreign Trade Convention*, 354–55.

21. Vázquez and Meyer, *The United States and Mexico*, 129.

22. “Menos teorizantes y más hombres prácticos,” *Excelsior*, April 19, 1921, 3; “Volvamos los ojos a la tierra,” *El Universal*, April 19, 1921, 3.

23. IIE, “Eighth Annual Report of the Director” (1927), 34.

24. Gabino A. Palma, “Los estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero,” *El Universal*, April 22, 1921, 14.

25. Gabino A. Palma, “Poemas neoyorkinos,” New York Public Library, NPC p.v. 241, no. 3 (1921).

26. Palma, “Los estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero.”

27. Querido Moheno, *Cosas del Tío Sam: Impresiones de viaje* (Talleres Tipográficos de “Revista Mexicana,” 1916).

28. Querido Moheno, “Ellos y nosotros,” *El Universal*, April 25, 1921, 3. The editors who published Moheno’s piece noted below the text that they disagreed with him “on several points.”

29. Moheno, “Ellos y nosotros.”

30. “Una humorada del Sr. Moheno,” *Excélsior*, April 26, 1921, 3.
31. Davis, *Official Report of the Eighth National Foreign Trade Convention*, 353.
32. Liping Bu notes that the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico City “authorized the IIE to administer the scholarships that it had established for Mexican students.” See Bu, *Making the World Like Us*, 59.
33. Vázquez and Meyer, *The United States and Mexico*, 130–33.
34. For example, a 1923 scholarship to study mining at Yale would be awarded on the basis of the applicant’s performance on the entrance examination administered by the Yale Club in Mexico City, and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) agreed to finance “transportation from Mexico City to the border.” Authorities at the Universidad Nacional selected the awardees for a scholarship to attend Pomona College’s summer school in 1926. “John Hays Hammond Endows Mexican Scholarship at Yale,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 1923, 1; “Mexican Scholarship Winners Will Study American Methods,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 6, 1926, 1.
35. Palma, “Los estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero.”
36. Ramón Beteta, “Lo que enseña a los estudiantes mexicanos una universidad americana,” *La Nueva Democracia* (New York), March 1, 1924, 7.
37. Ignacio García Téllez, “Declaraciones del rector,” *Revista de la Universidad*, t. I, no. 5, March 1931, 430–31, AHUNAM, Colección Memoria Universitaria.
38. “Informe del rector al H. Consejo Universtario,” *Revista de la Universidad*, t. II, no. 8, June 1931, 152–53, AHUNAM, Colección Memoria Universitaria.
39. Acting Secretary of State W. R. Castle Jr. to Mexican Chargé d’Affaires Téllez, August 8, 1931, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1931*, ed. Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler Dennett (US Department of State, Office of the Historian, 1946), 2:718–23, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1931v02>.
40. Abraham Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy: The Shooting of the Mexican Students, 1931* (Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1987), 2.
41. “Mexican Students Hazed by Notre Dame Collegians,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 21, 1914, 1; “Mexican Students Dipped,” *Morning Oregonian*, April 21, 1914.
42. *The Columbian* (Columbia University, 1915), 356.
43. Commission on Survey of Foreign Students in the United States of America, W. Reginald Wheeler King, Henry Hall, and Alexander Barkalow Davidson, *The Foreign Student in America* (Association Press, 1925), 236.
44. Anastasio Guzmán to José A. Cuevas, August 1, 1928, Archivo Histórico del Palacio de Minería (AHPM), Fondo Escuela Nacional de Ingenieros (ENI), box XI, folder 19.
45. Between 1911 and 1920, 124 Mexicans were lynched by Anglo mobs; 10, during the next decade. See William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 423, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2003.0169>.
46. Carrigan and Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent,” 429.
47. These included comedian Will Rogers and media magnate William Randolph Hearst in the United States and journalist Nemesio García Naranjo in Mexico.
48. E.g., “Enérgicos comentarios de la prensa americana sobre el crimen en Ardmore, Okla.,” *El Universal*, June 11, 1931, 4. The murder was also of particular interest to the Mexican communities in the United States and the Anglo-American community in Mexico, as evidenced by coverage in Spanish-language papers in Texas and in the English-language section of Mexico City dailies.

49. Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 65.
50. Silvano Ramos and Ortega, *La Tragedia de Oklahoma*, Corridos y tragedias de la frontera, CD (Arhoolie Records, 1994).
51. "Manifestación de protesta por la muerte de los estudiantes," *El Universal*, June 12, 1931, sec. 2, p. 6.
52. "Funerales de los estudiantes asesinados en Ardmore, Okla.," *El Universal*, June 15, 1931, sec. 1, p. 8.
53. Abraham Hoffman's account of these events seeks to objectively reconstruct the crime and scandal, arguing that the facts of the case were obscured at the time precisely because of heightened diplomatic and media interest. To the extent that Hoffman identifies a broader significance to this story, it is as an indication of anti-Mexican discrimination and violence prevalent in the United States during the Great Depression. Hoffman states that the murder was "another insult [in] an already lengthy list of injuries" to the Mexican people, such as massive deportations, committed by the United States in this era. See Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 44, 65.
54. "La vergüenza de Ardmore," *Excelsior*, June 29, 1931, 5.
55. José Luis Velasco, "Themis está dolida," *Excelsior*, June 30, 1931, 5–6.
56. Dávila had previously worked in Mexico's immigration agency, and if his speech was any indication, he had strongly nationalist, even xenophobic tendencies. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 240–41.
57. Fernando and Guillermo Ortiz Rubio attended St. Benedict's College in Atchison, Kansas. "Mexican President's Sons at College," *Daily Reporter* (White Plains, NY), October 14, 1930, 18.
58. The editors of *El Universal*, the same newspaper that had reported on Dávila's speech, felt that the legislator had actually overlooked the gravest danger of sending Mexican students to the United States, a concern that had already been raised in the newspapers during the 1920s. The editors averred that most Mexicans educated abroad "floundered" once back in their homeland, where they had become "foreigners." While abroad, Mexican students lost contact with their social networks and lost touch with the professional realities of their country. See "Los peligros de la educación en el extranjero," *El Universal*, June 18, 1931, 3.
59. "La educación de mexicanos en E. Unidos," *El Universal*, June 17, 1931, 1.
60. Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 51.
61. "Oklahoma ofrecerá dos becas para jóvenes mexicanos," *El Universal*, December 4, 1931, 4.
62. "Oklahoma College to Assist Mexican," *Washington Post*, December 4, 1931, p. 7.
63. "¡Un puñado de oro a trueque de su sangre!" *El Universal*, December 5, 1931, 3.
64. "Las becas de Oklahoma, E.U.," *El Universal*, December 5, 1931, 1, 7.
65. Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 43.
66. "Las dos becas se rechazarán," *El Nacional*, December 11, 1931, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada (BLT), Archivos Económicos (AE), "Becas—México," M10015. Telegram from Nicéforo Guerrero Jr. (Private Secretary to President) to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, December 12, 1931, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Presidentes, Ortiz Rubio, folder 104 (1931).
67. In 1933, the US government paid \$15,000 to each of the families of the slain students. See Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 56.
68. Hoffman, *An Oklahoma Tragedy*, 47.
69. Vázquez and Meyer, *The United States and Mexico*, 146–47, 151.

70. Previously, in 1927, then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover lauded the benefits of student exchange between the countries of the hemisphere in a speech in New York City with many prominent Latin Americans in attendance, and he reiterated these calls once elected president during a Latin American goodwill tour. Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948*, 19–24, 69–70, 73.

71. Bu, *Making the World Like Us*, 146.

72. “Maltrato a mexicanos,” *El Universal*, August 15, 1934, 1.

73. Edward L. Reed, Chief of the Division of Mexican Affairs, to Julio Trens of Trens Agency, August 25, 1934, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal file, 1930–39, box 5058.

74. “Una protesta por las descortesías de Texas,” *El Universal*, August 25, 1934, 1.

75. “La huelga de protesta por las descortesías de Texas,” *El Universal*, August 28, 1934, 7.

76. A representative of the Fondo Estudiantil Mexicano obtained an offer of two scholarships for UNAM students to attend the University of Southern California and promises of work opportunities from the local chamber of commerce to allow a few more students to attend. “Dos becas para la universidad libre,” *Excelsior*, November 12, 1935, BLT-AE-“Becas—México”-M10015.

77. “Becas a los estudiantes,” *Excelsior*, December 29, 1936, BLT-AE-“Becas—México”-M10015.

78. Sociedad Estudiantil Socialista to Secretary of Educación Pública, June 1939, AGN, SEP, Subsecretaría, box 36829, folder 16.

79. “Establecerá la Universidad Nacional de México becas y concursos para los alumnos,” *Excelsior*, January 19, 1936, BLT-AE-“Becas—México”-M10015.

80. “Pensionados de asistencia a EE.UU.,” *El Nacional*, December 11, 1938, BLT-AE-“Becas—Estados Unidos”-M10007.

81. “Cinco becas dona el Banco Ejidal para estudiar en EE.UU.,” *El Nacional*, May 29, 1939, BLT-AE-“Becas—México”-M10015.

82. Rafael López, “Las becas de la Guggenheim [sic],” *El Nacional*, June 17, 1938, BLT-AE-“Becas—México”-M10015.

83. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 226–31.

84. Moheno, “Ellos y nosotros.”

3. INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS, MERIT, AND THE RIGHT TO A FAVOR, 1920–1940

1. Luciano Rosaldo to President Ortiz Rubio, December 4, 1931; Luciano Rosaldo to President Ortiz Rubio, December 5, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Ortiz Rubio, folder 104 (1931). For Felipe Benicio Rosaldo’s age, I use the birth date of 1915 for Felipe Rosaldo Gutiérrez on Ancestry.com, “U.S., Index to Alien Case Files, 1944–2003” (database online).

2. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 940–41.

3. Tina Hilgers, “Clientelism and Conceptual Stretching: Differentiating Among Concepts and Among Analytical Levels,” *Theory and Society* 40, no. 5 (September 2011): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-011-9152-6>.

4. For more on definitions of clientelism, see Rachel Grace Newman, “The Right to a Favor: International Scholarships, Clientelism, and the Class Politics of Merit in Post-Revolutionary Mexico,” *Journal of Social History* 56, no. 4 (June 2023): 828–55, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shac056>.

5. Héctor Mariscal to President Ortiz Rubio, ca. December 4, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Ortiz Rubio, folder 104 (1931).
6. Eutimio Calzado to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, August 28, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Ortiz Rubio, folder 104 (1931). This request was denied.
7. Jean Meyer, "Revolution and Reconstruction in the 1920s," in Bethell, *Mexico Since Independence*, 202–3.
8. See Rupert Hughes, "Keep an Eye on Mexico's Flappers!" *Baltimore Sun*, June 26, 1926, SM8.
9. Plutarco Elías Calles was of middle-class origin, descended from an elite Sonoran family but an illegitimate child raised by merchant relatives of middling means. He became a schoolteacher and eventually quit that line of work in search of "a more lucrative profession" that would let him "live the comfortable lifestyle he desired," only to fail in his subsequent ventures. On Calles's class background and his children's education, see Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 19, 93.
 10. Bazant, "La enseñanza y la práctica de la ingeniería durante el Porfiriato," 277.
 11. Bazant, "Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero," 743–50.
 12. Social mobility had happened in both directions during the nineteenth century. For some interesting cases, see Staples, "Fortuna vs. estatus."
 13. Dennis L. Gilbert, *The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Latin America, 1880–1970* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1884–1935*.
 14. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.
 15. As Porter observes, while important studies of the middle classes exist for other periods, most scholars examining the 1920s and 1930s direct their attention to the state's relationship with the popular classes. Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker*, 10. On the middle and working classes during the Porfiriato, see French, *A Peaceful and Working People*; on the mid-twentieth century, see Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*; on the late twentieth century, see Walker, *Waking from the Dream*.
 16. Scholars have long argued that obtaining a government job propelled Mexicans into the middle classes. See Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker*, 6.
 17. In the 1920s, women working in white-collar government positions earned less than men in similar roles and sometimes less than men in working-class jobs in the private sector. See Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker*, 67–72.
 18. Michael A. Ervin, "The Formation of the Revolutionary Middle Class during the Mexican Revolution," in López and Weinstein, *The Making of the Middle Class*, 213, 215–16.
 19. Quoted in Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960*, 42.
 20. Ervin, "The Formation of the Revolutionary Middle Class During the Mexican Revolution," 213.
 21. Ryan M. Alexander, *Sons of the Mexican Revolution: Miguel Alemán and His Generation* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 21–23.
 22. José Iturriaga, cited in James W. Wilkie and Paul D. Wilkins, "Quantifying the Class Structure of Mexico, 1895–1910," in *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*, 21 (UCLA Latin American Institute, 1981), 578.
 23. Indeed, all levels of post-primary education served only a small fraction of Mexican youth: students had to have time to study, which limited their ability to work; schools were

mainly located in urban centers and therefore less accessible to the country's rural majority; and "federal public secondary, technical, and professional schools . . . charged tuition and fees." See Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928*, 161.

24. AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder "Carlos E. Pérez Guerra."

25. José A. Valenzuela to Carlos E. Pérez Guerra, August 15, 1924. AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder "Carlos E. Pérez Guerra."

26. Gabino Palma to Manuel Padrés, Subsecretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público del Gobierno de México, June 4, 1921. AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, Pensiones, box 31642, folder "Gabino Palma-Daniel Arellano."

27. Lists of recipients from the Universidad Nacional include 30 students abroad in 1927; 21, in 1928; and 38, in 1929. "Expedientes de pensionados . . ." December 13, 1929, AHUNAM, Universidad Nacional, Departamento de Administración, box 54, folder 1778, fols. 9827, 19830. Pension amounts for the year 1927 for students sponsored by the Universidad Nacional are found in AHUNAM, Universidad Nacional, Departamento de Administración, box 54, folder 1778, fols. 19821–22.

28. While this is surely an undercount, the point is that higher education abroad was not widely accessible, and given the small numbers of Mexican youth enrolled in higher education at home, study abroad clearly constituted an unusual opportunity for middle-class students. See appendix 1 for further discussion.

29. David E. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico: University Graduates and Occupational Change Since 1929* (University of California Press, 1992), 19.

30. E.g., Gabino Palma to José Vasconcelos, August 8, 1921, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31642, folder "Gabino Palma-Daniel Arellano"; Francisco Morales to the Secretary of Education, November 12, 1924, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder 8; Carlos E. Pérez Guerra to Rector of the National University, n.d. (ca. July 1925), AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder "Carlos E. Pérez Guerra"; María Choa de Espinosa de los Monteros to Plutarco Elías Calles, May 30, 1925, AHUNAM, Universidad Nacional, Rectoría, box 17, folder 265; Prudencio Algravez to Plutarco Elías Calles, February 5, 1926, Fideicomiso Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torrealba (FAPECFT), Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles (APEC), folder 109, inventory 4634, bundle 3/7, fol. 124.

31. Rick Anthony López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State After the Revolution* (Duke University Press, 2010), 13–14, 18–19.

32. Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (Routledge, 2004), 144.

33. Cañeque, *The King's Living Image*, 141–42.

34. I include all letters between students seeking scholarships and state officials as well as letters from students who already had scholarships seeking an increase or recompense for missed payments. Some of these letters are more formally "petitions" than others, but I follow Martyn Lyons in treating the personal letter and the petition as similar, overlapping genres of political writing that combined formalities and canned phrasing with more personal language. See Martyn Lyons, "Writing Upwards: How the Weak Wrote to the Powerful," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 2 (December 2015): 319.

35. Romana Falcón, "El arte de la petición: Rituales de obediencia y negociación, México, segunda mitad del siglo XIX," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (August 2006): 475, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-2006-002>; Christina M. Jiménez, *Making an*

Urban Public: Popular Claims to the City in Mexico, 1879–1932 (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 33–61; María Eugenia Ponce Alcocer, *Las fiestas del Centenario de la Independencia a través de la correspondencia del General Porfirio Díaz* (Universidad Iberoamericana, 2009), 35–42.

36. On patriotism as a banal strand of revolutionary ideology, see Alan Knight, “The Ideology of the Mexican Revolution, 1910–40,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y El Caribe* 8, no. 1 (1997): 91–92.

37. As Lex Heerma van Voss in a comparative study of petitions, in “whatever form or context,” writes, examples of this genre “were usually written in a deferential style, showing that the petitioner did not intend to question the established power structure.” See Lex Heerma van Voss, Introduction to *Petitions in Social History*, ed. Lex Heerma van Voss (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

38. Carmen Nava Nava, ed., *Los abajo firmantes: Cartas a los presidentes, 1920–1928* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, Unidad de Publicaciones Educativas, Editorial Patria, 1994), 1:7.

39. Virginia Oliveros, “Making It Personal: Clientelism, Favors, and the Personalization of Public Administration in Argentina,” *Comparative Politics* 48, no. 3 (2016): 373–75.

40. Scholars examining the petition genre around the world have found that petitioners from marginalized groups adopted “a direct personal approach to a superior authority,” seeking a positive result not easily obtained through “other bureaucratic channels,” but at least in the Mexican case, this is true of more privileged petitioners as well. See Lyons, “Writing Upwards,” 326.

41. Aymara Flores Soriano, “Suplicantes y ciudadanos con derechos: Los padres de familia en secundarias federales del Distrito Federal (1932–1939),” *Secuencia*, no. 94 (2016): 190–93.

42. Rafael Zendejas Camargo to Lázaro Cárdenas, December 7, 1938, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/272.

43. María N. Viuda de Pérez Guerra to José Vasconcelos, July 11, 1922, AGN, SEP, Pensiones, box 31616, folder “Pérez Guerra, Carlos E.” For another mother requesting a scholarship for her son using paternalist language, see María Chozá de Espinosa de los Monteros to Plutarco Elías Calles, May 30, 1925, AHUNAM, Fondo Universidad Nacional, Rectoría, box 17, folder 265.

44. Susanne Eineigel, “Revolutionary Promises Encounter Urban Realities for Mexico City’s Middle Class, 1915–1928,” in López and Weinstein, *The Making of the Middle Class*, 256–57.

45. Pan-American Union, *El sistema universitario estadounidense y los estudiantes latinoamericanos* (Pan-American Union, 1916), 39.

46. All figures are in US dollars unless otherwise noted. Pan-American Union, *El sistema universitario*, 35, 37.

47. In 1928, federal teachers earned on average 2,254 pesos per year, while those employed by states earned 848 pesos per year. See Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928*, 157, 159.

48. Ernestina Medina Alvarado to José Vasconcelos, Rector of the National University, September 28, 1920, AGN, Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes (SIPBA), box 296, folder 45.

49. Francisco Romandía to Plutarco Elías Calles, August 7, 1924, FAPECFT, APEC, file 5, inventory 5065, bundle 1, fols. 4–5.

50. For irregularities in payments made to federal and state teachers, see Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928*, 159; for agronomists owed back pay, see Ervin, “The Formation of the Revolutionary Middle Class during the Mexican Revolution,” 215–16.

51. Álvaro Obregón to the Ministry of Public Education, November 6, 1923, AGN, Presidentes, Obregón-Calles, 121-H-D-14.

52. For an early example, see Francisco Vela González to Ing. Félix Palavicini, Minister of Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, August 11, 1916, AGN, SIPBA, box 294, folder 11; in a later, similar claim, Filiberto Gómez argued that his part-time work while studying at the University of Chicago “naturally prevents [his] studies from being as intense as would be desired” and stated that he wished to “dedicate [himself] only and exclusively to [his] studies.” Filiberto Gómez González to the Secretary of Education, December 23, 1939, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/1059.

53. Quoted in Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928*, 69.

54. Quoted in Bazant, “Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero,” 747.

55. Palma, “Los estudiantes mexicanos.”

56. Gabino Palma to José Vasconcelos, June 2, 1921, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, Pensiones, box 31642, folder “Gabino Palma-Daniel Arellano.”

57. Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 244–45.

58. In 1920, at just seventeen years old, Herrerías interviewed Calles, who was then serving as Mexico’s secretary of war. It is not clear whether Herrerías already knew Calles before this meeting. See Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, December 31, 1920, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 1, fol. 9.

59. For this student’s educational activities in New York City, see Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, September 25, 1922, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fol. 62.

60. Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, April 5, 1921; July 7, 1921; September 8, 1921; December 1, 1921, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fols. 12, 23, 32, 38.

61. Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, December 1922, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fols. 74–75.

62. Salvador Ramos to Francisco I. Madero, December 29, 1911, AGN, Presidentes, Francisco I. Madero, folder 202, fol. 5827. In a subsequent letter, Ramos noted that in light of Madero’s “fondness for student youth” and his “benevolence,” he expected to receive the president’s “personal help.” See Salvador Ramos to Francisco I. Madero, January 10, 1912, AGN, Presidentes, Madero, folder 202, fols. 5828–29. For a similar case, see Guillermo Fuentes D. to Francisco I. Madero, February 18, 1912, AGN, Presidentes, Madero, folder 65, fol. 1977–78.

63. Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, April 30, 1921, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 1, fol. 16.

64. Ignacio Herrerías to Plutarco Elías Calles, December 1922, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fols. 74–75.

65. Cañeque, *The King’s Living Image*, 143–44.

66. Ponce Alcocer, *Las fiestas del Centenario*, 43–47.

67. Orfilia Obregón to Abelardo Rodríguez, January 3, 1934, AGN, Presidentes, Abelardo Rodríguez, 660/151.

68. Ignacio Herrerías to Soledad González, March 18, 1922, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fol. 47.

69. Soledad González to Ignacio Herrerías, May 23, 1922, FAPECFT, APEC, file 149, inventory 2785, bundle 2, fol. 48.

70. José Garza y de Gárate to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, July 3, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, file 104 (1931). The request was denied.

71. Based on his son's name, Ramón Otero Ross, I suspect that Espiridión Otero was probably related through marriage to Ramón Ross (1864–1934), a businessman who served as mayor of Huatabampo in 1905 and held important posts in Mexico City in the 1920s. Biographical information for Ross is from Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1884–1935*, 194.

72. Espiridión Otero to Lázaro Cárdenas, November 21, 1938, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.3/300.

73. Arnulfo Figueroa y Rosete to José Vasconcelos, November 25, 1922, AGN, SEP, Pensiones, box 31688, folder "Figueroa y Rosete, Arnulfo."

74. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 243.

75. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 25–26.

76. The family resided in the tony colonia of Lomas de Chapultepec. Bátiz's address is given in J. Jesús González Gallo to Juan de Dios Batiz, January 31, 1941. See also Juan de Dios Bátiz to Manuel Ávila Camacho, January 23, 1941; Jesús González Gallo to Luis Sánchez Pontón, Secretary of Public Education, January 31, 1941, AGN, Presidentes, Manuel Ávila Camacho, 534.11/17.

77. Manjarrez was the nephew of the director of *El Nacional*, the official newspaper of the ruling party, as he noted in the letter. Daniel C. Manjarrez to Lázaro Cárdenas, April 19, 1939, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/272.

78. Mónica Ricketts, *Who Should Rule? Men of Arms, the Republic of Letters, and the Fall of the Spanish Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 34–35.

79. Ricketts, *Who Should Rule?*, 46–47.

80. Bazant, "Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero," 741–42.

81. Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 144–55.

82. Manuel Azpíroz to Justino Fernández, December 3, 1903. AGN, SIPBA, box 188, folder 25.

83. Secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Justicia e Instrucción Pública to Director of the Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios, December 16, 1903, AGN, SIPBA, box 188, folder 25.

84. Manuel Álvarez to Secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Justicia e Instrucción Pública, December 28, 1903, AGN, SIPBA, box 188, folder 25.

85. An official from the Secretaría asked the director to propose how it should be decided which student would receive the scholarship, but we do not have further information. See Secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Justicia e Instrucción Pública to Director of the Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios, January 4, 1904, AGN, SIPBA, box 188, folder 25.

86. "Memorandum," Secretario de Educación to Rector of the National University, February 12, 1925, AHUNAM, Fondo Universidad Nacional, Sección Secretaría General, box 2, folder 11; *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección Editorial), t. 3, no. 10, March 1925, 17–18; "Reglamento de pensiones de la Secretaría

de Educación Pública para estudios en el país y en el extranjero,” February 12, 1925, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31558, folder 11.

87. See José A. Cuevas to Rector of the National University, December 19, 1927; Jefe del Departamento to José A. Cuevas, February 7, 1928; and José A. Cuevas to the Director del Departamento Administrativo de la Universidad Nacional, February 8, 1928, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder 1.

88. See José A. Valenzuela to Carlos E. Pérez Guerra, August 15, 1924, AGN, SEP, Departamento Administrativo, box 31616, folder “Carlos E. Pérez Guerra.”

89. Raúl Domínguez to Plutarco Elías Calles, February 14, 1929, FAPECFCT, APEC, file 127, inventory 343, fol. 44.

90. Filiberto Gómez, “Relación de la documentación enviada . . .,” n.d. (ca. December 1939), AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/1059.

91. Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and [illegible] Novoa to Ezequiel Padilla, Secretary of Education, December 26, 1930, AGN, SEP, Pensiones, box 31616, folder “Martínez, Samuel.”

92. “Angélica Morales, una Juventud Consagrada al Arte,” *Rotográfico*, August 21, 1929, 10, AGN, SEP, box 31616, folder “Morales, Angélica.”

93. On this project, see López, *Crafting Mexico*.

94. For two examples of US-based teachers recommending students for scholarships, see León Sametini to Ezequiel Padilla, Secretary of Education, August 26, 1929, AGN, SEP, Pensiones, box 31616, folder “Martínez, Samuel”; Lee M. Sharrar, Acting Dean of the Rice Institute, to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, June 16, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, file 104 (1931).

95. Espiridión Otero to Lázaro Cárdenas, November 21, 1938, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.3/300.

96. Espiridión Otero to Lázaro Cárdenas, November 21, 1938.

97. Godofredo F. Beltrán, Secretario Particular, Oficial Mayor, to Espiridión Otero, November 29, 1938, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.3/300.

98. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1884–1935*, 197.

99. In late nineteenth-century Brazil, “nepotism did not constitute a shameful practice; there was nothing to hide. . . . [A] man who refused to use his public office to aid a relative would be thought to have violated a basic precept of social life.” See Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, 235.

100. “Library Prize Awarded at Swarthmore College,” *New York Herald Tribune*, May 24, 1936, B5.

101. Moisés Sáenz to Lázaro Cárdenas, March 2, 1939, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/909.

102. Agustín Leñero to Moisés Sáenz, March 13, 1939, AGN, Presidentes, Cárdenas, 534.1/909.

103. See “Who Is Who at the Forum: Dr. Josue Saenz,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 10, 1947, 23; “Pan-American Unity Is Applauded as Key to Peace in High School Forum,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 9, 1947, 9; “Dr. Saenz Sees Industrialization as Solution for Latin America,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 10, 1947, 23.

104. Luciano Rosaldo to President Ortiz Rubio, December 5, 1931, AGN, Presidentes, Ortiz Rubio, folder 104 (1931).

105. Presidents continued to grant scholarships individually, using administrative discretion, through at least the mid-1950s. E.g., Adolfo Ruiz Cortines to the Secretaría de Educación Pública, February 25, 1954, AGN, Presidentes, Ruiz Cortines, 534.1/810.

106. María Concepción Caro Flores to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, January 21, 1956, AGN, Presidentes, Ruiz Cortines, 534.1/1129.

107. See, e.g., Guillermo V. Silva C. to Ignacio Ovalle Fernández, Secretario de la Presidencia, October 31, 1975, AGN, Presidentes, Echeverría, box 2326 (696), folder 5. I refer to this letter in chapter 6.

4. MEXICAN AND US INSTITUTIONS BUILDING MEXICAN EXPERT CADRES, 1940–1960

1. See appendix 1 for a discussion of counting Mexican students in the United States.
2. “Person to Person,” *Mexico This Month* 1 (May 1955): 5–6. The student query that prompted the comment was from Salvador Gámiz Fernández, president of the Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Técnicos. The article was probably written by Anita Brenner.
3. Gillingham and Smith, “The Paradoxes of Revolution”; Smith, “Building a State on the Cheap”; Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*.
4. Smith, “Building a State on the Cheap,” 270.
5. J. George Harrar and Rockefeller Foundation, *Strategy for the Conquest of Hunger: Selected Papers of J. George Harrar, President, the Rockefeller Foundation* (Rockefeller Foundation, 1963), 111.
6. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 220.
7. Bazant, “Estudiantes y profesores mexicanos en el extranjero, 1880–1912.”
8. Many works acknowledge earlier processes and moments in which experts wielded power. For an interesting case featuring US-educated experts in the early twentieth century, see J. Justin Castro, “Technocratic Diplomacy: Constitutionalist Engineers to the United States,” in *Technocratic Visions: Engineers, Technology, and Society in Mexico*, ed. J. Justin Castro and James A. Garza (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022).
9. Castro and Garza, *Technocratic Visions*, 12.
10. For a definition of experts, see Chastain and Lorek, Introduction to *Itineraries of Expertise*, 13; on defining technocrats, see Miguel A. Centeno and Patricio Silva, “The Politics of Expertise in Latin America: Introduction,” in *The Politics of Expertise in Latin America* (Macmillan, St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 2–5.
11. Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880–2002* (Praeger, 2003); Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside* (Princeton University Press, 2017); Gabriela Soto Laveaga, “The Socialist Origins of the Green Revolution: Pandurang Khankhoje and Domestic “Technical Assistance,”” *History and Technology* 36, nos. 3–4 (2020): 337–59; Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*.
12. For other prominent foreign-educated economists of this era, as well as discussion of the limits of their power to shape economic policy, see Babb, *Managing Mexico*, 83–87.
13. Eduardo Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México: 1940–1946* (Banco de México, 1990), 359.
14. Banco de México, Departamento de Estudios Económicos, Sección Becas, “Informe sobre el programa de becas industriales del Banco de México S.A.,” cited in Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México*, 358.
15. Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México*, 341.
16. Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México*, 359–62.

17. They were Gonzalo Robles, Eduardo Villaseñor, Víctor Urquidi, and Daniel Cosío Villegas. See Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México*, 358–59. Daniel Cosío Villegas collaborated as well in his role as head of the Departamento de Estudios Económicos, which housed the Oficina de Investigaciones Industriales and the scholarship program itself. See Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Memorias*, 3rd ed. (Joaquín Mortiz, 1977), 198; Manuel Bravo Jiménez, “Con Gonzalo Robles, 1940–1980,” in *Economía e industrialización: Ensayos y testimonios: Homenaje a Gonzalo Robles*, ed. Angelo A. de Tuddo and Emilio Alanís Patiño (Nacional Financiera; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982), 255; on Urquidi, see Babb, *Managing Mexico*, 83–85.

18. On Juan Francisco and his brothers (Víctor Urquidi’s uncles), see Bazant, “Estudiantes mexicanos en el extranjero.”

19. Víctor L. Urquidi, “Transcript of Interview for United Nations Intellectual History Project,” interview by Thomas G. Weiss, June 18, 2000, 1, 13–16, <https://www.ralphbuncheinstitute.org/un-intellectual-history-project/PDFs/Urquidi.pdf>.

20. Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (University of California Press, 2020), 80.

21. Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Good Neighbor Empires: Children and Cultural Capital in the Americas* (Brill, 2024).

22. J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948* (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State, 1976), 111–13, 159–60.

23. Donald H. Scott, “The Cultural Institute in Mexico City as an Example of United States Policy in Cultural Relations” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1959), 1010–11.

24. Quoted in Scott, “The Cultural Institute in Mexico City,” 31–32.

25. Urquidi, “Transcript of Interview for United Nations Intellectual History Project,” 52.

26. In 1954, though a US embassy staff member in Mexico acknowledged that it was “impossible to estimate with any exactitude the influence” of student exchanges generally “or any one grant” on the bilateral relationship, he nonetheless insisted that “each exchange has a chain-reaction which is both immediate and continuing.” See Robert G. Caldwell, Cultural Advisor, US Embassy in Mexico City, to Department of State, April 12, 1954, NARA-RG59–1950–2286.

27. Allen Haden, Cultural Attaché, US Embassy in Mexico City, to Department of State, June 29, 1956, NARA-RG59–1955–2098.

28. Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

29. Argentina had the oldest cultural institute, founded in 1928, and in the late 1930s and early 1940s, many others were founded in quick succession, mostly in South America. Mexico’s Cultural Institute, founded in 1942, was the sixteenth such institute established in Latin America. Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948*, 252–53; on the Argentine Cultural Institute, see Laura Fotia, “Proyección y política cultural estadounidense en Argentina (1928–1941),” *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 41 (2015): 21–46.

30. Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936–1948*, 166, 252–53.

31. Scott, “The Cultural Institute in Mexico City,” 462–63.

32. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 31–32.
33. "Primeros becados a EE.UU," *El Nacional*, October 25, 1942.
34. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 377–79.
35. These individuals included Samuel Ramos (philosopher who studied in Europe), Pablo Martínez del Río (historian trained at Oxford), Alfonso Reyes (writer and diplomat who had worked and traveled extensively abroad), José Zozaya (Harvard-educated, Rockefeller-sponsored biologist), and Sandoval Vallarta (physicist and MIT graduate). Noteworthy prestigious subscribers were the rector of UNAM (Nabor Carrillo Flores), minister of communications and public works (Carlos Lazo), and director-general of UNESCO (Jaime Torres Bodet, who had also been and would later resume the post of secretary of education); even José Vasconcelos paid dues. On Martínez del Río, see Manuel Maldonado-Koerdell, "Semblanza y obra de un prehistoriador," in *Homenaje a Pablo Martínez del Río en el vigésimo quinto aniversario de la primera edición de Los orígenes americanos* (n.p., 1961); on Martínez del Río's studies at Stonyhurst as a boy, see Macías-González, "Learning the Rules of the Game"; on Sandoval Vallarta, see Minor García, *Cruzar fronteras*; Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 462–63.
36. For an early example, see the editorial "Hacia una América indivisa, por los caminos de la ciencia," October 26, 1942, *El Nacional*, BLT-AE-"Relaciones científicas México-Estados Unidos"-No2474.
37. "Se fortalecen las relaciones culturales con Estados Unidos," October 14, 1944, *Excelsior*, BLT, AE, "Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales," No2532.
38. Samuel Ramos served as chair of the selection committee in 1942–43; he was replaced by Manuel Sandoval Vallarta, who would keep the position until at least 1958. Other prominent Mexicans and some US citizens would sit on the committee, and experts were called to weigh in on candidates specializing in their fields. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 956.
39. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 370–71.
40. See various newspaper announcements for these programs instructing candidates to submit materials at the Cultural Institute, e.g., "Nueva York ofrece becas a mexicanos," September 19, 1944; and "Becas en EE.UU. a Profesionales," October 19, 1944, *El Nacional*, BLT-AE-"Becas Estados Unidos"-M10007.
41. Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (Harper, 1952), 15.
42. Marcos Cueto, ed., *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Indiana University Press, 1994), x–xi. Note that these totals do not include fellowships granted after 1962 and thus do not encompass the entire period under study here.
43. Only one or two doctors were funded each year between 1920 and 1934, and beginning in 1935 when the program expanded, the foundation sent just four to six doctors each year. See Anne-Emanuelle Birn, *Marriage of Convenience: Rockefeller International Health and Revolutionary Mexico* (University of Rochester Press, 2006), 202.
44. On Mexican interest in the collaboration, see Cotter, *Troubled Harvest*, 10–11, 157; Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings*. On the importance of recognizing Latin American interest in shaping the contours of Rockefeller ventures in the region, see Cueto, *Missionaries of Science*. While the Mexican government's financial contributions to agricultural research were significantly smaller than the Rockefeller's, the Mexican government did provide essential infrastructure, including "land, labor, office and laboratory space, funds for buildings, certain pieces of machinery, fertilizers and other materials, and . . . commissioned technical

personnel to the program.” See J. George Harrar, “Mexican Agricultural Program: A Review of the First Six Years of Activity Under the Joint Auspices of the Mexican Government and the Rockefeller Foundation,” (Rockefeller Foundation, 1950), 10; Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*.

45. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 105.

46. For a thoughtful study of the foundation’s role in shaping the Colegio de México, see Álvaro Morcillo Laiz, “La Gran Dama: Science Patronage, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican Social Sciences in the 1940s,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51, no. 4 (2019): 829–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X19000336>.

47. On the “data flood,” see Gillingham and Smith, “The Paradoxes of Revolution,” 7.

48. Tabulated from data set created by the author using information in Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios* (Banco de México, 1961).

49. Sara Minerva Luna Elizarrarás, “Los universitarios: Expectativas de movilidad social en los ‘años dorados’ de la UNAM, 1954–1966,” *Trashumante: Revista Americana de Historia Social*, no. 18 (2021): 251.

50. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 199–200.

51. Tabulated from data set created by the author from volumes of CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1935–1948), IIE, *Open Doors* (1948–73). Totals disaggregated by sex are not available before 1935 or after 1973, and there is data missing for the period 1949–52. See appendix 1.

52. “Mexicanos becados en las Universidades de EE.UU,” *Excelsior*, November 5, 1943, NARA-RG59–1940–3836. By 1955, awardees were more evenly distributed among Mexico City (8), Monterrey (4), and Guadalajara (4), but since their current institutional affiliation rather than their alma mater was listed, it is hard to know whether this actually reflected a more geographically disperse set of alma maters. See “Summary of U.S. Government Grant Program 1955 FY,” NARA-RG59–1955–2098.

53. “Informe sobre el programa . . .,” cited in Turrent Díaz, *Historia del Banco de México*, 360.

54. Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 34–35.

55. Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 25–26.

56. Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 84, 221–22.

57. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 204–9.

58. Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 27.

59. Harrar and Rockefeller Foundation, *Strategy for the Conquest of Hunger*, 111.

60. E. C. Stakman et al., *Campaigns Against Hunger* (Belknap Press, 1967), 156.

61. Stakman et al., *Campaigns Against Hunger*, 42–43.

62. E. J. Wellhausen to J. J. McKelvey Jr., November 19, 1957, Rockefeller Archive Center, Rockefeller Foundation Records, Record Group 10.1, Series 323E, box 174, folder 2685. Hereafter RF-10.1–323E-174–2685.

63. Stakman et al., *Campaigns Against Hunger*, 10.

64. This is discussed briefly in the next chapter. See also Rachel Grace Newman, “Making Experts, Sustaining Families: The Rockefeller Foundation’s Mexican Fellowships as a Social Program for the Middle Class,” Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports (2023), <https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/making-experts-sustaining-families-the-rockefeller-foundation-s-mexican-fellowships-as-a-social-program-for-the-middle-class.html>.

65. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 382; Instituto Mexicano-Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales, "Becas para estudios post-graduados," Folleto informativo 1, 1944, NARA-RG59-1940-3836.
66. "Becas en E.U. a postgraduados," *El Nacional*, January 20, 1944, NARA-RG59-1940-3836; Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 960.
67. Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 951.
68. "Bursley," US Embassy in Mexico City to US Department of State, October 31, 1944, New York City Municipal Archives (NYCMA), Office of the Mayor (Fiorello La Guardia), Latin American Scholarship Committee (LASC), box 6, folder 21.
69. Instituto Mexicano-Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales, "Becas para estudios post-graduados," Folleto informativo 1, 1944, NARA-RG59-1940-3836.
70. For the Rockefeller Foundation, this did not resolve the problem and created some issues of its own. J. G. Harrar to Warren Weaver, February 13, 1948, RF-1.1-323-7-41. For the Banco de México's use of these English classes not just for selected becarios but also for applicants, see Scott, "The Cultural Institute in Mexico City," 964-65.
71. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 222.
72. G. S. Messersmith, US Ambassador to Mexico, to Secretary of State (Cordell Hull), October 28, 1942, NARA-RG59-1940-3836.
73. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 226-27.
74. Norman Katkov, "Study for Work in Their South American Countries," *New York World Telegram*, January 24, 1946 (clipping; page unavailable), CU, RBML, Columbia University Archives, Series XIX, box 227.
75. Jesse Merlan, "Hello, Mexico," WNYC Radio Broadcast, February 8, 1943, NYCMA, La Guardia, LASC, box 3, folder 6.
76. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, May 30, 1953, fol. 29, Smithsonian Institute, National Anthropological Association Archives, Ralph Beals Papers, box 26, folder CN-14 (hereafter, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14); transcript of interview with Jaime Castrejón, June 29, 1953, fols. 3-4, SI-NAA-Beals-25-CO24.
77. "Phidian Art Club at Lena Opens Season," *Freeport (IL) Journal-Standard*, October 15, 1941, 2. For other examples, see "Mexican Student Speaks at Club," *Athens (OH) Messenger*, November 24, 1953, 1; "Jr. Women to Entertain Mexican Student Tuesday," *Clearfield (PA) Progress*, April 19, 1943, 6; "Mexican Student Learns Our Ways and Admires Us," *Daily Register* (Harrisburg, IL), September 30, 1947, 1.
78. E.g., Richard G. Burau, "Evaluation of Graduate Study," November 1, 1966, RF-10.1-323E-185-2823; "Evaluation of Graduate Study," July 8, 1968 [author illegible], RF-10.1-323-E-184-2817.
79. Oral history interview by the author, conducted in 2016. All interviewees are anonymous in this book.
80. "Wellesley Grad Is Vice-Consul of Mexico Here," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 19, 1946, 4.
81. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 235.
82. Oral history interview by the author, conducted in 2016.
83. Oral history interview by the author, conducted in 2016.
84. Oral history interviews by the author, conducted in 2016.
85. University of Texas, *Cactus (Yearbook)* (1948), 288.

86. Rosemary LaRue Whitaker, "The Latin American Student at the University of Texas: A Study of Group Adjustment" (MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1948), 36–37.

87. Association of Mexican Students of New York City, Invitation, n.d. (ca. 1946), NYCMA, La Guardia, LASC, box 3, folder 4.

88. Interview with Concepción Reza, June 22, 1953, fol. 37, SI-NAA-26-CN14.

89. Interview with Ismael Ortiz, June 9, 1953, 29–30, SI-NAA-26-CN15.

90. Edmundo Flores, *Historias de Edmundo Flores: Autobiografía, 1919–1950* (Martín Casillas Editores, 1985), 1:287–88.

91. As president of the American Anthropological Association in 1951, Beals called for fellow scholars to attend to acculturation processes both within and beyond the United States, seeking out generalizable insights as well as ethnographic specificities. See Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, "Modernization, Dependency, and the Global in Mexican Critiques of Anthropology," *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 1 (2014): 105.

92. Ralph L. Beals and Norman Daymond Humphrey, *No Frontier to Learning: The Mexican Student in the United States* (University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 121.

5. BECARIO POLITICS AND THE PURSUIT OF MIDDLE-CLASS STABILITY, 1940–1970

1. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, June 22, 1953, fols. 2–3, SI-NAAA-Beals-26-CN14.

2. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*.

3. Gillingham, *Unrevolutionary Mexico*, 4.

4. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*; Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 23–24.

5. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 8.

6. "CN-14 [Data sheet for Concepción Reza]," ca. 1952, SI-NAA-Beals-22—"Datasheets."

7. The methodology used to produce those figures defined class groups "by a combination of income and occupation." See the tables and the thoughtful explanation of attempts to quantify class in Mexico in Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 209–15; these particular figures originally come from Wilkie and Wilkins, "Quantifying the Class Structure of Mexico, 1895–1910."

8. Cruz et al., *The Middle Classes in Latin America*; López and Weinstein, *The Making of the Middle Class*; Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 3–4, 16–17.

9. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 3.

10. Sara Minerva Luna Elizarrarás, "The Ordeal of Decency: A Perspective on Mexico City's Urban Space and Middle Classes (1952–1966)," in Cruz et al., *The Middle Classes in Latin America*, 66–81.

11. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, May 30, 1953, fols. 15–16, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.

12. Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Seen and Heard in Mexico: Children and Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

13. Vaughan, *Portrait of a Young Painter*, 8–21.

14. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 19.

15. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 29.

16. de Gortari, *La ciencia en la historia de México*, 489.

17. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 31–33.

18. In 1963, two-thirds of UNAM's student body came from the upper class, most of the rest were middle class, and less than 5 percent were of lower-class origins. See Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 198.
19. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 21–22.
20. Some graduates of rural normal schools explain that the fully funded education they received, which included room and board, was the only viable option to them aside from international migration. Padilla, *Unintended Lessons of Revolution*, 42.
21. For a detailed description of Mexico's agricultural schools in this era, all of which provided scholarships for some students, see Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 120–28.
22. Michael A. Ervin, "The 1930 Agrarian Census in Mexico: Agronomists, Middle Politics, and the Negotiation of Data Collection," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2007): 537–70.
23. Pablo González Casanova is quoted in Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 2.
24. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, May 30, 1953, fol. 26, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
25. Transcript of Interview with Concepción Reza, November 21, 1952, fols. 13–14, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
26. Cited in Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker*, 206–7.
27. Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker*, 200–210.
28. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, November 21, 1952, fols. 2, 10–11, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
29. Between 1940 and 1965, only about a fifth of the students enrolled at UNAM were women. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 199–200; Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 28–30.
30. Luna Elizarrarás, "Los universitarios," 250.
31. James G. Maddox, "Mexicans Study Abroad," Mexico City, January 7, 1957, 1, CU, RBML, Columbia University Archives, Frank Tannenbaum Papers, Series IV, box 40.
32. On the mid-century baby boom and US middle-class family culture, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, rev. ed. (Basic Books, 2017).
33. JGH [J. G. Harrar], April 17, 1951, RF-1.1–323–7–41.
34. Mexico's central bank also offered family allowances, but these were almost certainly much less substantial. See Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 25–26.
35. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 120.
36. For another nearly identical example from a different source, see Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 157.
37. Ricardo García Lagos to Jesse P. Perry, August 1, 1963, RF-10.1–323E-185–2823.
38. Instituto Mexicano-Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales, "Becas para estudios post-graduados," Folleto informativo 1 (Mexico City, 1944), NARA-RG59–1940–3836.
39. Kenneth Wernimont to Juan Antonio Sifuentes, December 9, 1957, RF-10.1–323E-198–2996.
40. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 158–59.
41. RLF, Interview with Víctor Manuel Soria-Murillo, March 21, 1967, RF-10.1–323E-199–3002.

42. RLF, Interview with Víctor Manuel Soria-Murillo, March 21, 1967.
43. Soria-Murillo, Víctor Manuel Fellowship Recorder Card, RG 10.2, Mexico, Drawer 1, Discipline 5 (Humanities Fellows).
44. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 159–60.
45. Víctor Soria Murillo to Robert Fischelis, August 2, 1969, RF-10.1-323E-199-3002.
46. José M. Soto Angli to Jesse P. Perry, May 18, 1963, RF-10.1-323E-178-2738.
47. Jesse P. Perry to L. S. Hardin, March 13, 1963, RF-10.1-323E-178-2738.
48. N. P. Neal to L. C. Coffey, May 7, 1962, RF-10.1-323E-182-2795.
49. Norman C. Mervine to Jesse P. Perry, February 21, 1966, RF-10.1-323E-179-2749.
50. See documents in RF-10.1-323E-196-2963a.
51. “Tech Co-Ed Counsels Foreigners in UT ‘Get-Acquainted’ Program,” *The Toreador* (Texas Technological College, Lubbock), September 23, 1952, 2.
52. Ralph Arellano, “Initial interview,” October 2, 1952, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
53. E.g., John A. Pino, “Interviews,” December 22, 1965, RF-10.1-323E-187-2844.
54. V. C. Scott diary entry, May 22, 1959, RF-10.1-323E-198-2990.
55. Luna Elizarrarás, “Los universitarios,” 250–52.
56. My research, which involved a sample of Agricultural Science becarios, did not include any of the four women becarias in that program. Their dossiers were analyzed by Méndez Rojas, who found that two of the four were married. The case I cite below is the only becaria mother whose dossier I reviewed. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 132, 136.
57. Leland M. Goodrich to Jesse P. Perry Jr., October 22, 1965, RF-10.1-323E-193-2917.
58. Her husband described Morales’s exit from academia as her own choice. See Amitai Etzioni, *My Brother’s Keeper: A Memoir and a Message* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
59. Catalina Sierra Casasús, “Personal History and Application for a Fellowship,” October 30, 1956, RF-10.1-323E-176-2717; Sierra Casasús, Catalina Fellowship Recorder Card, RG 10.2, Mexico, Drawer 1, Discipline 6 (Humanities/Social Sciences Scholarships).
60. Catalina Sierra Casasús to Mr. [Erskine] McKinley, September 24, 1957, RF-10.1-323E-176-2717.
61. MY [Montague Yudelman], Interview with Catalina Sierra Casasús, February 25, 1959, RF-10.1-323E-176-2717.
62. Méndez Rojas, *Modernización nacional, experticia transnacional*, 136–38.
63. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, October 24, 1952, fol. 19, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
64. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, June 29, 1953, fols. 9–10, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
65. Transcript of interviews with Concepción Reza, November 21, 1952, fol. 12; June 22, 1953, fol. 2, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.
66. Banco de México, *Programas de becas y datos profesionales de los becarios*, 221–22.
67. Oral history interviews by the author, conducted in 2016.
68. J. G. Harrar to E. J. Wellhausen, March 31, 1954, RF-1.1-323-7-41.
69. Jorge Ibarguengoitia to Dr. Gilpatric, May 20, 1955. See also a delightful autobiographical sketch describing the family’s fall from the Porfirian aristocracy to genteel shabbiness after the revolution. Jorge Ibarguengoitia, “Informal Biography,” May 17, 1955, RF-10.1-323E-199-2859.

70. One recipient accompanied by his wife and young children also brought a 16-year-old girl who may or may not have been a family member. The girl's parents had authorized her travel and contributed to part of her expenses, and she was studying English and secretarial skills while living with her guardians in Kansas. The girl, María Florencia Juárez, did not share paternal or maternal surnames with the recipient, but this does not preclude her from being a relative of him or his wife. Juan Antonio Sifuentes to Richard H. Kale, February 2, 1961, RF-10.1-323E-198-2997.

71. Sebastián Romero Cova to Richard H. Kale, February 2, 1964, RF-10.1-323E-197-2980.

72. Annual salary given as MX\$45,500 in 1963, in "Personal History and Application for a Fellowship," November 20, 1963, RF-10.1-323E-197-2980.

73. Oral history interview by the author, conducted in 2016.

74. Henry W. Kumm, Interview Report, January 16, 1961, RF-10.1-323E-198-2990.

75. Income of 2,693 pesos for a middle-class family cited in Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 214.

76. LG, Interview with Minerva Morales, July 8, 1964, RF-10.1-323E-193-2917.

77. A similar word, *decency*, was a ubiquitous political concept wielded by middle-class Mexicans to assert their right to lifestyle, housing, and all manner of distinction from the popular classes in these years. Luna Elizarrarás, "The Ordeal of Decency"

78. María Moliner, *Diccionario de uso del español* (Editorial Gredos, 1966), 1:871.

79. Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 18th ed. (Espasa Calpe, 1956), 428; for a similar definition from 1970 in a Mexican dictionary, see Antonio Raluy Poudevida, *Diccionario Porrúa de la lengua española*, 2nd ed. (Editorial Porrúa, 1970), 229.

80. Ralph Arellano, note on interview with Raúl Hernández Peón, July 26, 1953, 1-2, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN17.

81. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, June 29, 1953, fol. 9, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.

82. Transcript of interview with Nelly Benveniste, October 1, 1952, fols. 21-22, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CO18.

83. Transcript of interview with Humberto Tiburcio, October 30, 1952, fols. 11-12, SI-NAA-Beals-25-CO21.

84. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 34.

85. Emmett L. Pinnell to A. H. Moseman, December 18, 1961, RF-10.1-323E-177-2724.

86. Norman E. Borlaug to E. R. Sears, December 28, 1961, RF-10.1-323E-177-2724.

87. For a 1963 photograph of Acosta and Borlaug together at Chapingo, see Derek Byerlee, "The Birth of CIMMYT: Pioneering the Idea and Ideals of International Agricultural Research" (CIMMYT, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, 2016), 18.

88. Jorge Ibarguengoitia to Charles B. Fahs, July 12, 1956, RF-10.1-323E-199-2859.

89. Flores, *Historias de Edmundo Flores*, 1:379.

90. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, trans. Lysander Kemp (Grove Press, 1985), 86.

91. Flores, *Historias de Edmundo Flores*; Edmundo Flores, *Antesales del poder*, vol. 2 (Editorial Posada, 1986).

92. Quoted in G. Baldovinos and C. Pérez Castro, *Programas de becas para estudiantes mexicanos de ciencias agrícolas* (Investigaciones Industriales, Banco de México, 1952), 70-71.

93. Héctor Medina Neri, “Reunión de ex-estudiantes de la Universidad de Texas en la capital de México,” June 1947, University of Texas, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Library, Special Collections, Carlos E. Castañeda Papers, Correspondence, box 33, folder 1.

94. The other alumni clubs mentioned by Scott were for graduates of Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown, the University of Michigan, the University of Louisiana, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, and the University of California. See Scott, “The Cultural Institute in Mexico City,” 978n67.

95. Alejandro Guillot S. to Manuel Gual Vidal, Secretario de Educación Pública, March 16, 1949; “Beca del Instituto Tecnológico de Massachusetts,” attached to letter by Dorothy M. Jester to Alejandro Guillot, January 16, 1950, Archivo Histórico del IPN, Reference IPN/22.05 (73)/9, box 276, folder 9.

96. Scott, “The Cultural Institute in Mexico City,” 971–81.

97. Baldovinos and Pérez Castro, *Programas de becas para estudiantes mexicanos de ciencias agrícolas*, 65–66, 71.

98. Baldovinos and Pérez Castro, *Programas de becas para estudiantes mexicanos de ciencias agrícolas*, 74.

99. Transcript of interview with Concepción Reza, May 30, 1953, fols. 22–23, SI-NAA-Beals-26-CN14.

6. MANAGING STUDENT MOBILITY WITH SCIENCE POLICY, 1970–1982

1. In 1956, UNAM published a guide to help students identify scholarship opportunities for study abroad, and a second edition followed in 1959: UNAM, Oficina de Intercambio Cultural y Becas, *Guía de becas* (UNAM, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1956). The SEP released its own guide in 1963: *Guía de becas en el extranjero para estudiantes y graduados mexicanos*, Cuadernillos de información 5 (SEP, Dirección General de Asuntos Internacionales, 1963). These guides listed the many sources of funding, Mexican and foreign, and provided students with timelines and addresses of institutions. This type of information was increasingly useful as scholarship opportunities beyond those offered by the Mexican state proliferated: between the late 1950s and mid-1960s, the United Nations and the governments of the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy gave out hundreds of scholarships to Mexican students. Victor L. Urquidi and Adrián Lajous Vargas, *Educación superior, ciencia y tecnología en el desarrollo económico de México: Un estudio preliminar* (Colegio de México, 1967).

2. Guillermo Etienne, *Becas y estudios de postgraduado en el extranjero* (UNAM, Secretaría General, 1971), 5, 9–10; emphasis in the original.

3. The Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología was known as Conacyt from its founding until 2023, when the agency added “Humanidades” to its title (abbreviated Conahcyt). Though sometimes it was written CONACYT or CONACyT, I use “Conacyt” as it was written in official documents. As of 2025, Conahcyt no longer exists, but its functions were passed on to a successor institution, the Secretaría de Ciencia, Humanidades, Tecnología e Innovación.

4. On the defects of this forerunner, see de Gortari, *La ciencia en la historia de México*, 548–49.

5. “Diario de Debates de la Cámara de Diputados,” XLVIII Legislature, Year 1, Ordinary Period (Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de la Unión, December 17, 1970), <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebate/48/1er/Ord/19701217.html>.

6. "Ciencia y desarrollo T.V.," *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 18 (February 1978): 47.
7. María Teresa Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1982), 97–100.
8. These were Eugenio Méndez Docurro (1971–73), funded by the SEP; Gerardo Bueno Ziriñón (1973–76), exbecario of the Banco de México; and Edmundo Flores (1976–82), who had received funding from the Ministry of Agriculture.
9. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Programa Nacional Controlado de Becas*, Serie Documentos 22 (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1976), 171.
10. Conacyt's budget grew significantly every year during its first decade: in 1971, it spent 43 million pesos, and by 1980, its budget was 1,833 million pesos. However, rampant inflation during this time means that this growth was not as spectacular as it might seem. See Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 95.
11. Edmundo Flores, *La ciencia y la tecnología en México* (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1982), 16.
12. Guillermo V. Silva C. to Ignacio Ovalle Fernández, Secretario de la Presidencia, October 31, 1975. AGN, Presidentes, Echeverría, box 2326 (696), folder 5.
13. Lázaro Cárdenas created the Consejo Nacional de la Educación Superior y de la Investigación Científica (1935–38). This was replaced in 1942 by the Comisión Impulsora y Coordinadora de la Investigación Científica (1942–50), which was in turn replaced by the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Científica (INIC) in 1950 and reorganized in 1961. Rosalba Casas Guerrero, *El estado y la política de la ciencia en México, 1935–1970* (UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, 1985).
14. Manuel Moreno Sánchez, Antonio Mena Brito, and Juan Manuel Terán Mata, "Proyecto de Ley del Instituto Nacional de Becas," October 14, 1961, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Archivo Particular Jaime Torres Bodet (JTB), vol. 81.
15. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 1017.
16. LW [Luis Weckmann Muñoz], "Proyecto de Creación de un Instituto Nacional de Becas: Observaciones," October 30, 1961, AHGE, JTB, vol. 81.
17. The officialist paper reported favorably on the proposal prior to the discussion in the Senate. See "Proyecto senatorial para establecer el Instituto de Becas," *El Nacional*, October 25, 1961, BLT-AE- "Becas—México"-M10015. But the proposed law had powerful critics besides Weckmann. Officials from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional wrote that the proposal "mutilate[d]" the school's authority to manage instruction, planning, and budget. See Dr. Eusebio Mendoza Ávila et al., "Consideraciones del Instituto Politécnico Nacional en relación con el proyecto de creación del Instituto Nacional de Becas," n.d., AHGE, JTB, vol. 81.
18. On the role of expertise in this era, see Chastain and Lorek, "Introduction."
19. For those arguing for development (and access to international credit) since the 1930s, see Thornton, *Revolution in Development*.
20. Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, Introduction to *The Development Century: A Global History*, ed. Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108678940.001>; Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (University of California Press, 1997); Alan Knight, "The Mexican Developmental State, c.1920–c.1980," in *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain*, ed. Agustín E. Ferraro and Miguel A. Centeno (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 238–65, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316995785.011>.
21. De Gortari, *La ciencia en la historia de México*, 18–19.

22. “Declaration of the Presidents of America, Signed at the Meeting of American Chiefs of State, Punta Del Este, Uruguay, April 14, 1967” (General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, Department of Information and Public Affairs, 1967), 20.

23. In Mexico, science policy boosters cited statistics on the number of researchers per 10,000 inhabitants for different countries around the world; while the United States and the Soviet Union had 50 or 60 and Spain—perhaps a more suitable comparison—had 4, Mexico’s indicator was only 0.74. See Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional y programas en ciencia y tecnología* (Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, 1970), 35–36.

24. In order of their year of creation: National Science Foundation (US, 1950); Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (Brazil, 1951); and Consejo Nacional de Investigación Científica y Técnica (Argentina, 1958). Other institutions that predate Mexico’s Conacyt are the Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (Chile, 1967) and the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología y el Fondo Colombiano de Investigaciones Científicas y Proyectos Especiales “Francisco José de Caldas” (Colombia, 1968).

25. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 5–6.

26. Thomas Brinley, “Modern’ Migration,” in *The Brain Drain*, ed. Walter Adams (Macmillan, 1968), 38.

27. Robert G. Myers, *Education and Emigration: Study Abroad and the Migration of Human Resources* (McKay, 1972), 131.

28. Urquidi and Lajous Vargas, *Educación superior, ciencia y tecnología*, 69.

29. Romeo Flores Caballero, “Cerebros, talentos y subdesarrollo en México,” *Diálogos: Artes, Letras, Ciencias Humanas* 5, no. 29 (1969): 24.

30. For Lajous, see Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 516; for Urquidi, Thornton, *Revolution in Development*, 80; for Flores Caballero, “Romeo Flores Caballero recibe homenaje por su labor al frente del CONARTE del año 2006 al 2009,” CONARTE Nuevo León, December 15, 2020, <https://conarte.org.mx/2020/12/15/romeo-flores-caballero-recibe-homenaje-por-su-labor-al-frente-del-conarte-del-ano-2006-al-2009/>.

31. Ramón Xirau, “Epígrafe,” *Diálogos: Artes, Letras, Ciencias Humanas* 5, no. 5 (September–October 1969): 2.

32. Manuel Durán, “Notas sobre la emigración de los intelectuales,” *Diálogos: Artes, Letras, Ciencias Humanas* 5, no. 29 (1969): 5–6.

33. He was cosmopolitan in another way: born in Spain in 1925, he came to Mexico in 1942. “Durán, Manuel,” Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Secretaría de Cultura, January 15, 2016, <https://literatura.inba.gob.mx/espana/5224-duran-manuel.html>.

34. Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 553–54.

35. Rosalba Casas et al., *Construyendo el diálogo entre los actores del sistema de ciencia, tecnología e innovación: Libro conmemorativo a 10 años de la creación del Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico* (Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico, Editorial Gustavo Casasola, 2013), 56.

36. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 11–12.

37. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, 20, 22.

38. He served as rector of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional in 1959–62 and was assistant secretary of communications and transportation under Díaz Ordaz. See Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 626–27.

39. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 115.

40. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 56.
41. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 84–85.
42. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 84.
43. A rarely remarked on biographical detail of the new president, a lawyer and long-time bureaucrat, was that Echeverría studied abroad in 1941 with a scholarship that took him to the United States, France, Chile, and Argentina. See Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 282–83.
44. Alan Knight, “Cárdenas and Echeverría: Two ‘Populist’ Presidents Compared,” in *Populism in Twentieth Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia M. Kiddle and María L. O. Muñoz (University of Arizona Press, 2010), 28; Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 23–30; see also Pensado and Ochoa, *México Beyond 1968*; Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 14–16.
45. For the former interpretation, see Gerardo Bueno Ziri6n, “Un organismo con visi6n a futuro,” *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, April 2011, <http://www.cyd.conacyt.gob.mx/251/articulos/testigos-de-una-historia.html>; for the latter interpretation, see Flores, *La ciencia y la tecnología en México*, 10; Bernardo Mabire, “Políticas culturales y educativas del Estado mexicano de 1970 a 2006,” in *Una historia contemporánea de México*, ed. Ilán Bizberg and Lorenzo Meyer (Mexico City: Océano, 2009), 4:260–61.
46. A final possibility that I find unconvincing as a complete explanation is that Echeverría “used scholarships to foreign universities as a way of getting the radicalized generation of 1968 out of the country.” Miguel Ángel Centeno cites a 1988 interview with an unnamed Mexican academic for this claim. See Miguel Ángel Centeno, *Democracy Within Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico*, 2nd ed. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 152; see also note 25 on that page. For a novel in which a student activist goes abroad in just this era, see Paloma Villegas, *La luz oblicua: Novela* (Ediciones Era, 1995).
47. Bravo Ahuja earned a master’s degree in aeronautics at the California Institute of Technology in 1944 and held a variety of academic and political positions in the following decades, serving as governor of Oaxaca just before his cabinet appointment. See Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 116.
48. This deputy was Francisco Hernández Juárez. See Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 471.
49. “Diario de Debates de la Cámara de Diputados,” XLVIII Legislature, Year 1, Ordinary Period (Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de la Unión, December 15, 1970), <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/48/1er/Ord/19701215.html>.
50. The deputy was Maximiliano León Murillo. See Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009*, 528.
51. “Diario de Debates de la Cámara de Diputados,” December 17, 1970.
52. Peter H. Smith, “Mexico Since 1946: Dynamics of an Authoritarian Regime,” in Bethell, *Mexico Since Independence*, 333.
53. Advertisement for Multibanco Comermex, *Ciencia y desarrollo*, no. 25 (May–June 1978): 4.
54. Advertisement for Conacyt, *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 30 (January–February 1980): 58.
55. I was told that there was no archive. However, see Sylvia Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento: El Programa de Becas-crédito del Conacyt* (Secretaría de Educación Pública–CONACYT, 2001), 37; Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, “1971–2000, treinta años del programa becas-crédito: Evolución, resultados e impacto” (CONACYT, n.d.), 9.

56. Instituto Nacional de la Investigación Científica, *Política nacional*, 85.
57. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 43.
58. Data set “1974 Becarios.” Captured by Daniela Shia-Sevilla and analyzed by the author from “439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior,” *Excélsior*, August 12, 1974, BLT-AE-MO4542 (1974). See appendix 3.
59. Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 103.
60. “Becas CONACYT,” *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 26 (June 1979): 168.
61. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Programa Nacional Controlado de Becas*, 165, 168.
62. “439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior.”
63. “Tomar lo mejor del mundo para perfeccionar lo nuestro,” *Comunidad Conacyt* 4, no. 88 (March 1978): 18.
64. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Programa Nacional Controlado de Becas*, 169–70.
65. Data set “1974 Becarios.”
66. “Tomar lo mejor del mundo para perfeccionar lo nuestro.”
67. Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 104.
68. Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 103.
69. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Programa Nacional Controlado de Becas*, 161.
70. Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 106.
71. Data set “1974 Becarios.”
72. Advertisement for Conacyt, *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 30 (January–February 1980): 58.
73. Data set “1974 Becarios.”
74. Lorey, *The Rise of the Professions in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 201.
75. The report has graphics but not exact figures for the sex ratio by historical period. The report notes that among becarias, the proportion holding international scholarships rather than domestic scholarships increased in the 1990s. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, “1971–2000, treinta años del programa becas-crédito,” 19–20.
76. “439 becarios del Conacyt estudiarán en el exterior.”
77. María Luisa Rodríguez-Sala and Adrián Chavero, *El científico en México: Su formación en el extranjero, su incorporación y adecuación al sistema ocupacional mexicano* (UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Centro de Estudios sobre la Universidad, 1982), 24, 65–66.
78. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Información básica sobre becas*, Serie Documentos 8 (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1975), 5; Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Reglamento de becas CONACYT*, Serie Becas (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1980), 7.
79. In 1975, a Conacyt pamphlet directed to aspiring becarios stipulated higher scholarship amounts for students who were married, with additional resources for up to three children. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Información básica sobre becas*, 21.
80. Marcos Moshinsky, “Demanda de Investigadores: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología,” *Excélsior*, December 26, 1970, BLT-AE-“CONACYT”-MO4540 (1970–72).
81. Ruy Pérez Tamayo, “Para desmontar el CONACYT,” in *El Desafío mexicano* (Ediciones Océano, 1982), 330.

82. Edmundo Flores, *Historias de Edmundo Flores: Autobiografía 1973–1976* (Posada, 1990), 3:215.

83. His tendency toward overstatement was well known. It probably helped Flores garner more press coverage, but it also made him widely unpopular. See Miguel Reyes Razo, “Edmundo Flores ha provocado la crisis en el Conacyt,” *El Universal*, July 8, 1977, BLT-AE-“CONACYT”-Mo4545 (1977–81).

84. Paz Muñoz, “Anunció Edmundo Flores: El BID prestará 20 millones de dólares al CONACYT, para becas,” *El Día*, April 7, 1977, BLT-AE-“CONACYT”-Mo4546 (1982–84).

85. Edmundo Flores, *The United States and Mexico*, interview by Virginia Lemaitre, CD, 1979.

86. It was actually the loss of medium-skilled workers that they believed especially crucial. T. N. Osborn and J. R. Newton, “¿Hasta qué grado es una fuga de cerebros la emigración mexicana a los Estados Unidos?,” *Ciencia y Desarrollo*, no. 26 (1979): 146–52.

87. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 159–60.

88. It was possible to simply lose track of former becarios once they entered the workforce: a 1976 report determined that Conacyt should follow former becarios’ trajectories for up to a decade after the conclusion of their scholarship term. Conacyt hoped to be regularly informed about job titles, salaries, and research output, but the need to spell this out suggested that it was not able to collect this information. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Programa Nacional Controlado de Becas*, 170.

89. Márquez, *10 años del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología*, 106.

90. As of 1978, Conacyt also published a bimonthly employer-facing bulletin with a directory of becarios who were seeking positions. Sixteen thousand copies of the bulletin were distributed to academic institutions, research centers, and private firms. An advertisement in *Comunidad Conacyt* notified becarios that their profiles could be included in this bulletin and asked them to submit information about their studies, language abilities, work experience, and employment preferences. “Bolsa de Trabajo,” *Comunidad Conacyt* 4, no. 91 (July 1978): 46.

91. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, *Reglamento de becas CONACYT*, 7.

92. Miguel S. Wionczek, “Detrás de la fuga de cerebros,” *Excelsior*, May 11, 1971, BLT, AE, “Profesionistas—emigración—México,” G05069.

93. One writer called for Conacyt to take action, arguing that the phenomenon was “a manifestation of poor countries’ dependency with regard to wealthy countries.” See Pablo Latapí, “Tarea para Conacyt: Fuga de talentos de México a EU,” *Excelsior*, February 15, 1972, BLT-AE-“CONACYT”-Mo4540 (1970–1972).

94. Manuel Stephens García, “Robo de cerebros: Arma contra países subdesarrollados,” *Excelsior*, April 18, 1977, BLT-AE-“Profesionistas—emigración—México”-G05069.

95. Luis Echeverría, “Que la [sic] Conacyt contribuya a formar una convicción política y moral,” *El Nacional*, March 23, 1973, BLT-AE-“CONACYT”-Mo4541 (1973).

96. Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences*, 11; Joseph L. Love, “CEPAL as Idea Factory for Latin American Development: Intellectual and Political Influence, 1950–1990,” in Ferraro and Centeno, *State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain*, 31, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316995785.003>. On Echeverría’s affinity for dependency theory, see Knight, “Cárdenas and Echeverría,” 27–28.

97. Echeverría, “Que la [sic] Conacyt contribuya a formar una convicción política y moral.”

98. According to Bueno Ziri3n, this change was due to M3ndez Docurro's dual roles as secretary of transportation and communications and director-general of Conacyt and the need for him to focus on the former. The timing, though, suggests that Echeverr3a had grown dissatisfied with M3ndez Docurro's leadership. See Bueno Ziri3n, "Un organismo con visi3n a futuro."

99. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 49–50.

100. This initiative was first announced a year earlier. See Juli3n Carlos y J., "Financiamientos especiales para hacer regresar a talentos nacionales: Herrera," *Exc3lsior*, April 11, 1972, BLT-AE-"CONACYT"-Mo4540 (1970–72).

101. "Ondarza Vidaurreta, Ra3l N.," Academia de Ciencias de Morelos, A.C., accessed January 25, 2019, <http://acmor.org.mx/?q=users/ondarza-vidaurreta-ra%C3%BA1-n>.

102. Neftal3 Celis, "Se han repatriado 11 talentos nacionales, afirma el Conacyt," *Novedades*, March 31, 1973, BLT-AE-"CONAYCT"-Mo4541 (1973).

103. Two Mexican medical researchers based in the United States wrote to the editors of *Ciencia y Desarrollo* in 1981 claiming that other Mexicans abroad were interested in returning home given the country's "great improvement in technological infrastructure" in recent years. They were curious about whether repatriation efforts, public or private, existed that "provide orientation to educated Mexicans wishing to return to their country, to analyze their resumes, and to channel them to where their time and energy will be best put to use." In other words, they wondered if Conacyt was doing the very work it was already engaged in. "Cartas de nuestros lectores," *Ciencia y Desarrollo* 7, no. 40 (October 1981): 4.

104. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnolog3a, *Consideraciones sobre el papel del CONACYT en el sistema nacional de ciencia y tecnolog3a*, Serie Documentos 6 (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnolog3a, 1974), 22.

105. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnolog3a, *Consideraciones sobre el papel del CONACYT en el sistema nacional de ciencia y tecnolog3a*, 23.

106. Antonio Ortega G., "Continuidad o estatismo cient3fico," *Exc3lsior*, September 7, 1975, BLT-AE-"CONACYT"-Mo4543 (1975).

107. Alejandro Rauh-Hain C., n.d. [ca. 1976], AGN, Presidentes, Luis Echeverr3a, box 2326 (696), folder 5.

108. Gerardo Bueno Ziri3n to Al R. Wichtrich, President of the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, May 24, 1976, AGN, Presidentes, Echeverr3a, box 2326 (696), folder 5.

109. Margarita Michelena, "Fuga de cerebros," *Exc3lsior*, July 11, 1979, BLT-AE-"Profesionistas—emigraci3n—M3xico,"-Go5069.

110. "M3xico no aprovecha la preparaci3n de los becarios," *El Heraldillo de M3xico*, September 26, 1978, BLT-AE.

111. Miguel Breceda Lapeyre, "Vaivenes del Conacyt," *El D3a*, August 16, 1983, BLT-AE-"CONACYT"-Mo4546 (1982–84).

112. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 43.

EPILOGUE: TOWARD THE UNREACHABLE FUTURE

1. "Enrique Beltr3n," John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, <https://www.gf.org/fellows/enrique-beltran/> (accessed August 4, 2023).

2. Colegio de Postgraduados, *Las ciencias agr3colas y sus protagonistas* (Colegio de Postgraduados, 1984), 1:64–65.

3. *Las ciencias agrícolas y sus protagonistas*, 1:72.
4. Alejandro Canales Sánchez, *La política científica y tecnológica en México: El impulso en el periodo 1982–2006* (UNAM, Seminario de Educación Superior, Instituto de Investigaciones sobre la Universidad y la Educación; Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2011), 101.
5. In both 1984 and 1994, just over half earned master's degrees, just under half completed nondegree specializations or certificates, and less than 4 percent earned doctorates. Canales Sánchez, *La política científica y tecnológica en México*, 99, 136.
6. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 55.
7. Data on the numbers of men and women is presented in a graph that makes precise determination of figures impossible, though the trends are visually observable. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 41, 49, 60.
8. Nora Hamilton, *Mexico: Political, Social, and Economic Evolution* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 151–52.
9. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 59.
10. This figure refers to scholarships given during the period 1994–2000, during the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 20.
11. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, “Informe de autoevaluación del Conacyt enero-diciembre de 2020,” n.d., 8, <https://www.siicyt.gob.mx/index.php/transparencia/informes-conacyt/informe-de-autoevaluacion/informe-de-autoevaluacion-2020/4943-inf-autoevaluacion-2020-ene-dic/file>.
12. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 21.
13. Rodríguez-Sala and Chavero, *El científico en México*, 13.
14. Ortega Salazar et al., *Invertir en el conocimiento*, 88–91, 110–11, 126.
15. “Lo que dice AMLO de las universidades extranjeras y las ‘malas mañas,’” *El Universal*, December 11, 2018, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/politica/lo-que-dice-amlo-de-las-universidades-extranjeras-y-las-malas-manas> (accessed December 11, 2018).
16. Ana Francisca Vega, “Claves para entender el plan del nuevo Conacyt,” *El Universal*, February 12, 2019, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/columna/ana-francisca-vega/nacion/claves-para-entender-el-plan-del-nuevo-conacyt> (accessed February 20, 2019).
17. “Quién es Rosaura Ruiz Gutiérrez, futura secretaria de Ciencia, Humanidades, Tecnología e Innovación,” CNN Español, June 21, 2024, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2024/06/21/quien-es-rosaura-ruiz-gutierrez-secretaria-ciencia-tecnologia-innovacion-orix>.
18. Institute of International Education, “Country and Area Facts and Figures 2024: Mexico.”
19. Maldonado, *Patlani*.

APPENDIX 1

1. Capen, *Opportunities for Foreign Students at Colleges and Universities in the United States*, 57–58.
2. CFRFS, *Directory of Foreign Students*.
3. IIE, “Ninth Annual Report of the Director,” 16–18.
4. The 1930 report was titled “Envoys Extraordinary.”
5. See IIE, “Open Doors: Report on International Education Exchange” (1949).
6. IIE, “Open Doors: Report on International Education Exchange” (1975), 5–9.
7. E.g., CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1933), 10.

8. IIE, "Ninth Annual Report of the Director," 16.
9. CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1936), 11.
10. CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1937), 9.
11. IIE, "Open Doors: Report on International Education Exchange" (1975), 9–10.
12. For scholarship requests to the Mexican government from individuals residing in the United States, see Romeo Guzmán, "Migrant Parents, Mexican-Americans, and Transnational Citizenship, 1920s to 1940s."
13. For a biography of Castañeda, see Felix D. Almaraz, *Knight Without Armor: Carlos Eduardo Castaneda, 1896–1958* (Texas A&M University Press, 1999); for Galarza's experiences migrating as a child, see Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); for an oral history with Galarza from the end of his life, see Ernesto Galarza, *The Burning Light: Action and Organizing in the Mexican Community in California* (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, 1982).
14. On this, see George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1993).
15. Galarza, *The Burning Light*, 28–29.
16. CFRFS, *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1946), 13.
17. The CFRFS report from 1933 included "four hundred students born in [the] United States of Oriental parentage" in its count of "foreign students." By 1937, this categorization had come under scrutiny, but the CFRFS defended its attention to this group of US citizens by explaining that they faced "more discrimination than do Oriental students who have come from overseas," and, moreover, university administrators "do not know who are American citizens and who are not, among Orientals." See CFRFS *The Unofficial Ambassadors* (1933), 10; and (1937), 9, 12.
18. For a recent study of this type, see Maldonado, *Patlani*.

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