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The Hispanic Challenge Revisited in the Context of an Integrated Capitalist World System.
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‘The Hispanic Challenge’ Revisited in the Context of an Integrated Capitalist World System

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Abstract

Nativists such as Samuel Huntington are fueling the hysteria that stems from the unrelenting influx of Mexican immigrants in recent years (Barry 29). In his 2004 book *Who Are We?* Huntington argues that Mexican immigrants threaten the social fabric of US society by their refusal to assimilate into the mainstream, which he defines as the white Protestant values espoused by the early British settlers (“Who Are We?” 62). In this paper, I examine the threats that Huntington and others assert are posed by Mexican immigrants, including both their “failure to assimilate” and their much-cited depressed economic state.

After providing an overview of current approaches and explanations for these phenomena, I contextualize the migration and assimilation of Mexicans in US society by employing the theories of Immanuel Wallerstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Alejandro Portes / Robert Bach. These theorists demonstrate the immigration is not an action instigated solely by the immigrant, but rather part of the movement of goods and capital in a global world-economy, characterized by capitalism. In this system, Mexican immigrants comprise a second culture, kept deliberately separate and disparate in order to perpetuate the workings of this capitalist system.

Immigration legislation has consistently ignored this context, focusing instead “controlling” the borders and punishing immigrants. Recent proposals in Congress have called for the implementation of a guest worker program, endorsed by scholars such as Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey, which would decriminalize migration while bolstering certain segments of the economy. However, as Sarah Hines and other activists point out, a guest worker program further divides the workforce, maintaining the hierarchy that impedes the successful integration of Mexican immigrants.

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Introduction

Fueled by nativists such as Samuel Huntington, the hysteria that stems from the unrelenting influx of Mexican immigrants to the United States has reached new heights in recent years (Barry 29). In his 2004 book *Who Are We?* Huntington argues that Mexican immigrants threaten the social fabric of US society by their refusal to assimilate into the mainstream, which he defines as the white Protestant values espoused by the early British settlers (“Who Are We?” 62). In his article “The Hispanic Challenge,” which preceded his book, Huntington predicates Mexicans’ “failure to assimilate” on their contempt for and rejection of US values such as education and hard work and their unwillingness to dilute their national identity through intermarriage with US Americans (“Challenge” 37).

Huntington argues that there are six factors that characterize Mexican immigration: contiguity, scale, illegality, regional concentration, persistence, and historical presence, the sum of which imperils the nation. First, a mere shallow river divides this First World country from the Third World, permitting Mexicans to maintain close bonds and connections with relatives and cohorts in their hometowns across the border, while discouraging the forging of ties in the US. Second, the large number of Mexican immigrants has saturated the population of this country, changing immigration trends “from diversity to dominance.” Huntington exemplifies this lost “diversity” in a graph that depicts five Western (predominantly white) nations, who, in 1960, sent relatively equal numbers of immigrants: Poland, the U.K., Canada, Germany, and Italy. The graph with the 2000 figures portrays “dominance,” with Mexicans far outnumbering other immigrant groups (Cubans, Indians, Filipinos, and Chinese), all of whom trail substantially behind (“Challenge” 33).

Third, Huntington purports that Mexicans are categorically different from other immigrants groups as they account for the largest number of illegal aliens in the US, easily surpassing the next largest group from El Salvador. Huntington blames the 1965 Immigration Law, better and more accessible transportation, and the promotion of Mexican emigration for the large number of undocumented residents. After penetrating the border, Huntington asserts that Mexicans cluster in Spanish-speaking enclaves in areas such as Southern California, a propensity which taxes the school systems, in particular. Since many of these so-called enclaves are situated in land that once belonged to Mexico, those who settle in these parts are even less inclined to assimilate, exhibiting instead a sense of propriety, an attitude that holds “serious potential for conflict” (“Challenge” 36). And there is no end in sight: Huntington claims that Mexicans will continue to arrive in droves unless Mexico’s gross domestic product per capita reaches that of the US, which is currently four times as large. Even that, Huntington worries, might not reduce the number of persons who emigrate from Mexico (“Challenge” 35-36).

After outlining these six factors, Huntington discusses the role of language in assimilation, maintaining that to be truly American, one must speak English and only English. He argues that though a second language may be useful for communicating with people outside US borders, the national identity is threatened when US Americans learn a second language (i.e., Spanish) to communicate with their fellow Americans. Dual language programs are especially problematic as they put Spanish on par with English. Perhaps the underlying issue is that the retention of Spanish by the second and third generation (who, Huntington admits, are fluent in English) puts native-born Anglophones at a distinct disadvantage. For example, Huntington reports that in Miami, according to an unnamed study, English-only families earned an average

of \$32,000, while Spanish-only families grossed \$18,000. Bilingual families, on the other hand, brought in more than \$50,000 on average (“Challenge” 36-39).

Huntington also remonstrates that, in an unspecified 1992 study, only four percent of Mexican-American children born in the US selected “American” when asked how they identified or called themselves. In contrast, twenty-eight to fifty percent of children whose parents were not Latin American chose “American.” Huntington then provides anecdotal evidence to bolster his claims: at a 1998 Mexico-US soccer match in Los Angeles, Mexican-Americans booed during the national anthem and later assaulted the US players. For Huntington, these instances indicate that Mexican-Americans are not assimilating, but rather moving toward an “autonomous, culturally and linguistically distinct, and economically self-reliant bloc within the US” (“Challenge” 40-42).

Finally, Huntington argues that Mexican-Americans differ from earlier immigrant groups because they display contempt for US culture, an attitude which is exacerbated by their large numbers. Unlike Cuban immigrants, who harbor feelings of hostility toward the Castro regime, Mexican-Americans enjoy economic and political support from the Mexican government, which makes them less aligned with the US. In addition, they “call attention to and celebrate” their heritage, which, for Huntington, amounts to an antagonism for US culture (“Challenge” 44).

Implicit in Huntington’s arguments is that the refusal to assimilate burdens not only the social institutions in US society, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the economy. The first page of his article in *Foreign Policy* features a photograph with an array of brown-skinned Mexican workers with their children who “were hired to replace American workers who quit over low wages” (“Challenge” 30).¹ After rendering native-born Americans jobless, Mexicans do not later progress onto higher-paying jobs: Huntington reports that Mexicans hold fewer

managerial and professional positions than other immigrant groups, and that they “lag behind...on a variety of other economic indicators” (“Challenge” 37), none of which is specified in the article.

In this paper, I will examine the threats that Huntington and others assert are posed by Mexican immigrants, including both their “failure to assimilate” and their much-cited depressed economic state. After providing an overview of current approaches and explanations for these phenomena, I will contextualize the migration and assimilation of Mexicans in US society by employing the theories of Immanuel Wallerstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Alejandro Portes / Robert Bach. Finally, I will discuss how immigration legislation impacts assimilation, and call for reform that promotes integration, not further marginalization.

Review of the Literature

The economic disparities between Mexican immigrants and native-born US Americans have been explored by a number of scholars. Quoted in Huntington’s article is Lionel Sosa, a successful Mexican businessman, portrayed in Huntington’s article as a separatist, applauding Latino professionals who reject Anglo-American values. However, in his book *El Sueño Americano: Cómo los latinos pueden triunfar en Estados Unidos*, (the English translation is titled *The Americano Dream: How Latinos Can Achieve Success in Business and in Life*), Sosa reports that preserving cultural beliefs from Mexico, for example, often hinders immigrants in the US. For example, he argues that in countries such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Panama where the indigenous population survived European conquest, the Spanish spoken in daily life is submissive, even obsequious. For example, when thanked, a Mexican might respond, “*Para servirle* / So that I may serve you” (136-37, my translation). Sosa asserts that this language, with its accompanying attitudes, depicts a lack of self-confidence and initiative,

which prevents Mexicans from earning the equivalent of their worth in the US (135-41). Therefore, he ultimately promotes the co-adoption of certain “Anglo” values and attitudes, arguing that bilingualism and biculturalism are a great advantage to any Mexican living in the US (135-36).

Like Sosa, Peter Skerry, also quoted in Huntington’s article, addresses some of the cultural traits that may thwart Mexicans’ ability to gain political strength, such as “the pattern of humility and deference to authority that has persisted for generations, often in tandem with a smoldering resentment that finds few constructive outlets” (345). He identifies a tendency toward “in-fighting” and a highly emotional temperament as further obstacles in advancement. However, Skerry is careful to note that he does not endorse these explanations completely; he acknowledges that they are redolent of a “blaming the victim” mentality, and that they disregard the external social, economic, and political forces that interact with these cultural proclivities (345-46). In a 2004 interview with Michael Elliott, Skerry states that Huntington “pushes things too far. On questions of loyalty and the adoption of American democratic values, the evidence is that we don’t have a problem [with Mexican immigrants] up until now” (Elliot 52).

Dowell Myers also examines the depressed economic state of Mexican immigrants, who he states have replaced blacks as the poorest in American society. However, he refutes the notion that “Mexican immigrants are doomed to remain in poverty without hope of economic assimilation” (160-61). Rather, he believes that because of the constant arrival of new immigrants from Mexico who “have not yet had time to advance,” the alarming figures that depict the depressed economic state of Mexicans are not an accurate reflection of all Mexican immigrants (161). Myers argues that in measuring the progress and economic assimilation of Mexican immigrants, their age upon arrival must be examined, as most immigrants migrate to

the US after they have completed their educational attainment, which locks them into a certain earnings trajectory. The 1.5 generation, a term used to identify the children who immigrate with their parents, progresses economically at rates equal to native-born workers since they are not limited by this educational level. Moreover, if the intergenerational progress (i.e., the progress of the children born in the US) is measured, even greater advancement is evident (187).

Similarly, Marta Tienda and Rebeca Raijman insist that the economic status of Mexicans is not as dire as the media avows. They assert that using census-type data (as Huntington does) does not reflect the true economic status of Mexican immigrants because it fails to account for multiple job earnings (e.g., family income versus individual income) and informal self-employment, such as selling vegetables (296). When allowance is made for these factors, earnings poverty is reduced by nine points, moving from 58% to 49% (305).

Finally, Robert Levine rejects Huntington's arguments entirely, purporting that today's Mexican immigrants are, in fact, no different from earlier, European immigrants and are following similar patterns of assimilation into US mainstream society. First, unlike Huntington, Levine acknowledges the existence and influence of African-Americans in US history, stressing that this country has "never been fully Anglo-Protestant anyhow" (1). Levine then challenges the six factors that, according to Huntington, distinguish Mexicans from earlier groups, focusing on the so-called dominance of Mexican immigrants and their concentration in certain regions. Finally, Levine demonstrates that Mexican assimilation is evident politically, economically, and culturally.

First, Levine argues that Mexican immigrants are not arriving in unprecedented numbers in US history, nor are they dominating the immigration figures more than other groups have in the past. Pointing to the annexation of Texas in the mid 1880s, Levine writes that the current

number of immigrants of Mexican origin “could not have been much greater” than that in the middle of the nineteenth century (4). Second, at present (the year 2000), the foreign-born population stands at 11.2%, while in 1890 it was 14.8%, with the Irish and Italians / Jews dominating that percentage. Levine argues that with time (about a century), both groups successfully assimilated into US society such that Irish-American US Senators can no longer be counted, for example, and pizza and bagels are considered American foods (2). Levine also argues that Mexicans are not clustering in enclaves, but rather dispersing just as Huntington implies that the Founding Fathers mandated (“Challenge” 35). Though immigrants primarily arrive through the border states (California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas), they then have moved internally to the Midwest and the South, with North Carolina gaining the most immigrants (7-8).

Levine measures political assimilation by looking at the number of Latino Representatives in the US Congress. He reports that with twenty-five Hispanics in the House of Representatives, integration is occurring more rapidly than it did with Jewish and Italian influxes. Furthermore, Levine argues that Mexican immigrants will not form a political bloc: they are too diverse, though “the mainstream...is well within the American consensus” (4).

Economic integration, Levine reports, is evidenced by Economist James P. Smith, whose figures are included in Huntington’s book. However, Smith’s data, which measures economic and educational achievements of Mexican immigrants, is misinterpreted by Huntington. While Huntington purports that the wages and education levels for Mexican-American men fall with the second or third generation (“Who Are We?” 237), Smith reports, “These fears [Hispanic immigrants’ inability to secure a better life for their children] are unwarranted: 2nd and 3rd-generation Hispanic men have made great strides in closing the economic gaps with native

whites. The reason is simple—each successive generation has been able to close the schooling gap with native whites which then has been translated into generational progress in incomes” (qtd. in Levine 5).

Lastly, Levine argues that Mexican immigrants are assimilating culturally, with Mexican food and music permeating the mainstream. Language, another element of culture, is not under attack, either: Levine counters Huntington’s protestations that only Spanish-speaking immigrants resist cultural assimilation by their refusal to learn English. In his article, Huntington quotes California Republican Senator S.I. Hayakawa to illustrate his point:

Why is it that no Filipinos, no Koreans object to making English the official language? No Japanese have done so. And certainly not the Vietnamese, who are so damn happy to be here. They’re learning English as fast as they can and winning spelling bees all across the country. But the Hispanics alone have maintained there is a problem. There [has been] considerable movement to make Spanish the second official language. (qtd. in Huntington “Challenge” 39)

Levine reports that Latino immigrants are also “learning English as fast as they can”: the second generation of immigrants speaks primarily English or is bilingual (93%), while the third generation shows primarily English-speakers (78%), with the remaining percent being bilingual. Moreover, Levine insists that culture is not a static phenomenon anyway, but rather is continually being changed (not undermined) with each successive generation (7).

Rodolfo de la Garza also refutes Huntington’s conjectures, calling his scholarship “inadequate and weak” (Elliott 2). In particular, de la Garza challenges the idea that Mexican-Americans do not identify with the US and exhibit enmity for US culture (Elliott 2). He points to a survey in which 84% of Mexican-Americans professed an “extremely strong” or “very

strong” love for the US (as did 92% of Anglos). In addition, 91% of Mexican Americans were “extremely proud” or “very proud” of the US. De la Garza maintains that “whether they were born in Mexico or the United States...Mexican Americans support American core values at least as much as Anglos do” (qtd. in Elliott 2).

The conclusions of these researchers are useful in grappling with and understanding the depressed economic state of Mexican immigrants and their integration in US mainstream society. However, absent from these studies and oftentimes absent from discussion in the media are the underlying forces of the capitalist world economy; the focus of Immanuel Wallerstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Alejandro Portes / Robert Bach highlights these pressures, unveiling the covert factors that sustain this unequal status and impede integration.

Immanuel Wallerstein

Wallerstein asserts that the capitalist world economy is perpetuated by the seemingly contradictory coupling of universalism and racism/sexism (42). He argues, however, that this pair of ideologies is in fact symbiotic in nature, functioning together to “contain the contradictions of the capitalist world-economy” (42). Wallerstein explains that the world-economy is connected by universal systems such as the measurement of time and space and also by universal values, delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Encompassing geographical areas that were earlier governed by a far greater number of political authorities, now roughly 150 sovereign states constitute the world system. To bring these factions together in one sovereign state, the concept of citizenship emerged as a universal means to bring equality to the diverse peoples living in a geopolitical area. At the same time, however, there exist great inequalities both within each sovereign state and among these 150 states that comprise the world-economy (42-43).

This hierarchical system is maintained, legitimated, and justified through the ideologies of racism/sexism, which coexist with these universal values. Wallerstein argues that in this system, one group is typically rendered “genetically or culturally inferior” to the other groups, which prevents them from “performing tasks” with the same competence as the superior group (43-44).

Huntington’s arguments epitomize how universalism and racism/sexism work together to maintain the inequalities inherent in the capitalist world system. By demonstrating the “superiority” of US culture, Huntington justifies the hierarchy that safeguards both the United States’ position as a world leader and superpower and the subordinate status of Latin American countries. He writes:

Contributions from immigrant cultures modified and enriched the Anglo-Protestant culture of the founding settlers. The essentials of that founding culture remained the bedrock of U.S. identity, however, at least until the last decades of the 20th century. Would the United States be the country that it has been and that it largely remains today if it had been settled in the 17th and 18th centuries not by British Protestants but by French, Spanish, and Portuguese Catholics? The answer is clearly no. It would not be the United States; it would be Quebec, Mexico, or Brazil. (“Challenge” 32)

Huntington completely disregards the highly divergent systems of colonization that were imposed in the United States and Latin America, and instead focuses solely on the superiority of US white Protestant culture. Huntington reasons that because Mexicans are unwilling to relinquish their inferior values upon arrival in the US, their subordinate economic position is merited. The concept of universalism promises rewards to all that embrace the so-called

Protestant work ethic; by rejecting this value, the largely Catholic Mexicans are responsible for their own misery. In Wallerstein's words, "Those who are worse off, therefore those who are paid less, are in this position because they merit it....Those who have less have less because they have earned less....And they work less hard because there is something, if not in their biology, at least in their 'culture', which teaches them values which conflict with the universal work ethos" (46).

Pierre Bourdieu

In his description of how the hierarchy that preserves social advantages for the dominant class is maintained, Pierre Bourdieu disentangles the threat posed by Mexican immigrants that Huntington warns "the United States ignores...at its peril" ("Challenge" 30). Bourdieu uses the term "*habitus*" to refer to "a system of dispositions adjusted to the game [of a field]" (qtd. in Moi 1021). Defining a society's social norms, this system, when functioning properly, is unspoken, and absorbed through upbringing and education. Legitimacy is granted only to spokespersons of this *doxa* (Moi 1022). As Huntington demonstrates, until recently, this *doxa* remained unspoken, as white Protestant values were accepted as the norm and their core beliefs were absorbed by various immigrant groups upon arrival in the US.

However, because Mexicans continue to speak Spanish and do not shed their national identities upon arrival, they create a *heterodoxic* presence. Huntington evinces this presence, reporting that "Jose" has become the most popular name for boys (replacing Michael) in California and Texas ("Challenge" 38). This *heterodoxic* presence has gained legitimacy in places such as Miami, where Huntington claims that "Spanish-speakers...established dominance in virtually every aspect of the city's life, fundamentally changing its ethnic composition, culture, politics, and language" ("Challenge" 42). He quotes a Cuban-born sociologist who

explains, “In Miami there is no pressure to be American. People can make a living perfectly well in an enclave that speaks Spanish” (“Challenge” 43). The recent election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles also reflects the growing capital (economic, social, and political) that Latinos are acquiring in the US.

Bourdieu asserts that when a *habitus* is threatened or challenged, an *orthodoxic* movement emerges in an attempt to rekindle and re-establish the values that were once *doxic*. The resurrection of the white nativism movement is underway, as Huntington declares that “the chance that they [white nativists] will not react at all is about zero. Indeed, they already have reacted by approving initiatives against benefits for illegal immigrants, affirmative action, and bilingual education, as well as the movement of whites out of the state [California]” (“Challenge” 41). The rise of the “Minute Men,” vigilantes who patrol the border in search of illegal crossings, is an attempt to curb the numbers and therefore destroy the legitimacy of the *heterodoxic* movement. Nevertheless, Barry reports that anti-immigration movements (*orthodox* movements) “are nothing new in the United States” and have gained and lost strength in relation to “economic and political circumstances” (28). The *habitus* and *doxa* of the dominant class is threatened and these movements, explained in greater detail subsequently, are predictable responses to this menace.

Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach

Focusing on four principal areas of analysis, Portes and Bach, like Wallerstein, also examine the role of the world capitalist system and the interstate system in their 1985 book *Latin Journey*, a study of the patterns of migration between the US and Mexico / Cuba (3).

The Origins of Migrant Flow

First, Portes and Bach discuss the “origins of migrant flow,” averring that the widely accepted notion of the push-pull theory of migration is inadequate (3). They explain that the “push” component is comprised of the economic, social and political factors that impel individuals to leave their home countries, and is often employed to illustrate why refugees flee their native lands (3). The “pull” side, which presupposes an “unlimited supply of labor,” is propelled by “the gap in wage incentives between the sending and receiving regions” (3). Portes and Bach argue, however, that the push-pull theory has several major limitations that are evident when examining movement from Latin America to the US. First, the push-pull explanation is inadequate because it fails to explain why migration is more extensive in certain areas of the world that have comparable conditions to other regions. Further, the majority of Mexican immigrants originate neither from the most impoverished regions of Mexico nor from the states that geographically border the US. Instead, Portes and Bach contend that most Mexican immigrants have their roots in the urban working class, which has more economic resources than the farmers, for example, in rural areas of Mexico (4). Recruitment efforts, an alternative explanation for the flow of migrant laborers, also fail to explain why some regions experience greater migration than others (6).

Instead, Portes and Bach argue that an understanding of migrant patterns necessitates a broader perspective that takes into account the changing global system (now characterized by an international capitalist economy), while also considering the conditions in the sending and receiving countries (6). Because of “networks of trade and information across the world, the homogenization of culture, and the extension of consumption expectations even to remote areas....[c]ountries at the center of the system are today in the enviable position of requiring

neither force nor recruitment efforts to meet labor demands, but simply regulating a permanently available supply at their borders” (6). At the same time, pressures from capitalism have created imbalances in the economic and social structures in the sending nations, which impel individuals to leave their home country (6-7).

Directionality and Stability of Migrant Flow

Second, Portes and Bach examine the “directionality of these [migrant] flows and their stability over time,” by expounding upon two theories: the unidirectional pre-World War II movement and the “ebb and flow” post-World War II movement (7). The more Orthodox theory maintains that prior to the Second World War, immigrants came, mostly from Europe, “in response to economic or political conditions” with the hope of building a new and better life (7). Aspiring to assimilate and advance in the new nation, few returned to their native land (7).² The second theory holds that newer immigrants come as “target earners,” interested in earning as much money as they can so that they can “fulfill goals in the *home* country” (8, emphasis mine). Focusing on “monetary rewards,” these immigrants agree to perform menial labor which they might reject in their native country (8). Target earners are characterized by their lack of assimilation in the “receiving” country, which is evidenced by their unfamiliarity with the new language, social customs and institutions (8). Return to their native country is the norm, rather than the exception, and it is this repatriation that is the mark of success, not adaptation to the new society (8-9). Douglas Massay, Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone believe that Mexicans seek permanent residence in the US only because that is the only option available to them. Given the choice of a temporary worker visa, they would opt for it (159). Daniel Griswold concurs, stating, “Most Mexicans who migrate to the US do not come intending to settle permanently. They come to solve temporary problems of family finance—by saving dollars and sending them back

home in the form of remittances. Their goal is to rejoin their families and communities after a few months or years as sojourners in the American labor market” (Griswold 2).

Portes and Bach concur that this pattern of immigration might better explain the migration of Mexican nationals to the US, though they point out that many Mexicans do stay in the US, precisely because of their economic success. Their contention with both theories, again, is that they focus on the conditions of the sending and receiving countries without contextualizing them in the capitalist world economy. They insist that rather than a single movement to the US and back, Mexican immigrants tend to migrate back and forth frequently, oftentimes in conjunction with the growing seasons (9). Social networks have emerged which link “villages in the interior of Mexico...with ethnic communities in Chicago” and aid immigrants in not only determining exactly when it is advantageous to travel to the US but also in providing alternative opportunities and “ensuring the early survival of immigrants” (10). It is these social networks (which Portes and Bach call “microstructures”) that explain “the resilience of migrant flows after original push and pull forces have disappeared or after original opportunities for target earnings have been removed” (10).

The Uses of Migration

The third area of immigration that Portes and Bach address expounds upon this idea; they examine the connection between the functions of immigration for the receiving country and the resulting assimilation or lack of assimilation of new immigrants. The orthodox theory on immigration, known as the equilibrium theory, maintains that immigration serves to counteract domestic shortages of labor, and is useful to capital only if these same immigrants do not begin to acquire land or otherwise move out of labor positions (335). If or when immigrants undergo this transition, new immigrants with less education or fewer resources are required to fill the

positions left vacant. In this model, immigrants do not differ categorically from native workers, who essentially follow the same pattern.

However, if the number of immigrant laborers is increasing at the same time that the number of unemployed domestic workers is increasing, the equilibrium theory of immigration does not suffice. Portes and Bach then offer several nonorthodox theories, which are paramount in examining the patterns of immigration from Mexico. First, they demonstrate that involuntary migration results from a sort of internal colonization that supplies the dominant class with a labor source that “agrees” to do “permanently subordinate” activities (335). These are not positions vacated by native workers or immigrant groups, but rather positions that “no free domestic labor can be found to perform” (12). Slaves and indentured servants used to fulfill this role, and were kept in isolation so that they would be unable to survive outside this capacity. When this system collapsed, racism served to lock these workers into menial labor by excluding them from mainstream society (12-14).

A second alternative to the equilibrium theory, and very similar to the colonist theory, holds that immigration supplies labor at a cheaper cost, which benefits the dominant group, and gains greater importance as the domestic labor movement strengthens its force (Portes and Bach 14-15). In this theory, which Edna Bonacich terms the split labor market interpretation, immigrants are more useful to the dominant class than domestic laborers (qtd. in Portes and Bach 16). First, legal restraints make immigrants more vulnerable, and the threat of deportation prevents their organization into labor unions, for example. Similarly, because of cultural and linguistic barriers, immigrants do not typically unionize with domestic workers. Fleeing desperate economic conditions in their home country, immigrants will likely tolerate and accept occupations that others would reject. Vicente Fox was referring to this situation in his

unfortunate comment on May 14, 2005, when he declared that Mexican were willing to take jobs that "that not even blacks want to do in the United States" (qtd. in Lee). Huntington also alludes to this phenomenon in his caption under a photograph of Mexicans: "Mexican workers gather at the Smithfield hog plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina....[where they] were hired to replace American workers who quit over low wages" ("Challenge" 30).

Before discussing the effects of these immigration patterns on assimilation, their fourth area of focus, Portes and Bach present a third nonorthodox theory of immigration, known as the dual economy thesis. This thesis holds that two major labor markets have emerged under advanced capitalism. The first economy has produced "oligopolistic segments" which exercise greater control over their respective markets. The principal goal of these oligopolistic segments is stability in the labor relations, which is achieved through "bureaucratization of the production process and the creation of so-called internal markets" (17). Oligopolistic corporations are generally able to pay higher wages and maintain impersonal relationships with their workers, who follow bureaucratic rules rather than direct orders from a supervisor. These jobs, which are highly competitive, tend to be reserved for white native-born male workers in the US. While oligopolistic corporations rely on technology in their production processes, the second economy is more traditional in that the process of production comes from the labor force, which is considered vital, though disposable. Rather than following corporate rules, workers are controlled directly through supervision; turnover is high due to frequent dismissals and resignations (17-19). As women and minorities rejected these jobs due to their "harsh and unfair working conditions," immigrants, particularly those who were undocumented, began to take their place (19). The agricultural sector, for example, has "acknowledged freely that they [have] become dependent on illegal aliens" (Fuchs 33). The Pew Hispanic Center corroborates this

division in their Latino Labor Report, 2004, stating that new jobs for Hispanic workers are emerging in “low-skill occupations” which require only a high school education. At the same time, “non-Hispanics secured large increase in employment in higher-skill occupations requiring at least some college education” (Kochhar “More Jobs”).

Assimilation of Immigrants

These theories of immigration are indispensable in analyzing how immigrants adapt to the United States, the fourth major focus of immigration that Portes and Bach outline. Portes and Bach asserts that immigrant adaptation is directly correlated with these theories of the functions of immigrant labor (20). Traditional explanations of cultural assimilation hold that adaptation starts with acculturation, the process by which immigrants abandon their values and norms and “by osmosis” begin to adopt beliefs which are closer to the core culture (21). Some sociologists acknowledge that this process is “affected by three variables: race, religion, and language” (21), with the most rapid assimilation demonstrated by those who are white, Protestant, and English-speaking. The outcomes of assimilation may take three forms: complete conformity to Anglo culture, the blending of values as seen in the melting pot theory, or cultural pluralism, in which some aspects of native culture are preserved (Gordon qtd. in Portes and Bach 22).

Portes and Bach assert that each of the three alternative views of immigrant labor, the colonist theory, the split-labor market theory, and the dual-economy theory, leads to different analyses of immigrant adaptation (23). In the traditional equilibrium theory, immigrants enjoyed greater acceptance from the dominant class as they assimilated into Anglo culture and learned English. This model explains the relatively rapid acculturation of early European immigrant groups such as the Polish, the Irish, the Italians, the Germans, and the Norwegians (21). However, the alternative theories of immigrant labor, which more closely resemble Mexican

immigration, do not follow the same patterns as seen in the equilibrium model. Instead, as immigrants become aware of their exploited and subordinate position, “ethnic consciousness and the resilience of ethnic culture” takes on a greater importance, and they are *less* likely to assimilate into mainstream culture (24).

Two branches of ethnicity literature grapple with the resistance of assimilation, the phenomena feared by Huntington and other nativists. The first branch, associated mainly with white immigrants from Europe, holds that the emotional and tangible support that ethnic solidarity offers outweighs the advantages of assimilation (24). The second branch better explains the situation of Mexican immigrants, and has also been true for the Chinese, Japanese, Poles, and Italians (25). For these groups, ethnic solidarity resulted from the rejection that these groups experienced as they attempted to integrate with the mainstream. Because these groups comprised an essential element of the labor force which could not be easily replaced, the dominant class deliberately precluded their integration into the mainstream. In this model, adopting Anglo values and behavior, which in the past had granted immigrants access to the mainstream, is not longer sufficient as a means to assimilate. As a result of this rebuff, ethnic culture is “reconstituted” and becomes “the only effective means to break out of this situation [exploitation and isolation]” (Portes and Bach 25). Because Mexicans are *forced* to cluster in “enclaves” where certain industries and jobs are available, unions with other Mexicans are reinforced. In organizing to protest their exploitation, race and class become the salient points of unification, rather than “a universal proletarian class” (26).

Portes and Bach’s theories would support Huntington’s assertion that “[c]ontemporary Mexican and, more broadly, Latin American immigration is without precedent in US history. The experience and lessons of past immigration have little relevance to understanding its

dynamics and consequences” (“Challenge” 33). As the political economy has changed significantly since World War II, the equilibrium theory (tacitly endorsed by Huntington and other Americans), which was once useful in interpreting the immigration patterns of past groups, has little relevance to current Mexican immigration.

Portes and Bach’s theories also prove useful in examining several of the factors in Mexican immigration that pose a threat to US society, according to Huntington. Portes and Bach’s work reveals that these phenomena are not an attempt to undermine the social fabric of the US, but rather predictable outcomes of immigration in a capitalist world-economy.

First, the close contact that Mexicans maintain with “their families, friends, and home localities in Mexico,” is a result of the emergence of “target earners” whose economic goals are different from groups prior to World War II (Huntington “Challenge” 33). Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey assert that immigrants have always gone to places where they have economic, political, or social connections (“Borderline” 28-29). Daniel Griswold, associate director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, agrees that Mexicans who migrate to the US do not aspire to “settle permanently” in the US, but rather “come to solve temporary problems of family finance—by saving dollars and sending them back home in the form of remittances” (2). This point is corroborated by Durand and Massey who have interviewed approximately 5000 immigrants since 1985. They cite reasons for emigration such as the diversification of family-income risks, accumulation of cash, or the financing of family business or major purchase (“Borderline” 29).

The large scale of Mexican immigration, Huntington’s second point, is also a direct result of the global economy which has left imbalances in Mexico and has created a need for unskilled labor in the US. The numbers are unlikely to decrease, according to Griswold, as the Labor

Department estimates that the total number of jobs requiring training of less than one month (for example, food preparation and servicing workers, waiters and waitresses, cashiers, security guards, orderlies, janitors, materials movers, etc.) will surge from 53 million in 2000 to almost 61 million in 2010 (4). Meanwhile, the supply of native-born American workers for these jobs is decreasing because of aging and rising education levels (4). The imbalances apparent in the sending nations include inadequate capital, credit, and mortgage markets, and lack of unemployment insurance, crop insurance, futures markets, and so on (Durand and Massey, “Borderline” 29).

The illegality that plagues Mexican workers, Huntington’s third factor, is also directly linked with the global economy. The split labor market and the dual economy theory elucidate why the employment of “illegal” workers is favored. A possible solution to this problem, the guest worker program, which was implemented in the 1950s, virtually eliminated undocumented migration at that time (Massey, Durand, and Malone 159). However, while the oligopolistic sectors benefit from a dependable source of labor, the other sector of the labor market, which depends upon very cheap unorganized labor, has no use for such a program. A Vidalia onion grower summarizes his preference for undocumented workers:

If we had a bunch of American workers, we’d have to hire someone like a personnel director to deal with all the problems. The people we have now, they come and they work. They don’t have kids to pick up from school or take to the doctor. They don’t have child support issues. They don’t ask to leave early for this and that. They don’t call in sick. If you say to them, ‘Today we need to work 10 hours,’ they don’t say anything. The problems you have with American workers are endless. (qtd. in Brownell 81)

At the same time, since the oligopolistic sectors have more labor available (native-born workers) than they can employ, there is no incentive to look for dependable immigrant labor (Portes and Bach 18).

Moreover, when the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 granted amnesty to undocumented workers, many of them sought to upgrade their skills and education. A 1995 Labor Department study found that 43% of Mexican men enhanced their job skills after the passage of this law. Legalization also resulted in a 15% increase in wages (Griswold 4-5). The “second” economy (where the process of production comes from the labor force) has no economic incentive to employ organized, legal workers.

The guest worker program, which will be discussed in greater detail below, would alleviate the problems associated with undocumented workers, but it would not allow for assimilation into society. George W. Bush, in proposing his temporary worker program in January 2004, was careful to point out that he was not encouraging integration: “I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the path to citizenship...America’s a welcoming country, but citizenship must not be the automatic reward for violating the laws of America” (qtd. in Ramos 198).³

Huntington’s narrow focus and ahistorical viewpoint prevent him from viewing Mexican immigration in light of current economic and political trends. Instead, in his effort to drum up anti-Mexican sentiment in the US, he appeals to emotions and the “‘them versus us’ framing of international affairs” popularized in recent years by Bush, which ultimately serves to further prevent the integration and assimilation of these immigrants (Barry 28). Huntington’s anti-immigration / anti-Mexican attitude is shared by an increasing number of Americans.

Anti-Immigrant Climate in the Last Decade

In December 2005, in a day-labor center in northern Phoenix, Arizona, Minutemen assaulted workers, attempted to take their photographs, and shouted, “This is our country. We are under invasion” (McCarthy et al. 1). Part of a campaign called Operation Spotlight, the Minutemen send these pictures to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and post them on Web sites such as *wehirealiens.com* (McCarthy et al. 2).⁴ The leader of the Minutemen, Jim Gilchrist, proclaims that “[i]llegal aliens...are killing us” (qtd. in McCarthy et al. 2). Racist and violent actions such as these are only opposed by 65% of Americans, according to a CBS News Poll (McCarthy et al. 2).

In a 2004 paper, Laura Pulido reports that racist letters to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* are frequently printed and largely condoned by the American public. For example, news in 2002 that the city of LA would honor Mexican identification cards elicited this response: “This will bring another flood tide of illegal immigration, crime, ethnic enclaves, and non-English-speaking people here for a free handout” (Lindley qtd. in Pulido 156). Another letter echoed Huntington’s complaints: “Besides the dismal success rate of poor Mexican immigrants and generations of their American-born offspring, there is the alarming failure of various immigrant groups to become assimilated into our society” (Mackenzie qtd. in Pulido 156). Pulido points out that such comments have become increasingly commonplace, and are not considered to be morally reprehensible or racist in tone. She contends that Americans justify this attitude because they believe immigrants *choose* to come to the US, which makes them “less entitled to services, opportunities, and resources” (156).

In April of 2006, CNN’s Dan Simon reported on a new video game titled “Border Control” that awards points to players as they shoot and kill Mexicans racing across the border.

The migrants portrayed in the video include a flag-waving Mexican nationalist, a drug smuggler, and a “breeder,” illustrated as a pregnant woman carrying children. Once popular solely with hate groups in favor of ethnic cleansing, these games are now accessible to mainstream society, for no charge, via the Internet (“Playing Racism”).

Although California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s press secretary later issued a “clarification,” the Governor proclaimed, “Close the borders in California and all across Mexico and in the United States. Because I think it is just unfair to have all those people coming across, have the borders open the way it is, and have this kind of lax situation” (qtd. in “Slip” 2). Meanwhile, after appearing at mass protests in response to the Sensenbrenner Bill (HR 4437), Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and California Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante, both Latinos, received death threats (“Latino Leaders”).

In Kansas City, Kansas, a bilingual teenager was suspended from school after speaking in Spanish in the hallway with a classmate. The principal defended her decision, saying, “This is not the first time we have [asked] Zach and others not to speak Spanish at school” (Reid A03). The suspension was later rescinded after the boy’s father called the superintendent of the school district (Reid A03).

A Short History of Nativism

However, although anti-immigration sentiment has been swelling in the past decade, nativism is not a new phenomenon, and has always “involve[d] the interplay of nationalism with a changing set of prejudices and antagonisms” (Castro 38). John Higham defines nationalism as:

intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (i.e., “un-American”) connections. Specific nativistic antagonisms may, and do, vary widely in response to the changing character of minority irritants and the shifting

conditions of the day; but through each separate hostility runs the connecting, energizing force of modern nationalism. While drawing on much broader cultural antipathies and ethnocentric judgments, nativism translates them into a zeal to destroy the enemies of a distinctively American way of life. (qtd. in Castro 38)

Four distinct nativist movements have emerged in US history, and Castro argues that a new movement targeting individuals from Latin American and the Caribbean is underway.

First, the Alien and Sedition Acts in the 1790s were passed in an effort to dispel the proliferation of the French Revolution. Less than a century later, violence and persecution erupted once more, this time targeting Irish Catholics, who were immigrating to the US in large numbers at that time. Shortly thereafter, amidst “fear that the frontier would reach a saturation point” (Gorman 3), the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed. Other measures to control immigration were also introduced, spurred by the belief that Chinese laborers were taking jobs from white men. Furthermore, the Huntingtons of times past quipped that the Chinese would not embrace the principles and ideals set forth in the Constitution, according to Professor Bill Ong Hing of the University of California (qtd. in Gorman 3). The Exclusion Act did not effectively bar the Chinese from entering; in fact, Gorman maintains that the Chinese constituted the first “illegal immigrants,” guided by smugglers who would help them slip through the Mexican border (1).

Finally, during World War I, an effort was made to exclude “imbeciles” and revolutionaries, along with “prostitutes, the handicapped, Asians, and Africans” (Castro 39). Quotas were introduced to exclude the Slavs, Latins, and the Jews, and knowledge of English became a requirement for citizenship (Castro 39). Interestingly, Nathaniel S. Shaler, a Harvard intellectual like Huntington, argued that “the future of American democracy depended on

nourishing its English and Northern European roots” (qtd. in Gorman 4). Non-Aryan immigrants were, according to Shaler, not biologically capable of assimilating (qtd. in Gorman 4).

Nativism and restrictive immigration policies consistently center on the actions of the immigrants, suggesting that they as individuals choose to enter the US in order to seek opportunity while the receiving country is viewed as a passive agent (Sassen 14). However, Saskia Sassen asserts that this mindset fails to encompass the “international activities of governments or firms of receiving countries may have contributed to the formation of economic linkages with sending countries that function as bridges not only for capital but also for migration flows” (Sassen 14). In addition, she points out that patterns of migration are also influenced by economic internationalization and the geopolitics that surfaced after colonialism (13). Current and past immigration laws consistently fail to take this larger context into account.

Immigration Legislation and Proposals Since 1986

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and a smattering of Guest Worker Programs have been implemented in the past, and their repercussions are being discussed in light of the current proposals (2005-2006), which include the McCain / Kennedy bill known as “The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act,” (currently stalled in the Senate) and the Sensenbrenner bill (recently passed in the House) titled “Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005” (H.R. 4437). After offering some background in immigration legislation, I will present a description and evaluation of these recent proposals, and then, incorporating the ideas of Wallerstein, provide an analysis by Sarah Hines and Durand and Massey.

IRCA was designed to reinstitute “control of our borders” by mandating that employers check the documentation of all employees and by fining those who knowingly hired

undocumented workers (Griswold 2). A second stipulation allocated more money toward border control and policing (Griswold 2), resulting in over 10,000 officers and an annual budget in excess of one billion dollars by 2003 (Durand and Massey, "Contradiction" 241). Lastly, IRCA granted permanent legal status, or "amnesty" to close to three million undocumented residents who had been living in the US continuously for the past four years (Griswold 2).

However, the implementation of the act gave rise to a number of problems, the repercussions of which have become political weapons for both pro- and anti-immigration groups. Because the border was no longer porous, an underground market for coyotes, smugglers, and fraudulent documents unfurled (Griswold 3). In addition, tighter security propelled undocumented workers to extend their stay in the US; the median sojourn increased from 2.6 years before IRCA to 6.6 years afterwards (Griswold 3). Peter Brownell reports similar findings, concurring that would-be temporary workers prolonged their time in the US and brought their families because of increased risk of apprehension at the border (74).

In addition, because of the tighter control at the frontier, infiltration arose along the rural Arizona line rather than through major urban centers, resulting in the deaths of over 300 migrants in both 2000 and 2001. An escalation from prior years, these mortalities were triggered by dehydration and other causes (Griswold 3). Durand and Massay corroborate Griswold's report, stating that after Operation Gatekeeper, "the rate of death from suffocation, drowning, heat, cold, and unknown causes increase threefold to plateau around 6 per hundred thousand ("Contradiction" 241).

The imposition of a fine on employers who hire illegal residents has resulted in lower pay for workers, both legal and illegal. A Labor Department study found that, "employer sanctions are viewed as a tax on the employment of unauthorized workers and are incorporated directly

into the labor demand schedule of the firms. As a result, the direct effect of employer sanctions is to lower wages” (qtd. in Griswold 3). Employers in agriculture, construction, gardening, and custodial services shifted the required increase in paperwork (to verify employment eligibility) to subcontractors, who assumed the legal liability and agreed to provide workers at a fixed rate of pay. A percentage of the worker’s wages was retained by the subcontractors in exchange for providing this “legal buffer” (Massey and Durand, “Contradiction” 243-244).

Finally, in driving millions of Mexicans to become citizens, IRCA encouraged “even larger migrant flows in the future, as each new citizen create[d] a host of entitlements for the entry of relatives” (Durand and Massey, “Borderline” 28).

The 1990s spawned a multitude of other problems with the passage of Proposition 187 in California, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) of 1996, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (known as the Welfare Reform Act) of 1996. Briefly, Proposition 187, which State Senator Art Torres referred to as “the last gasp of white America in California,” endeavored to deny undocumented residents access to all public services, and was later overturned by a federal court (Russell 3). IIRIRA, passed two years later, stripped immigrants of many legal rights (including due process), and facilitated the exportation of both legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants (Jonas and Tactaquin 68-69). Lastly, the highly punitive AEDPA promulgated the automatic detention of any immigrant who had ever committed a crime punishable by a one year prison sentence. It also called for the deportation (without a hearing or other recourse) of any immigrant with connections to a terrorist group, as defined by the Attorney General (Jonas and Tactaquin 68-69). Further, the act was retroactive, such that any noncitizen who had ever violated the law (including petty offenses such as minor

drug convictions) became eligible for deportation, even if the crime had occurred twenty years earlier (Jonas and Tactaquin 69). Finally, the Welfare Reform Act went beyond Proposition 187 in that it revoked public services for all immigrants regardless of legal standing (Jonas and Tactaquin 69).

Durand and Massey argue that these laws have “sought to discourage immigration” but that “nothing of the sort has happened” (“Borderline” 28). Instead, “current [prior to 2003] US policy has produced the worst of all possible worlds: continued, growing Mexican immigration under conditions detrimental to the United States, Mexico, and the immigrants themselves” (“Borderline” 28).

The McCain / Kennedy Bill – A Guest Worker Program

Two recent proposals in Congress, the McCain / Kennedy bill and the Sensenbrenner bill, may also undermine the ability of Mexican immigrants to assimilate and progress economically, evoking the fulmination of nativists once more.⁵ In describing the McCain / Kennedy bill, Senator Kennedy proclaimed, “Americans want and deserve realistic solutions to the urgent immigration problems we face. They want secure borders, which require fair and effective immigration laws that can actually be enforced, that protect our security, strengthen our economy, respect our ideals, and honor our heritage as a nation of immigrants” (US Fed News). A major provision of the bill calls for the Essential Worker Visa Program, which allows workers to temporarily fill positions that entail little to no job skills. Application for this renewable 3-year visa (H-5A) requires a previously secured job in the US and carries of fee of \$500. The cap on these visas is set at 400,000, but can be adjusted according to market demands. The bill also cultivates a partnership with Mexico in order to establish the re-integration of its citizens as they

repatriate and to share the health care costs of Mexican nationals residing in the US (US Fed News 1-4).

The rekindling of interest in a guest worker program is “entirely predicable,” according to Manuel Pastor and Susan Alva, because of the US’s dependence on Mexican labor, lack of employment opportunity in Mexico, and “the need to protect migrant workers versus the desire of employers to clarify the rules of engagement in their favor” (93). Guest worker programs have been enacted in the past with dubious success. The infamous Bracero Program, in effect from 1942-1964, brought 4.6 million Mexicans to work in agriculture due to wartime shortages of eligible US American workers. Propaganda at the time (in Mexico City’s *El Universal*, for example) depicted happy workers “joyfully greeted by the North American farmers” who enjoyed abundant wages and a stellar working environment (Hines). However, the deplorable conditions under which these laborers were employed were brought to light in two documentaries: Ernesto Galarza’s study titled *Strangers in our Fields*, and Edward R. Murrow’s film titled *Harvest of Shame*. As the Bracero Program came to an end in the early 60s, amendments to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act were added which changed the quota system and provided opportunity for more migration from Mexico. Because of the social networks established by legal residents, these amendments also brought an increase of undocumented aliens (Pastor and Alva 96-97).

Since the passage of IRCA in 1986, several other guest worker programs have emerged. The H-2A visa program allows employers in agriculture to contract foreign workers if they can demonstrate a scarcity of US American workers at the prevailing wage. However, there are only 42,000 H-2A visa holders at present, and abuse, which is not reported by workers who fear for their jobs, is prevalent. One laborer summarized the situation, “What you see, you must remain

silent” (qtd. in Pastor and Alva 96). The H-2B program was designed for similar purposes, though the workers are employed in nonagricultural fields. Although these workers tend to have higher job skills and thus better bargaining power, they also are ascribed fewer formal protections (Pastor and Alva 96).

The last guest worker program issues an H1-B visa for educated workers (with a B.A. degree or higher) and allows employers to later petition for permanent resident status of the worker. As with the other programs, the employer must prove that eligible US American workers are not available. H1-B visa holders may bring their spouses, provided they do not work, and their children, who are able to attend public schools. However, this program is also subject to abuse and exploitation. A US Labor Department student concluded that the H1-B program “serves as a probationary try-out employment program for illegal aliens, foreign students, and foreign visitors to determine if they will be sponsored for permanent status” (qtd. in Pastor and Alva 97). With permanent residency serving as a carrot, H1-B visa holders often consent to working long hours at relatively low pay.

In their advocacy of guest worker rights, Pastor and Alva call for a scrupulous evaluation of guest worker proposals, focusing on seven fundamental questions, which I will employ in my assessment of the McCain / Kennedy bill. Pastor and Alva first insist that the demand for workers be fairly established, recommending that employers be required to certify, not merely attest under good faith, that domestic labor is unavailable. Under Section 308 of the McCain / Kennedy bill, employers must attest that they have posted job openings in America’s job bank and that these positions have not been filled for at least 30 days. Moreover, they must keep records documenting the reasons that US applicants were not hired (“Secure America” 8).

Second, Pastor and Alva question the role of the labor contractor, who may be a state representative or a private actor. They point to the success of a Canadian guest worker program in which Mexican consular officials are directly involved in the administration of the program and the protection of worker rights, a responsibility they share with Canadian functionaries. Section 501 of the McCain / Kennedy bill, titled "Labor Migration Facilitation Programs," provides for such an arrangement by authorizing the Secretary of State to enter into agreements with foreign governments whose citizens are participating in the guest worker program. The purpose of these agreements is to (1) monitor the foreign nationals' participation in the program, (2) facilitate travel between the US and the country of origin, and (3) aid with reintegration of the foreign national into his/her country of origin upon return ("Secure America" 10).

Third, Pastor and Alva insist that guest workers, like domestic workers, should not be obliged to remain with a single employer, but rather should possess the freedom to switch jobs since without the "capacity to exit ...workers lose their voice as well as their rights" (98). Section 302, "Admission of Essential Workers," specifies that the temporary worker must be continuously employed in the US. If unemployed, the worker must acquire a new job within 45 days or risk deportation. However, if new employment is secured in the home country while the temporary visa is still valid, the worker may return to the US to work. Further, the worker is eligible to change employers at will, which might stave off potential abuse by the employer, as long as 45 days do not pass between jobs. ("Secure America" 5).

Fourth, the program should not be limited to certain sectors, such as agriculture. For example, because the H2A visa program made agriculture dependent on underpaid labor, it has not invested in mechanization that might raise the skills required along with the wages. The McCain / Kennedy bill opens the guest worker program to all employers.

In order to effectively safeguard workers from exploitation, Pastor and Alva also call for the coupling of labor protections with enforcement mechanisms, including sufficient resources. Less tangibly, the political will to enforce the laws must also be present. Though most programs contain protections, they stress that the capacity to enforce these rules is crucial in enabling workers to exercise their rights without retaliation such as termination of employment. For example, during the Bracero years, when workers demanded “better wages or working conditions, the growers called the Immigration and Naturalization Service and had them deported” (Baldauf). In addition, Pastor and Alva believe that guest workers should not be segregated from domestic workers, but rather encouraged to forge ties with union leaders and other individuals in civil society (99). Section 304 of the McCain / Kennedy bill, “Protection for Workers,” outlines the protections extended to the workers including (1) the same rights and wages as US workers employed (guest workers cannot be treated as independent contractors), and (2) disclosure of working conditions and compensation at the onset of employment. Further, employers cannot hire guest workers during a strike or lockout, nor can they retaliate if an alien exercises his/her rights. The enforcement techniques include whistleblower protection and the imposition of more stringent fines on employers who violate these terms (“Secure America” 6, 10). However, it is not stipulated whether guest workers may join labor unions, and the current climate of anti-immigration is likely to make the enforcement of these protections politically unpopular.

Sixth, the program must allow for the passage of family members; Pastor and Alva call it “inhumane” to exclude families (103). Because ~~that~~ guest worker programs are designed for sojourns, the H2-A and H2-B programs prohibit family members from residing in the US with the worker (Pastor and Alva 99). This exclusion attempts to undermine long-term ties to the

community and prevents unnecessary “burdens” on the public school and health care systems. However, under Section 301 “Essential Workers,” the spouse and children of the guest worker are eligible to accompany the principal alien (“Secure America” 5).

Finally, while Pastor and Alva recognize that most transnational workers do not intend to settle permanently in the US, they advocate that a guest worker program provide a path to legal residency if the worker chooses (99). Under Section 306 “Adjustment to Lawful Permanent Resident Status,” H-5A visa-holders may petition for permanent resident status through employer-based petitions or self-petition, if the alien has maintained status in the temporary worker program for 4 consecutive years (“Secure America” 7).

Critiques and Analyses of Guest Worker Programs

Pastor and Alva may, therefore, endorse the Kennedy / McCain bill; nonetheless, other scholars and activists question the ethics and objectives of guest worker programs, and outline alternative paths for immigration reform. Durand and Massey, in articles published in 2001 and 2003, criticize immigration policies based on “cold War hysteria and economic panic of the early 1980s rather than on hard facts” (“Borderline” 28). They point to empirical data that illustrates three realities of the current situation. First, international migration does not arise from lack of development in the sending nation (“Borderline” 28). Like Portes and Bach, Durand and Massey point out that it is not the poorest, least developed nations that send immigrants, but rather countries that are undergoing industrialization or development. Industrialization, they maintain, has always displaced workers, moving them from the countryside to other locations, oftentimes abroad (“Borderline” 28). Monica Heppel and Luis Torres, using a model developed even before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), purport that 1.4 million rural Mexicans will be displaced, “with 800,000 migrating within Mexico and 600,000 immigrating to the

United States (56). Wallerstein contextualizes this process of industrialization in the capitalist world-economy, which “has seen the need to expand the geographic boundaries of the system as a whole, creating thereby new loci of production to participate in its axial division of labor” (36).

Similarly, Durand and Massey recognize that immigration is part of a larger economic system; with NAFTA, the integration of “markets for goods, capital, information, commodities, and services” was established, yet labor markets were ignored (“Borderline” 28). To ensure that the free trade agreement would be enacted, the US government did not prepare the public for the increased Mexican immigration that would necessarily result from it (Martin 134; Heppel and Torres 51). Because the US and Mexico were already connected politically, economically, and socially, it should not have been a surprise that Mexicans would migrate to the US (“Borderline” 28-29).

The accumulation of capital is the underlying force in capitalism, and requires “movement and change” of not only goods and capital, but “manpower as well” (Wallerstein 36-37). This circulation stems from the necessity to maximize the appropriation of surplus value (Wallerstein 36). In an effort to increase this appropriation, capitalism pressures its producers to work more while being paid less (Wallerstein 36). The importation of Mexican workers, who are stripped of legal rights and protections, fulfills this need, allowing the capitalist system to expand and grow.

Finally, Durand and Massey concur with Portes and Bach’s analysis of the dual economy, which reserves “good” jobs in the oligopolistic sector for native-born Americans while designating “bad” jobs for immigrants in the second economy, where the process of production comes from the labor force (“Borderline” 29; Portes and Bach 17). This division, found in

advanced capitalism, is a result of “shifts in the technology of production, the emergence of the welfare state, and the pervasiveness of social hierarchies” (“Borderline” 29).

These social hierarchies, Wallerstein asserts, are also a defining characteristic of the capitalist world economy, which is a “polarizing system, both in its rewards pattern and in the degree to which persons are increasingly forced to play socially polarized roles” (37). This polarization emerges as the wealth is distributed to a shrinking proportion of the population, a disparity that is again justified by the superiority of one culture over another. As Mexico formally “joined” the world capitalist system, this division is also evident domestically. James Petras reports that “[f]oreign debt payments, corrupt privations and large-scale growth of precarious employment led to an absolute decline of wage levels, even as the number of Mexican billionaires multiplied” (2).

Increased control of the border will not eliminate these market pressures, and wastes \$3 billion dollars annually (Durand and Massey, “Borderline” 28). Political leaders are caught between appeasing the owners of capital, who benefit from international migration, and the more numerous but less powerful ordinary workers, who suffer from the downward pressure on wages (“Borderline” 29). The efforts of programs such as Operation Gatekeeper (California), Operation Hold-the-Line (Texas), and Operation Safeguard (Arizona) are generally powerless against these market pressures. Therefore, Durand and Massey suggest that although international migration is inevitable under the current capitalist world economy, it should be managed more appropriately (“Borderline” 30).

They suggest that first the immigration quota from Mexico must be adjusted. In 2001, there were only 20,000 visas available for Mexicans; it is estimated that currently between 8 and 11 million Mexicans are residing illegally in the US. The Kennedy / McCain bill provides for

400,000 visas (which is consistent with the numbers provided by Mexico's National Population Council (qtd. in Rosen 3)), while Durand and Massey call for 300,000. Section 305 "Market-Based Numerical Limitations" allows for a 20% increase in the subsequent year if the numerical limit is reached within the first quarter ("Secure America" 6). These visas, however, are not reserved only for Mexican nationals, but rather for any worker who participates in the guest worker program.

Durand and Massey concur with Pastor and Alva on several other key requirements in a guest worker program. First, a guest worker program must allow for temporary stays, without forcing migrant workers to obtain permanent residency. In addition, the visa must be affiliated with the employee, not the employers, granting the worker freedom to transfer jobs. This latitude would also make it "more difficult for unscrupulous employers to lower the wages of native-born workers or cut corners on ensuring their health and safety" ("Borderline" 30).

The government would not be burdened financially by the administration of this program, Durand and Massey contend, if they charge a \$300 fee for each visa. (The Kennedy / McCain bill would charge visa applicants a \$500 application fee. However, if the worker is currently residing illegally in the US, he or she must also pay a \$1500 fine.) The government would also collect additional revenues in the form of federal taxes withheld from paychecks. And finally, a drastic reduction in the money poured into border control and enforcement would free up \$3 billion dollars annually ("Borderline" 30-1). (Brownell argues that the build-up of resources and personnel is largely symbolic, as it is the result of potential and actual protests, but not at all effectual (77)).

The 4.4 billion dollars generated by this program should be designated for states that house a large number of immigrants, to offset costs in education and health care, according to

Durand and Massey (“Borderline” 31). Other funds should be used to bolster the social infrastructure of Mexico and improve their markets (“Borderline” 31). Durand and Massey point to the successful integration of Spain and Portugal into the European market as an example. While these countries had been sending migrant workers to Western Europe, the allocation of funds back to these countries allowed for the upgrade of their transportation, communication, banking, and social welfare programs, which led to large net return migration (“Borderline” 31).

A better banking system in particular, Durand and Massey argue, would benefit Mexican migrants by reducing the fees for wire transfers and improving the rates of exchange that they receive in Mexico. In addition, better banking would allow Mexicans to finance a house (or refrigerator) without having to migrate to the US (“Borderline” 31). The Kennedy / McCain bill does allow “bilateral efforts with Mexico to reduce migration pressures and costs,” but improving banking services in Mexico is not specified. Instead, Section 502 calls for increasing health care for the poor and underserved in Mexico, especially in emergency and trauma care for locations along the border, and helping Mexicans establish a program to provide for the health care of its citizens working in the US (“Secure America” 10).

While Durand and Massey advocate policies that include a guest worker program, Sarah Hines opposes any such program on the grounds that it segregates the labor force, which leads to exploitation. She highlights the gross injustices that arose with the Bracero agreement, despite the protections that workers should have been afforded in this program. For example, although, like the Kennedy/ McCain bill, the Bracero Program stipulated that workers were to be employed only in cases where there existed insufficient domestic laborers, “the opposite occurred” (Hines). In addition, workers were not compensated at the “prevailing rates,” but rather found themselves replacing domestic workers who had been paid double their wages (Hines).

Though provisions to file grievances and join labor unions through elected representatives were outlined, these rights were, according to National Farm Labor Union organizer Ernesto Galarza, “stillborn...[remaining] embalmed in the meaningless language of the international agreement” (qtd. in Hines). Laborers who attempted to exercise these rights were terminated, and therefore deported. In the *International Socialist Review*, Justin Akers asserts that “any ‘breach’ of the contract, such as speaking out against poor conditions or involvement in collective bargaining, was a violation of the contract. Because these contracts were made with individuals, collective bargaining was precluded” (qtd. in Hines).

Hines argues, therefore, that “bogus” immigration reforms such as a guest worker program result in problems such as “lack of consistent work, long work hours, earnings that barely covered expenses, unauthorized deductions from their pay, meager and poor-quality food rations, run-down and unsanitary housing, dangerous means of transportation, dangerous working conditions that le[a]d to disabling or fatal accidents, and even physical abuse as well as severe racial discrimination,” all of which also arose with the Bracero Program. Instead, Hines calls for “equal rights and unconditional amnesty” for all immigrants working in the US.

Conclusions

The threat that Mexican immigrants pose, described by Samuel Huntington in his article “The Hispanic Challenge,” is a thinly-veiled attempt to orchestrate anti-Mexican sentiment in a climate that seems ripe for it. Though Huntington claims that the social values and norms of America are under attack by the growing number of Mexican immigrants who refuse to assimilate into mainstream society, this lack of assimilation is best understood within the context of the modern world system, characterized by a capitalist global economy. Wallerstein demonstrates how this global economy envelopes nations, while pressuring local and traditional

cultures to adopt Western or “modern” culture. The “contradictions, ambiguities, and complexities” of the capitalist world economy have led to the construction and preservation of a hierarchy of cultures, partly through the co-existence of universalism and sexism/racism (38). In this system, Mexicans are obligated to participate in the global economy, but marginalized through racist beliefs that deem their culture deficient. Similarly, Portes and Bach demonstrate that the capitalist world economy deliberately excludes Mexican immigrants, preferring to keep them on the peripheries so that they can provide low-paid labor.

Nativism, under the guise of patriotism, also vilifies and excludes Mexicans. Wallerstein notes that “patriotism has quite often been reinforced by or transformed into racism...([such as] opposition of the citizen to the stranger or immigrant)” (47). This opposition, like earlier nativists movements, is manifested in immigration proposals such as the Sensenbrenner bill, which suggest that Mexican immigration is akin to an invasion that must be combated.

An alternative proposal, the Kennedy / McCain bill, stipulates provisions for a temporary guest worker program, a solution endorsed by the business community and some social activists. Though this proposal, and similar proposals by Durand and Massey, represent the most humane and just form of immigration reform that is currently under debate, they would still function to separate the labor force, preserving the hierarchy of cultures. Dan Stein, director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform in Washington, maintains that a guest worker program is ultimately motivated by “greed and exploitation” (qtd. in Baldauf), which, Wallerstein asserts, are major tenets of the ever-expanding capitalist world system. (37). Therefore, because the capitalist world-economy supports the division of “the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages,” it is futile to lament “the persistent inflow of

Hispanic immigrants” and their lack of assimilation into mainstream society (Huntington “Challenge” 30).

A Brief Epilogue

While Bush is deploying National Guard troops to patrol the border, Mexican immigrants and their supporters have launched a major campaign to combat immigration proposals that reinforce their marginalization in society. The spring of 2006 brought mass demonstrations in major cities across the nation, as hundreds of thousands of immigrants marched in opposition to the punitive and draconian measures under debate in Congress. While it is too early to analyze these movements, Mexican immigrants and their supporters are undoubtedly challenging the ideas behind “The Hispanic Challenge.”

Notes

¹ I mention “brown-skinned” because I agree with Tom Barry that “the US public generally views immigrants with more or less hostility according to the color of their skin...” (28).

² Portes and Bach cite the studies of Oscar Handlin (*Boston's Immigrants* and *The Uprooted*), William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*), Irving L. Child (*Italian or American?*), and Carl Wittke (*Refugees of Revolution*). In these portraits of immigrant life, the authors assumed this general pattern. While these authors do include some accounts of repatriation, it is considered the exception, and is usually “attributed to individual circumstances or to periodic recessions in the United States” (Portes and Bach 8).

³ During Vicente Fox's first visit to the White House in September 2001, he and Bush discussed a program that would include both a guest worker program and legalization, or “the whole enchilada” as Jorge Castañeda called it. Since then, Bush has aimed only to “accommodate U.S. business needs for a stable supply of low-paid Mexican labor,” but has refused to attach a legalization program (Ross).

⁴ The following quotation from *wehirealiens.com* epitomizes the mindset behind this movement: “Boy, does your site work well! I just wanted to send you an update on Turner-Baxter Inc. I was told today that the company got rid of 18 illegals! Good job, guys! I guess these employers see that the American people are not going to sit back and let our country be invaded by illegals anymore! Thank you very much!”

⁵ The passage of the Sensenbrenner bill in the House on December 16, 2005, sparked mass demonstrations across the US in the spring of 2006. The Sensenbrenner bill, known as the “Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005,” calls for, among other things, the criminalization of unlawful presence in the US, the criminalization of those who assist undocumented residents, the removal of legal protections from undocumented residents including due process and judicial review, and the construction of a 700 mile long fence along the US-Mexico border (Friedland et al.).

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