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Mexican Immigrants as "Other": An Interdisciplinary Analysis of U.S.
Immigration Legislation and Political Cartoons

by

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Gardner-Webb University
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Approved by:

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Introduction

Since the 18th century, America has been called the “melting pot,” a land filled with different languages and ethnicities, oozing with diversity and ripe with opportunity for all. Many people have immigrated to the United States with the hope of finding a better job, getting a better education, or finally having the freedom to openly express their religious and political beliefs. While the United States’ borders have seen immigrants from many different places in the world, the current influx-- for about the last 50 years or so-- is people from Central America, but more specifically, Mexico. According to the Migration Policy Institute, over three million Mexican immigrants come to the United States every year, and many of them do not have the paperwork to achieve legal status (Zong and Batalova).

Consequently, close to half a million Mexicans living in the U.S. are deported every year. In a country whose very foundation was built upon the backs of immigrants, the government has found it quite necessary to construct and enforce certain immigration policies throughout its nationhood in an effort to welcome newcomers, but keep out negative influences like illegal drugs, unregistered weapons, and sex trafficking. The previously mentioned influences are contemporary concerns and have come to embody the modern definition of “undesirable,” with

regards to Mexicans immigrants, in the United States today. It is also necessary to point out that these concerns are assumptions that many United States' citizens make about immigrants, meaning that, while it may be true about some Mexican immigrants sell and abuse illegal drugs, it cannot be said that *all* Mexican immigrants sell and abuse illegal drugs; it is nothing more than a stereotype that is used to perpetuate negative ideas about Mexicans and Mexican immigrants.

U.S. citizens that buy into this negative stereotype believe that immigration legislation should be strict and that its primary goal should be to protect the rights and well-being of American citizens. While protecting U.S. citizens is certainly important, it is also vital to have immigration policies that encourage immigrants and treat them with the same respect that the United States gives its own citizens. If not, immigrants end up being singled out and "othered" by both the government and a nation's citizens. By othered, I refer to the act of singling out and separating a group of people based upon inherent characteristics that are different from the characteristics of the dominant people group(s) in a specific area (Spivak 272). This scenario is what has happened to Mexican immigrants in the United States since the immigration and citizenship terms that were agreed upon in the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848; these terms had a direct effect on the Mexicans living in the newly acquired United States' territory and they set the stage for

future immigration legislation. Mexican immigrants were othered through government legislation, news articles, and political cartoons. To analyze this problem, I will use postcolonial theory and its concept of othering, discussed by Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said, specifically considering how the concept of othering of Mexican immigrants by the United States government and the media might help us better understand the divide between Mexican immigrants and United States citizens and how it was created.

In his fundamental postcolonial work *Orientalism*, Said stated that postcolonial theory investigates the “systems of discourse by which the ‘world’ is divided, administered, plundered, by which humanity is thrust into pigeonholes, by which ‘we’ are ‘human’ and ‘they’ are not” (77). The “we” in this instance is U.S. citizens while “they” refers to Mexican immigrants. When Said and Spivak wrote about “they,” it was in reference to people from Arab and East Asian countries that were being invaded, colonized, and exploited by the British and other Western European countries as early as the seventeenth century. However, Jenny Sharpe, professor of English, Gender Studies, and Comparative Literature at the University of California, said,

when used as a descriptive term for the United States, *postcolonial* does not name its past as a white settler colony or its emergence as a neocolonial power; rather

it designates the presence of racial minorities and
Third World immigrants. (181)

Great Britain colonized externally, meaning that they went to other countries with the purpose of creating colonies and exploiting its people and natural resources (Sharpe 182). But Sharpe makes the distinction that the United States colonized internally on the land that they gained from Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; white settlers moved westward, pushing Mexican residents out and exploiting the land through ventures like gold mining. The Mexicans who chose to stay in the United States' newly claimed territory were considered to be outsiders and inferior, despite the fact that this western territory had been their home for years. They became colonial subjects because they were a conquered people, and they were expected to immediately adapt to the "American" way of life that had been established by the U.S. and leave their Mexican heritage in the past (Sharpe 182). Sharpe goes on to note that because of the United States' rise in immigrants from Third World countries, the "figure of racial exclusion" is becoming "the migrant," which is a term that describes millions of Mexicans living in the U.S. Excluding Mexicans because of their race epitomizes postcolonialism because it distinctly identifies them as a minority group that is different from and outside of the majority group in the U.S., that being natural born citizens. When they became colonial subjects in 1848, Mexicans also became "the other"

and that idea has persisted through the years to the current day.

Postcolonial theory and its concept of othering are ideas frequently used in literary criticism to analyze similar issues.

Literary criticism, like postcolonial theory, is interdisciplinary and is often used to analyze social and political themes in literature, as well as current social and political issues of the day. For example, Wendy Willems wrote a paper in which she used postcolonial theory to study the humor used in political comic strips that appeared in a privately owned newspaper in Zimbabwe in the 2000s (Willems). In 2008, two different authors, one French and one American, published a paper together and applied a "postcolonial view to customer research" by analyzing how the purchases of black communities in the United States and France create "street identity" in their respective communities; black Americans and French blacks maintain their "fanatical consumption through the acquisition of sneakers," and these sneaker choices fulfill a need for empowerment, rebellion, and identity creation (Brace-Govan and Burgh-Woodman). Both of these papers are examples of current social and political issues that were successfully analyzed through the lens of postcolonial theory, and in this paper I will show that Mexican immigration in the U.S. is another issue that is well suited to analysis through postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial analysis of United States' immigration policies is important because it uncovers the attitudes and behaviors of lawmakers and citizens that help and hurt immigrants and their immigration status in the United States. The way the United States' government views and treats its immigrant population is important for two reasons. First, the immigrant population should be respected and valued. As stated above, the United States was created and built by immigrants, both literally and figuratively. Immigrants have labored with their hands to build schools and roads, but they have also made significant contributions to U.S. culture. To shut out and alienate them with words, actions, or policies would be a great disservice to the country as a whole. Second, the attitudes and actions of the government have a direct impact on its citizens. So, if the government vilifies immigrants and does not accept them, then there is a strong likelihood that many of its citizens will blindly follow suit and hold a negative opinion of immigrants. The cultivation of negative attitudes like this can encourage consequences as minimal as an unfriendly glance or as significant as segregated schools and restaurants.

Postcolonial theory is helpful in understanding these negative attitudes because it helps us see exactly how immigrants are being othered by the government and the media, and how these attitudes become actions. Because the government and its policies have such a direct, and sometimes monumental, impact on U.S. citizens, it is vitally

important that the government acts on immigration in a way that values immigrants and their contributions while still protecting and valuing the people that are already citizens.

By examining immigration legislation, new articles, and political cartoons, I will identify and discuss the attitudes of the government towards immigrants and how this has impacted both immigrants and U.S. citizens. While I will use aspects of postcolonialism to analyze both government documents and media publications, the outcome will not be the same. Through immigration legislation, the U.S. takes an official government stance on immigration and, through that legislation, sends a specific message to both immigrants and U.S. citizens about immigrants' place in society and how they should be viewed and treated. Media publications, like news articles and political cartoons, can either take the same stance as the government, or they may differ, for example, thinking that the government has not restricted immigration enough or that the path to citizenship should be easier. It is important to look at legislation and media publications together to understand the actions of the government and how they impact and are interpreted by the media.

To examine political cartoons and images, I will use Gunther Kress' and Theo van Leeuwen's visual rhetoric concepts of represented participants, interactive participants and gaze. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen's *Reading Images*, represented participants are "the people,

the places, and things depicted in images,” while interactive participants are “the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers and viewers of the image” (114). It is important to look at the represented participants and interactive participants of the political cartoons and images I have included because they help us understand the attitudes of the media toward immigrants and the immigrant legislation at that given time in history. It is also important to look at how the participants interact with each other. Kress said, “Interactive participants are therefore real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions” (114). There are two types of interactive participants that will communicate with and through represented participants: producers, who communicate through the production of images, and viewers, who communicate with the image and draw meaning from it (Kress and van Leeuwen). Producers communicate with viewers through the way they portray immigrants in images. So, in the social context of immigration legislation, producers of images seek to make sense of immigration legislation through the production of images, while viewers seek to make sense of these images through viewing them, consequently determining their own attitudes toward immigrants and immigrant legislation. Through the portrayal and interpretation of represented participants, we can see how the attitudes of interactive participants, especially producers, either supported the

government's immigration legislation or criticized it, continuing to point to Mexicans as "the other" or being sympathetic to the plight of Mexican immigrants.

Of represented participants, Kress and van Leeuwen note in *Reading Images* that "being represented as looking at the viewer, they are represented as human, anthropomorphized to some degree" (118). While this is true, I will show that in some images, represented participants are actually dehumanized because of the way they are depicted by the producer in the image. Additionally, I will look at the cartoons and images chronologically to see how U.S. attitudes towards immigration and immigration reform have changed or stayed the same through the years.

Kress' and van Leeuwen's concept of gaze has to do with the way the participants are looking at each other and/or looking at the viewers. Their concept of gaze communicates a connection or lack of connection with both the producers and viewers of an image, and can portray many different attitudes and emotions through its demand for a relationship with the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen). The gaze of the represented participants in the images I use often portray weakness, confusion, and exclusion, pointing back to the postcolonial idea of "the other," the inferior minority group that is marginalized because of their differences,

and the negative stereotype of Mexican immigrants that is continuously perpetuated.

In chapter 1 of my thesis, I will begin in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and show that this treaty was the beginning of the othering of Mexican immigrants by the U.S. government during their annexation of former Mexican lands. In the remainder of chapter 1 and in chapter 2, I will examine immigration legislation that was enacted from 1870 to 1965 to show how the U.S. government further othered Mexican immigrants and made it even more difficult for them to become legal members of the U.S. In chapter 4, I will explore the immigration legislation of the 1980s and 1990s that made some attempts at being more inclusive of Mexican immigrants, but still treated them as “the other” and considered them inferior to U.S. citizens. In chapter 5, I will discuss the attempted measures at immigration reform in the early twenty-first century and the newest immigration plan proposed by President Obama, all of which seek to be more inclusive but do not make changes significant enough to entirely discontinue the othering of Mexican immigrants. In each chapter, I will analyze an immigration political cartoon that coincides with the period of time discussed in that chapter; I will use postcolonial theory and visual concepts from Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen to discuss how each cartoon either reflects or refutes the government attitude at that given time. To conclude, I will present

some solutions to this issue that I have found during my analysis, solutions that would improve the government's relationship with its Mexican immigrants, causing them to be less othered through government legislation, and the media outlets and U.S. citizens who follow the government's lead on treating Mexican immigrants as "the other".

Chapter 1

It is important to examine the historical beginnings of othering of Mexican immigrants so that we can see how and why it began. The formation of attitudes about Mexican immigrants did not begin recently, but rather early on in the United States' nationhood. Starting from the Mexican-American War and working through history to the modern era helps us understand how these attitudes have evolved and how they have impacted Mexican immigrants. In this chapter, I will use postcolonial theory to analyze how U.S. government legislation has othered Mexican immigrants since the Mexican-American War and the concepts of gaze and represented participants to discuss the details and significance of relevant political cartoons.

Manifest Destiny and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

During the mid to late 1800s, the term "Manifest Destiny" was coined and used to describe the United States government's strong desire to claim other lands, with the attitude that its country was "destined to

stretch from coast to coast" ("Manifest Destiny"). Mexico was no exception. Until the late 1840s, Mexico had control of almost the entire modern-day United States' western region. In order to fully expand its territory to the Pacific Ocean, the United States would have to claim the northern half of Mexico. In 1845, the U.S. government annexed Texas, and Mexico retaliated in 1846, starting the Mexican-American War. Following the United States' victory in the Mexican-American War, it was determined that a treaty should be created and signed to officially end the war and to make peace between the two nations (Dear).

Michael Dear, professor of geography at the University of Southern California, notes that in 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was enacted, making it the first piece of legislation to specifically impact Mexican nationals. During negotiations, Mexico agreed to cede modern-day California, Nevada, and Utah, and parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, redefining the United States-Mexico border as the Rio Grande and causing Mexico to lose half of its territory (Dear). Articles VIII and IX of the treaty promised to protect the citizenship, rights, and property ownership of Mexicans who chose to remain in the newly annexed territory. The Avalon Project conducted at Yale Law School, which catalogued historical and legal documents online, notes that the treaty gave them the opportunity to choose either to remain a Mexican citizen or become a citizen of the United States of America,

granted them all rights and privileges afforded to U.S. citizens, and allowed them to retain ownership of any property that they had prior to the treaty (Yale). However, no one was assigned to enforce the treaty and on many occasions Mexican land titles were not accepted, forcing Mexicans to surrender their property and homes to the U.S. government, according to Martha Menchaca, professor of anthropology at the University of Texas (18). The government remained passive in this matter rather than actively enforcing the treaty's promises to Mexicans living in this newly acquired territory; therefore allowing the othering of Mexican immigrants in the United States to begin and become a greater and more important issue as time marched on. By not protecting the Mexican people, the U.S. government was sending to U.S. citizens the message that Mexico and its people were small and weak because they could be easily dominated and manipulated, and that they were inferior to United States' citizens and insignificant to the world. The creation of this stereotype is quite significant because this small, weak, inferior Mexican is the image that the U.S. government had of Mexican people, including the ones who were living in the U.S., and it continues to persist today. Because of manifest destiny, the U.S. government thought that it was their right to take Mexican land, and that Mexicans needed help from the U.S. to become civilized and to civilize their land, but they did not really want to take on the burden of these so-called uncivilized people

(Menchaca 21). In this sense, the U.S. government was treating Mexicans like colonized people because they took their land and property and demanded that they become "American," meaning that they conform to the expectations of the U.S. government and citizens. Through a lack of action and treaty enforcement by the U.S. government, the U.S. simply took northern Mexico, said "this is *ours* now," and made it clear through both words and actions that Mexicans did not belong there, even if that happened to be where they had lived their whole lives. This stereotype was perpetuated out of a desire to create and maintain a clear distinction between U.S. citizens and Mexicans and label them as "the other." This label of "the other" developed because Mexicans were different from U.S. citizens in several ways: their skin color, due to a mix of Spanish and Native American ancestry, was usually much darker than the northern European heritage of most U.S. citizens; they spoke Spanish rather than English and they were predominantly Roman Catholic rather than Protestant. They also wore different clothing, ate different food, and celebrated different holidays. Rather than being tolerant of these differences, the U.S. government rejected them, and therefore rejected the people, the Mexicans themselves. These differences were used to separate and alienate the Mexicans, and were the catalyst in the development of such a negative stereotype. Furthermore, if the government could continue to perpetuate this negative stereotype of

Mexican people, then it was very likely that the media and U.S. citizens would adopt this stereotype as their view of Mexican people and other them through means of negative publications and social oppression.

It could even be argued that the U.S. government chose not to actively uphold the mandates of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo because it wanted Mexicans to move south of the Rio Grande, back within the borders of Mexico. President James K. Polk had no intentions of offering anything to Mexico or the Mexican people living in the new U.S. territory, but his treaty negotiator was very sympathetic and offered money, as well as protection for Mexicans who did not want to leave (Dear). Fearing backlash from the Mexican government, President Polk signed the treaty (Dear); however, I would argue that he never had any intention of upholding the treaty because his only goal in annexing Texas and northern Mexico was to expand the United States' territory to the Pacific Ocean. According to scholar Sam W. Haynes of the University of Texas, President Polk was an extraordinarily aggressive expansionist who was elected primarily because of his pro-expansion platform. Polk, along with most of the Democrats in Congress, believed that westward expansion was necessary in order to survive and accommodate the growing number of European immigrants, and to keep other countries, especially Great Britain, from staking claim on Texas and northern Mexico. Polk and the democrats also wanted to expand because they were interested in having

more land on which to grow cash crops and, being advocates of slavery, wanted to fill these new fields with slave labor (Haynes). If Mexicans stayed in the United States' newly acquired territory, the U.S. government's seemingly perfect plan for expansion would have been thwarted.

Putting right into words the apparent attitude of President Polk and his democratic allies, John C. Calhoun, a pro-expansion senator who served from 1832 until his death in 1850, said:

We do not want the people of Mexico, either as citizens or subjects. All we want is a portion of territory, which they nominally hold, generally uninhabited, or, where inhabited at all, sparsely so, and with a population, which would soon recede, or identify with ours. (Gutierrez 188)

In the first words of his statement, Calhoun says very clearly that the United States' does not want Mexican people living in their newly acquired territory. He also makes the annexation of the northern half of Mexico sound as if it should be insignificant to the Mexican government, and especially the Mexican people, by saying that this northern portion of Mexico was "generally uninhabited," which was not true, according to University of California history professor, David G. Gutierrez (190). Calhoun also says that Mexico held this portion of land "nominally," meaning that Mexico's claim was in name only, rather than in a true and

legal way. This quote is a perfect example of postcolonialism because the U.S. government was attempting to push out Mexicans making them seem inferior and insignificant, dominating them like a colonized people. When men like President Polk and John C. Calhoun held positions of political power and were influential in creating government policies, it is no wonder that real measures were not taken to protect the rights of these Mexicans.

Federal and State Citizenship Conflict

The government continued to other Mexican immigrants with the next piece of U.S. government immigration legislation, the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) of 1870. While the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had promised citizenship to all Mexicans who chose to remain in the United States' newly acquired territory, it was not always granted because of the right for states to determine citizenship requirements on their own, apart from the federal government (Menchaca). In fact, in the newly formed state of California where many Mexicans were already living, the state law prohibited people of Indian (Native American) descent to become citizens, excluding the majority of Mexicans living in the United States (Menchaca 31).

The purpose of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1870 was to improve the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1790. The INA of 1790 simply extended citizenship to free white persons who maintained

good character and had resided in the United States for the previous two years (Dierks). Also, if the applicant had children under the age of twenty-one, they were automatically given citizenship. So, any white U.S. residents, including women, could become citizens. Unfortunately, this act made no provisions for any non-white residents of the U.S., making it clear that white residents were superior to any other residents and deserved citizenship when they did not, which othered dark(er) skinned immigrants from the very beginning of United States' nationhood. Eighty years later, in 1870, the INA was revised, but it did not make any significant changes to immigration and citizenship restrictions that would aid Mexican immigrants on a national level.

The INA of 1870 created an actual system for the citizenship process and instituted penalties for "fraudulent practices," according to Marian L. Smith, senior historian for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (Smith). Without a streamlined process and common system to be used nationally, it was becoming very difficult to keep track of the ever-increasing number of immigrants that poured into the U.S. every day. Names, ages, and countries of birth, among other information, were important for identifying immigrants later on, keeping a record of their movements within the country, and making sure all eligible immigrants became citizens in the same manner (Smith). So, with less state involvement and rapidly growing power of the federal government,

it was necessary to create and maintain a national database of immigrants with one set of rules and one process.

In addition to a national immigration database and citizenship process, the INA of 1870 promised consequences to those who engaged in “fraudulent practices.” These alleged fraudulent practices included entering the United States for the purpose of illegal or immoral activities like prostitution or gambling, secretly bringing other immigrants into the U.S., and bypassing the national immigration and citizenship process that was created by the INA of 1870 (“Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1870”). The U.S. government wanted to make sure that the immigrants who were entering their country were honest, upstanding people who would only make positive contributions to United States’ culture and society. The act, however, still did not do anything to specifically improve immigration and citizenship eligibility for Mexicans due to the continued practice of othering based on skin color.

The INA of 1870 did extend citizenship to freed slaves and their descendants, but continued to deny citizenship to any other “non-white” people living in the United States. Most Mexicans were not considered white, so this legislation was a direct contradiction to the mandates of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In states like Texas where Mexicans were not excluded from state citizenship mandates, they enjoyed a quick and smooth process which often granted same-day citizenship (Menchaca 33).

But for Mexican immigrants in less inclusive states like California, their plea to be recognized as natural citizens of the United States fell upon deaf ears, further othering them from the white—and now black—citizens of the United States. Though the federal government's power was steadily increasing, the states still retained a lot of individual power, even being able to override federal mandates, in some cases (Menchaca 35). At this time in the United States' history, many lawmakers and citizens believed that states should be able to make their own decisions without interference from a national body (Menchaca 35). However, as the country continued to grow in land and population, the need for a stronger federal government became more and more evident and these individual state-mandated immigration rules were no longer recognized. The next immigration act, unfortunately, still did not seek to make any positive changes for Mexican immigrants.

The Page Act of 1875 dealt mostly with Asian immigrants, but it prohibited the entry of any immigrant deemed "undesirable" by the federal government (Smith). While intent to engage in prostitution and bringing forced laborers are specifically stated acts that would cause immigrants to be rejected from entering the United States, the word "undesirable" is not actually defined, leaving this portion of the act entirely up to the interpretation of the officials screening the immigrants coming into the country (Smith). This made it very easy for immigrants,

especially non-white immigrants which included many Mexicans, to be discriminated against and othered by white citizens who were working for the United States government.

Within the next several years, the U.S. government saw a need for immigration reform that focused on other immigrant groups. With a rapidly increasing number of immigrants coming to the United States from Asia and Europe, the spotlight was taken off of Mexican immigrants and the U.S.-Mexico border as immigration officials focused on the sea ports flooding with immigrants coming by boat. The Immigration Act of 1882 was enacted to regulate European and Asian immigration and continue to make sure that “undesirable” immigrants did not enter the country (Smith). With regards to legislation, things still had not gotten better for Mexican immigrants seeking citizenship; however, discrimination and scrutiny had been shifted to immigrants of other nationalities, making life in the United States a little bit better for Mexicans.

The Media and the Mexican-American War

As the U.S. government acquired this new land and sought to reform immigration through legal means, the media took on the duty of informing the public of the goings-on of the war and the subsequent issues with Mexican immigrants. Consequently, the media played quite a big role in the Mexican-American War. It was the “first foreign war to be

covered extensively by U.S. correspondents” (Reilly). Thanks to the penny press, newspapers all over the United States, including newly annexed Texas and the soon-to-be acquired northern Mexican territory, received weekly coverage of the war from reporters stationed at the frontlines (Reilly). Overwhelmingly, the media was in support of the war and the vast amount of new land that would come with an assumed United States victory. Some media contributors were concerned about the possible negative consequences (namely, moral) of such a violent war and enormous land acquisition, but they remained positive and enthusiastic in their reports to the United States’ public and military.

Some United States’ citizens joined in on the negative treatment of the Mexicans by creating political cartoons that furthered the sentiment of othering towards Mexicans by promoting and exaggerating the dominance and superiority of the United States’ government. Pictured below is a political cartoon that was created by a U.S. artist following the Mexican-American War (see fig. 1).

On the left side, Figure 1 depicts the eagle from the Mexican flag, seated atop a cactus, wings spread, looking proud and fierce. This is the eagle before the war. The eagle after the war is depicted on the right, featherless and exposed, clinging to a withered cactus. This is a strong representation of what the U.S. government did to Mexico; they were stripped of half their land and lost over 25,000 soldiers in battle (Salz).

Mexico was viewed as weak and powerless against the mighty United States of America.

Here, the eagles are the represented participants, the things depicted in the image, and they speak very clearly to this attitude of conquering and dominance because of the very stark contrast between the two images,

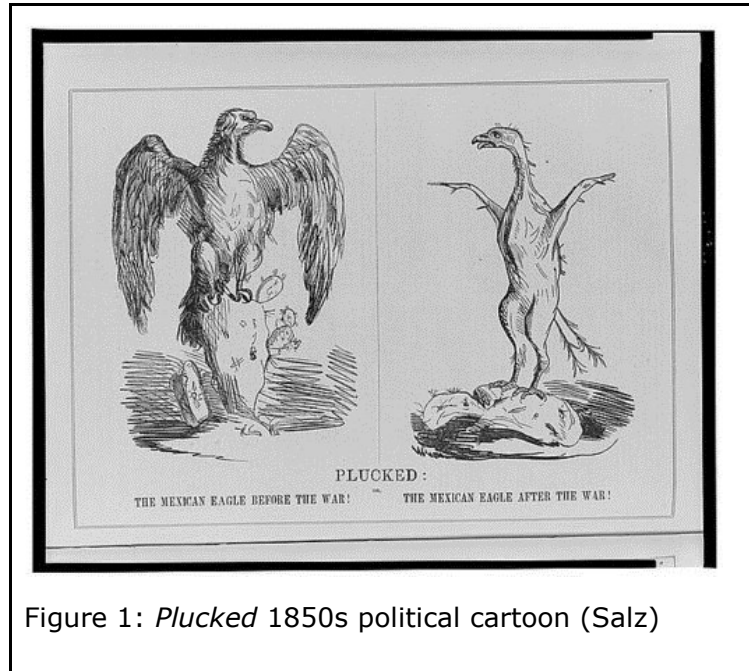


Figure 1: *Plucked* 1850s political cartoon (Salz)

as I described above (Kress and van Leeuwen 114). The significance of these specific represented participants comes from the symbolic nature of the eagle, which is a primary image on the Mexican flag. To interactive participants known as viewers, this cartoon seems to be conveying the idea that the United States single-handedly defeated Mexico and brought them to their knees, begging for mercy and humiliated by their inferiority. The featherless eagle is naked, exposed for all the world to see, and he looks weak and powerless. Even the foundation beneath him has crumbled, leaving him even more vulnerable to predators and enemies. The image forms a relationship with the viewer by asking the viewer to compare the two eagles and consider what caused the drastic changes

from pre-war eagle to post-war eagle. These changes, of course, were the result of United States' domination of Mexican land and subsequent colonization of the land and people by taking their rights and freedoms, and turning their home into a place where they were no longer welcome.

The concept of gaze through eye contact between represented participants is seen in this image because the eagles are facing each other and appear to be looking at each other; consequently, they are not making any direct eye contact with the viewer. It is almost as if the post-war eagle is gazing upon a vision of his former, pre-war self, longing for a return to a time when Mexico was proud and strong. The intended audience for this cartoon was most likely U.S. male citizens. At this time, most U.S. families were still very patriarchal and looked to the husband/father as the head of the household. Furthermore, this was a time where male education was valued far above female education, so the percentage of literate males was much higher than that of literate females (Gutierrez 196). Many women would have had to rely on their husbands to receive news about political happenings. As a result, if the men were convinced of the negative Mexican stereotype, then their wives and children would most likely adopt the same beliefs.

Due to the strong emphasis that the United States (and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) placed on citizenship and nationality, this cartoon's

idea of a weak, powerless Mexico was extended to Mexican immigrants as well.

The war and the development of this attitude were catalysts in the othering of Mexican immigrants in the United States. The United States government made a clear statement with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that Mexicans did not really have a place in their new country and the media continued to perpetuate the idea that Mexican immigrants (and their native country) were weak, inferior, and unwanted through publications like political cartoons and also social segregation.

Chapter 2

The same sentiment continues on through a pattern of other immigration legislation that further narrows the ability of Mexican immigrants to become citizens, and the media's push to other Mexican immigrants, encouraging negative stereotypes and attitudes through their publications. Postcolonial theory continues to influence my analysis as I examine these next pieces of immigration legislation, especially with the specific language used in the legislation, and demonstrate how the U.S. government further restricts Mexican immigration and therefore continues to treat them as the other. The questions and concerns of the media and U.S. citizens are also viewed through the lens of postcolonial theory and

paired with two of Kress' visual concepts to show how Mexican immigrants are othered through the means of represented participants and gaze.

Linguistic Requirements for Immigrants

The next piece of immigration legislation that clearly represents the continued othering of Mexicans in the United States was yet another "improvement" of the Naturalization Act. According to The American Society of International Law, in 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed into law a revision that established the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization to oversee immigration and citizenship, created standardized naturalization forms, and required immigrants to speak English in order to become citizens. This requirement is an example of U.S. colonization of Mexican people because the U.S. government imposed its own linguistic preferences on the Mexicans who spoke Spanish and/or native dialects, intending to force them to be more "American". An official oath was also created; a citizenship candidate must recite the oath, pledging allegiance to the United States, in order to complete the citizenship process (ASIL). These new changes facilitated both positive and negative consequences for immigrants. The more streamlined and standardized process for citizenship allowed for much less discrimination toward immigrants from immigration officials because now there were more clear-cut rules and regulations, along with

federally-created, rather than state-created, paperwork. The power of individual states was steadily decreasing as the federal government became bigger and wanted more and more laws to apply to the entire nation, rather than allowing states to create and enforce most of their own laws (Smith). This is evident with the creation of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, as the federal government no longer wanted states to be able to place restrictions on who could or could not become citizens of the United States (Smith). However, this new stipulation had a monumentally negative impact on the majority of immigrants coming to the United States. According to Jacob L. Vidgor, Professor of Public Policy and Economics at Duke University, in 1910, one-third of all immigrants could not speak English, and an even larger percentage considered their English-speaking skills to be poor. This means that at least one out of every three immigrants would have been denied citizenship because of their lack of English language skills. While there were many non-English speaking immigrants that came from Europe, English was much more widely spoken in Europe than in the Americas (Vidgor). Therefore, requiring English language skills for Mexicans to obtain citizenship is a very clear example of othering by the government. English was not a part of most curricula in Mexican schools and going to school was expensive; many could not afford to attend (Menchaca 109). So, most Mexicans would not have had the opportunity

to learn English prior to coming to the United States, making it impossible for that to be a realistic expectation.

Consequently, I would argue that the government was actually trying to deter Mexicans from emigrating to the United States by instituting a rule that they knew would prohibit so many from becoming citizens. They were treating Mexican immigrants as the other by diminishing the value of their native language and requiring English language skills as a "ticket," of sorts, into the community of United States citizens. By segregating Mexicans from white and black English-speaking U.S. citizens in this manner, the government could make a clear distinction between citizens and non-citizens, definitively separating those who belonged from those who did not belong. This sentiment was a continued manifestation of the imperialist attitudes that developed from the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe. The government wanted Mexico's land, but they did not want their people. Their goal was to expand United States' territory because white U.S. citizens felt that they were superior to the native people groups (Native Americans, including Mexicans) and had the right to take the land that formerly belonged to Mexico (Gutierrez 184, Menchaca 56).

This idea of superiority and entitlement is expanded upon in literary Said's *Orientalism*. He notes that colonizers tried to mask their exploits as missionary journeys, of sorts, to better the lives of the native people.

However, they were really only interested in land, goods, and natural resources, which they took from the native people, and often displaced them, killed them, and spread deadly diseases (Said 80). Of course, this exploitation of the native Mexicans that lived in modern-day western United States had already occurred by 1906, but the U.S. government (and citizens') attitude of superiority and desire to impose on the native peoples continued on and became evident in the persistent emphasis on the things that separate Mexicans from other people groups in the United States, as opposed to the things that unite them (Spivak 293). In her foundational postcolonial piece "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak names these segregated groups, the "subaltern," defining them as people outside of the "hegemonic power structure" of a colony or a nation, and one means of defining that structure was through language. They are separated and diminished, making white European (or European descendants, in this case) the center of the nation or colony, and therefore the center of its history (Spivak).

The Media: Who is the Immigrant?

A political cartoon created by artist Gillam F. Victor in 1903 that depicts the growing fears of United States' government and its citizens regarding the massive rise in immigration that began in the late nineteenth century (see fig. 2). It falls in line perfectly with the things discussed by Said and Spivak, issues of othering and the desire to keep

immigrants separated from the rest of the United States' population. It is called *The Immigrant*, and the tagline under the title says, "Is he an acquisition or a detriment?" This was the big question that troubled quite a few people in the United States, but many had already made up their minds. Viewing immigrants as outsiders and continuing to exclude them from citizenship and belonging in the United States was easier than accepting their differences and trying to understand them (Gutierrez, Menchaca).



Figure 2: *The Immigrant* 1903 political cartoon by Gillam F. Victor (Victor)

The immigrant in the cartoon above is shown walking with his belongings in sacks, clothes tattered, surrounded by U.S. citizens who are bombarding him with stereotypes and personal opinions and concerns, all written on signs. The sign labeled *citizen* reads, "He is a menace," while the one labeled *workman* says, "He cheapens my labor." Yet another is labeled *health officer* and says, "He brings disease." None of these sentiments are positive, yet they were common opinions of this time period (Menchaca 89). Many U.S. citizens thought that all immigrants were bad and were negative influences in the United States (Smith). However, it is impossible to know, and therefore impossible to say, that all people belonging to a specific people group are good or bad and will have a certain kind of influence on a nation. Similarly, it is impossible to say that every immigrant cheapens labor or brings disease; it may be true in some cases, but certainly does not apply to every person, or even every Mexican, who immigrates to the United States.

The cartoon contains a few comments that are seemingly more positive. A politician says, "He makes more votes for me," and a contractor says, "He gives me cheap labor." While it seems that these U.S. citizens do not have a negative attitude towards immigrants, they are really only interested in what the immigrant can *give* them or *do* for them. The immigrant *makes votes* for the politician (only if they are granted citizenship), and he also *gives cheap labor* to contractors. Still,

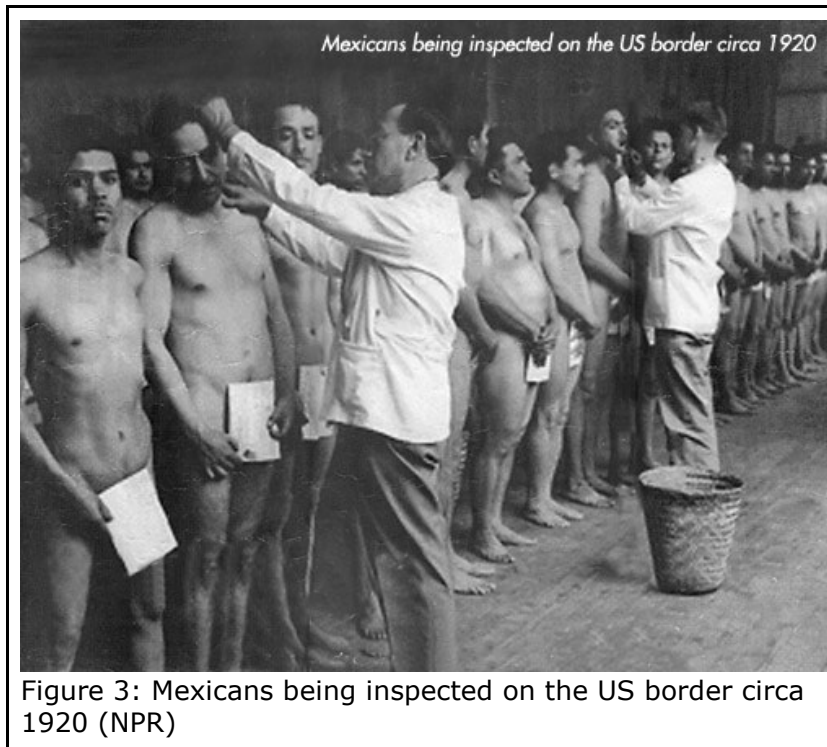
these people are not concerned with the welfare of the immigrants and helping them acclimate into United States' culture and society; they just want what immigrants can provide for them, often taking advantage of them (i.e. using immigrants for cheap labor by paying them less than United States' citizens). This cartoon is a clear visual representation of Mexican immigrants being treated as colonized people because the U.S. citizens in the image that are surrounding the immigrant are either looking to take advantage of him or are disapproving of him because they do not understand him.

The gaze, the way the represented participant is visually connecting with the viewer, is very notable because the immigrant is not looking at any of the people surrounding him but straight forward at the viewer as he prepares to begin his journey of creating for himself a life in the United States. The U.S. citizens around him are all looking at him, some with judgmental looks (health officer and citizen), some with satisfied looks (politician and contractor), and others with looks of despair (workman). The immigrant is not looking at them, but rather is forming a relationship with the viewer through eye contact and humanizing the immigrant as the represented participant (Kress and van Leeuwen 118). The creation of this relationship causes the viewer to connect with the immigrant and consider how he is being treated by the surrounding people, the other represented participants, and the impact this treatment has on the

immigrant. For this reason, the intended audience seems to be adult U.S. citizens across the country who were trying to decide how they felt about immigration and the growing immigrant population. In the background of the image is an ocean or river, symbolizing that where the immigrant came from is in the past and he is moving forward to a future that awaits him in the United States.

This cartoon is such a poignant illustration of what Mexican immigrants dealt with in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, many of them were coming to the United States to find better, higher paying jobs, as well as to improve their standard of living and provide a safer, more comfortable environment for their families (Gutierrez 202, Menchaca 96). Their goal was to work and live in the United States, just like those who were born in and grew up there. Unfortunately, many citizens maintained the attitude that immigrants “did not belong” in the United States and continued to make immigrants feel othered through segregation that emphasized their ethnic differences (LULAC).

This emphasis on ethnic differences is clearly seen in figure 3, a photograph of Mexican immigrants who were forced to strip naked and be invasively inspected by U.S. doctors to determine if they were “fit” to enter



the United States. This must have been humiliating for Mexican immigrants. It was the U.S. government's way of telling Mexicans that, on top of all the other immigration

requirements like learning English and taking an oath of allegiance, they must go through a dehumanizing and invasive physical exam that does not respect them as people, but rather treats them like livestock. They could be detained at the border for days while immigration officials and doctors determined their fate, and some went through multiple exams and health tests just to be sent back to Mexico (Menchaca 198). What a stark visualization of U.S. colonization; in this image, the U.S. government is asserting its dominance over Mexican immigrants. This photograph was not featured in a newspaper or any public media forum, in fact, and is housed at the Proyecto Bracero Archives at the Centro de Trabajadores Agricolas Fronterizos in El Paso, Texas, a center that provides various services to area farmworkers and low income residents

(Burnett). I do not think the U.S. government ever intended for this image to be seen by U.S. citizens because, despite the negative attitudes that some citizens had about Mexican immigration, this image would have caused at least a few citizens to be sympathetic towards these immigrants and question the methods of their government.

Looking closer at the black-and-white image, we can see that the represented participants, the Mexican immigrant men, are in straight lines and their gaze is focused directly ahead, apart from the few closest to the camera who were most likely looking at the photographer. They are all holding something that looks like white paper in front of their genital area in an effort to preserve a little bit of modesty. The doctor closest to the camera is examining a man's ears, while another doctor further down the line is examining a man's mouth. By stripping them of their clothes and lining them up in rows, the U.S. immigration officials and doctors have also stripped away these Mexican men's sense of dignity and identity as individuals, as well as the sense of even being human. This photograph reminds me of livestock that have been corralled for inspection or to be branded. This kind of treatment by the U.S. government is not indicative of an attitude of acceptance or respect, but rather an attitude of national and personal superiority and a disdain for ethnic diversity. The gaze of the man on the far left, who is looking directly at the camera, is what really grabbed my attention. As a

represented participant who is making direct eye contact with the viewer, this man humanizes this photograph and draws in the viewer with the solemn way he is looking at the camera (Kress and van Leeuwen 118), so solemn that it seems the thrill of building a new life has vanished entirely. This visual connection creates a relationship with the viewer, causing the viewer to contemplate the moral dilemma of such treatment. Coming to the United States was an exciting thing for most Mexican immigrants because they were hoping for the prosperity of the "American dream." But as I look at the faces of these immigrant men, I see no joy, hope, or excitement. I see the faces of people who were needlessly violated by a government that they thought would provide solace and protection, but instead othered them by focusing on the things that separated Mexican immigrants from natural-born U.S. citizens.

Postcolonial Language in Immigration Legislation

The Immigration Act of 1918, also known as the 1918 Wartime Measure, established that, during wartime, the president has the authority to determine the rules and regulations of international travel. This act required U.S. passports going to and from the U.S., and made it unlawful for people to secretly transport others to and from the U.S., and to falsify travel documents or knowingly carry falsified travel documents ("1918 Wartime Measure"). Other rules and regulations were left up to each president during each wartime period, which ended up leaving a lot

of room for discrimination (LULAC). The government kept a very close eye on immigrants during World War I (1914-1918) and often accused them of espionage and other criminal acts. Due to lack of citizenship and limited English language skills, many immigrants were easy targets (LULAC).

The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 sought to limit immigration by placing quotas on the number of immigrants that could come from each country to the United States ("Emergency Quota Act of 1921"). One reason for this limitation was the drastic increase in Mexican immigrants following the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath (Gutierrez 217). The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 and officially ended in 1917 with the drafting of a new constitution, but skirmishes at the U.S.-Mexico border continued until the mid-1930s, according to University of Essex history professor, Dr. Alan Knight (Knight). During this time, close to one million Mexican immigrants made their way across the border in order to escape the violence of the revolution and make a new home in the U.S. (Knight). The United States' government was concerned that its country would be quickly overwhelmed by immigrants and eventually would not be able to contain its ever-increasing population. This limitation created problems for Mexicans seeking to escape the turmoil of their native country. Some were able to petition for an exception, but not all were granted (Gutierrez 219). This is a clear example of othering of Mexican immigrants by the

United States government because they refused to shelter many Mexicans who were in desperate need of refuge.

Apart from the practical meaning of these laws, it is very interesting to note the use of specific language. In the Immigration Act of 1918, the word "alien" is used to talk about the immigrants. According to Merriam-Webster, alien is defined as "belonging or relating to another person, place, or thing," so if we talk about immigrants as aliens, then we are indefinitely separating them from rest of the country, namely, citizens. For example, the law states that "aliens violating prescribed rules" is illegal and can result in expulsion from the United States ("1918 Wartime Measure"). However, the law uses the word "people" when it describes travel restrictions or requirements for U.S. citizens. So, according to this law, citizens are people, while immigrants are just aliens. This language choice speaks to the attitude of superiority that the U.S. government and citizens had towards immigrants entering into the country, as do the language choices in The Emergency Quota Act of 1921.

This Immigration Act of 1918 also uses the term "alien" to refer to immigrants. It actually defines the word, saying that it "includes any person not a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States" ("1918 Wartime Measure"). The law says several times "the number of aliens," then, "aliens who are under the age of eighteen," "aliens from Asiatic countries," and so forth. This law, as well as the previous one,

makes a clear distinction between immigrants and U.S. citizens by consistently calling them aliens and referring to citizens as people. When the government referred to immigrants as aliens, it became easier for them to reject immigrants from citizenship and treat them as inferiors because they were not thinking about them as actual people. Othering of Mexican immigrants by the government and the media continues still throughout the twentieth century through even more restrictive government legislation and more widespread negative attention from the media. Political ideology will become yet another means of othering Mexican immigrants, making them appear inferior, unsavory, and even violent.

Chapter 3

Communism and Mexican Immigrants

Immigration legislation took an interesting turn in the 1950s with the tension of the Cold War and the Red Scare, which was the United States' nationwide witch hunt for communists and communist sympathizers. The projection of a radical communist stereotype onto all Mexicans was deeply rooted in postcolonialism in that it falsely represented Mexican people and found yet another way to other them by making them appear to

be in opposition to the U.S. government. Mexico has had a thriving communist party since 1911, so it is possible that many Mexican immigrants would have identified as communists (Gutierrez 298). World-renowned Mexican artists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo are famous for their communist ideals and their expression of those ideals through art, especially public murals, and it is important to note that many working-class Mexicans held communist beliefs, too (Schmitt 12). Frustrated with being poor and feeling oppressed by the Mexican government, many Mexicans hoped that communism would bring them economic relief and social equality (Schmitt 14). Consequently, the next piece of legislation had a very big impact on Mexicans trying to emigrate to the United States.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 sought to restrict immigration further by denying entrance to the United States anyone who was a criminal, involved in immoral behavior like prostitution, had any kind of illness, or held radical political beliefs. With regards to political beliefs, it specifically denied immigrants who identified themselves as communists ("Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952"). In its list of "aliens" who are not allowed entry into the United States, the 1952 revision of the INA includes:

Aliens who are members of or are affiliated with (i) the Communist Party of the United States, (ii) any other

totalitarian party of the United States, (iii) the Communist Political Association, (iv) the Communist or any other totalitarian party of State of the United States, of any foreign state, or of any political or geographical subdivision of any foreign state... ("Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952").

For decades, communists had been seen as dangerous and were thought to be a threat to the United States' capitalist and democratic way of life, hence the emphatic exclusion of all things communist or totalitarian, as seen in the document excerpt above. They were so hated that many were arrested and imprisoned (Wall). Wendy Wall, associate professor of history at Binghamton University, notes that even as early as 1848 when Karl Marx published his *Communist Manifesto*, the United States' public refuted communism and considered it an "alien ideology."

As I discussed with specific pieces of immigration legislation in chapter two, "alien" is a term that has been used constantly throughout United States' history to refer to things that are foreign, that do not belong to society's prescribed way of thinking and behaving. So, if communism is an alien ideology, outside of the social norm and what is accepted in the United States' society, then it makes sense that the U.S. government would reject people who support communist ideals along with the ideology itself.

Anti-communist sentiments were deeply rooted in U.S. culture since the mid-1800s, but the strength of these sentiments fluctuated and had a direct correlation with the state of the U.S. economy, and especially the current status of the United States' relationship with the staunchly communist former U.S.S.R (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (Wall). For example, following the Great Depression, anti-communist sentiments waned in the United States because of U.S. citizens' discontent with results of capitalism on their economy. Similarly, when the U.S. allied with the former U.S.S.R. against the Nazis in World War II, disdain for communist ideology once again temporarily subsided. However, when the war ended, the U.S.S.R. withdrew their peace agreement with the capitalist United States, consequently launching the biggest anti-communist campaign in United States' history (Wall). The U.S. government felt that the Soviets could not be trusted, especially after they exposed U.S. citizens who were working as spies for the U.S.S.R. As fears heightened and families and neighbors turned on each other, the question arose: how can we trust immigrants if we cannot even trust our own citizens?

Mexican immigrants were especially vulnerable to anti-communist prejudice from the U.S. government and its citizens because of Mexico's strong communist activity and ties to the U.S.S.R. From the early to mid twentieth century in Mexico, three separate communist parties were

created and became relatively strong, gaining members and political clout; the three parties differed from each other in minor ways, ideologically, but they all had the same goal: to create a Soviet-style state (Schmitt). Karl M. Schmitt, professor of government at the University of Texas, notes that Mexico was the only country that would shelter communist leader Leon Trotsky after he was banished from the U.S.S.R. During the United States' Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s, the communist party was alive and well in Mexico, often resulting in protests and demonstrations that became violent (Schmitt).

Furthermore, during the Cold War, Mexico took money from the Soviet government in exchange for the right to build centers for Soviet communication and espionage on the U.S.-Mexico border (Schmitt). For these reasons, the United States' government was very skeptical of Mexicans and was hesitant in allowing them to enter the U.S.

By the early 1900s, communism was already considered "un-American" and "alien" in the U.S. (Wall). And Mexican immigrants, who were also deemed "alien" and "un-American," were often viewed negatively as well. So, if you put these two things together, Mexican immigrants and communism, the idea was that it was nothing but a recipe for disaster (Schmitt). In reality, it just gave the U.S. government another reason to other Mexican immigrants, and it gave U.S. citizens another way to exclude them from society and reject their influence.

But the reality of the situation is that most of the Mexicans who espoused communist beliefs simply desired a higher standard of living for their families and more opportunities, like education and higher-paying jobs. Communism is all about giving power to the working class and making them equal to the elite, so it is not hard to see how this ideology would appeal to poor, working class people. Among the working class rose leaders like Mexican-American Cesar Chavez, who worked to improve conditions for Mexican migrant workers in the southwest U.S (Gutierrez 296, Menchaca 108). He, too, saw worth in communist ideals as he made great efforts to achieve higher wages and better working conditions for laborers. However, the U.S. government believed firmly in a capitalist structure that valued personal freedom, success, and responsibility.

Many Mexicans shared Chavez's vision because they were laborers and lacked the education to rise above the working class. Because education in Mexico was not complimentary nor compulsory, most children did not attend because their families could not afford the fees and because they had to work to help provide for the basic needs of their families (Gutierrez 298). Between lack of education and lack of funds to better their situation, many Mexicans, including children, were forced to work as field hands, laboring all day in the hot sun for wages that were often not enough to provide food, clothing, and shelter (Gutierrez 303).

When Mexicans chose to emigrate to the United States, they did not have many other options to make a living other than sowing and harvesting crops as they had in Mexico, because they had no education or other skills and spoke no English. Unfortunately, this predicament has persisted into the present day as many still lack the education, job skills, and English language skills that lend themselves to anything other than manual labor positions, like construction workers, field hands, and housekeepers. The immigration legislation that has been enacted since the INA of 1952 has continued to other Mexican immigrants through strict immigration quotas on Mexicans and ending the bracero work program, rather than making an effort to be more inclusive and improve immigration and citizenship practices.

In 1965, the INA was amended once again. It was heralded by President Lyndon B. Johnson as a more democratic way of handling immigration, a way that “values and rewards each man on the basis of his merit as a man” because it abolished the ethnic quotas that were previously established by The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 (“Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965”, Johnson). However, this was not entirely true. With this law, quotas were placed on Latin American countries for the first time, and an even stricter quota was placed on Mexico due to the ending of the bracero program (Burnett).

Beginning in 1942, the United States partnered with Mexico to enact the bracero program (bracero meaning “manual laborer” in Spanish) which brought hundreds of thousands of workers from Mexico to the U.S. to aid with World War II efforts. The U.S. government found this to be the best course of action in seeking much-needed laborers because they had expelled some half a million Mexican immigrants during the Great Depression, and knew that the appeal of higher wages and better living conditions would draw many back across the border once more (Gutierrez 68, Menchaca 196). During World War II, and for twenty years following the war while the U.S. engaged in conflicts with Korea and Vietnam, the U.S. government continued to allow more and more Mexican workers into the country under this program. But then, in 1964, the United States chose to end the bracero program because it no longer desired to recruit low-skilled workers, leaving a huge number of Mexican laborers without legal status though they had contributed to the welfare of the U.S. and had made a home there (Gutierrez 72, Menchaca 197). They were simply expected to pack their bags and relocate back to Mexico. As one can imagine, many chose to stay in the U.S., causing the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. to skyrocket. President Johnson and the nearly unanimous Congress vote spoke so highly of this new and improved version of the INA, primarily because it was created to attract highly skilled labor, giving preference to college educated immigrants

whose strengths were in mathematics and science ("Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965"). However, Mexican immigrants were considered low-skilled workers, so the goal of this policy was to attract more immigrants from European and Asian countries. There is no doubt that Mexico had plenty of highly skilled workers, but the U.S. government continued to believe and perpetuate the weak, uneducated Mexican immigrant stereotype by deliberately encouraging immigration from countries other than Mexico (Gutierrez 62, Menchaca 304). This, coupled with the establishment of immigration quotas for Mexico, demonstrates that this policy in fact only created more problems for Mexican immigrants and othered them further through the neglect of the U.S. government to take care of hard-working immigrants and the rejection of so many others who desired to live and work in the United States. This attitude of rejection was also adopted by some U.S. citizens. Figure 4 shows the extent that local citizens and business owners went to in order to segregate and other Mexican immigrants.

This message, painted on the outside of a restaurant, made it clear that no one of Mexican descent and no one who identified with Spanish ancestry or the Spanish language was welcome (LULAC).

Beginning in Texas and moving westward, restaurants, movie theaters, public restrooms, and even schools were segregated in the southwestern United States, with the goal of keeping Mexicans away from United

States' citizens (LULAC). Mexicans were being treated in the same manner that black citizens were being treated in the southeastern United States. The producer of the image, the interactive participant who created it, developed a relationship with the image when they took the photograph and either



Figure 4 *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)*

connected with the sign's message or was distanced by it (Kress and van Leeuwen 118). The intended audience of this sign most likely would have been patrons of the business where it was painted. The sign is in English, not Spanish, so it would have intended to create a certain identity for the business, to let white patrons know that they could dine or shop here with other whites, people who were just like them. If Mexicans *could* read the sign, it would have told them very clearly that they were not welcome in that business. This attitude clearly treats Mexican immigrants like a colonized people because they were being oppressed due to their linguistic differences and being forced to learn English, the language of the colonizer, if they wanted to be fully accepted into U.S. society.

It would have been a struggle for Mexican immigrants who had to walk past messages like that every day, to know that they were not welcome in their own towns and that they did not have the same rights and privileges as the white and black citizens living down the street. So many Mexican immigrants lacked English language skills, or were considered “undesirable” for other reasons, and therefore were not eligible for citizenship, which led to a lack of rights as a United States’ citizens, leaving them very much outside of the nation’s power structure and causing them to perfectly embody Spivak’s theory of the subaltern (Spivak 299). Over one hundred years after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican immigrants were still being discriminated against by the government, the media, and the natural-born citizens that they encountered every day.

Chapter 4

Turning the Tide of Immigration Reform?

Thus far, U.S. immigration legislation has othered, excluded, and segregated Mexican immigrants, making immigration procedures and the citizenship process more and more difficult. However, by the mid-1980s the United States was well into the Reagan era and the tide began to turn for Mexican immigrants, especially for those who were in the country illegally.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan as an effort to create a pathway for immigrants living illegally in the United States, mostly Mexicans, to be granted legal status ("Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986"). This law is broken down into quite a few sections and its content is extensive, so I will be focusing mainly on the aspect of legalization for immigrants who were illegal at the time. In order to become legal, immigrants had to provide proof of continued residence in the U.S. since 1982, have a clean criminal record, and men must register with the selective service ("Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986"). Immigrants also had to meet "minimal knowledge requirements" in U.S. history, government, and the English language ("Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986"). The U.S. government was now trying to be more open and accepting of immigrants, but still wanted them to be "desirable," mainly having no criminal record, and as "American" as possible by speaking English and being knowledgeable about their new country. This continued desire for Mexican immigrants to have "American" qualities maintained the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized because the U.S. government was asking immigrants to prioritize another language, culture, and history above their own. This law also placed a real emphasis on keeping families together by helping

illegal immigrants receive legal status if their immediate relatives were already legal or in the process of receiving legal status.

The sentiment of the Reagan administration was that previous immigration legislation did not do enough to help immigrants obtain legal status once they enter the country, nor did they try to help them assimilate into U.S. culture by treating them as equals with U.S. citizens. This legislation was a genuine effort to improve conditions for immigrants, especially the Mexican immigrants who had been coming across the border for over one hundred years, and the beginning of the government's recognition that immigrants should be treated with the same respect and charged with the same responsibilities as natural-born U.S. citizens.

This is also the first piece of legislation that placed a real sense of responsibility on the government and U.S. citizens for being a part of immigration. It required employers to document their employees' immigration status (legal or illegal) and made it illegal to recruit and/or hire illegal immigrants ("Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986"). This was designed to deter U.S. companies from employing illegal immigrants, and therefore deter illegal immigrants from entering the United States; if they could not get a job, then they would not be as likely to come across the border. President Reagan was quoted as saying:

It makes one wonder about all the illegal alien fuss.

Are great numbers of our employed really victims of the illegal alien invasion or are these illegal tourists actually doing work our own people won't do? One thing is certain in this hungry world: no regulation or law should be allowed if it results in crops rotting in the fields for lack of harvesters. (Wyloge)

When looking at this quote and the language of this law, it is important to note that while the law is making conditions better for Mexican immigrants, the word "alien" is still used to refer to immigrants, and "people" refers to U.S. citizens, continuing to make the distinction between immigrants and U.S. citizens. So, while the law's actions may be more inclusive, the language still very much treats immigrants as the other, as if they do not belong. Furthermore, President Reagan was attempting to speak in a positive manner about Mexican immigrants and force U.S. citizens to consider their responsibility as a contributing member to society, but he actually continued to other immigrants and make it seem as though they are nothing more than menial laborers. Prior to the passing of IRCA, President Reagan said during a 1984 presidential debate that amnesty was the smart and kind response to illegal immigrants who had "put down roots" in the United States, and said on multiple occasions that he had the desire to "fix what was widely considered a broken immigration system" (Wyloge). I believe that

Reagan's intentions with IRCA were good, and that he had compassion for illegal immigrants and truly wanted to make the U.S. a country that is friendly and open to immigrants. However, just like the language of IRCA, he used "alien" to refer to immigrants. He also went on to relegate them to simple farmhands who came to the U.S. to harvest crops. These farmhands were an asset to the U.S. and should be given legal status, but nonetheless, he viewed Mexican immigrants as nothing more than farmhands.

While many Mexican immigrants were excited to receive legal status and even some U.S. citizens viewed it positively, there were others who were quite opposed to President Reagan's amnesty legislation and thought that it would "suck the life" out of the United States' economy and permanently alter U.S. culture in a negative manner (Gutierrez 300). Figure 5 is a cartoon created by British artist, Ralph Steadman, that appeared in U.S. newspapers nationwide and sought to reach the doorsteps of millions of adult U.S. citizens. It is called "Reagan's Latest Close-up," playing off the



Figure 5 Reagan's Latest Close-up by Ralph Steadman 1980s (Steadman)

fact that Reagan was a Hollywood actor before he ran for president. The cartoon depicts the two represented participants, Reagan and the Statue of Liberty, as actors in a movie. The producer of the image, Ralph Steadman, drew

Reagan as a scary vampire with long nails and sharp fangs, dressed in black, while the Statue of Liberty is laying back in his arms, clothed in contrasting white, looking frightened and defenseless; Reagan looks as though he is ready to take a bite out of her. One purpose of the gaze of represented participants is to demonstrate the connection between represented participants, and the gaze between Reagan and Lady Liberty is one of tension, fear, and domination (Kress and van Leeuwen 114). Vampire Reagan has all the power and poor Lady Liberty is at his mercy, fearful that he will harm her.

This sense of fear and powerlessness is what many citizens felt regarding Reagan's legalization of millions of illegal Mexican immigrants. These concerned citizens imagined millions of immigrants suddenly

becoming legal and wanting to take part in welfare and other government assistance programs. They imagined that schools would be overflowing with immigrant children who complicated the educational system because of their inability to speak English fluently. And they saw a country that was becoming less and less “American,” and that scared them (Gutierrez 301). Their fear of the unknown, of a people whose appearance and culture was unfamiliar to them, gripped them and they defaulted to rejection rather than trying to understand the plight of illegal Mexican immigrants and the Reagan administration’s rationale for passing such progressive immigration reform (Gutierrez 301). Mexican immigrants were “the other,” and these citizens wanted them to stay that way. But in reality, granting amnesty to the millions of illegal Mexicans in the U.S. did not have a negative impact on our economy (Menchaca). Every documented worker meant one more person paying both state and federal taxes, which is funneled into schools, roads, social security, government assistance programs, and many other things. Also, the vast majority of Mexican immigrants come here to find jobs, not to live off of government assistance.

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, I have had the opportunity to get to know many Mexican families. According to the parents of one student—we’ll call them the Garcias—Mexican culture breeds a sense of pride and personal responsibility. The Garcias told me

that they would have to be jobless with no food and no place to live before they would even consider accepting government assistance. This is a deeply rooted cultural belief that has been passed down from generation to generation for many years. While there are always exceptions, as a general rule Mexican immigrants believe that it is their responsibility to work hard and earn a living to support their families and to help support their communities. They are not here to “suck the life” out of the U.S. economy, but rather to be a part of it and make it even stronger.

“Beefing up” Border Security

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) is the next piece of legislation that affected Mexican immigrants. Continuing with the theme of government and citizen responsibility, this law increased law enforcement presence at the U.S.-Mexico border, established better systems of keeping track of immigrants, and established rules about immigrant employment (Public Law 104-208). Also, it established acceptable practices for arrest and deportation, and determined to what extent the immigrants would be eligible for federal aid. The focus on heightened border security and enforcement between Mexico and the United States was because of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994, two years prior to the IIRIRA. This treaty

allowed free trade, without tariffs or borders, between Canada, the United States, and Mexico (NAFTA NOW). In order to ensure that trade between countries operated smoothly, it was of utmost importance to make sure that nothing interfered with designated trade routes, especially illegal immigrants. Furthermore, if illegal immigrants did cause problems with trade routes, it could create tension in the trade relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. So, border security was heightened to protect North American goods and trade routes, but the IIRIRA did much less to protect the people who sought a better life in the U.S.

Immigration, Not Human Beings

It is important to note that this is the first piece of legislation I have examined that did not use the word “alien” to refer to immigrants. In fact, it does not specifically refer to immigrants at all, but rather simply the changes that the law is making to immigration practices. The language in the IIRIRA is centered around money and logistics, seemingly removing the human factor altogether. The postcolonial concept of othering has been seen clearly in every piece of legislation thus far through the use of “alien” to make the distinction between immigrants and U.S. citizens, but this law does not discuss *immigrants* at all, just the issue of *immigration*. This creates an even greater distance between the issue of immigration and the immigrants that it actually affects because it completely eliminates the conversation about *people*. Immigrants are not

even considered “aliens” in the IIRIRA; in fact, it would seem that they are not considered at all. Although the IIRIRA sought to make positive changes for illegal immigrants who had made their home in the United States, the language of the policy made it much easier for lawmakers to not consider the “what ifs.” The law talks about penalties for “immigration-related offenses,” like obtaining falsified documents to become legal (“Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996”). It discusses the measures that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will take to increase border security between Mexico and the U.S. It also refers to increasing the “number of departures successfully matched to departure records” when it discusses the improvement of documentation and tracking technology for immigrants. This policy does not talk about immigrants like they are people because it does not even mention them. In this policy, *people* are reduced to records, documents, and “departures”; they are just numbers on pieces of paper. What if the policy did not do what it promised? What if it made illegal immigrants easier targets for discrimination and deportation? These, among others, are serious questions, but not ones that the government is forced to answer if they do not consider *human beings* when they consider immigration.

A Nation Divided

While the government's attitudes and actions towards immigrants began to shift in the mid-1980s, many natural born U.S. citizens were in opposition to making conditions any better for immigrants, especially the illegal ones who were viewed as job stealers, tax evaders, and criminals (Gutierrez 73).

Figure 6 is a photograph that very clearly demonstrates the way that a portion of U.S. citizens felt about amnesty for illegal immigrants and the acceptance of more immigrants into the country. The producer of this image was probably a local news source that was reporting on the protest of which this man and the other represented participants were members. There are other members in the background,



Figure 6 U.S. citizen protesting amnesty (Numbers USA)

but one man is front and center. His sign says, "SAY NO," which is followed by the issues to which U.S. citizens should evidently oppose- amnesty of illegal immigrants, supporters of illegal immigration, an open

border, and “pandering politicians,” members of Congress, especially Republicans, who were thought to be accepting bribes or some sort of “kickback” in exchange for their support of Reagan’s immigration reform (Wyloge). This image exemplifies the colonist attitude of the U.S. in that Mexican immigrants are different and therefore do not belong and should be not made a true part of U.S. society. And, if someone tries to make them a part of U.S. society, some citizens, media, and government officials alike will make it clear that they are not welcome. As interactive participants, viewers are invited to contemplate the attitudes of this protester and decide whether or not they agree with him.

This protester's attitude perfectly exemplifies postcolonialism because these U.S. citizens were against Reagan’s measures that would help millions of Mexican immigrants achieve legal status and possibly even be reunited with their families. In this situation, anti-amnesty citizens focused solely on the fact that these people were *immigrants*, and especially the fact that many were illegal. People placed their focus on a word-- immigrants-- which allowed them to detach themselves from thinking about immigrants as individual people, many of whom are escaping violence and poverty and risking their lives in an effort to create a better life for themselves and their families. By lumping all immigrants into one category without regard for immigrants as individual people, it is much easier to continue to perpetuate the stereotype of the “undesirable”

Mexican immigrant who brings drugs and prostitutes, who takes jobs and makes our country less “American.” In this way, focusing on Mexicans as *immigrants* rather than just *people* makes it easier to other them and treat them as though they are not and will never be equals with natural born U.S. citizens.

Chapter 5

Immigration Reform in the 21st Century

Not much progress was made with regards to immigration legislation in the early twenty-first century. With the exception of President Reagan and the 1986 IIRIRA that provided a pathway to legal status for many illegal immigrants, Republicans are typically on the conservative side of the immigration, opposing measures like amnesty for illegal immigrants and advocating for heightened border security. Since 2000, Republicans have been in control in one or both of houses of Congress, and a Republican president was in office for eight of those years, making it difficult for any progress to be made for immigrants.

Since 2001, the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) has been introduced into Congress, in several different versions, but a federal act has yet to pass through both houses, under any president (White House). The purpose of this act is to provide a legal pathway for immigrants, the vast majority of whom are Mexican, that have come to the United States as minors. As long as these minors can

pass criminal background checks and are pursuing an education, the DREAM Act would allow them to stay in the U.S. legally in order to continue to pursue education and get a job. Quite a few states have passed their own versions of the DREAM Act, allowing illegal minors to achieve legal status if they meet certain predetermined conditions, which are quite similar to the conditions listed in the federal versions of the DREAM Act.

If enacted, the DREAM Act would expand upon DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which is a very limited immigration relief program begun by the Obama administration in June 2012 (White House). DACA was designed to grant two-year work permits to illegal immigrants who entered the U.S. prior to their sixteenth birthday, have graduated from or are enrolled in U.S. schools, and have no criminal history. This two-year permit can be renewed indefinitely for as long as the DACA legislation is active. It protects these immigrants from deportation, although they are still not technically legal, in the sense that they are not considered permanent residents or citizens. Consequently, this legislation is only the beginning to creating real reform for Mexican immigrants in the U.S., especially illegal ones.

Greater Strides in Immigration Reform

In November 2014, President Obama proposed a bold new plan that would create “dramatic changes” for the millions of illegal immigrants

living in the U.S. (Bennett). According to *L.A. Times* reporter Brian Bennett, one of the main statutes of this legislation is a shift in deportation practices; instead of deporting immigrants simply for entering the U.S. illegally, all immigration law enforcement would be instructed to focus entirely on deporting illegal immigrants who have committed criminal acts since entering the country. At the border, the focus will be apprehending people who are considered a threat to the U.S., like gang members, drug traffickers, and sex traffickers (Bennett). In his speech about this proposed legislation in November 2014, President Obama said that one of the main purposes of this legislation was to unite families, to keep parents with their children who have completed or who are going through the DACA process because this plan is not limited to immigrant minors (Bennett). President Obama's plan will not aid immigrants who have entered the U.S. recently because immigrants must prove that they have maintained continued residency in the United States for the past five years, says *Forbes* political risk contributor Nathaniel Flannery. The biggest issue with this proposed legislation is that it does not improve upon DACA's allowances for legal status. Under this new plan, immigrants would become documented and would not live in fear of deportation, but they still would not receive true legal status. Just like DACA, immigrants would be given temporary work permits that are

renewable, and they can be revoked at any time, for any reason (Flannery).

While Obama's plan is positive in that it extends work permits to a much larger group of illegal immigrants, it still does not provide a pathway to permanent residency or citizenship. The U.S. government reserves the right to revoke this pseudo-legal status, removing protection from deportation and immigrants' ability to legally work in the U.S. The goal of this attempt at immigration reform is to continue to supply the U.S. workforce with low-skilled laborers in fields like construction, manufacturing, and tourism (Flannery). These types of jobs can handle a high turnover rate because, generally, not a lot of training is required and higher education is not necessary. Deporting an immigrant construction worker is not a problem when there are ten more lined up to take his place. And when a government can and does deport immigrants at will, it does not feel responsible for educating these immigrants, making it impossible for them to rise above the standard of low-skilled labor. From this perspective, it could appear that the Obama administration is extending work permits to more illegal immigrants solely in an effort to "beef up" the U.S. economy and not for the purpose of making immigrants a part of the culture and society of the United States.

This embodies postcolonialism and the idea of Mexican immigrants being a colonized people because, in this scenario, the U.S. is exploiting

Mexican immigrants for their labor, for what they can offer to the U.S. Through this exploitation, the U.S. government continues to perpetuate the stereotype of the weak, uneducated Mexican immigrant who is inferior to U.S. citizens and is only valued for what he can provide to the U.S. economy. Should the U.S. government decide that he is not so valuable anymore, they reserve the right to revoke his work permit and send him back to Mexico. So, while this policy may open the door for more Mexican immigrants to stay in the U.S. on a temporarily legal basis, it is not really making major headway with immigration reform because it makes no genuine effort to make Mexican immigrants a true part of the United States.

Mixed Messages

Figure 7 perfectly demonstrates the idea that the U.S. government only wants Mexican immigrants when it is convenient for and benefits the U.S. The represented participants in this political cartoon, the two illegal immigrants, are sitting at the United States-Mexico border, contemplating crossing the Rio Grande into the U.S. while they try to make sense of the signs that are positioned on the U.S. side of the fence that separates the two countries.



Figure 7: *Bilingual signs* by Steve Greenberg (Greenberg)

The fence is a stark image, symbolizing that the U.S. and Mexico are, in fact, very separate and that Mexicans are unwanted in the U.S. The sign on the left features a big stop sign at the top alongside the words “KEEP OUT!” These words remind me of signs that are posted on property, warning trespassers to stay away or risk being prosecuted. This sign is a very definitive statement in and of itself, making it clear that Mexicans are not welcome in the United States, that they are nothing more than trespassers going somewhere where others think they should not be. Then, the rest of the message reads, “Mexican illegals, stay away from our country!” This cartoon makes the distinction that Mexican *illegals* are not welcome, but unwelcome attitudes from the U.S. government, media,

and citizens are often extended to all Mexican immigrants, not just illegal ones.

The sign on the right shows a big smiley face and "WELCOME!", which is the exact opposite of the message of the sign on the left. "Mexican workers needed to harvest our crops!", reads the rest of the sign. So, the idea is that the United States does not want Mexican immigrants unless they can provide a much-needed service, like harvesting crops. Even so, based on current legislation, the U.S. government does not *really* want to be responsible for them; they want a cheap source of labor, not people who need food, clothing, shelter, and education.

Using Kress' and van Leeuwen's concept of represented participants, I analyze the two men by looking at how the artist portrays them and how I, as an interactive participant, connect with and interpret the image of these two men. The two hopeful Mexican immigrants are kneeling on the banks of the Rio Grande, gazing at the fence and the signs, trying to decide whether or not to continue their journey. The man on the left questions the man on the right, "Well, Paco, should we go for it?" The man on the right responds, saying that he is confused by all the "bilingual language." Of course, the signs are not literally bilingual because they are presented only in English, but the idea is striking. The United States does send mixed messages to Mexicans when it desires and

seeks out laborers, but rejects and denies *immigrants*. I think this cartoon was created to point out these mixed messages to natural born U.S. citizens, especially those who support aggressive deportation measures and oppose any kind of amnesty for illegal immigrants. Since it appeared in a 2005 edition of the *Ventura County Star* newspaper, I would narrow the intended audience to natural-born adult citizens, people who are most likely in their 40s or older, because it is rare in U.S. culture today for teenagers and young adults to get their news from a newspaper, whether it be in print or online. I believe that they chose to target this demographic because it is typically the older members of society that have the hardest time adjusting to and accepting change. As a result, this cartoon seeks to show older generations that immigrants are people, too, and demonstrates the struggle that the U.S. puts them through. It attempts to humanize illegal immigrants by demonstrating how the U.S. government welcomes what immigrants can offer, but does not welcome them as *people*. But when we do view immigrants as real people, we can better understand the perilous journey that lay ahead of them when they choose to create a new life in the United States, and the contradictory messages that await them from exploitative employers, wary citizens, and a federal government that is charged with enforcing immigration policies.

Looking back at the cartoon, the U.S. government's message of confusion and minimization continues to express itself in other aspects. The immigrants' backs are turned to Mexico, their previous homeland, and they are facing what they hope to be their new home, the United States. The gaze of the men is in the direction of the United States; they are looking upon the land of the "American dream" that they are hoping to take part in. While the men are dressed the same, it is interesting to note the differences in what they are carrying. The man on the right has a simple sack that contains the belongings he is taking to the U.S., while the man on the left is carrying his belongings in a briefcase. This represents the media's denial of the Mexican stereotype that is so perpetuated by U.S. immigration legislation. According to the National Council of Science and Technology, in 2010 over half a million Mexicans living in the United States had an undergraduate degree, and eleven thousand had a doctorate degree. Mexican immigrants are not all menial laborers who can only sweep floors, pick fruit, and lay bricks. They are also businessmen, doctors, and lawyers. They are teachers, bankers, and police officers. Mexican immigrants can provide more to the United States than simply a low-skilled workforce, and therefore the U.S. government should provide more to them than tentative, shoddy immigration policies that continue to treat them as "the other," making a

clear distinction between Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens, and reinforcing the inferior stereotype.

This continued government action of putting Mexican immigrants outside of the rights and privileges enjoyed by U.S. citizens draws me back to the gaze between the represented participants in figure 5 because I think it speaks to the identity they are given (or not given) by the United States. When looking at the man on the right, only the side of his face is visible. It appears that he is looking at the signs on the other side of the fence but also turned to a degree in order to converse with the other immigrant. However, the face of the man on the left is not shown at all. I think this is symbolic in a couple of ways. First, the lack of full facial representation in the cartoon can be seen as a lack of representation of immigrants in immigration legislation, just like the lack of representation that a colonized people receives after being colonized. They are seen only for a small part of what they are and therefore are not fairly and fully represented in U.S. culture and society, nor recognized by the U.S. government, citizens, and media as people with real needs, real hopes, and real desires that are not unlike those espoused by natural born U.S. citizens. Second, the total lack of facial representation of the man on the left can be interpreted as a complete lack of identity of high-skilled Mexican immigrants, like doctors and teachers. They are seemingly left out of the immigration legislation equation because policies

are created with the purpose of gaining low-skilled laborers to fill a workforce need in the U.S. Simply put, the U.S. takes as much as it can from Mexican immigrants while giving to them as little as possible.

Conclusion

Since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the United States has made quite a few attempts at defining who Mexican immigrants are and what rights they should have in the U.S. Lawmakers have also tried to determine what constitutes legal status and who should get it. It has been over 150 years since this foundational piece of immigration legislation was enacted and, depending on one's perspective, the policies that have come along after the treaty can either be interpreted as progress or stagnation.

On the one hand, immigration legislation has opened the borders to more immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, and has allowed more illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S. legally. Many families have been reunited or maintained the ability to stay together in the U.S. because of legislation that has been enacted in the past thirty years. In the latter half of the twentieth century, presidents have spoken about the importance of accepting immigrants and helping them assimilate into U.S. society. In 2014 in his speech announcing his new plans for immigration, President Obama said, "What makes someone American isn't just blood or birth but allegiance to our founding principles and faith in the idea that

anyone-- from anywhere-- can write the next chapter of our story.” This is a beautiful sentiment, but the plight of immigrants today would be much different if the U.S. government’s words matched its actions.

While immigration legislation throughout U.S. history has made it possible for more Mexican immigrants to remain in the U.S. (technically) legally, it has made no real progress with regards to making the pathway to permanent residency and citizenship any less challenging. When writing and executing immigration policies, U.S. lawmakers clearly value their product over the immigrant producers, meaning that they care more about the labor that Mexican immigrants can provide than the actual immigrants themselves. Because lawmakers are not granting true legal status to Mexican immigrants, the U.S. government has the right to remove legal protection and deport at will if the labor being provided is no longer needed or desired (Bennett). These measures in no way make Mexican immigrants a true part of U.S. society, when they have no guarantee that they can remain, for many years to come, in the place they call home without fear of suddenly becoming unprotected. Even today, most immigrants are still required to go through some type of physical exam in order to enter the United States, as well as learn English and pass a U.S. history exam (Burnett). Along with the expense and time span associated with becoming a citizen, these requirements do not make the millions of Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. feel as though the

U.S. really wants them to become citizens and be celebrated members of U.S. society.

I have argued throughout this thesis that conditions for Mexican immigrants in the U.S. have not improved in any significant manner since the first legislative action in 1848. Lack of enforcement of protective measures in the Treaty of Guadalupe permitted the U.S. government to take Mexican immigrants' land and property. The Naturalization Act of 1906 required immigrants to learn English prior to applying for citizenship. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 placed strict quotas on the number of Mexican immigrants that could enter the U.S. each year. Learning a new language can take years, and placing quotas on immigrants relegates them to the status of livestock or imported goods. These measures do not sound like actions a government would take if they truly desired to welcome immigrants and make them feel at home in their new country, but rather a government that views Mexican immigrants as a colonized people that need to be "Americanized."

This resistance to fully accepting immigrants has also led to a lack of true multiculturalism in the United States. Many people consider the U.S. to be a "melting pot" of people and cultures due to its rich history of immigrants who come from all over the world and many will point to this heritage as a positive thing because they can enjoy dinner at a local Mexican restaurant or spend the weekend at a Cinco de Mayo festival.

But author, scholar, and literary theorist, Stanley Fish, labels this type of citizen a “boutique multiculturalist,” saying that they “admire or appreciate or enjoy” other cultures and maybe even “sympathize” with immigrants, but this attitude develops a “superficial or cosmetic relationship” that “will always stop short of approving other cultures” if those cultures go against what these boutique multiculturalists consider to be inherently “un-American” (Fish 378). Instead, Fish encourages us to be “strong multiculturalists,” which calls citizens to support the cultures of immigrants even when it threatens what “constitutes the core of our identities” (Fish 380). If the United States is truly going to be a multicultural nation, its government, media, and citizens must accept more than just the entertaining cultural aspects of immigration; they must accept the immigrants that embody those cultures and everything that they bring to the table. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in July 2013 there were fifty-four million Hispanics living in the United States, representing seventeen percent of the population. This number continues to increase daily, causing the principles of strong multiculturalism and the need for a practical pathway to citizenship to be as relevant and necessary as ever for Mexican immigrants.

I have had several students over the years that have struggled to find their place in U.S. society and truly assimilate because of their illegal status. Pancho was twelve years old when he came with his parents to

the U.S. from Mexico. He was nineteen when I first met him as a senior at the high school where I was teaching. He had just completed the DACA process and proudly showed me his two year work permit that would allow him to stay in the U.S. legally for two years and obtain a job as a documented worker. It had taken his family months to save up the money for his DACA application, even with a discount provided by a Spanish-speaking lawyer in Charlotte, NC. Pancho worked at a local fast food restaurant during his senior year, and then found a construction job that paid much better after graduation. He was finally able to get a license, which meant he no longer had to worry about being stopped by the police and getting arrested for driving without a license. Pancho had several younger siblings, a parent out of work, and a girlfriend that wanted to get married. He felt the burden to be a financial provider in his household and worked as many hours as possible. He was a very talented artist and loved working on cars, and we had several discussions about career possibilities for him outside of construction. Pancho expressed his desire to be a mechanic or graphic designer but, even if he could make time to take college classes, he was not eligible for any kind of federal financial aid because he was not a citizen, so he told me there was no way he could ever afford to go to college. Pancho is twenty-one now, still working in construction and is planning a wedding with his fiancée. He is also preparing to renew his DACA work permit as his first

two year permit expires in the fall. This temporary legal status through DACA has helped Mexican teenagers in that it allows them to obtain a job and a driver's license in a documented fashion, and it does allow them to legally continue their education. However, DACA recipients are not eligible for any kind of financial aid, so the dream of college is out of reach for most. And even if a student was able to afford college, their permit could be revoked at any time, or simply not renewed, and that student would be forced to withdraw and faced with the fear of deportation once again. Simply put, DACA has made greater strides in immigration reform, but it has not done enough because Mexican immigrants still cannot enjoy the same rights and privileges as natural-born U.S. citizens.

In order to see real change for Mexican immigrants, lawmakers must write policies that provide a more accessible pathway for permanent residency and citizenship. Becoming documented must become easier and cheaper, and temporary residency without fear of deportation must be provided while immigrants are going through the process to become legal members of the United States. Mexican immigrants risk their lives every day to enter the U.S., sometimes escaping poverty and violence. The majority of them want nothing more than to assimilate into U.S. society and create better lives for themselves, achieving better jobs, higher wages, more comfortable living conditions, and a quality education

without expense. They desire to be a true part of the fabric of the United States, but the U.S. government continues to create obstacles that prevent Mexican immigrants from being completely interwoven into that fabric.

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