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**Influence of Mexican Immigrants and Their Descendants on American  
Culture in the 21st Century**

Master's Thesis

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Olomouc 2015

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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**Vliv mexických imigrantů a jejich potomků na americkou kulturu  
21. století**

Diplomová práce

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2015

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci dne.....

Podpis.....

*I would like to thank PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D. for his help, suggestions, and guidance given while supervising my thesis.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Moving from one place to another and crossing borders has been typical for humankind throughout history. Nowadays immigration represents a big hope for people who wish to change their life, for example if they feel dissatisfied with the living conditions in their motherland. There are many reasons why people choose to leave their native country and start living somewhere else. A hope for a better economic and social situation, political freedom, religious tolerance, escaping natural disasters, wars, etc. On the one hand, the clash of different cultures leads to enrichment of both cultures involved but at the same time may cause problems both to immigrants and residents of states that accept them.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Hispanics became the largest minority group in the United States, surpassing African-Americans, and Mexicans represent the largest number of them. Although the United States is still a country with majority of its population being Anglo-Protestant and speaking English, such high numbers of people with significantly different background and language that do not assimilate much into the mainstream culture have influenced the United States in many aspects.

The thesis is structured into five chapters. The first one focuses on the United States as the country of immigrants. It discusses two metaphors that have been commonly used to refer to the United States. A melting pot, a metaphor symbolizing mixing of different cultures, races, nationalities, which create a new, homogenous society on the one hand, and a salad bowl, in which different cultures keep their unique flavor and complement each other, on the other hand. Which one best describes American society these days? This part also gives an overview of the most important laws implemented throughout history by the government to deal with immigration.

The second part offers an insight into the historical development of Mexico, from the times when it was populated by highly developed indigenous civilizations, through the Spanish conquest of the territory, to modern history. It explains why in the 21st century Mexico is still a developing country and what has led so many people to leave their homes and come to the United States.

The following chapter looks into the matter of American immigration from the Mexican point of view. What is it that makes Mexican immigrants unique from other nationalities? Based on Samuel P. Huntington's book *Who Are We? The Challenges to*

*America's National Identity* written in 2004, six characteristics are put forward that define Mexican immigration and which can help us explain why Mexican culture is the one most significantly influencing life in the United States in the last decades. This part also examines the history of Mexican immigration into the United States at three different periods and explains what twin cities are.

The fourth chapter focuses on the core topic of the thesis. It examines five areas in which Mexican immigrants and their descendants most visibly influence everyday life in the United States. These include cuisine, language, politics, economy, and crime. All these spheres of influence attempt to show that Mexican culture and also its problems are present in everyday lives of American natives and that Mexicans in many aspects help to shape political, social, and economic reality in the United States.

The last chapter of the thesis tries to predict how the influence of Hispanics, and especially Mexicans, could continue in the future as their numbers grow. Will they become a threat to the mainstream Anglo-Protestant society or will they manage to assimilate into the American culture?

The aim of the thesis is to show that Mexican immigrants and their descendants are not just low skilled, uneducated labor force and a drain on government services, as many Americans stereotypically perceive them, but that over the last decades, as a community, they have become powerful enough to influence many aspects of contemporary public life and have played an important role in shaping today's United States and its future. Some believe that immigrants from Mexico have a negative impact on American economy or crime rates and the thesis will look into this matter, attempting to find an answer to if it is really true or not.



# 1 UNITED STATES AND IMMIGRATION

The United States has always been a country of immigrants. Throughout its history people from all around the world have been leaving their homes to start a new life in this land of opportunities and better life. And this phenomenon continues until this day when the United States is the world's top destination for immigrants.

## 1.1 Melting Pot vs Salad Bowl

America has been traditionally talked about as the melting pot of different races and nationalities, an ideal society in which no matter where people come from, they lose their original identity and melt together with others into one homogenous culture. In this country, people would be free, have the same opportunities, and a prospect of a better life. The idea of the melting pot goes back to 1782 when J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a Frenchman who settled in America, in the famous third letter of the collection of essays *Letters from an American Farmer*, came up with the idea that all the settlers from different parts of the world would create a new man, an American different from the European society. "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."<sup>1</sup> However, this idea of assimilation that was valid a couple of centuries ago does not seem to work anymore.

In the last few decades the United States has become much more culturally diverse because of high numbers of immigrants coming to the country. And these growing numbers of immigrants, who are coming from even more parts of the world than before, do not seem to be melting and assimilating into the American society and culture as much as they used to. Many immigrants are neither willing, nor able to leave their original culture behind and become just another typical American. Instead, most of them tend to form their own enclaves and preserve their traditions and language which connect them with their motherland. Therefore, a new term came into use among theorists in the last decades, which defines America rather as a salad bowl "containing a mixture in which each ingredient remains distinct but contributes its own flavor and texture."<sup>2</sup> The United States is thus seen as a multicultural country in which immigrants from all over the world are invited to preserve their uniqueness and share it with others

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<sup>1</sup> J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, "Letter III: What is an American," *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1957), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Wepman, *Immigration* (New York: Infobase, 2008), 336.

to make the society culturally richer. And this contribution of a flavor can be observed even in the case of Mexicans, adding their own culture to that of the United States.

However, even though this new theory of tolerance could be seen as the best way to describe contemporary America, it is not so easy. The opinions on immigration differ and American society is divided over whether immigration itself is a good thing or a threat, and if assimilation or cultural pluralism is better for the country. The truth is immigration can have both beneficial and detrimental effect on the culture of the United States. On the one hand, many things which immigrants bring to the country can be inspiring and enrich American culture, on the other hand, immigrants can cause problems which have a negative effect on the life in the United States and the country struggles to deal with them.

## **1.2 History of Immigration Laws in the United States**

The tale of the United States as a country open to everyone who wants to change his or her life for the better is not that simple. The high numbers of people coming to the country cannot go uncontrolled. Therefore, there have been many policies throughout the history which have attempted to regulate the influx of foreigners into the country. The following paragraphs will name some of the most historically important immigration laws.

First official documents that deal with immigration into the United States date back to the end of the eighteenth century. However, the first document which attempted to regulate immigration was the *Page Act of 1875*. Growing numbers of Chinese people who came to the west of the country because of the Gold Rush and the building of transcontinental railroad started to make Americans uneasy. As a consequence, the 1875 Act prohibited the immigration of Asians unless their work was voluntary and free. Also Asian prostitutes were denied access.

The *Emergency Quota Act* passed in 1921 limited the number of immigrants entering the United States to 357,000 per year and also imposed quotas based on the country of birth. The quotas for each country were 3 percent of the total number of people from that country living in the United States as recorded in the 1910 U.S. Census. This quota was not valid for people from the rest of the American continent, there were no limits on their numbers.

The *Immigration Act of 1924* reduced the number of aliens admitted into the United States to 150,000 per year and cut the quota to 2 percent of the number of people from each country living in the United States in 1890. It restricted or completely prohibited immigration from other continents to preserve homogenous American identity. There were again no limits on immigration from Latin America.

In 1952, the United States passed the *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952* which creates the basic body of immigration law until today. It codified all the immigration policies which existed before but were scattered and not collected in one official document. It eliminated racial restrictions but still preserved the national quota.

However, a new *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* was passed which introduced amendments to the original one. It abolished the quota system which favored certain nationalities. Skills, supposed occupation, and family relationships with American citizens became the main factors for admitting an immigrant. This made it possible for many people to come to the country and the number of immigrants highly increased. However, this Act also contributed to the augmentation of illegal immigration from the developing world and especially from Mexico and the rest of Latin America. These countries suddenly needed to apply for a visa to get into the United States and that was time-consuming and success was not ensured. Many people opted for getting into the neighboring country illegally. The main reason for illegal immigration from Mexico was the elimination of the so-called Bracero Program which will be discussed later.

At the beginning of the 1980s, illegal immigration reached such high numbers that it started to be seen as a big problem which was to be solved by the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986*. It put forward penalizations of those who would employ illegal immigrants, it increased Border Patrol, and it legalized those illegal immigrants who had been unlawfully present in the United States since 1982, but who at the same time had a clean criminal record and met minimal knowledge of American history, government, and English language.

*The Immigration Act of 1990* increased the annual number of immigrants allowed to enter the country to 700,000 a year. Preference was given to those who already had family members in the country or needed a visa to work in America. Employment visas were divided into several categories based on occupation.

*Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996* added many significant points to already existing immigration laws. It put forward penalties,

including deportation, for smuggling, creation of fake immigration-related documents, and other crimes committed by alien citizens. It also made changes to guarding the border and the work of Border Patrol. During this decade, leading figures of the United States started to focus on border enforcement in the South of the United States. As a consequence, much tougher border controls started to be carried out, more people were hired to guard the border, and modern technologies were employed, including infrared night-vision scopes, special sensors, or modern computer systems to locate and process illegal crossings.

In spite of continuing attempts to control illegal immigration into the country and to increase border security, the government has still not found a solution to stop or at least significantly decrease the high numbers of unauthorized aliens from entering American territory.

## **2 OVERVIEW OF MEXICAN HISTORY, REASONS FOR EMIGRATION**

Before exploring Mexicans as immigrants into the United States, it is convenient to understand why in the 21st century Mexico, while sharing a border with one of the most economically powerful countries in the world, is still a Third World country and why the situation there is so bad that such high numbers of Mexicans keep escaping life in their motherland.

The area of today's Mexico was already inhabited about 25,000 years ago and many indigenous tribes and civilizations had been living there before the arrival of Europeans. However, the most prosperous times are connected with the empire of the Aztecs who in 1325 founded Tenochtitlan, today's Mexico City. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spanish colonizers put an end to one of the most famous civilizations on the American continent of all times. Hernán Cortés, Spanish conqueror, led an expedition which in 1521 conquered the city and began to build a new one on the ruins of Tenochtitlan which got the name Mexico. The Aztec territory then became a part of New Spain. Mexico remained under the Spanish rule until the beginning of the Mexican Revolution.

In Mexico, Agustín de Iturbide came up with the Plan of Iguala in 1821, a proclamation which established a constitutional monarchy in Mexico and which guaranteed three central principles for the newly established state: Religion, Independence, and Unity. Concretely, it proclaimed Roman Catholicism as the primary religion, political independence of Mexico, and equality for all social and ethnic groups in the state. Agustín de Iturbide proclaimed himself the monarch of Mexico but did not have many supporters and was expelled from the country. Mexico then turned into a federal republic after the example of the United States. After the American-Mexican War which took place between 1846 and 1848, Mexico lost about a half of its territory to the United States.

The wars of independence throughout Latin America went down in history as conflicts full of violence and suffering. Many new states were established but politically very unstable, weak, and economically poor.

The history of Mexico starts with the establishment of Mexican Republic in 1821 when it gained independence from Spain. A big part of agricultural land was in the hands of the Church and the Mexican Liberals were against it. Benito Juárez

implemented a Constitution in 1857 based on which the State got a bigger power than the Church, and three years later Juárez became the President of the country. He introduced new reforms, many of which were aimed against the Church. He confiscated its properties and its lands were redistributed to the poor. As a consequence, Mexico faced a war which lasted several years and caused economic crisis after which Mexico was unable to repay loans from European countries. France intervened Mexico with the help of the Habsburg Maximilian I who was proclaimed the Emperor of the new Mexican monarchy in 1864. In 1872 Mexican republic was re-established and Benito Juárez again became the President.

In 1876 the dictator Porfirio Díaz became the head of the country. Stacy points out that when he assumed responsibility for the country, “Mexico was practically bankrupt, [t]he country’s industry was in ruins, there was social unrest, and chaos prevailed,” during his tenure foreign investments to Mexico strengthened its economy, however, most Mexicans still lived in poor conditions because the money never got to those who needed it.<sup>3</sup> Although he turned Mexico from a feudal to a modern country, his attempts did not focus on the citizens who at the end of his rule mostly lived in the country, suffered from hunger, and 80 percent of them were illiterate. Industry was under the control of foreign companies, especially American ones, railroad system was created to transport goods between Mexico and the United States, land was in the hands of wealthy elite, peasants were earning little money. The population was highly dissatisfied with their situation and also the opponents of the dictator did not like it that he was in power of the country for so long and they imagined Mexico as a different country, a country ruled by democracy which would not be dependent on foreign investments anymore.

His opponents led by Francisco Madero rebelled against him in 1910. Mexican Revolution (1911-1917) was an important moment in the history of Mexico and at the same time one of the most complicated conflicts in history. After putting an end to the dictatorship of Díaz, Madero became the President of the country in 1911 but was murdered two years later. His follower Victoriano Huerta, who was responsible for Madero’s death, became a new head of the country but was not popular with rich Mexicans. The most famous representatives of the opposition were Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Venustiano Carranza, and Alvaro Obregón. Feeling threatened,

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<sup>3</sup> Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 263

Huerto escaped from the country. Now that Huerto's opponents reached their goal, they were unable to agree on the future of Mexico. The following years witnessed lots of violence. Zapata and Villa who stood together against Carranza and Obregón lost and after some time were murdered. Their two opponents who one after another became Mexican presidents lived to see the same destiny. The revolution debilitated Mexican economy and politics and this led to the founding of the "National Revolutionary Party" (which was later renamed to the "Party of the Mexican Revolution" and under the name "Institutional Revolutionary Party" exists until this day). The land was redistributed among peasants and the property of the Church nationalized. The discontent with the government led to even more armed conflicts.

In the 1930s the government led by Lázaro Cárdenas, the founder of modern Mexico, came to power. He nationalized oil industry and railway system and unlike his predecessors was very popular with people. Nevertheless, the situation in Mexico did not calm down. Battles for power brought about a civil war which lasted for years. After a good start of Mexican economy, a crisis came again. According to Stacy, economic weakness of Mexico brought about devaluations of Mexican peso after 1970 and caused higher instability of Mexican economy. She also notes that government policies required lots of money which brought about high inflation, financial insecurity, and higher prices, peso could not keep up with American dollar.<sup>4</sup> "In the 1980s and 1990s the Mexican economy suffered continued instability as a result of policies aimed at liberalizing exports and imports, encouraging international investment, and integrating Mexico into the global economy."<sup>5</sup> Although countries in Latin America started to collaborate with the United States and during the second half of the twentieth century entered many projects which were believed to improve economic situation, the results did not reach expectations. Since the 1970s Latin America has been struggling with very low wages, underdevelopment, political crises, and economy has been dependent on foreign capital. Since the second half of the twentieth century, more and more peasants started coming to cities to look for jobs and better life. But as the millions of newcomers started to increase, it was impossible to find a job, and many people ended up living in slums in very poor conditions which is also the case of Mexico City. As Levy, Bruhn, and Zebadúa point out, under the rule of Salinas and Zedillo between the end of 1980s and during 1990s, collaboration with the United States brought about

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<sup>4</sup> Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 260.

<sup>5</sup> Stacy, 260.

privatizations, cooperation with foreign economies, allowing foreign investment into oil industry, and joining in NAFTA, but “the benefits of this growth were distributed unequally. A few Mexicans got very rich, but most people failed to improve their lot substantially.”<sup>6</sup> Privatizations significantly reduced job opportunities in the country and contributed to even higher unemployment.

The beginning of the twenty-first century was characterized by the defeat of the presidential candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party who lost to Vicente Fox. The Institutional Revolutionary Party lost elections after long 71 years. There was a hope for improvement of the situation in the country with the establishment of democracy. Fox wanted to bring about reforms which would improve the situation in Mexico, including economic growth and new jobs, but his plans were not much successful. Vicente Fox was for many “a decent man with many good ideas who lacked the skill and appetite to muscle his programs through. . . . [H]is failures began to give democracy a bad name.”<sup>7</sup> Although democracy was established and Fox stabilized economy, there was not a sign of a significant improvement in the lives of a big part of Mexican population.

Poverty and inequality are deeply rooted in Mexico. . . . [A]most half of the population lives in poverty, unable to meet the Food and Agriculture Organization’s minimal food intake standards, and about seventeen million are in what is classified as extreme poverty. That Mexico is not listed among the world’s poorest countries, because much of the rest of the population is relatively well off, is little solace for these millions of people.<sup>8</sup>

Fox’s follower Felipe Calderón, who was the President between 2006 and 2012, finished his presidency with the same result. As Rocha Menocal from the *Foreign Policy* magazine points out, Calderón failed to deal with corruption or drug trade (under his control, Mexico reached 135th out of 158th position among the most violent countries), and economic growth was very slow (on average from 2 to 2,5 percent per

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel C. Levy, et al., *Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 12.

<sup>7</sup> “Mexico’s New President,” *New York Times*, December 2, 2006.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/02/opinion/02sat2.html> (Accessed: March 7, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel C. Levy, et al., *Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 13.



year) and unable to create enough job opportunities.<sup>9</sup> The contemporary President Enrique Peña Nieto who has been the head of the country since 2012 is according to *The Economist* seen as a good President who came up with beneficial reforms by foreigners but is not very popular with Mexican population as “they blame his government for a squeeze on living standards and the interlinked problems of violent crime and corruption.”<sup>10</sup> The situation in Mexico has not improved under several democratic presidents, therefore, many poor people still do not see any other possibility than to emigrate from the country.

High levels of unemployment, poverty, which is still a major problem of today’s Mexico, very low wages, but also danger connected with crimes of for example drug cartels, that represent the well-off Mexicans, are the main reasons for Mexicans to leave the country. Mexico has still not found a solution to stop history from repeating itself. Constant violence, political instability, crime, corruption, problematic economy, and inequality still remain a big problem and many Mexicans choose to try their luck and leave the country, hoping to find a better life in the United States.

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<sup>9</sup> Alina Rocha Menocal, “A Requiem for Calderon,” *Foreign Policy*, June 18, 2012. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/06/18/a-requiem-for-calderon> (Accessed: March 7, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> “Reforms and democracy, but no rule of law,” *The Economist*, November 15, 2014. <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21632477-save-promising-presidency-enrique-pe-nieto-must-tackle-crime-and-corruption-reforms-and> (Accessed: March 7, 2015).

### 3 IMMIGRANTS FROM MEXICO

Immigration has always been an important source of population growth in the United States. Hispanics and especially Mexican immigrants together with their Mexican American descendants have a unique place in the history of the United States. They have been coming to the United States for the last three centuries, but especially in the last decades they have been entering in such numbers that today Hispanics constitute the biggest minority group in the country and thus have a big influence on everyday life in America. Sometimes the door on the Mexican border was wide open, allowing people to come to the United States without problems, at other times it was closed on them. In 2013, Mexican population in the country numbered almost 34 million.<sup>11</sup> The masses of Mexican immigrants have become a controversial topic and American politicians have been trying to come up with solutions to stop such high numbers of people from coming to the United States, especially to do away with illegal immigrants and have immigrant policy under control.

Center for Immigration Studies (CSI) is an organization that is concerned with immigration into the United States. In its 2010 survey it published data about the numbers of immigrants coming from countries all over the world. Table 1 shows six Hispanic countries with the highest numbers of immigrants (over 500,000) who came to the United States over the last decades until 2010 based on the data collected by CSI.<sup>12</sup>

*Table 1*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2000-2010</b>	<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>Pre-1980</b>
Mexico	11,746,539	4,050,077	3,608,247	2,209,189	1,879,026
El Salvador	1,207,128	434,726	342,011	320,276	110,115
Cuba	1,112,064	359,480	210,858	157,545	384,181
Dominican Republic	879,884	290,971	258,936	176,634	153,343
Guatemala	797,262	382,791	193,802	158,325	62,344
Colombia	648,348	242,441	170,799	121,961	113,147

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<sup>11</sup> Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, Mark Hugo Lopez, *A Demographic Portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the United States*, Pew Research Center, May 1, 2013. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/01/a-demographic-portrait-of-mexican-origin-hispanics-in-the-united-states/> (Accessed: February 22, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Steven A. Camarota, *Immigrants in the United States, 2010: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population*, Center for Immigration Studies, 2012. <http://www.cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/articles/2012/immigrants-in-the-united-states-2012.pdf>. (Accessed: February 22, 2015).

The data clearly shows that Mexico is the Hispanic country with the highest number of people entering the United States and that the numbers in case of other Hispanic nations are rather trivial compared to Mexicans. It also explains why Mexican culture has such a big influence on everyday American life.

### **3.1 Specifics of Mexican Immigration According to Huntington**

Samuel P. Huntington, American political scientist, published a book called *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004)<sup>13</sup> in which he is concerned with the identity of Americans and the threat immigration, especially the one from Mexico, represents to the United States and its Anglo-Protestant society which could be because of the persistent influx of Mexicans divided into a country with two peoples, cultures, and languages. He names six specifics of Mexican immigration that make it unique from the immigrants of other nationalities coming to the United States. These factors can help us understand why so many Mexicans live in the country and why Mexican immigration has become the one that most visibly changes life in American society.

*Contiguity* is the first characteristic of Mexican immigration according to Huntington.<sup>14</sup> While most immigrants in the past had to make a long and exhausting sea voyage and now have to travel long distances by plane to get to the United States, which makes it quite expensive to come to the United States, Mexicans are very close and even the poorest classes can get to the country. All they have to do is cross the border which in many places is just an open space with no obstacles. The United States is the only First World country which so closely borders a Third World country without being divided by ocean. And this advantage of closeness, relative easiness, and low cost makes many Mexicans attempt to change their lives for the better by getting to the neighboring country.

*Numbers.* The reason why so many people from Mexico come to America is mainly given by the economic, demographic, and political situation in their motherland and, on the other hand, the situation in the United States where they see possible improvement of their lives. Many immigrants would be discouraged by losing touch with their families and friends whom they might not see for months or years, but in case of

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<sup>13</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Huntington, 222.

Mexicans, this is not a thing to stop them from moving away because they can easily go back to Mexico and visit those who stayed there. Legal immigrants from Mexico constituted 25 percent of total number of immigrants in the United States in 1990s and in 2000 it was already 27.6 percent.<sup>15</sup> And Mexicans coming to the country illegally would make this number even higher. It is believed that American population will be represented by up to 25 percent of Hispanics, out of which Mexicans create the majority, by 2040. This change will not only happen because of new immigrants but also as a consequence of fertility.<sup>16</sup>

*Illegality* is the third sign of Mexican immigration which highly increased after 1965. In 1960s, the number of people who were arrested when attempting to cross the border illegally was 1.6 million, in 1980s it rose to 11.9 million, and in 1990s it reached 12.9 million.<sup>17</sup> The 1986 *Immigration Reform and Control Act* granted legal status to more than 2 million Mexicans who were illegally residing in the country, and it was expected to reduce illegal immigration by penalizing those who would employ an illegal alien and by tightening controls of the Mexican-American border. However, desired reduction of illegal immigration was not achieved. In 1990s, the number of illegal immigrants started to rise again. It is estimated that 4 million illegal immigrants were present in the United States in 1995, 6 million in 1998, and in 2003 the number reached 8-10 million unauthorized aliens.<sup>18</sup> And based on Pew Research Center, the number continued to rise until 2007 when it reached its peak, 12 million, which in 2011 decreased to 11.1 million.<sup>19</sup>

*Regional Concentration* is another aspect which makes Hispanic immigration unique. Hispanics tend to move to specific parts of the United States instead of dispersing all over the country like most of other immigrants. This causes that Hispanics living together in such high numbers do not assimilate into American culture. The Southwest part of the United States is a region with the highest number of Hispanic population. Two thirds of Mexicans who lived in the United States in 2000 concentrated in the West

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 223.

<sup>16</sup> Huntington, 224.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, 225.

<sup>18</sup> Huntington, 225.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrants: 11.1 Million in 2011*, Pew Research Center, December 6, 2012. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/12/06/unauthorized-immigrants-11-1-million-in-2011/> (Accessed: March 21, 2015).

and almost half of them in California.<sup>20</sup> However, it is important to point out that it is not true anymore that Hispanics do not come to other parts of the United States, today Mexicans are living and working all over the country.

*Persistence* of the Mexicans coming to the United States makes them as immigrants distinct from others. Each year new masses of people cross the border and there is no sign this phenomenon should stop or that the numbers of Mexicans should decrease. Probably the only chance that in the long term Mexican immigration could stop or significantly reduce is that Mexico gets closer to the economic level of the United States.<sup>21</sup>

*Historical Presence* – Huntington compares the immigration of Mexicans into the United States to a Spanish Reconquista [reconquest]:

No other immigrant group in American history has asserted or has been able to assert a historical claim to American territory. Mexicans and Mexican Americans can and do make that claim. Almost all of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah was part of Mexico . . . . Quite understandably, they feel that they have special rights in these territories.<sup>22</sup>

The area in the southwest with the highest number of Mexicans used to belong to Mexico and because so many Mexicans live there, it is not perceived by them as much as a foreign country like in the case of immigrants from other countries.

Contiguity, numbers, illegality, regional concentration, persistence, and historical presence represent factors which cause that Mexicans come to the country in such numbers and that they do not assimilate into the mainstream American society.

### **3.2 History of Mexican Immigration into the United States**

The following paragraphs will summarize the most important moments in the history of Mexican immigration into the United States.

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<sup>20</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 226.

<sup>21</sup> Huntington, 227-228.

<sup>22</sup> Huntington, 229-230.

### 3.2.1 Immigration until 1980

Some Mexican people had already been living in the area of today's United States centuries before it was founded. The first time large numbers of Mexicans appeared on American territory is connected with the year 1848 when after the two-year-long Mexican-American War, 51 % of Mexican territory was annexed to the United States based on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The United States gained today's Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and part of Colorado and Wyoming. Thus Mexicans who were living in these areas and decided to stay in their homes suddenly became citizens of another country. In 1854, the United States bought another part of Mexican territory that is now the southern part of Arizona and New Mexico. Known as the Gadsden Purchase, this was the last important enlargement of the continental territory of the United States. Since then, Mexico and the United States have been divided by a new, almost 3,200-km long, border stretching from the Gulf of Mexico, following the Rio Grande, to the Pacific Ocean. This border officially draws a line between two countries which have a common history but which are in many aspects very different, today it marks the distinction between a developed and a developing country.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, 80 % of Mexican population lived in the country and in very poor conditions and there was a high proportion of illiteracy. When the Mexican Revolution came in 1910 and during the years after, many people fled to the United States to escape danger and the bad economic situation. Most of them found jobs in the southwest of the United States in agriculture. Moreover, during the WWI, there were many job opportunities for Mexican workers in industry.

*The Immigration Act of 1924* caused another big wave of Mexican immigrants to come because unlike in case of other nationalities, Mexico was given no limits as for the number of immigrants that could enter the United States. Because the influx of Asian people was very restricted, Mexicans had a free access to many job opportunities in America, which was in need of people willing to work for low wages. Mexicans worked in mines, they helped to build railways, and in other manual jobs not—only in the Southwest but also on the east coast. The United States Border Patrol was established in the same year and since then it has guarded the border with Mexico to prevent illegal immigration into the country and smuggling.

The Great Depression period of the 1930s, characterized by economic crisis, unemployment, and poverty, caused many Mexicans to go back to Mexico.

WWII brought about another labor agreement between the two countries, because America was again in need of manual workers for war industries. Many Mexicans even participated in the war, fighting for the United States. Unlimited numbers of Mexicans were hired as “braceros” [laborers] to work in the United States for a certain amount of time in agriculture. After their contract expired, they had to go back to Mexico but in general getting to the United States was very easy thanks to this program. The Bracero Program lasted from 1942 until 1964. The fact that there were not enough jobs in Mexico and also wages were much lower than in the United States, which after the war became a country with the strongest economy in the world, workers were attracted to the life in America more than ever. Although in the United States they were only granted a minimum wage, it was still higher than in their motherland and they were also provided with housing, transportation expenses, and health benefits.

However, since 1965 when the *Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments* were introduced, the numbers of braceros admitted into the country were highly reduced and there were not enough job opportunities for all the Mexicans who wanted to continue in pursuing the American Dream. As it was much more difficult now to get into the United States legally, high numbers of Mexicans decided to enter the country in an illegal way.

### 3.2.2 Immigration between 1980 and 2000

Children who were born in Mexico during the baby boom of 1960s and 1970s were in search of jobs during the 1980s and 1990s. Latin America was in crisis and growing population and the lack of job opportunities caused that many Mexican citizens started to pursue the American Dream. Immigration significantly increased during the 1970s which is the time that marks the beginning of today’s immigration issues.<sup>23</sup> The problem of high number of illegal immigrants was to be solved by the *Immigration and Reform Control Act* passed in 1986 which not only penalized those employing illegal immigrants but it also became one of the most important moments in the history of immigrants into the United States. There were over 2 million Mexicans who turned

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<sup>23</sup> Faye Hipsman, Doris Meissner, “Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon,” Migration Policy Institute, April 16, 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform> (Accessed: March 10, 2015).

from illegal to legal citizens of the United States thanks to an amnesty. The fact that Mexican-American border was much more guarded than before caused many Mexicans to attempt to cross the border in dangerous places.

In 1994, there was another plan to reduce Mexican immigration into the United States. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1994 between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. It cancelled taxes on many Mexican goods exported to America and on some goods imported into Mexico. Many people in Mexico found employment in factories (the so-called maquiladoras) situated mainly near the border with the United States. Raw materials from America were brought in Mexico duty-free, transported into these factories where the materials were then manufactured and the final product was sent back to America. In 2000, there were more than 2,500 factories, which were able to offer employment to about a million workers.<sup>24</sup> Creating job opportunities for Mexican people was to reduce their emigration to the North. However, although the situation near the border is better than in the rest of Mexico, NAFTA did not prevent Mexicans from coming to the United States.

### 3.2.3 Immigration from 2000 until today

In 2000, the United States elected a new president, George W. Bush, and in Mexico Vicente Fox became the head of the country. The two representatives of the states engaged in a discussion of the most important issues in the relation between the United States and Mexico which were immigration, trade, and drugs. There were five proposals made by Mexico: establishing a guest worker program, legalization of illegal immigrants, projects to help Mexico in its further development, cooperation on securing the border, making conditions for family reunification more favorable. However, further discussions and possible signing of the bilateral agreement between the two countries was interrupted by the terrorist attacks on The World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. The security of the United States and dealing with terrorist issues became a major concern and bilateral agreement was not so important in that moment.

The *USA PATRIOT Act* of 2001 (stands for **U**niting and **S**trengthening **A**merica by **P**roviding **A**ppropriate **T**ools **R**equired to **I**ntercept and **O**bstruct **T**errorism **A**ct of 2001) was passed to prevent future terrorist attacks. This affected also Mexicans as the situation was made even more difficult for all illegal immigrants. It brought about a

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<sup>24</sup> Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 837.



much higher protection of American borders and there was even greater chance that illegal aliens would be deported.

The events of 2001 also led to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002 which substituted the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) that used to take care of immigration and naturalization matters. DHS took over the function of INS and secures the nation from possible dangers.

In 2006, the *Secure Fence Act* came into force which was intended to provide more security for the United States and to lower illegal immigration. It supported the building of additional 700 miles of fence along the border and money was invested into special technology like cameras and special sensors to secure especially American states near the border which desired to protect their citizens from problems that immigrants bring about, like violence and drugs.

All the measures taken since 2001 led to higher number of people arrested on the border. However, the fact that crossing the border became more difficult caused greater demand for the so-called coyotes, human smugglers, and increased the number of deaths. Wastelands which are not guarded seem to be easier places to cross the border although at the same time very dangerous. Most of the unpopulated places along the border are surrounded by deserts, therefore, the weather is too sunny and migrants dehydrated. Illegal immigrants are also subject to violence from the side of the coyotes or cartels. They are transported in inhuman conditions, kidnapped, robbed, raped, blackmailed, and hundreds of them die of drowning, homicides, dehydration, or exhaustion each year.<sup>25</sup>

#### 3.2.4 Twin cities

*Twin cities* is a term used for pairs of two cities, one of them on the American and the other on the Mexican side of the border. They constitute the official crossings from one country to another. The term implies not only proximity between the two cities but also their social and economic interdependency.

Already in the second half of the 19th century, the communities that were close to each other exchanged goods and railroads were built to connect these cities.

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<sup>25</sup> Ray Walser, et al., "The Human Tragedy of Illegal Immigration: Greater Efforts Needed to Combat Smuggling and Violence," The Heritage Foundation, June 22, 2011. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/06/the-human-tragedy-of-illegal-immigration-greater-efforts-needed-to-combat-smuggling-and-violence> (Accessed: March 10, 2015).

Agriculture, manufacturing, or mining started to flourish in the American southwest. In the 1920s, during the American Prohibition era, United States citizens were coming to Mexico to enjoy themselves in places near the border such as Tijuana. Drinking alcohol, gambling, and prostitutes were the main attractions for Americans. In the early 20th century, border towns in Mexico were places where Americans hired Mexicans for work in the United States. Laborers often settled in border towns to have it close to America, especially during the Bracero Program years. Another wave of population growth came when maquiladoras were built in the border towns.

Today there are fourteen principle twin cities. Millions of people cross the border each year, either just for a short time to get to work, school, visit friends and relatives, and then go back home, or the crossing is permanent when they decide to move to the neighboring country for good. The most frequent crossing of the border happens between the city of San Diego in California and Tijuana in Mexico.

The border area on the Mexican side is wealthier than the rest of the country, while on the American side, this area is very poor compared to the rest of the United States. Better opportunities to find a job on the Mexican side of the border leads people from the South to migrate to the border region and also those who unsuccessfully attempt to enter the United States often stay in this area. What in the past used to be a sparsely populated area with just small villages and towns is now one of the most urbanized places in Mexico. However, the quality of life is still not comparable to that in the United States. It is an area of crime, drug smuggling, and wages are still much lower than in the United States. “The wage differences allow a Mexican worker to take his or her skills and education to the United States and earn seven to ten times more income than those same skills and education can generate in Mexico.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, immigration from Mexico is not stopping and people are even willing to risk their lives to get across the border.

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<sup>26</sup> Joan B. Anderson, James Gerber, *Fifty Years of Change on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Growth, Development, and Quality of Life* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 55.

## 4 MEXICAN INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN CULTURE

In 1970, Ralph Ellison published an article in which he was concerned with the question of what America would be like without blacks. According to him, America could not become the country it is today, there would be no famous authors like Faulkner, Crane, Hemingway because there would be none of the important moments in the history between the black and white race, and America would not understand how precious freedom is: “The nation could not survive being deprived of their presence because, by the irony implicit in the dynamics of American democracy, they symbolize both its most stringent testing and the possibility of its greatest human freedom.”<sup>27</sup> The United States is a country of different races, nationalities, and each of them contributed something to make it unique. Without the variability America would not be the country it has become over the past centuries.

Hispanic population had been present in the area of the United States even before the country was founded. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of Hispanic, and above all Mexican, population in the last decades and the emergence of Hispanic population as the largest minority group in the United States have become very important features for the development of American society and culture. Mexican influence is traceable in many aspects of American life. It is marked by the influence of not only Mexico, but also of Spain and indigenous culture which are all inherent to what it is to be a Mexican.

When Mexican people decide to move to the United States, it is very difficult for them to start a new life in a different country. Family is of high importance to them and often several generations live together under one roof. Therefore, when moving to a new place, they tend to come to the same area where a part of their family or members of the community are settled so that the beginnings are easier for them. Whole communities staying in one place keep their traditions to stay connected with their motherland and their culture even in the new country, and thus spread these traditions there and influence even non-Mexican people.

The following chapters will highlight the most prominent types of influence on American culture.

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<sup>27</sup> Ralph Ellison, “What America Would Be Like without Blacks,” originally published in *Time Magazine*, April 6, 1970. <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-america-would-be-like-without-blacks> (Accessed: February 28, 2015).

## 4.1 Cuisine

Mexico is the 14th largest country in the world and because it is so big, people do not prepare the same things everywhere. Typical meals differ from region to region and people also cook based on their financial situation. But in general, Mexican cuisine is a combination of indigenous and Spanish flavors, it is unique, colorful, full of different flavors, and uses various spices and locally grown crops such as corn, beans, guavas, avocados, chili peppers, tomatoes, etc.

Burgers, hot dogs, pizza, potato chips, or ketchup have long been seen as an example of typical fast food sold in the United States. But with the high influx of Mexicans, this image started to change and now the list includes many types of food with Spanish names. Hispanics, today constituting more than a quarter of the population of the United States, markedly influenced what Americans eat. Tacos, burritos, fajitas, quesadillas, enchiladas, nachos, tortilla chips, salsas, jalapenos, chili con carne, guacamole, and many others have become a part of everyday English vocabulary. Basically on every corner in the United States, we can find a restaurant that sells these meals, most popular of them being fast food restaurants. However, although many people think they buy Mexican food, it is not so. What we find in fast foods are meals which are only inspired by Mexican cuisine but are American inventions. Also many Mexican immigrants work in Mexican restaurants and thus enable American population to enjoy the food in so many places across the country.

The opening of fast foods with food from Latin America started to attract not only Hispanic population but also the non-Hispanic inhabitants for whom it is a good choice if they are looking for something quick, economical, and tasty to eat. American fast foods seek to sell cheap food and it has an impact on the quality of the final product. Thus, although American cuisine is inspired by Mexican one, a new term came to be used for Mexican food in America. The so-called Tex-Mex food is a term used to refer to inauthentic Mexican food. Tex-Mex is characterized by the use of different flavorings, ingredients, and cooking techniques from that of the Mexican original to accommodate the taste of American customers. Some people do not use this term for inauthentic Mexican food but simply for the regional cuisine of Mexicans living in Texas from where it then spread to other parts of the United States.

To name some of the differences between traditionally Mexican and Tex-Mex cuisines, real tacos served in Mexico are soft, typically made of corn tortilla, and they are topped with meat (mostly chicken), lettuce, tomatoes, lime juice. On the other hand,

Tex-Mex makes use of flour tortillas and if it uses corn, it is a hard taco shell, something purely American, and they are mostly stuffed with beef, lettuce, tomatoes, cheddar or jack cheese, and sour cream.

Gustavo Arellano, a name not many people know, but this man, who is a son of Mexican immigrants, has become very popular in America. He is the one questions about Mexicans are often directed to. He is the author of ¡Ask a Mexican!—a column in the Orange County, California-based newspaper *OC Weekly* which has spread to other national newspapers. In this column, he answers questions of people about everything concerning Mexicans. His interest in Mexican food in America resulted in the publication of a book called *Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America*<sup>28</sup> in 2013. He uncovered some interesting facts about Mexican food in America, including why Mexican food has become so popular.

*The Christian Science Magazine* published an interview with Arellano where they asked him about the origin of Mexican food in the United States. As Arellano stated, “Mexicans have been wrapping a tortilla around meat and eating it going back to the days of the ancient Aztecs, but the meal didn't get into the United States [until] refugees brought it in during the Mexican Revolution.” He then emphasized that these people kept eating Mexican food and started opening restaurants in the south of California in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> Since the time first Mexican restaurants appeared, American natives came up with the idea that they could profit from selling Mexican food as it was something unique, something different from what Americans knew. And this was also the case of Glen Bell, the founder of the most popular Tex-Mex fast food restaurant in the country, Taco Bell. The city of San Bernardino in California is the place where first McDonald's appeared in 1940. As Arellano explains in an article published by the *New York Times*, during the following two decades, businessmen started coming to the town to look at what was behind the success of it. And, according to him, one of them, Glen Bell, often went to Mitla Café where lines were forming to buy Mexican-American food, and he managed to convince the owners to give him a recipe for their tacos and in 1951 started to prepare his own tacos, under various names, until in 1962 it got the name we know

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<sup>28</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Randy Dotinga, “How did Mexican food become so popular in the US?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 9, 2014. <http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2014/1009/How-did-Mexican-food-become-so-popular-in-the-US> (Accessed: March 7, 2015).

today, Taco Bell.<sup>30</sup> And although he prepared tacos in his own way, he gradually really managed to make Mexico-inspired food a phenomenon which became so popular with Americans and people all over the world that “today there are more than fifty-eight hundred Taco Bells, spanning the globe with annual revenue reaching into the billions.”<sup>31</sup> And many people followed him, making Mexican food more and more widespread and profitable all over the country. Not only the most famous companies sell Tex-Mex fast food, it is also a type of food which can be bought in many stalls in summer resorts for families, like amusement parks or water parks.

However, in the United States there are also Mexican restaurants which prepare authentic food basically in every town. And just like people enjoy going to Italian or Chinese restaurants, they have also grown fond of Mexican cuisine. Mexican immigrants often decide to take a risk and open a restaurant where they introduce typical, yet at the same time diverse Mexican meals. And also those who do not want to eat unhealthy often come to enjoy it as some Mexican dishes present a healthy choice, using fresh and low-fat ingredients.

Mexican alcoholic drinks have also gained popularity in America and all around the world and can be typically found at parties and in pubs. Tequila, which is prepared from the juice of the agave cactus, a typical plant of Mexican sandy soils, has become one of the most famous symbols of Mexico. It is produced in Jalisco, one of the Mexican states, and today there are many brands of tequila that people enjoy. Corona, the best-selling Mexican beer in America, which is in the United States served with a piece of lime or lemon in the bottle, is very popular especially in the summer. And margarita, an alcoholic drink made from tequila, citrus liquor, fresh squeezed lime juice, and is typically served in a glass with salt on the rim, became probably the most famous cocktail of all.

Mexican food and drinks are especially enjoyed during the celebrations of Cinco de Mayo [Fifth of May]. It is bound to the history of Mexico when the Mexican forces unexpectedly defeated the occupying French army in the Battle of Puebla which took place on May 5, 1862 in the state of Puebla situated in East-Central Mexico. However, nowadays, in most parts of Mexico, it is a day just like any other, except for the state of

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<sup>30</sup> Julia Moskin, “How the Taco Gained in Translation,” *New York Times*, April 30, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/dining/north-of-the-border-its-everyones-mexican-food.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/dining/north-of-the-border-its-everyones-mexican-food.html?_r=0) (Accessed: March 7, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 64.

Puebla where this day is still commemorated. On the other hand, in the United States Cinco de Mayo gained importance. It started to be celebrated by Mexican Americans in California to remember the battle itself but in the last several decades it has spread to the rest of the United States and it has turned into the celebration of Mexican heritage and culture, especially in big cities with large Mexican-American population. On this day, American streets are filled with Mexican music and dance, colorful parades, dresses, sombreros, and all this is accompanied by typical food and beverage (especially margarita, tequila, and beer). In the United States, companies take advantage of this festival to promote Mexican food and drinks among all Americans.

On the one hand, Mexicans are often seen as just a cheap labor force, but on the other hand, their hard work gives natives an opportunity to taste unique food all over the country. Restaurants with Mexican food open even in small cities and people visit them, not minding that they are served by Mexican immigrants or that they often pay for the food to immigrant owners. Mexican-like food also opened new opportunities for many native entrepreneurs who can profit from something that is inspired by Mexican cuisine.

Coming to the United States as an illegal alien and beginning a new life there can seem hard, but because of so many Mexicans living in the United States who do not assimilate much into the mainstream culture, it is always not so. Mexicans tend to help each other and it is often possible to come across someone in the community who finds a job for the newcomers, and that is especially typical in restaurants. There are many Mexican American citizens who hire illegal aliens to work in their companies. Although these entrepreneurs often primarily think of their business rather than the good working conditions of their employees, for the illegal newcomers it is often the only way to make a living.

A case of illegal immigrants working in the United States appeared for instance in Maine. Brothers Hector and Guillermo Fuentes, who were born in Mexico and became legal American residents, started a business in the United States, opening several Mexican restaurants in Maine (the Fajita Grill Mexican Restaurant in Westbrook and the Cancun Mexican Restaurant in Waterville and in Biddeford) which became very popular with local people. According to *Portland Press Herald*, in 2006 they hired undocumented Mexicans to work in these restaurants for six or seven days a week for 13 hours a day with only one two-hour break, waiters not being paid, only keeping tips; and they were providing illegal employees with false documentation. A car with undocumented Hispanics who worked in these restaurants was stopped by the police in

2008 and investigation started. It resulted in the brothers being convicted of hiring undocumented workers for their financial benefit and of frauds with documentation in 2013. The brothers could have faced up to 10 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, confiscation of their earnings, and after that a possible deportation. In 2014 when a new trial started, Hector Fuentes was sentenced to 30 months in prison and after that a one year supervised release, his brother Guillermo to 37 months in prison and two years of supervised release.<sup>32</sup> Although being a thorn in the side of law enforcement for the past years, the owners and their restaurants have not fallen out of favor with local people, the restaurants are still open and visited by them. As people in Waterville admitted to *Central Maine*, they will not stop visiting the restaurant as they enjoy the food, they think there is no better place to eat Mexican food in the town, and they support the owners because their restaurants can provide anyone who lives there with job opportunities.<sup>33</sup>

This example illustrates how complicated the immigration issue is. On the one hand, illegal status of many workers and unlawful business of employers are against the law, but at the same time many people do not think of them in a bad way because these foreigners work, try to improve their own lives in any possible way, and they enrich the life of locals with something they enjoy.

Although the Mexico-inspired food that most Americans eat is in many cases not authentic, Mexicans undoubtedly have a big impact on American diet. Although many people do not like it that the cheap Tex-Mex cuisine which only looks like Mexican food has become so popular and criticize this food, referring to it as bastardization of Mexican cuisine, it somehow belongs to American culture. As a salad bowl in which different cultures influence each other, Tex-Mex is a mix of two distinct tastes which combine to create something unique but where both these cultures find something of their own. It can be said that food is something that connects Mexicans and Americans. In spite of big social differences and immigration issues, the two cultures together created a new phenomenon when people from different backgrounds enjoy the food even though it is often not something purely American or Mexican.

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<sup>32</sup> David Hensch, "Court: Brothers used illegal workers at Maine restaurants," *Portland Press Herald* March 18, 2013. <http://www.pressherald.com/2013/03/18/brothers-guilty-of-profitting-off-illegal-workers-at-maine-mexican-restaurants/> (Accessed: March 20, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Rachel Ohm, "Waterville restaurant owner, brother to appeal convictions on illegal workers," *Central Maine* March 18, 2013. <http://www.centralmaine.com/2013/03/18/waterville-restaurant-owner-and-his-brother-convicted-of-harboring-undocumented-aliens/> (Accessed: March 20, 2015).



## 4.2 Language

Today's English is influenced by many languages and Spanish is one of them. Over the past centuries, English has borrowed words from Spanish and indigenous languages of aboriginal peoples which today are a part of the English lexicon and are used by English speakers in everyday life. In the last decades many Mexican things like food became a part of the American culture and the words denoting these things are a part of the vocabulary of each American. However, the influence of Spanish goes far beyond the adoption of a couple of Spanish words into the English lexicon.

With about 37 million Spanish speakers in the United States, Spanish is the second most spoken language in the country. The fact that in the last decades, Hispanic population in the United States has become so populous and that so many people got there illegally has caused that Spanish influences lives of English-speaking Americans more than ever. The influence of Spanish language is not connected solely with Mexicans but as it was discussed in previous chapters, Mexicans constitute majority of Spanish-speaking population in the United States, therefore, they are the ones to be associated with Spanish impact on American culture the most.

Americans see bilingual signs in many places, instructions are often written in both English and Spanish, Spanish is heard in many American songs on the radio or on TV, it has also become the second most taught language at schools all around the country. As in any other places, speaking another language can be valuable and the more it is valid for the United States where so many people speaking a different language live. In jobs where Americans deal with immigrants or work in a company for or with Hispanic people, knowledge of Spanish can be more than useful and a bilingual person may have a privilege. A company whose employees are able to give an advice in more than one language can address larger audience and that also improves the image of the company.

On the other hand, Spanish is often seen negatively, as a language of immigrants that does not have a place in American English-speaking society. In the introductory part of her book, Fuller states:

Although Spanish is an important world language for business and education, it is not valued as such within the US. Instead, it is often seen as the language of (illegal) immigrants, and there is an **iconic** relationship between the perception of the speakers and the

language: the people are seen as simple, uneducated rural folk, and their language is ‘easy’ and unsophisticated.<sup>34</sup>

The presence of so many Spanish speakers and the perception of their language as inferior lead to the use of Mock Spanish among English-speaking Americans in colloquial language. “Mock Spanish borrows Spanish-language words and suffixes, assimilates their pronunciation to English (often in a hyperanglicized or boldly mispronounced form), changes their meaning, usually to make them humorous or pejorative (...).”<sup>35</sup> Americans who want to emphasize the inferior status of Spanish and its speakers and to evoke an unflattering image of Hispanic citizens, especially Mexicans, without being politically incorrect, thus make use of this kind of for them humorous, innocent, pseudo-Spanish language. But this language hides a meaning that can be insulting for Hispanic citizens. Users of Mock Spanish make intentional grammatical mistakes and that can be seen as a scorn for the heritage of Hispanic population. The use of Mock Spanish to express stereotypes about Spanish-speaking citizens is more effective because grammatical mistakes which are made on purpose make Hispanic people feel the contempt from the side of Americans for the language and its speakers. Spanish language thus serves as a tool to exclude speakers of it from the dominating English-speaking elite.

Everyday Spanish words and expressions may change their meaning from neutral or positive to negative when used by English-speaking Americans. These words include for instance “hasta la vista,” “adios,” “amigo,” “macho,” “mañana.” For example, the word “amigo” [friend] can be used in a pejorative sense when addressing unwanted immigrants as in the sentence “So you're here illegally? Then go back to where you came from, amigo!” The word thus gains a completely opposite meaning. Hill gives an example of the American use of the word “cerveza” when instead of saying “Let’s go have a beer,” or “Let’s get together for a few cold ones,” people often say “Let’s get together and crack a few cervezas.” In a humorous way it points out to the stereotype of “drunken Mexican” and that they will get drunk in the same way.<sup>36</sup>

Another case is adding Spanish suffixes or articles to English phrases. These are usually added in an ungrammatical way. Instead of English “No problem,” Mock

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<sup>34</sup> Janet M. Fuller, *Spanish Speakers in the USA* (New York: Multilingual Matters, 2012), x.

<sup>35</sup> Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 134.

<sup>36</sup> Hill, 42.

Spanish uses “No problemo,” adding a wrong Spanish-like ending to the English phrase which in Spanish is “No hay problema.”

Hyperanglicization, which refers to intentional mispronouncing of words, is another way to show superiority of English-speaking Americans over Spanish-speaking people. Americans do not want to sound like they know Spanish because real Americans do not have that knowledge. Therefore, they assimilate the pronunciation of Spanish words to English. The name of the city of Los Angeles can serve as an example. Although the city has a Spanish name, Americans do not pronounce the words based on Spanish pronunciation.

As Fuller points out, English is not an official language of the United States although many people think so. English is spoken by majority of people in the country, therefore, can be talked about as the national language but it has never been declared an official language by any law.<sup>37</sup> The United States is a multicultural country and its history is connected with immigrants. But because English-speaking society has always prevailed, this majority feels their language is the only one that has a space in American culture and those speaking another language should assimilate to this majority and be able to speak English if they want to live in this country.

Mock Spanish is not just used by a small group of individuals who want to emphasize their superiority over immigrants. “Mock Spanish is not redneck ranting. Most Whites encounter it almost daily, use it themselves, and certainly have heard it from public figures and characters in entertainments that they admire and enjoy.”<sup>38</sup> Mock Spanish has become popular not only in American politics as a way to ridicule an opponent but often appears in movies, newspapers, or children books. Hill gives an example from politics when a cartoonist uses Mock Spanish to address George W. Bush:

Mock Spanish reproduces the stereotype of Latin political corruption by using Mock Spanish political titles like ‘el presidente’ and ‘Generalissimo.’ ‘Generalissimo El Busho’ is a favorite insult of the left-wing cartoonist Ted Rall, who dresses President Bush in an

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<sup>37</sup> Janet M. Fuller, *Spanish Speakers in the USA* (New York: Multilingual Matters, 2012), 22.

<sup>38</sup> Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 154.

absurdly over-decorated military uniform with huge epaulettes and a high-peaked military cap (...).<sup>39</sup>

Hill then adds that to understand this name given to Bush, we must have a notion of the stereotype of Latin America as a “Banana Republic” ruled by a corrupt dictator.<sup>40</sup> Americans thus also use Spanish to show the inferiority of Hispanics by pointing out to the problems connected with Latin America.

Hill implies that Mock Spanish is racist because “[it] works through dual indexicality to elevate the White speaker as a person with a delightful sense of humor and a cosmopolitan access to foreign languages, while at the same time parodying Spanish speakers as lazy, dirty, insincere . . . .”<sup>41</sup> She also emphasizes the following:

Mock Spanish is a very important tactic of colloquial American English and its registers of jocular intimacy. To stand apart from it, to refuse to make the inferences and ‘get’ the jokes, to join in the fun, is to reject this mutuality and intimacy and its pleasures, to be divisive, and, finally, to be un-American.<sup>42</sup>

Using Mock Spanish represents an important part of being an American and to defend Anglo-based identity of American society.

In a country where the language of a minority group is used and heard as much as in the United States, this language may be perceived as inferior and breed inequality. As Fuller points out, those having another mother tongue than that of the dominant group have less opportunities in everyday life than the native speakers, for example in education or jobs. This is caused by the conviction that their English might not be understandable enough.<sup>43</sup> While native English-speaking Americans who know Spanish can be highly valued by employers, it does not always work the other way round. English is the primary language of the country, therefore, it is most important that American natives understand the speaker. If an employee does not sound like a native speaker of English, it might not give the best impression, and some employers might see it as a big problem and prefer another applicant.

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<sup>39</sup> Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 150.

<sup>40</sup> Hill, 150.

<sup>41</sup> Hill, 170.

<sup>42</sup> Hill, 153.

<sup>43</sup> Janet M. Fuller, *Spanish Speakers in the USA* (New York: Multilingual Matters, 2012), 6.

Spanish has undoubtedly enriched English with its vocabulary and through it Americans also learnt something about the culture of Latin American countries. The language has come to be very important for a society in which so many speakers of Spanish live. I believe that although many natives defend English as the only language that should be spoken in the United States and think there is no place for Spanish and its speakers, by using Mock Spanish, they actually make Spanish speakers a part of the culture as they are. In spite of using Spanish intentionally in a wrong way or implying stereotypes about Mexicans, they still incorporate Spanish into their discourse, use it in media, and thus do the opposite of what they intend. They actually put Spanish into a higher position than they want it to be. Newspapers, television programs, or books are not faithful to English only, they put Spanish expressions right next to English ones and thus basically admit Spanish and its speakers into their culture although they think they do the complete opposite.

Spanish words incorporated into English by Americans do not always imply something negative. Many songs on American radios are sung in Spanish and Spanish words are often a part of otherwise English lyrics. Even the most famous singers who are known to sing in English use Spanish phrases in their songs, for example Madonna in “La Isla Bonita” or one of the best-selling artists Lady Gaga released a song “Americano” in which she not only uses Spanish words but she also incorporated mariachi tune into it. American audience enjoys not only purely English songs, in music English and Spanish are combined together without any racist subtexts. There are also many singers who re-record their originally English songs into Spanish versions to reach out to wider audiences. Beyoncé, Christina Aguilera, and many others are heard on the radio in both languages and they are still popular with both American fans and with those who have origins in Latin America. Using Spanish by American natives thus therefore not always serve to breed racism or inequality. Artists adopt Spanish into their songs to connect with people from different backgrounds which also gets Hispanic and native citizens closer together.

Despised by some and appreciated by others, Spanish is a language that cannot be ignored. Hispanics constitute a high percentage of American population and their language is a part of American culture. It enters the language of English-speaking Americans and shapes their thoughts no matter if they like it or not, it has become a part of their everyday life.

### 4.3 Politics

The United States and Mexico have long been cooperating in important matters these countries share. They have been trying to find a common ground in the question of economy or immigration. Their cooperation is of high importance to the achievement of economic prosperity and safety of citizens.

The numerous Hispanic minority group that emerged in the last decades represents many votes in elections and is thus capable of changing the situation in the country. And American politicians more and more realize this fact and attempt to reach out to them. At first Hispanic participation in election was not so high but as they started to realize their votes could bring about important changes in immigration issues, they began to be interested in voting. There are organizations like for example the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) which attempt to reach out to Hispanic citizens and convince them to register to vote so that issues which concern them can be changed.

As Junn and Haynie point out, Hispanics are not voters inclined to one political party at all times, it is typical for them that their opinions change a lot and any party has a chance to get their votes.<sup>44</sup> Hispanics thus have a big potential to influence the results and politicians do realize it. "In the 2000 presidential election, both George W. Bush and Al Gore recognized the importance of the Hispanic vote and tailored their campaigns accordingly. Both candidates ran campaign advertisements in Spanish . . . ."<sup>45</sup> While using the language of the most populous minority group, politicians also address issues that interest them. *CNN* cites the words of George W. Bush who in 2004 attracted the attention of this minority group when he proposed a different view of immigrants, saying: "We shouldn't be content with laws that punish hardworking people, . . . [i]t's time for an immigration policy that permits temporary guest workers ... rejects amnesty ... and closes the border to drug dealers and terrorists."<sup>46</sup> This makes Hispanic voters feel like politicians are familiar with their problems and they care about them. Hispanics feel they are wanted, that there is someone who actually sees the difference between a hard-working immigrant, who wants to improve his or her life, and the one who just contributes to higher crime rates. Hispanics were also important in the

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<sup>44</sup> Jane Junn, Kerry L. Haynie, *New Race Politics in America: Understanding Minority and Immigrant Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22

<sup>45</sup> Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 283.

<sup>46</sup> Maria Santana, "How to woo a Latino voter," *CNN*, February 14, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/14/politics/winning-latino-vote/> (Accessed: March 4, 2015).

presidential elections of 2012 when their votes were decisive in Barack Obama's re-election. As the British *Daily Mail* states, 10 percent of all voters were Hispanics and Obama received 71 percent of their votes against Mitt Romney who only got 27 percent, and then adds that "the results show just how key their votes are to elections . . . ." <sup>47</sup> By promoting the issue of jobs, healthcare, economy, education, and immigration reform, Obama managed to attract Hispanic voters. In 2011, he had a speech in El Paso, Texas, where about 25 percent of the population is Hispanic, and he talked about immigration and the DREAM Act (acronym for **D**evelopment, **R**elief, and **E**ducation for **A**lien **M**inors) there. This Act was supposed to turn youth who got to the United States illegally as children and who met certain criteria into American citizens. And this was something immigrants responded to. Also illegal immigrants, who are not eligible to vote, thus have the power to influence elections because based on how politicians approach issues concerning them, the rest of the voting population can decide which candidate they should support.

As Junn and Haynie point out, states that are most important for the result of elections are populated by many immigrants. These states include California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois, and Latinos are more numerous in these states than in others, California and Texas having more than 30 percent of Hispanic citizens in 2008. <sup>48</sup> During an election period, residents of each state choose their representative who then gives all his votes to a presidential candidate. The total number of electoral votes is based on the number of seats in the Congress and each state in the country gets a number of votes based on its representation in the Congress. The most important states are thus California (55 votes), Texas (38 votes), New York (29 votes), Florida (29 votes), Illinois (20 votes), and Pennsylvania (20 votes). The candidate that receives most votes in each state gets all the electoral votes for that state. The winners from all states then gather as the "Electoral College" to vote for the President and Vice President of the United States. American citizens in individual states also elect the members of the Congress.

Hispanics have also become influential on American political scene, occupying key positions in the American government. Mexican Americans are the most numerous

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<sup>47</sup> Lydia Warren, "Record number of Hispanic and Asian voters head to the polls to help Obama secure second term - as his support among whites plummets," *Daily Mail*, November 7, 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2229225/Presidential-election-2012-Record-number-Hispanic-voters-head-polls.html> (Accessed: March 3, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Jane Junn, Kerry L. Haynie, *New Race Politics in America: Understanding Minority and Immigrant Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.

Hispanics in American politics. In 1822, Joseph Marion Hernández became the first Hispanic-American member of the Congress. Since then many Hispanics have followed him. Until August 2012 there have been 91 Hispanics in the Congress, 37 of them elected between 1822 and 1976 and the remaining 60 percent after 1976. This was caused not only by the increase of Hispanic population in the country but also by passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its amendments in the 1970s.<sup>49</sup> The Voting Rights Act and its extensions put an end to selecting voters and Congress candidates based on race or ethnicity. Language minorities thus gained voting rights. “The greatest legal barriers to Mexican American voting have been the language requirements. For much of the twentieth century, literacy tests prevented a number of Mexican Americans from going to the polls,” but extensions to the Act made it possible to vote in Spanish.<sup>50</sup> From 2001 until 2013 the number of Hispanic Americans in the Congress ranged from 19 to 31 and in the 114th Congress set up in January 2015 there are 32 Hispanics.

In 2005, the *Time* magazine published a list of the 25 most influential Hispanics in America, including Hispanic politicians, for instance Alberto Gonzales, Mel Martinez, Bill Richardson.<sup>51</sup> In the head of the list is Alberto Gonzales, an American from Texas with Mexican roots, whose career is closely connected with that of George W. Bush. Gonzales, coming from a poor family, became a talented attorney, and was chosen by Bush, the Governor of Texas, to become his general counsel. Gonzales became his advisor on relations with Mexico and border security. He was then appointed the Secretary of State of Texas and after that became a member of the Texas Supreme Court. After Bush became the President, he gave him the opportunity to work as the White House counsel. In his last years of political career, he became the first Hispanic attorney general of the United States. During his long cooperation with Bush he was the one giving advice on defence and foreign policy issues, and signing many influential documents. These include the treating of suspects after the 9/11 attacks when interrogation based on torture and the use of eavesdropping without warrants became legal. As *The Washington Post* states, Gonzalez was the leading personality of the

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<sup>49</sup> United States Congress House, Office of the Historian, et al. *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822-2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), 474. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-CDOC-108hdoc225/content-detail.html> (Accessed: March 3, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Lee Stacy, *Mexico and the United States* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 282.

<sup>51</sup> “25 Most Influential Hispanics in America,” *Time*, Aug. 22, 2005, available at: <http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2008201,00.html> (Accessed: March 1, 2015).



discussions about interrogation techniques which should be used to obtain information from those suspected of connection with terrorism, including waterboarding, the technique which makes a person feel like he or she is drowning, and without discussing the issue with experts, he was the one making it legal for CIA to use such techniques.<sup>52</sup> Concerned with the security of American population, Gonzales also advocated the USA PATRIOT Act. He is thus connected with many laws passed to deal with the security of American citizens.

Hispanic population, including Mexicans, has more and more to say when it comes to the life in the United States. They are increasingly becoming visible in American politics and have a power to decide about the nation. Their votes are very important in elections and, as it was said before, their numbers will continue to grow which means we can expect their opinions to be crucial even in the following decades of the 21st century. Politicians will probably have to more and more often focus on addressing minorities and issues concerning them as Hispanics need to feel politicians care about them to get their votes. Although Hispanics are often seen as inferior immigrants, Gonzales, who turned from the son of poor immigrants into an influential politician thanks to a good education, and many others, including the Hispanic population, have shown that even poor immigrants can shape the country's future.

#### **4.4 Economy**

The immigration policy passed in 1965 caused a high influx of unskilled and poor immigrants, many of which started to enter the country illegally. Moreover, based on the law they could come to the country to reunite with their families. While in the past there were regulations which mostly only admitted skillful workers, now there are no such limits and both highly skilled, educated workers and low skilled people with little education are coming to the country, the latter prevailing. The predominant influx of low skilled labor force is an issue full of contradiction, dividing the American society. As it was noted earlier, Mexico's closeness to the United States, local unemployment, and the possibility of higher income in the United States cause, more than in case of any other nation, Mexican immigrants to come to the country to reunite with their families or improve their standard of life. As they group together, they prefer to keep their

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<sup>52</sup> R. Jeffrey Smith, Dan Eggen, "Gonzales Helped Set the Course for Detainees," *The Washington Post* January 5, 2005. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A48446-2005Jan4.html> (Accessed: March 5, 2015).

culture rather than assimilate into the American one. And when they settle down and start a family, their numbers grow even more rapidly.

The high influx of Mexicans into the United States has long been seen as a problem which needs to be solved and thus many anti-immigration laws have been passed to reduce the numbers of immigrants, especially those from Mexico, coming to the country. It is believed that newcomers compete for opportunities not only among themselves but also with American natives. It has been widely discussed what effect low skilled immigrants have on the wages and job opportunities of American population. Especially illegal immigrants have become a controversial issue, many people believing they are a drain on the economy of the United States because the country needs to provide them with health care and education. It is undeniable that all immigrants, both legal and illegal, influence the United States economy, not only as workers but also as consumers. Is their influence beneficial or do they hurt the economy?

Nowadays, there are two opposing views among economists on how immigrants, and especially those in low-skilled positions, affect labor opportunities of American natives. One standpoint is that they harm natives as they compete for the same jobs and thus significantly influence earnings of native population in a negative way. The other standpoint is that immigrants and natives rather complement each other and immigration thus has zero or negligible effect on the wages of low skilled American natives, and that the highly skilled Americans, on the other hand, benefit from immigration.

George J. Borjas, a Professor of Harvard University and an influential immigration economist in the United States, is one of those who see mass immigration negatively, believing that low skilled Americans are hurt by foreign workers a lot. Borjas uses national-level data when examining the influence of immigration. He focuses on changes in economic data such as wages or unemployment between individual decennial censuses from 1960 to 2000. His study says that the influx of immigrants between 1980 and 2000 “reduced the wage of the average native worker by 3.2 percent.”<sup>53</sup> This is to say, the more foreigners come looking for a job, the fewer jobs and lower wages there are for native population.

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<sup>53</sup> George J. Borjas, *The Labor Demand Curve is Downward Sloping: Reexamining the Impact of Immigration on the Labor Market*, National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2003, 36. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w9755.pdf> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

A representative of the opposite view is for example David Card of the University of California, Berkeley. Unlike Borjas, Card puts into contrast the economic growth of regional labor markets with high numbers of immigrants on the one hand, and markets with few immigrants on the other, believing that if immigration has a negative effect, then native workers in places with high numbers of immigrants would be in a worse situation than those in areas with few immigrants. He also pays attention to differences in their skills. Card concludes that “[a]lthough immigration has a strong effect on relative supplies of different skill groups, local labor market outcomes of low skilled natives are not much affected by these relative supply shocks.”<sup>54</sup> Later in an interview, Card commented on the differences in views of various economists. He admitted that low skilled immigrants can negatively influence low skilled natives but it seems that the negative effect has only been a couple of percent nationwide over 25 years and that research shows that “there are positive benefits for other workers, for consumers and for the economy as a whole.”<sup>55</sup> The benefits therefore outweigh the negative effects. The *New York Times* wrote that the majority of economists support the view that all in all, immigration has a positive impact on the United States and that even though native high school dropouts do not earn much more than Mexicans, it does not mean that only low skilled Mexicans are responsible for wages of natives, also other factors like the minimum wage, as set by the government, or globalization influence this.<sup>56</sup> The *New York Times* also pointed out that unlike Borjas, who believes natives and foreigners with the same skill level can substitute each other, Giovanni Peri of the University of California, Davis, emphasizes that native speakers have some advantages, for example the perfect knowledge of English, therefore, immigrants are not in competition with them as much as it is assumed.<sup>57</sup> No agreement has been reached yet among economists about how immigration affects native workers. However, no matter which framework is used, the results are that the negative effect on wages of native population is rather small and only applies to a small part of population.

A commonly held belief when thinking of immigrants is that they take job opportunities from the native population. However, in case of Mexicans this is not so

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<sup>54</sup> David Card, *Is the New Immigration Really So Bad?* Department of Economics, UC Berkeley, January 2005, 24. <http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/new-immig.pdf> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Douglas Clement, “Interview with David Card,” *The Region*, December 1, 2006. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications/the-region/interview-with-david-card> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Roger Lowenstein, “The Immigration Equation,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/magazine/09IMM.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Lowenstein

true. Of course there is a part of American high school dropouts who compete with immigrants for low-paid jobs but the truth is that most Americans are not willing to work in jobs held by unskillful Mexicans and work for low wages. As it was mentioned before, a Mexican worker can earn even ten times more in the United States than in Mexico even when working for the lowest wage, and for many of them it is difficult to find a job in Mexico. And that is convenient for employers in many areas, as they are willing to accept less money and more hours, something a big part of Americans would not be willing to do. And the country needs workers in the low-paid and demanding jobs. “With rising educational levels among native-born workers — 90.5 percent had a high school degree in 2000 compared to 86.8 percent in 1990 — immigrant workers are necessary to fill gaps in the labor force.”<sup>58</sup> Immigrants thus help to increase economic efficiency by filling the holes in American labor market.

The *New York Times* reported that according to Card, “from an economic standpoint, immigration is no big deal and . . . a lot of the opposition to it is most likely social or cultural,” then the newspaper goes on to cite his words when he says that “[i]f Mexicans were taller and whiter, it would probably be a lot easier to deal with.”<sup>59</sup> He thus believes the opinions of many people on Mexican immigrants are based on prejudice rather than the economic influence of these workers.

When considering the influence of immigrants on American economy, however, it is important to distinguish between illegal and legal immigrants. The United States has the largest economy in the world but it is in need of increasing the economic growth and lowering the deficit, and immigration reform could serve as a solution to this problem. Some believe that more workers with legal status could change the situation:

[L]egal status and citizenship enable undocumented immigrants to produce and earn significantly more than they do when they are on the economic sidelines. The resulting productivity and wage gains ripple through the economy because immigrants are not just workers—they are also consumers and taxpayers. They will spend

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<sup>58</sup> *Mexican Immigrant Workers and the U.S. Economy: An Increasingly Vital Role*, Immigration Policy Focus 1, no. 2, American Immigration Law Foundation, September 2000, 5-6. <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/Mex%20Imm%20Workers%20&%20US%20Economy.pdf> (Accessed: March 20, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Roger Lowenstein, “The Immigration Equation,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/magazine/09IMM.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

their increased earnings on the purchase of food, clothing, housing, cars, and computers. That spending, in turn, will stimulate demand in the economy for more products and services, which creates jobs and expands the economy.<sup>60</sup>

Illegal immigrants, who often cannot speak English, usually content themselves with very low wages, which can often be below the minimum wage rate, and long working hours because they do not want their illegal status to be discovered and because they do not have the education needed. Although undocumented aliens are often viewed negatively mainly because they do not pay taxes, Charles Garcia from *CNN* points out that it is not so as just like any other citizen they pay sales taxes, property taxes, and payroll taxes.<sup>61</sup> Unlike authorized citizens, they do not receive any benefits from the government. However, mainly employers are those who benefit from the work of illegal immigrants. Therefore, it seems to be more convenient to turn them into legal workers as both the country and individual states would receive more money from them.

That is a contributing factor to the opinion of Barack Obama who has tried to make changes in the immigration policy. Together with the Congress he wanted to pass a bill which could improve the situation in the country. But it was opposed by many and, in the end, was not passed. As Obama said in his speech, “[the bill] would have doubled the number of border patrol agents while giving undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, started paying their taxes, and went to the back of the line. And independent experts said that it would help grow our economy and shrink our deficits.”<sup>62</sup> In spite of opponents of his immigration ideas, he continues to believe that as the President he will be able to set rules which would at least temporarily bring more justice and, in 2014, he announced a plan to legalize about 4 million immigrants. Those meeting certain criteria would be allowed to temporarily but legally stay in the United States. This would mainly concern immigrant parents of children born in the United

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Lynch, Patrick Oakford, *The Economic Effects of Granting Legal Status and Citizenship to Undocumented Immigrants*, Center for American Progress, March 20, 2013 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2013/03/20/57351/the-economic-effects-of-granting-legal-status-and-citizenship-to-undocumented-immigrants/> (Accessed: March 23, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> Charles Garcia, “Imagine a day without a Mexican,” *CNN*, March 4, 2012. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/02/opinion/garcia-illegal-immigrants/> (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

<sup>62</sup> “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 20, 2014. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-president-address-nation-immigration> (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

States and those who came to the country before 2010. According to Obama, it is not possible to deport every single undocumented alien, therefore, it should be distinguished between those who do not have good intentions with staying in America, these people should be deported, and those who work hard for better future of their families, these immigrants should be helped by the country.<sup>63</sup> The opinions on this issue are broadly different both among population and politicians. While Democrats support these proposals, Republicans oppose them. And we can expect that in the upcoming presidential elections of 2016, these opinions on immigration policy can be decisive. This issue again shows the power of immigrants, even of the illegal ones who are not eligible to vote, in influencing life in the United States, as immigration issues divide the American society.

Immigration reform is seen as beneficial also by Professor Hinojosa-Ojeda of the University of California, Los Angeles. He compares the two opposite ways of dealing with illegal immigrants, stating that an immigration reform would bring at least 0.84 percent increase in GDP which would generate around \$1.5 trillion over 10 years and increase wages of both natives and immigrants. On the other hand, deportation of unauthorized aliens would mean lowering GDP by 1.46 percent which would produce \$2.6 trillion loss over 10 years plus money spent on deportation, and while less skilled natives would earn more, others would lose money and there would be less job opportunities.<sup>64</sup> But not everyone is so positive about the economic impact of legalization of unauthorized aliens. *New York Times* states that there are economists who are not convinced about the positive effect as the amnesty which granted citizenship to several million aliens in 1986 did not much influence their wages and it is mainly supply and demand that has an impact on the wage of population.<sup>65</sup> The possible economic consequences of legalization thus remain a question.

According to the Pew Research Center, illegal immigrants constituted 3.5 percent of the American population and 5.1 percent of the American labor force in 2012, and mostly worked in service, construction, extraction, production, installation, and repair

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<sup>63</sup> “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 20, 2014. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-president-address-nation-immigration> (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, *Raising the Floor for American Workers: The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform*, Center for American Progress, American Immigration Council, January 7, 2010, 2. <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/immigrationeoneconreport3.pdf> (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Roger Lowenstein, “The Immigration Equation,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/magazine/09IMM.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed: April 4, 2015).

jobs.<sup>66</sup> A large number of illegal immigrants also work in agriculture. According to the Economic Research Service based at the United States Department of Agriculture, “over the past 15 years, about half of the hired workers employed in U.S. crop agriculture were unauthorized, with the overwhelming majority of these workers coming from Mexico.”<sup>67</sup> The country cannot afford to lose such high numbers of these workers. Economic Research Service also carried out a research in which they explored the possible consequences of both increase and decrease in the number of unauthorized workers in a fifteen-year projection. This research is based on an equilibrium in which they consider almost no unemployment which would have to decrease from 8.1 percent valid in 2012. They report that in case of the scenario when the number of temporary nonimmigrant workers increases by 156,000 by year 15, more of them will work for lower amount of money which will lead to higher export, accompanied by relative decrease in number of native and authorized farmworkers of 5.7 percent and in their wage of 3.4 percent.<sup>68</sup> However, if workers get low wages, companies can provide people with cheaper goods and services, which is in the end convenient for everyone. On the other hand, in the case of the scenario when number of both agricultural and nonagricultural workers decreases by 40 percent by year 15, dropping from 14.3 million unauthorized workers to 8.5 million, they expect lower production and thus less exports in all economic sectors, more native and authorized workers, and increase in their wage. Nevertheless, this would only be valid for lower paying occupations as economic decrease would result in lower incomes of those in higher paying occupations and “the occupational distribution of U.S.-born and other permanent resident workers [would] necessarily [shift] in the direction of more hired farm work and other lower paying occupations . . . , and away from higher paying occupations . . . .” Moreover, they point out that the native and authorized workers would not be able to cover the gap left after the unauthorized workers.<sup>69</sup> This again proves that even illegal immigrants are vital to the American economy.

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<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel, D’Vera Cohn, *Share of Unauthorized Immigrant Workers in Production, Construction Jobs Falls Since 2007*, Pew Research Center, March 26, 2015. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/03/26/share-of-unauthorized-immigrant-workers-in-production-construction-jobs-falls-since-2007/> (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Steven Zahniser, et al., *Immigration Policy and Its Possible Effects on U.S. Agriculture*, USDA, Economic Research Service, June 5, 2012. [http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2012-june/immigration-policy.aspx#.VRm7e\\_msWSp](http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2012-june/immigration-policy.aspx#.VRm7e_msWSp) (Accessed: March 28, 2015).

<sup>68</sup> Zahniser, et al.

<sup>69</sup> Zahniser, et al.

In 2006, Tabarrok and Theroux sent a letter to President Bush and members of the Congress in which they expressed their opinion on immigration, and this letter was signed by hundreds of American economists, including several Nobel Laureates, to express their agreement with its content. As they state in the letter, there is a small part of Americans that can be negatively influenced by immigrants, but “vastly more Americans benefit from the contributions that immigrants make to [American] economy, including lower consumer prices. As with trade in goods and services, the gains from immigration outweigh the losses.”<sup>70</sup> Even though the benefits may not be substantial, they do not think immigrants harm American economy.

Mexicans come to the United States to earn higher wages than in their motherland, but in spite of being a considerable part of American economy, their situation, as compared with most American natives, has not improved. As González emphasizes, despite the fact that Mexican Americans have been present in the area of today’s United States even before it was established, they remained among the poorer classes of American society and only in the second half of the twentieth century, they started to shape political and social life in the country, including their influence on economy.<sup>71</sup> He also points out that there are two sides of how Americans see Mexican Americans in relation to economy. “On the positive side, their labor has long been valued and sought by American employers. . . . Mexican Americans participate in the production of goods and services and pay property, income, and other taxes.” But as González further states, “stereotypes persist that Mexican Americans are lazy, unmotivated, and disposable laborers, and that the Mexican American family is foreign and inferior in culture, a drain on public programs and social welfare.”<sup>72</sup> Although a big part of Mexicans work hard to improve their lives and with their work provide Americans with various services, it seems that the high numbers of poor Mexicans crossing the border illegally supports the stereotypes that persist among natives.

Increase in economic wealth could be reached with an immigration policy that would prefer skilled workers as these reach higher wages, thus pay more on taxes and buy more things. However, at the same time low skilled workers are vital to the American economy. Although economists have contradicting views on the influence of

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<sup>70</sup> Alexander T. Tabarrok, David J. Theroux, “Open Letter on Immigration,” The Independent Institute, June 19, 2006. <http://www.independent.org/newsroom/article.asp?id=1727> (Accessed: March 23, 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Arturo González, *Mexican Americans & the U.S. Economy: Quest for Buenos Días* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002), 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> González, 4-5.



immigrants, majority of them supports the view that they do not have a negative effect on the American economy. This is an opinion I agree with. If we consider that more than 90 percent of natives had a high school diploma in 2000, although the remaining dropouts do not have it, they still have a very good knowledge of English which gives them an advantage when looking for a job. Moreover, although more and more immigrants are coming, they still find work in agriculture or in restaurants all over the country which would be not possible if there were not enough jobs for them. American economy needs low skilled workers. High numbers of both legal and illegal immigrants work in low-paid jobs and even though their overall contribution to the growth of economy may not be overwhelming or they lower the income of a small part of population by a few percent, their effort in these jobs is significant and without them there would not be enough workforce for many important sectors of American economy. These immigrants provide natives with many services for which Americans can pay less because of low wages of the workforce, low-paid and high-paid positions are thus mutually connected, they depend on each other. By not having these millions of low skilled workers, the economy would suffer significantly. The truth is that due to them not having sufficient education and skills, often including bad knowledge of English, their income is low compared to most Americans and their health or pension security are not covered. Although many Mexican immigrants have low education and thus are forced to work for low wages, they continue to struggle for better future in the divided American environment.

#### **4.5 Crime**

Immigration also brings about negative influence on everyday life in the United States. The Mexican-American border and the flow of migrants are not just associated with the entry of low skilled workers who want to earn money by honest work but it is also connected with criminal activity. Mexican immigrants coming to the country have both direct and indirect influence on criminality in the United States. In many cases, the large flow of migrants from Mexico serves as a cover for the influx of criminals and illegal goods, in other cases, immigrants from Mexico themselves are involved in criminal activity. Smuggling of illegal things or of humans on the one hand and immigration on the other are strongly bound.

The United States is among the countries with the highest number of consumers of illicit drugs and the demand for illegal drugs is the main reason illegal drug trade seems impossible to stop. Based on a research carried out by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, in 2012 there were about 23.9 million Americans, who comprised 9.2 percent of the population, that “had used an illicit drug or abused a psychotherapeutic medication (such as a pain reliever, stimulant, or tranquilizer) in the past month.”<sup>73</sup> Such numbers are not trivial when it comes to drug business.

The usage of psychedelic drugs in the United States started to gain in popularity in the 1960s among the hippies, young people who rebelled against the conservative society. In 1971, President Richard Nixon declared war on drugs, however, since then no solution has been found to win this battle and put an end to the high levels of trafficking, violence, and addiction. There have also been attempts on the Mexican side to solve this problem, Vicente Fox launched the so-called Operation Safe Mexico in 2005 with the determination to fight drug cartels and with them connected violence. Although he managed to catch some of the key criminals, he struggled with corruption among law enforcement agencies and was not able to reduce violence in the country. When he left office a year after, he started to push for the legalization of drugs. As the *Time* informed, only in 2010, Mexico witnessed 12,000 murders connected with drug trade, and Fox believes that although drugs are not good, there is no other possibility than to legalize them as fighting the problem with prohibition does not work. He then concludes that it is better to have the trade legal and under control than illegal and in the hands of criminals.<sup>74</sup> Although many consider this plan absurd, Mexico, as a territory between the main producers and consumers of drugs, and its population are endangered by this lucrative business the most.

Until 2000 when the Institutional Revolutionary Party had been in power for 71 years, the territory for drug trafficking and trade was clearly divided and agreed on with the leaders of the country, however, the following political changes in Mexico resulted in battles between cartels for the division of their territory and for their involvement in trade. Illegal trade has become an opportunity to earn money for many people living in poor conditions in Latin America.

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<sup>73</sup> *DrugFacts: Nationwide Trends*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, January 2014. <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

<sup>74</sup> Ioan Grillo, “Mexico's Ex-President Vicente Fox: Legalize Drugs,” *Time*, January 19, 2011. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2040882,00.html> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

There are many possibilities for cartels to transport drugs, offshore, air, or underground, however, the border between Mexico and the United States remains the key place where illegal import of drugs and other things happens. Most of world drug production is connected with American continent, specifically Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, Mexico also has a significant part. Marijuana but also harder drugs like cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine are transported into the United States to consumers through the collaboration of Mexican cartels and gangs on both sides of the border. Many drug cartels fight for supremacy over trade and control of territory which is accompanied by violence that also impacts innocent people. The two most powerful and at the same time largest cartels are the Zetas and the Sinaloa which control most of Mexico. The Zetas have in power much of eastern Mexico, occupying more than half of the 32 states that create Mexico, which makes it a cartel controlling the biggest area in the country. They are the most feared as they are infamous for their brutality. The territory that lies in the hands of the Sinaloa is the second largest, they control most of western Mexico. Cartels know it is problematic to control the long border and they use this knowledge for their own ends, often using undocumented immigrants as smugglers or as a cover for other crimes. As *The Washington Post* informed, cartels intentionally send big groups of migrants, mostly women and children, across the border to distract the Border Petrol which then, when it is dark, makes it easier for them to send individuals with drugs.<sup>75</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the domestic drug trade brings criminals tens of billions of dollars each year, and the trafficking and addiction on illicit drugs in the United States also has a big financial impact on the American society when for example only in 2007, \$193 billion was spent on crime, health, and lost productivity as related to the use of illicit drugs.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, this criminal activity does not only concern the underworld and against it fighting law enforcement officials, but it touches everyone in the country. However, drug crime does not only trouble the population from the financial point of view, it can also present a danger to American society.

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<sup>75</sup> Joshua Partlow, Nick Miroff, "Wave of Central American migrants strains Border Patrol, reducing number of drug busts," *The Washington Post*, June 19, 2014. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/wave-of-central-american-migrants-strains-border-patrol-reducing-number-of-drug-busts/2014/06/19/971075e2-8a7a-4f74-ab12-e3caf1edecb5\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/wave-of-central-american-migrants-strains-border-patrol-reducing-number-of-drug-busts/2014/06/19/971075e2-8a7a-4f74-ab12-e3caf1edecb5_story.html) (Accessed: March 29, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> *National Drug Threat Assessment 2011*, U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, August 2011, 1-3. <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs44/44849/44849p.pdf> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

Although the most violent situation is in Mexico, drug-related criminality does not avoid the United States either. Based on a report published by the National Gang Intelligence Center, there are more than 33,000 gangs in the country who “are responsible for an average of 48 percent of violent crime in most jurisdictions and up to 90 percent in several others . . .,” many of them exchanging their role of local drug distributors for participation in the highest circles of drug trafficking, and are dangerous to both civilians and law enforcement officers.<sup>77</sup> Drugs and crime are connected in several ways. Except for tax evasion and possession of illegal drugs, which are crimes itself, the drug trade is also responsible for personal property loss and violence, namely fighting among gangs, individuals committing crime to pay for drugs, or committing crimes under the influence of drugs when their judgement and self-control are undermined. Although it is impossible to get exact numbers of crimes connected with drugs in one way or another, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that in 2004, 56 percent of State prisoners and 50 percent of Federal prisoners used drugs in the month before the committed crime, 32 percent of State and 26 percent of Federal prisoners committed a crime under the influence of drugs, and 17 percent of State and 18 percent of Federal prisoners committed a crime with the intention to get money for drugs.<sup>78</sup> These numbers show that criminality connected with drugs is relatively high. However, many crimes of this type are not detected by law enforcement officials.

Mexican cartels and gangs cooperate with gangs in the United States which then distribute drugs all over the country. Mara Salvatrucha (abbreviated as MS-13), Los Aztecas, Sureños-13, and 18th Street belong to the most known gangs in the United States. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, the increasing number of gangs has been caused by the “failure to control the U.S.-Mexico border and [the] tolerance for high levels of illegal immigration,” a big part of gang members are illegal immigrants, and out of more than 8,000 gangsters that the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested, almost 60 percent were from Mexico, 17 percent from

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<sup>77</sup> *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment: Emerging Trends*, National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011, 9-11. <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment-emerging-trends> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Christopher J. Mumola, Jennifer C. Karberg, *Drug Use and Dependence, State and Federal Prisoners, 2004*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 2006, 1. <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/dudsf04.pdf> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

El Salvador, and 5 percent from Honduras.<sup>79</sup> These findings show that high numbers of undocumented aliens join or create gangs in the United States.

Because getting to the other side of the border illegally is problematic as the border is either secured by Border Patrol agents or the terrain is very hostile and there is a high chance of dying before getting to the other side, many illegal immigrants choose to get helped while crossing it. Although many human smugglers, the so-called coyotes, are good in the eyes of immigrants as they really get what they wanted for the money paid, there are also opposite cases when immigrants are treated inhumanly. *USA Today* emphasizes that illegal immigrants usually pay to coyotes to get them across the border, believing a well-paid job is waiting for them, but end up getting a low-paid job and are forced to transport drugs where it is needed, which they often cannot refuse because of worries that the cartels could hurt their families.<sup>80</sup> Other immigrants experience rapes, robberies, are left in a desert.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, for some of them, smuggling drugs can be a way to pay for the service or after they cross the border, some of them become a part of the gangs as it was discussed earlier.

However, illegal immigrants from Latin America who do not come to the country with the intention to improve their life by hard work are not the only ones who can cross the southern border and who can present a danger to the American population. Terrorism remains at the forefront of the United States security threats and the border with Mexico is a very problematic area in this matter. As the Center for Immigration Studies informs, terrorists are aware of the possibility to get into the country with the help of coyotes, and the Border Patrol has already had a chance to detain aliens from Syria, Iran, and Somalia, countries that are known to have ties with terrorist organizations, who were trying to get into the United States illegally.<sup>82</sup> Also *Fox News* reported that the border could be “America's Achilles heel.” as terrorists can use the flow of immigrants from Central America to slip across the border, and that there are

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<sup>79</sup> Jon Feere, Jessica Vaughan, *Taking Back the Streets: ICE and Local Law Enforcement Target Immigrant Gangs*, Center for Immigration Studies, October 2008, 1-2. <http://www.cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/articles/2008/back1208.pdf> (Accessed: April 1, 2015).

<sup>80</sup> Jess Rollins, “In Missouri, illegal immigrants used to smuggle drugs,” *USA Today*, February 10, 2013. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/02/10/missouri-meth-smuggling-illegal-immigrants/1907003/> (Accessed: March 29, 2015).

<sup>81</sup> Ananda Rose, “Death in the Desert,” *New York Times*, June 21, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/22/opinion/migrants-dying-on-the-us-mexico-border.html> (Accessed: April 1, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Cato, *The Weaponization of Immigration*, Center for Immigration Studies, February 2008. [http://www.cis.org/weaponization\\_of\\_immigration.html](http://www.cis.org/weaponization_of_immigration.html) (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

terrorist groups that are in contact with drug cartels and gangs in Latin America.<sup>83</sup> Such collaboration could be crucial for terrorists as another thing that represents a very serious threat to the United States is the smuggling of dangerous materials like uranium, “which can be safely assembled on U.S. soil into a weapon of mass destruction.”<sup>84</sup> To control the long border between the two countries is not easy and the danger of criminals and terrorists, who are often helped by coyotes, entering the country illegally, remains a serious threat to the security of the United States.

Although many Mexicans come to the country with the intention to work hard, some of them increase criminality in the United States. However, native population also commits crimes, just like citizens of any other country, therefore, we cannot expect that people from Mexico would not be involved in any criminal activity in the United States. The impossibility to control the long border, high numbers of consumers of drugs and the influx of too many people, who thus unintentionally help to cover more serious crimes, seem to be a much bigger problem which endangers not only migrants but also American population. Security of the long Mexican-American border remains a big issue for which no one has managed to found a reliable solution.

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<sup>83</sup> Perry Chiamonte, “Border crisis could provide cover to ISIS operatives, say experts,” *Fox News*, July 7, 2014. <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2014/07/07/isis-could-take-advantage-weakened-us-border-for-terrorist-attack/> (Accessed: April 1, 2015).

<sup>84</sup> *A Line in the Sand: Countering Crime, Violence and Terror at the Southwest Border*, United States House Committee on Homeland Security, November 2012, 3. <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/11-15-12-Line-in-the-Sand.pdf> (Accessed: April 1, 2015).

## 5 FUTURE OF “MEXICAN AMERICA”

The number of Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants coming to the United States over the last decades has been very high and the flow seems impossible to stop. Each year their community in the United States rapidly grows, not only because of the influx of immigrants but also because of fertility rates. While immigrants in the past assimilated into the mainstream American society, Hispanic population tends to stick together and keep their language and traditions, often rejecting the mainstream American identity. It is no surprise that the growing number of population that is not assimilating resulted in great concern about what this could mean for the future of the United States. Could Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants together with their descendants represent a threat to the Anglo-Protestant American culture?

Professor Samuel P. Huntington belongs to those who believe immigrants from Latin America, and especially Mexico, present a big threat to the values and identity of mainstream American society. He is known for the catastrophic vision of the future of the United States. He believes that political creed and Anglo-Protestant culture which is characterized by English language, religious commitment, individualism, work ethic, or together pursuing the common goal of creating a good place to live, are values which define American identity. In his eyes, there is a serious threat that the United States could be eventually divided into a country of “two peoples with two cultures (Anglo and Hispanic) and two languages (English and Spanish).” But although Mexicans live with the idea that they can make their own version of American Dream come true, Huntington opposes: “There is no Americano dream. There is only the American Dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English.”<sup>85</sup>

Many political scientists, however, regard Huntington’s view as overly pessimistic. In one of their studies, Citrin, et al. question Huntington’s claims. They argue that although Mexicans, and Hispanics in general, preserve their mother tongue, with each generation they speak English better, tend to be just as religious as white Americans, and just as hardworking and patriotic, especially the young and better-educated, and say that “[w]ith each successive generation, social, economic, and emotional ties to Mexico

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<sup>85</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, October 28, 2009. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/28/the-hispanic-challenge/> (Accessed: April 14, 2015).

diminish.<sup>86</sup> In their view, Mexicans living in the United States get more educated with each generation and thus gradually assimilate into the mainstream society. However, in their study they emphasize that their research does not take into consideration illegal immigrants. Illegal aliens constitute a big part of Hispanic immigrants in the country and often cannot speak English at all or very poorly and it is even more difficult for them to assimilate. But as also the children of undocumented aliens have a right to public education, we can assume that the next generations of both legal and illegal immigrants could follow the same path.

It is difficult to predict in what way the increasing numbers of Hispanic immigrants will affect the United States. The mass immigration from Mexico is still a relatively recent phenomenon and, moreover, the situation can always change based on the steps the government will undertake to deal with the immigration issue. It is quite possible that just like today Americans talk about their German, Italian, Czech, Polish, or any other ancestors, while not being able to speak their language, the same might happen with Mexico. There are still some communities where people of the same ancestry gather but their children are mostly educated in English and also need to speak English at work, and thus it naturally happens that each generation can speak the language of their ancestors less. The children of Mexican immigrants go to public schools and to acquire a well-paid job and to become a part of the American culture, they need to speak English. Mexico is very close to the United States and there are high numbers of Mexicans in the country who still remember the life in Mexico and it is hard for them to break ties with their culture. But for the future generations who grow up in the United States, study at public schools, and learn to speak English, the assimilation could be much easier. One day they might still feel some ties to their original culture but they will be Americans, with better education, well-paid jobs, and English as their first language. We cannot expect Mexicans to change into Americans overnight. Only time will show what the United States will be like in a couple of decades.

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<sup>86</sup> Jack Citrin, et al., "Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity?," *Perspectives on Politics* 5 (1), March 2007, 46-47.  
<http://www.ou.edu/uschina/gries/articles/IntPol/Citrin%20et%20al.2007.Testing.Huntington.pdf>  
(Accessed: April 14, 2015).



## CONCLUSION

The United States has been known as a country of immigrants, a place where everyone can make the American Dream come true and start a new life. While in the past the country experienced an influx of mainly highly skilled workers who assimilated into the mainstream culture, the last decades witnessed the entrance of many low skilled Mexican workers, many of which crossed the border illegally, who usually stick together and preserve their own language and traditions. Immigration started to be perceived as a controversial issue which divides American society.

Although Mexico has been a democratic country for many years, it is still a developing country which struggles with big inequality, low wages, unemployment, and it belongs to the most violent countries in the world, especially because it is a territory shared by several drug cartels that fight for supremacy. These problems of Mexico explain why so many people from this country cross the border, dreaming of a better life in the United States. The wish to change their future does not even stop people from illegal entries in deserted areas even though they know it represents a big danger not only from the side of the hostile countryside but also from human smugglers for whom it is a great business.

The goal of the thesis was to prove that although Mexicans coming to the United States are predominantly poor people with little knowledge of English and low level of education, they are not just a low skilled labor force but, although Hispanics emerged as the largest minority group just a short time ago, as immigrants they influence and shape everyday life of American society more than any other community. Although low skilled immigrants are perceived negatively by many Americans, it is undeniable that they are an important part of what the United States and its culture is today. Just like it has been shaped by many other nationalities that contributed something from their culture to enrich the American one and make it unique, in the same way Mexicans contributed something from their culture to add to the variety of the American one. Their influence is recognizable in several areas that touch daily lives of all American citizens.

The paper gave an insight into contradicting opinions of various experts which also reflect the opposite views of American society on low skilled immigrants. It also used statistics throughout the work to support individual claims. The thesis explored concrete

influence in various spheres of life and argued that the opinions of Americans who think that low skilled immigrants harm American society are not true.

As Mexican immigrants started to come to the United States, they introduced their cuisine to Americans. In the last decades, Mexican food has become very popular with Americans. Even American entrepreneurs realized it was something unique, something that could attract many customers. Therefore, they started to open businesses to profit from the food inspired by Mexican cuisine. Although most places to eat this food are fast food restaurants, where they sell Tex-Mex, cheap Mexican-like food, nowadays it has become as popular as food from McDonald's that Americans across social classes enjoy. Also many Mexicans who come to the country open their own restaurants with Mexican food in various towns where locals like to come to eat. No party can do without alcohol coming from Mexico, its drinks being on the list of most popular alcohol in the United States. The food that combines the taste of both Mexican and American cultures is something that connects the two worlds which otherwise stand against each other in many things.

Although Spanish is a language of a minority group, it started to be used by Americans in daily conversation. Not only for example the words that denote Mexican food are a part of English lexicon, but Spanish also entered English conversations as a means to emphasize the inferiority of the members of this minority group. Mock Spanish is used by media or in books to stress the dominance of the English-speaking society. The thesis argued that by putting Spanish words, even though in ungrammatical or mispronounced form, right next to English words, the speakers actually do the opposite of what they intend. Instead of showing that Spanish and its speakers have no place in American society, by using Spanish language in English speech, Hispanics become a part of the culture. On the other hand, as the second language with most speakers in the United States, it contributes to better opportunities for Americans in companies that work with Spanish-speaking population or need to attract larger audiences. The knowledge of Spanish thus can be an advantage as such person can address both English and Spanish-speaking population. Spanish is also enjoyed in English songs by both Hispanic and American people without any negative feelings towards the combination of the two languages.

The numerous community of Mexicans, and Hispanics in general, can influence political scene of the United States. Not only legal residents are eligible to vote for the members of the Congress or select a representative of their state that could vote for their

presidential candidate, but also illegal aliens can have an impact on the political scene as many voters give preference to a candidate based on his or her attitude to the immigration policy. Politicians are aware of the growing numbers of Hispanic population and their problems, and thus address the issues that concern them in their political campaigns. More and more Hispanics also become influential in the leading political positions of the United States and decide about the future of the country.

American society is divided on whether low skilled immigrants harm or benefit American economy. It is believed they take jobs from native high school dropouts and lower their wages, moreover, they are seen as a drain on the society, using health care services, education, not paying taxes. Although the opinions of economists differ, most of them support the view that if low skilled immigrants have a negative effect, it only concerns a small number of population, but the overall effect on the economy and on the rest of the native labor force is positive. Both legal and illegal low skilled immigrants are vital for American economy, they work hard to provide natives with services and their absence would harm the society as there would not be enough people to work in low-paid positions.

However, there is also a negative side to immigration. Although many Mexican immigrants come to the country to work hard and improve their lives, but the high numbers of people crossing the border have become a good way to cover many serious crimes that endanger the safety of the United States. It can help criminals or terrorists enter the country or smuggle dangerous things, and immigrants themselves often serve as smugglers or they join gangs which are to blame for many crimes. The consumption of illicit drugs, which are transported across the border to consumers in the United States, also touches American citizens as they can become victims of crimes connected with drug use and lots of money is spent on crime, health care, and lost productivity as related to drugs. The inability to secure the long border of the border and high numbers of migrants thus contribute to increasing crime in the country.

Some believe Hispanic population will become a threat to the mainstream Anglo-Protestant American society as Mexican immigrants do not assimilate into it. However, although it is hard to predict what will happen in the future, we can assume that since the mass immigration from Mexico is a recent phenomenon and a large number of Mexicans represent the first generation, with every other generation they will more and more assimilate into the English-speaking society.

Today Mexicans are an important part of the American society, they enrich its diet and language, contributing with their hard work to growing economy, influencing political scene of the country, and unfortunately also affecting criminality. Not only the attitude of political representatives to immigration issues but also the attitude of native population to low skilled immigrants and the behavior of Mexican immigrants and their descendants will show how their influence on the American culture will continue.

## RESUMÉ

Spojené státy americké vždy představovaly zemi, která je otevřená cizincům přejícím si začít nový, lepší život. V minulosti byly dveře otevřené především pro zkušené odborníky, kteří se začleňovali do anglicky mluvící společnosti. Během posledních desetiletí však začaly do země přicházet miliony pracovníků s nízkou kvalitací a vzděláním a také se špatnou znalostí angličtiny, kteří se drží svých zvyků a jazyka. Většina z nich pochází ze sousedního Mexika a velká část vstoupila do země ilegálně. Imigrace, která byla dříve neodmyslitelnou součástí Spojených států, se tak stala trnem v oku mnohých obyvatel a rozdělila americkou společnost.

Přestože Mexiko je už patnáct let demokratickým státem, stále se řadí k rozvojovým zemím. Nejenže se potýká s velkými sociálními rozdíly mezi obyvateli, nezaměstnaností a nízkými platy, ale také patří k zemím s vysokou kriminalitou a velkou mírou násilí, převážně kvůli konfliktům odehrávajícím se mezi drogovými kartely, které mezi sebou bojují o území a podíly na obchodě s drogami. Tyto problémy, s nimiž se obyčejní Mexičané potýkají, vysvětlují, proč takové množství lidí opouští tuto zemi a snaží se najít lepší život ve Spojených státech. Ani nebezpečí, které je spojené s nelegálním přechodem v nestřežených a nehostinných oblastech a s často nehumánním zacházením ze strany převaděčů, nezabrání lidem, aby se pokusili splnit si sen o lepší budoucnosti.

Cílem práce bylo ukázat, že i když Mexičané přecházející hranici jsou převážně chudí lidé s nízkým vzděláním a malou znalostí angličtiny, ve Spojených státech nepředstavují pouze levnou pracovní sílu, ale dokáží obohatit americkou společnost a jako komunita mají klíčový vliv na mnoho aspektů veřejného života, přestože se Hispánci, z nichž Mexičané tvoří většinu, stali největší menšinou teprve na začátku 21. století. Imigranti s nízkou kvalitací jsou mnohými Američany vnímání negativně, ale přesto tvoří důležitou a neodmyslitelnou součást dnešní americké společnosti a její kultury. Stejně jako mnohé další národnosti přispěly něco ze své kultury k obohacení té americké, tak i Mexičané mají svůj podíl na tom, čím dnes Spojené státy jsou. Jejich vliv je patrný v několika oblastech, které se dotýkají každodenního života Američanů.

Pomocí srovnávání pohledů odborníků práce nastínila, jak je americká společnost v imigrační politice rozdělená a jak jsou jí imigranti vnímání. Také využila oficiální statistiky z různých oblastí a období veřejného života ve Spojených státech, aby podpořily jednotlivá tvrzení. Práce se soustředila na to, jak konkrétně tito imigranti

ovlivňují americkou společnost a v neposlední řadě také na vyvrácení stereotypního pohledu, že imigranti s nízkou kvalifikací na ni mají negativní dopad.

Během posledních desetiletí se stala mezi Američany velmi oblíbenou mexická kuchyně. Místní podnikatelé si uvědomili, že tato kuchyně je výjimečná a mohla by přilákat spoustu zákazníků. Začali proto obchodovat s mexickým jídlem. Většina míst, kde se Mexikem inspirované jídlo prodává, jsou restaurace s rychlým občerstvením, takže se nejedná o autentickou verzi pokrmů, ale tak zvaný Tex-Mex, který kombinuje chutě mexické i americké kuchyně. Takováto jídla se stala v posledních letech stejně populární jako ta z restaurací McDonald's. Mnoho imigrantů po příchodu otevírá vlastní restaurace ve městech po celé zemi, kde často zaměstnávají ostatní imigranty, a ty jsou hojně navštěvované místními obyvateli. Ani mnohé oslavy se neobejdou bez typicky mexických alkoholických nápojů. Přestože obě kultury jsou poměrně rozdílné, jídlo se stalo prostředkem, který je navzájem spojuje i přes mnohé rozpory.

Španělština je sice jazykem menšiny, ale vstoupila do každodenní konverzace Američanů. Nejenže slova, která označují například mexická jídla, jsou součástí anglické slovní zásoby, ale španělština se také stala prostředkem k zesměšnění členů této menšiny. Španělská slova a výrazy jsou záměrně vyslovované anglicky, používají se gramaticky špatně a jejich význam se mění tak, aby zněly hanlivě či posměšně, a to nejen v běžné konverzaci, ale i v médiích či knihách. Mnohými je takovéto jednání považováno za rasistické. Anglicky mluvící společnost tak vyjadřuje nadřazenost angličtiny jako jazyka americké společnosti. Angličtina sice není úředním jazykem Spojených států, ale jelikož jí mluví většina obyvatel, panuje mezi mnohými názor, že by se ostatní měli tomuto jazyku přizpůsobit. Práce však poukázala na to, že i když anglicky mluvící společnost používá španělštinu záměrně nesprávně, dosahuje opačného efektu, než jaký zamýšlí. Přestože chce dát najevo, že španělština nemá v zemi místo, tím, že staví španělská slova vedle anglických, tento jazyk naopak do místní kultury začleňuje. Na druhou stranu, jelikož v zemi žije vysoký počet španělsky mluvících obyvatel, v některých společnostech, které pracují se španělsky mluvící komunitou nebo potřebují oslovit co největší část obyvatel, může být znalost španělštiny jako druhého jazyka velkou výhodou při hledání práce pro rodilé Američany. Španělština je používána politiky v jejich kampaních a začala se i bez jakéhokoli špatného úmyslu objevovat v mnoha anglicky zpívaných písních, které se těší oblibě u obou kultur. Španělština má nepopíratelně své místo v běžném životě všech Američanů i přes negativní postoj k ní ze strany mnoha obyvatel.

Početná komunita Mexičanů a obecně Hispánců má velký vliv i na politickou situaci ve Spojených státech, a to hlavně poté, co jim bylo umožněno hlasovat ve španělštině. Ti, kteří žijí v zemi legálně, mohou volit členy Kongresu či představitele jednotlivých států, kteří poté volí amerického prezidenta. Také ilegální přistěhovalci mohou ovlivnit situaci v zemi, jelikož mnoho voličů se při hlasování řídí tím, jak politici přistupují k otázce imigrace. Politici si uvědomují, že počet Hispánců v zemi neustále roste, proto se ve svých kampaních soustředí i na témata, která jsou pro imigranty důležitá. Stále více Hispánců se také prosazuje v čelních pozicích americké politické scény a rozhodují o budoucnosti celé země.

Názory americké společnosti na to, zda imigranti s nízkou kvalifikací, zvláště pak ti ilegální, škodí či prospívají americké ekonomice, se liší. Mnoho z nich věří, že tito imigranti připravují Američany se základním vzděláním o práci, mají negativní vliv na jejich platové ohodnocení a parazitují na celé společnosti. Ekonomové se v názoru na tyto otázky neshodují, ale většina z nich si myslí, že pokud mají imigranti na ekonomiku nějaký negativní efekt, týká se pouze malé části společnosti, ale celkově je jejich vliv na ekonomiku a na zbytek populace pozitivní. Tito imigranti jsou pro zemi důležití, bez nich by nebyl dostatek levné pracovní síly v mnoha oborech. Vynakládají úsilí, aby poskytli ostatním obyvatelům služby, které jsou pro ně důležité, ať už jde o práci v zemědělství či obsluhu v restauračních zařízeních.

Mexická imigrace s sebou ale přináší i závažné problémy. Přestože většina imigrantů do země přichází s úmyslem těžce pracovat a dosáhnout tak lepšího života, přecházení takového množství lidí se stalo zástěrkou pro závažné zločiny, které představují nebezpečí pro celou zemi. Vysoký příliv imigrantů napomáhá kriminálíkům či teroristům ve vstupu na americké území a v pašování nebezpečného zboží. Sami imigranti často slouží jako pašeráci, nebo se přidávají ke gangům, které jsou zodpovědné za mnoho zločinů na území Spojených států. Pašování drog, které se v poslední době stalo lukrativním obchodem, se dotýká všech amerických občanů. Mohou se stát obětmi zločinů spojených s užíváním drog a z jejich daní odchází velké množství peněz na různé potřeby týkající se drogově závislých, jako je lékařská péče, kriminalita, či ztracená produktivita. Přestože mnoho imigrantů je zodpovědných za spoustu deliktů v zemi, nejsou jediní. Stejně tak se dopouští zločinů národy po celém světě a nedá se očekávat, že Mexičané budou výjimkou. Největším problémem je tak vysoká konzumace drog ve Spojených státech, jejichž užívání a obchod s nimi s sebou

přináší mnoho negativních důsledků, ale také pohyb příliš mnoha lidí v oblasti dlouhé a těžce kontrolovatelné hranice.

Panují názory, že hispánská populace by se mohla stát hrozbou pro anglicky mluvící americkou společnost, jelikož se jí nepřizpůsobuje stejně jako předchozí vlny přistěhovalců. Je obtížné předpovědět, jak bude vývoj americké společnosti pokračovat, ale dá se předpokládat, že jelikož tak velký počet hispánských imigrantů je poměrně nedávný jev a většina z nich jsou zástupci první generace, která se tak snadno nedokáže odpoutat od své kultury, hispánská komunita by se mohla s dalšími generacemi víc a víc přizpůsobovat většinové společnosti.

Přestože je hispánská menšina v mnoha aspektech odlišná od zbytku společnosti, Mexičané a jejich potomci jsou důležitou součástí americké kultury. Obohacují nejen její kuchyni a jazyk, ale také svou tvrdou prací přispívají k růstu ekonomiky a mají vliv na politické dění v zemi. S tímto však přichází i negativní aspekt tak rozsáhlé imigrace, kterým je zvyšující se kriminalita. Nejen přístup politiků, imigrantů, ale i samotných Američanů k imigrační otázce ukáže, jak bude vliv Mexičanů a Hispánců obecně na americkou kulturu pokračovat.



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## APPENDIX

### Hispanic or Latino?

Before discussing immigration from Mexico to the United States, it is important to clarify and comprehend the two terms which are often used to describe people with roots in the non-English-speaking countries of the American continent as these will appear in the following chapters. There are texts which use the term *Hispanic*, some opt for *Latino*, but most of them mix both of these words, using them interchangeably. Is there any difference or do these terms have the same meaning?

The term *Hispanic* has its origin in the Latin word *Hispania* which denotes Iberian Peninsula, therefore includes the meaning of both Spain and Portugal. However, the modern use of the word Hispanic does not include people speaking Portuguese, it is most commonly used for those who come from the Spanish-speaking parts of New World. Anyone from the countries in Latin America where Spanish is the official language can thus be called a Hispanic, Brazil where Portuguese is the official language is not included. The term was first used in the 1970s U.S. Census to make classification of American population more systematic, to distinguish how big part of it comes from a Spanish-speaking country. Later in the 2000 census the term *Latino* was added. *Latino*, which is a shortened version of Latin American, on the other hand, is a term used to describe anyone from the area of Mexico, South and Central America; also Cuba, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. Brazilians are thus included in the meaning of this word. Simply said, the meaning of Hispanic is based on language and the meaning of Latino on geography.

However, the usage of these terms can be problematic as it depends on each individual whether he or she likes to be called one of these ways. Some people are proud to be called a Latino, a term which had been used throughout Latin America even before it became a widely known term in the United States, as it connects them with their country of origin and its traditions, while Hispanic might evoke years of Spanish dominance and with it connected struggle or they may feel it is just a political term which is used by Americans specifically for the purpose of making Spanish-speaking people different from the rest of American society. On the other hand, those who feel more American, for example if they were born there, often prefer to be called Hispanic as their bonds with Latin America are not so strong. But in the eyes of many people

who have roots in Latin America none of these words is a good way to describe them. “[T]here are no Latinos, no Hispanics. There are only Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, and so forth. Each is different and alike . . . . They are not so different that they cannot communicate and not so alike that they have nothing to say to each other.”<sup>87</sup> The truth is that the meaning of either of the two words is very broad and cannot capture the cultural background of people having roots in so many Spanish-speaking countries. Latin America is a vast area which covers many nationalities with different traditions, dialects, and histories.

We should keep in mind that when we use the words Hispanic and Latino, we refer to a variety of cultures that share many things but at the same time each of them has its own specifics which make it unique.

Only 24% of Hispanic adults said they most often identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, according to a survey . . . [a]bout half said they identified themselves most frequently by their family’s national origin, saying they were Mexican, Cuban or Salvadoran, for example. An additional 21% said they called themselves American most often, a figure that climbed to 40% among those born in the U.S.<sup>88</sup>

When addressing a person who has a Latin American origin, it is convenient to ask what he or she likes to be called to avoid a term the person may be uncomfortable with. However, it is not always possible to refer to individual nationalities if we want to talk about Spanish-speaking population of America in general.

In spite of the fact that there is a semantic difference between these terms, they are used interchangeably and the preference for one of the two terms differs from person to person. In this text, I will mostly talk about Mexicans, therefore, this word will be employed the most, however, when there is a need to refer to the whole Spanish-speaking community, the term *Hispanic* will be used.

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<sup>87</sup> Earl Shorris, “Latinos: The Complexity of Identity,” *NACLA: Report on the Americas* 26, no. 2 (1992): [http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/BLPR102\\_PIMENTEL/shorris.pdf](http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/BLPR102_PIMENTEL/shorris.pdf) (Accessed: 24. February 19 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Miriam Jordan, “Hispanics’ Like Clout, Not the Label,” *The Wall Street Journal* (2012). <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303816504577322723349114252> (Accessed: February 20, 2015).

## **ANNOTATION**

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Department: Department of English and American Studies

Name of thesis: Influence of Mexican Immigrants and Their Descendants on American  
Culture in the 21st Century

Supervisor: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 73

Number of characters: 145 295

Number of appendices: 1

Language of thesis: English

Keywords: United States, Mexico, culture, economy, politics, cuisine, crime, language,  
immigration

Abstract: The thesis explores the influence of Mexican immigrants and their descendants on everyday life of American society. It introduces the United States as a country of immigrants, the history of immigration policy, the overview of Mexican history and the reasons for people leaving the country, specifics of Mexican immigration, and shows that Mexicans are not just a cheap labor force but they have an impact on eating habits, language, criminality, political and economic situation in the United States. The paper also attempts to predict how the influence of this community will continue as their numbers increase each year.



## **ANOTACE**

Autor: Bc. Jana Dvořáková

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Vliv mexických imigrantů a jejich potomků na americkou kulturu 21.  
století

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Matthew Sweney, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 73

Počet znaků: 145 295

Počet příloh: 1

Jazyk práce: angličtina

Klíčová slova: Spojené státy, Mexiko, kultura, ekonomie, politika, kuchyně, kriminalita,  
jazyk, imigrace

Abstrakt: Práce se zabývá vlivem imigrantů z Mexika a jejich potomků na několik oblastí každodenního života americké společnosti. Představuje Spojené státy jako zemi imigrantů, historii jejich imigrační politiky, přehled historie Mexika a důvody jeho obyvatel pro emigraci a specifika mexické imigrace a ukazuje, že Mexičané nejsou pouze levná pracovní síla, ale mají vliv na stravování, jazyk, politické dění, ekonomii i kriminalitu v zemi. Práce se také snaží předpovědět, jak bude vliv Mexičanů, jejichž počet se ve Spojených státech stále zvyšuje, pokračovat.