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The Immigration and Integration of Hispanics in America since 1981 : A comparative analysis of California and Texas

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The Immigration and Integration of Hispanics in America Since 1981: A Comparative Analysis of California and Texas

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Master L.L.C.E.R. - Etudes Anglophones

Cover Illustration: Edgar Fidel Lopez in San Diego, in front of the US-Mexico Border.
Picture taken by Vanessa Sienne in May 2017.

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Introduction

“Illegal immigrants in considerable numbers have become productive members of our society and are a basic part of our workforce. Those who have established equities in the United States should be recognized and accorded legal status. At the same time, in so doing, we must not encourage illegal immigration.” Ronald Reagan¹

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan highlights the complicated relationship between the United States and the questions of immigration and integration of immigrants. The creation of the United States was based on the arrival of millions of immigrants from the whole world. Those waves of immigration were sometimes encouraged, and other times completely dissuaded or even prohibited. From the time when the thirteen colonies did campaigns to convince English people who lived in the countryside to immigrate² to the argument of the construction of a wall between the US and Mexico, the United States has been continuously shifting its policies towards immigration. These policies changed depending on their economic needs and on their international relations with other countries.

¹ Ronald Reagan, “Public Papers of The Presidents of the United States, 1981” 677, Best Books on.

² Nestor Rodriguez, “History of immigration in the United States.” United States Immigration 4470, September 24th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

The fact that some US territories were former Mexican territories and that Mexico shares a common border with the US makes the case of the immigration from Mexico a perfect example of this ambivalence about welcoming versus not welcoming. The Mexican population has always represented an attractive cheap labor force but also a significant and some say, costly minority in the United States.³ As a result, since the creation of the country, the relationship with the Mexican community in the United States has always been divided between a limited integration of those labor forces and a complete rejection of the Mexican community with the fear that this minority would become a majority and that the financial support of those immigrants would be consequent.⁴ Moreover, during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, Latin America became a place where both of those nations tried to extend their influences. As a result, the US intervention increased in the political spheres of these countries. Meanwhile, through the whole region, Civil Wars and poverty provoked increasing immigration to the United States, supported or not by the US government. Nowadays, the Hispanic population represents eighteen percent of the United States population, with one-third of Hispanics born in Mexico.⁵ During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump talked about a “crisis” at the US- Mexico border and accused Mexico to send drug “dealers, criminals, and rapists.”⁶ He also pointed out the danger of illegal immigration from

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Antonio Flores, “How the U.S Hispanic Population is Changing,” Pew Research Center, September 18th, 2017, Online, February 3rd 2019. <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/18/how-the-u-s-hispanic-population-is-changing/>>.

⁶ BBC news, “Drug dealers, criminal, rapists: what Trump thinks of Mexicans.” August 31st 2016, Online Video, October 3rd 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/video_and_audio/headlines/37230916/drug-dealers-criminals-rapists-what-trump-thinks-of-mexican>

Latin America. In 2016, the country counted 10.7 million unauthorized immigrants with half from Mexico.⁷

At that time, for the school year 2016-2017, I was studying abroad in Northern California. In all the courses that I took at Humboldt State University (HSU) from creative writing to social justice, the questions of the immigration and integration of Hispanics were at the center of all discussions. Furthermore, I had many teachers that were personally involved in the integration of Hispanics. Some of them decided to pursue their studies in law to help the undocumented Hispanic youth in the United States. Others were immigrants themselves and were trying to become citizens. Throughout that school year, I witnessed situations where my undocumented friends from Latin America, who crossed the US- Mexico border, were desperate following the election of Donald Trump, fearing for their future. As a result, I wanted to know more about the topic of Immigration and Integration of Hispanics in the United States. In winter 2017, I started taking sociology and history of immigration classes to understand the current situation in the United States. According to my teachers in sociology, to immigrate means to move from one country to another to settle for an extended period.⁸ At the time, my teachers were using the term “assimilation” instead of “integration” which were according to them, similar. For them, assimilation or integration had the same meaning, that is to say, the process of incorporation into an existing core in a country.⁹ However, talking to many students that were studying with me, and throughout my research, I noticed that the word assimilation¹⁰ bothers

⁷ Antonio Flores, Ibid.

⁸ Maral Attallah and Joseph Dieme, “Racism in California,” Critical Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies 372, February 4th 2017. Humboldt State University, California. Lecture.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰Public World Radio, Broadcast September 9th 2018, Online November 10th 2018, <<https://media.pri.org/s3fs-public/world-words/segment-audio/wiwpodcast445.mp3?siteplayer=true&dl=1>>

people. The term assimilation has a negative connotation to all the people that I interviewed who saw behind the meaning of this word, an attempt to erase their heritage to assimilate to the US-only culture. As a result, I started using the term integration throughout my research. This example shows the complexity of the process of integration since people do not give the same meanings and values to certain terms.

When I started my research, the first goal was to understand the reasons that led Latin America into poverty in the twentieth century. I also wanted to understand the complex international relations between the United States and this area of the world. At the time when Ronald Reagan was inaugurated in 1981, the immigration from all of Latin America started to grow.¹¹ Before then, immigration mainly concerned Mexico. As a result, another of my goal was to analyze the politics of immigration and integration of these Hispanics in the United States since his presidency. After the arrival of those “new immigrants”¹², scholars such as Samuel Huntington claimed that Hispanics were threatening the United States and its Anglo culture. Huntington also claims that Hispanics/Latinos do not want to integrate into the American core. The term “Hispanics” includes people that are from countries in Latin America, which had a historical link with Spanish colonization. I purposely chose to use the word Hispanics, throughout this analysis, instead of Latinos, because my study focuses on four Spanish speaking countries in Latin America that are Mexico, El Salvador, Cuba, and Argentina. The term Latinos could also include Portuguese speakers in Latin America such as Brazil.¹³ I chose those four countries

¹¹ Nestor, Rodriguez, Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

because they are separated geographically.¹⁴ As a result, I wanted to show that immigration from Latin America does concern the whole area.

Do Hispanic immigrants, as Huntington claims, try to impose their cultures on the United States? Does the process of gathering into a Hispanic community in the United States have the goal of not integrating and imposing a new society in the United States by imposing instead their language and cultures? I am going to show that Mexicans in the United States were always victims of discrimination since the creation of the United States. I argue that Mexicans attempted to integrate by fighting together for their rights. When Hispanics from other countries arrived, I argue that they had to learn to fight collectively as the same minority despite their differences. In other words, the reason why Hispanics try to gather is linked to their desire to integrate into the core of the United States. This process of integration is still a complicated process for Hispanics with many obstacles along their paths.

Throughout my research, I decided to focus my analysis on the states of California and Texas. The first reason is that those two states are at the border and were formerly part of Mexico. As a result, the United States shares a unique link with this country. Another reason is that historically, California is known as a Democrat state, whereas Texas is more on the Republican side. Eventually, I also had the chance to study abroad in both states; from 2016-2017 in California at Humboldt State University (HSU) mentioned before and 2018-2019 at the University of Texas at Austin (UTA). Those two experiences enabled me to be more productive in terms of interviews and to have an internal point of view on the issue of immigration.

¹⁴ Mexico in North America, El Salvador in Central America, Cuba in the Caribbean Islands and Argentina in South America.

In my study, I decided to divide my analysis into three parts; in the first part, I am going to show the reasons why people left their countries, their families and their comfort zones with the dream that the United States would give them a better future. As a result, I will adopt a historical point of view with the goal to show that Mexicans were indeed always victims of discrimination throughout US history. I will also show the particular relationships between the United States and Latin America. As a result, we will understand the roots of these waves of immigration and the ways that the US influenced them. Secondly, I will focus on the politics of integration of these Hispanics in California and Texas. In other words, I will try to see the ways that Hispanics were integrated or not in the country. We will see their attempt to gather as the same community in order to fight discrimination and find a way to integrate despite obstacles that the US society could impose. Then, I am going to compare three books of Mexican Americans : *Illegal* by Bettina Restrepo, a novel that takes place in the state of Texas, *The Distance Between Us* an autobiography by Reyna Grande, and *Mexican Jenny* a compilation of poems by my teacher at HSU, Barbara Curiel that is set in California. This comparative analysis will help the reader to understand what is happening at the border from an internal point of view. The three different genres will display the process of the creation of an Ethnic-Hispanic literature in the United States. This analysis will support the idea that immigrants from Latin America do try to create a common story as immigrants in the United States through literature. This common literature enables immigrants to have a common identity as Hispanics in the United States. Those immigrants try to integrate into the US society without forgetting where they come from.

*All the interviews were conducted in Spanish by myself and translated into English with the help of Francisco Chada.

Part I- International Relations United States and Latin America

I/The United States and Mexico, Two countries Intertwined and Interdependent

“We did not cross the border, the border crossed us. Borders do not only delineate physical space but also define the boundaries of belonging in the United States.”¹⁵ – Josue David Cisnero

1- Common History around the Changing Border

A) *A Border that Leads to Mexican migration in the Nineteenth Century*

“We did not cross the border, the border crossed us.” This sentence has been used by different immigrant rights movements for Mexican-Americans¹⁶ in the United States. The idea of the border that crossed the Mexican people refers to the fact that

¹⁵ Becky Little, “Why Mexican Americans say ‘thee border crossed us’” October 17th2018, Online, December 6th 2018. <<https://www.history.com/news/texas-mexico-border-history-laws>>

¹⁶ Mexican-Americans refers to Americans who were born and raised in the United States with Mexican origin.

the United States and Mexico have an intertwined history along the border. The entire states of California, Nevada, Utah and some parts of the states of Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, and Texas were Mexican territories and became part of the United States with the treaty of Hidalgo signed on February 2nd 1848. This treaty marks the end of the Mexican-American war that took place from 1846 to 1848. The end of the war led to tremendous consequences for the Mexicans populations that lived for centuries in those lands.

First of all, in terms of consequences, it is important to recall that Mexicans who became newly Americans lived the annexation by the Anglos-Americans as a true invasion. The historian Maria L. de Hernandez from Texas claims that “our ancestors were here long before the Anglo-Americans. It is they who are the newcomers.”¹⁷ During an interview that I conducted with a Ph.D. student from Mexico majoring in History¹⁸ I learned that in the United States the tendency is to study “this war as a liberation of Mexicans from a dictator”¹⁹ that is to say Adolfo Lopez de Santa Ana. In other words, the Mexican people at that time were seen by the United States as people that had to be delivered by the Anglos-Americans “their saviors, their messiah.”²⁰ On the contrary, Mexico saw in the annexations of its territories, an invasion from the United States.

Moreover, the Anglo-Americans operated under the ideology of Manifest Destiny²¹, an ideology that is “inextricably linked to race and racism.”²² The notion of

¹⁷ Teresa Palomo Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten, *Las Tejanas*. (Texas: University of Texas at Austin, 2003) 8.

¹⁸ Saul Garcia. Personal Interview. December 8th 2018.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Emma Perez, *Between Manifest Destiny and Women's Rights: Decolonizing Chicana History*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2003) 5.

²² Ibid.

Manifest Destiny is linked to racism in that there was already a vision of superiority²³ from the Anglo-Americans towards Mexican people that led to discrimination. This vision of superiority and this discrimination were seen through the fact that Mexican people had to undergo some dislocations and some displacements.²⁴ They were asked to choose between leaving their lands and remaining Mexican citizens or staying in those new United States territories and becoming American citizens. This constant and forced movement that Mexicans had to undergo at that time was seen by some journalists of the newspaper *La Cronica* as a real parallel with what Jewish people lived in Europe. “It appears that the Mexican race is condemned to be the Jewish race of the American continent and to be [undergoing] an eternal pilgrimage.”²⁵

This period in the history of the United States and Mexico shows that the migration between Mexico and the United States started with the creation of the United States that we know today. The link between the Mexican people and the different American states is still sacred for many families. A Tejana²⁶ named Ramoncita²⁷ said about the state of Texas: “Always remember these words: Texas is ours. Texas is our home.”²⁸ This sentence means that Mexican families see in Texas their home from different generations.

B) Mexican-Americans Victims of Anglo-American Discrimination in the Nineteenth Century

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lilia Rosas, “Tejanas and dislocation.” *Mexican American Studies* 374, November 7th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

²⁵ Gabriela Gonzalez, *Redeeming La Raza*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) 2

²⁶ The term Tejano undergoes different meanings through time. At that time, the Tejanos referred to Native Americans who also have Spanish ancestry. They previously had the Mexican nationality.

²⁷ Teresa Paloma Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten. Op.Cit.46.

²⁸ Ibid.

After the annexion of those states, Mexican-American discrimination is based on stereotypes created by the Anglo-Americans. For example, the stereotype of being “weak and lazy.”²⁹ Historians say that “stereotypes were an integral part of an ideology that helped justify the Mexican-American war as well as subsequent repression in the conquered territory.”³⁰ Moreover, “white Texans considered Mexicans as innately inferior and thus obstacles to economic and political progress.”³¹ Therefore, there was a complete rejection of Mexicans in the political and economic spheres.

For example, in terms of land owning. Mexicans who were considered as “worthless”³² such as Indians, who could not have the right to own their lands. The governor of Texas at the time Richard Coke³³ claimed that “The Mexicans are no better than Indians. I see no reason why we should not take their land.”³⁴ The Mexican-Americans could not work and exploit their lands. Even though, Anglo-Americans promised after the war to leave them in possession of their land, if they decided to become American citizens.³⁵

Furthermore, Mexican-Americans were victims of a direct and institutionalized violence based on the idea that they were inferior. Some historians mention that “Anglo violence against Tejanos, which had increased during the Texas war for independence, continued with Tejanos finding themselves unwelcome in their homeland.”³⁶ The idea of the Tejanos who are not welcomed in their land is seen

²⁹ Lilia Rosas, Ibid, Lecture.

³⁰ Teresa Paloma Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten. Op. Cit.54.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Lilia, Rosas, Ibid, Lecture.

³³ Richard Coke was the governor of Texas from 1874 to 1876.

³⁴ Teresa Paloma Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten. Op.Cit.54

³⁵ “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” National Archives, April 25th 2018, Online, October 7th, 2018.

<<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo>>.

³⁶ Lilia Rosas, Ibid

through the fact that there is the creation of the first border patrol in the state of Texas. Mexican-Americans were often asked to show that they were legal in the United States by showing identity documents.³⁷ This border patrol is the act of law enforcement which in the 1870's and 1880's "became the work of some Texas Rangers who commonly carried out acts of brutality, including lynching towards a large number of Tejanos."³⁸

Moreover, the "Mexicans were killed for a cow or horse or for no reason at all. The Rangers hated the Mexicans who hated and feared them in return (...) there was blood: Texas dipped a pen deeply in it and wrote its history with it."³⁹ The Tejanos were also "victims of lynching, violence at the border."⁴⁰ The historian Armando Alonzo notes that the period that succeeded the Mexican-American war was a "period of intense conflict and violence that existed between the different groups."⁴¹ This institutionalized violence was seen and accepted by the Anglo-American community. This violence towards Mexicans is proof that the decision that they had to take to stay in the United States and become American citizens did not bring them the same rights as other American citizens. Moreover, the historian Lilia Raquel Rosaz states that people in 1841 were victims of the anti-Mexican sentiment and received murder threats which forced people to flee⁴² from the United States even if they gave up on their Mexican citizenship. The brutality towards Mexicans also served to make Mexicans work for the Anglo-Americans. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mexican-Americans were seen as a free labor source and violence was a way to make them

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Teresa Paloma Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten, Op.Cit.55.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lilia Rosas, Ibid.

⁴¹ Lilia Rosas, Ibid.

⁴² Lilia Rosas, Ibid.

obey the rules of Anglo-Americans. The historians Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Lewis Winegarten mention that “When Tejano were dispossessed of their land they began to work for wages on land they once owned. Women were also forced into wage work as field hands, shepherdesses, cooks, domestics. Tejano elite could not escape these changes for long either.”⁴³

This perpetual violence was accompanied by a constant exclusion of Mexican-Americans in the society. For instance, Mexican-Americans were disfranchised as some scholars explained “besides using physical intimidation and violence against people of color, Anglos undertook organized means to disfranchise them.”⁴⁴ This disfranchisement on the society is seen through the fact that Mexican-Americans were “excluded from public accommodations by custom.”⁴⁵ They could not enter in the same public places as Anglo-Americans such as restaurants and bars. The only way that they could mix with those other Americans was via marriage. However, those marriages were only acceptable only if “they forget about el mestiza⁴⁶ and highlighting their Spanish ancestry.”⁴⁷ In other words the only way was to agree to the “dispossessing of any cultural roots in order to marry white people.”⁴⁸ Those marriages were still rare since the Anglo-Americans wanted to keep their stability and social status. There were laws that were created in order to discourage those weddings as Professor Rosas says: “They were laws that were oppressive, people could not get married to anyone.”⁴⁹ Those laws were called “miscegenation laws.”⁵⁰ Other laws

⁴³ Teresa Palomo Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten. Op.Cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mestizaje meaning mix raced. Mixed race highlighted their Spanish ancestry for more privileges in the society.

⁴⁷ Teresa Palomo Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Lilia, Rosas, *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Professor Curiel Barbara, Personal Interview via Skype, February 4th 2018.

also aimed to keep the privileges of the Anglo- Americans. We can take as an example the case of Chipita Rodriguez. This Mexican-American woman was accused of killing John Savage.⁵¹ This man was a traveler whose body was found near her house. There was no real proof that she was guilty of this crime but she was condemned to death.⁵² “The case of Chipita Rodriguez was a way to protect its stability, white society was willing to execute an innocent woman.”⁵³

To summarize, the ninetieth century saw many displacements from one country to another. Since the creation of the United States the migration between Mexico and the United States has been constant. Concerning the inter-racial relations, we see that during the creation of the United States as new territories were annexed, Mexican-Americans were already victims of discrimination.

2-The United States and Mexico, Two Countries Linked by an Economic Interdependence

A) Mexico: Main Source of Cheap Labor in the Agricultural Field in the Twentieth Century in the United States

After the Second World War, the issue that the war “would bring labor shortages to low paying agricultural job,”⁵⁴ was the center of debate in the agricultural field. A Professor at Humboldt State University during an interview stated “The immigration from Mexico was well perceived at that time, as long as the United States could get

⁵¹ Teresa Palomo Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten. Op. Cit.

⁵² Ibid, 58.

⁵³ Teresa Palomo Acosta, Ruthe Lewis Winegarten, Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Bracero History Archive”, Bracero Archive, Online, December 23rd 2018.

<<http://braceroarchive.org/about>>

cheap labor forces and could benefit economically speaking.”⁵⁵ That is the reason why, on August 4, 1942, the Bracero program was created. Introduced through an executive order, this program proposed to welcome cheap labor forces from Mexico in the United States for a short period of time.⁵⁶ In other words, the program aimed at encouraging the immigration from Mexico to the United States by offering “primarily agricultural contracts.”⁵⁷ As a result, for 22 years “from 1942 to 1964, 4.6 million contracts were signed, with many individuals returning several times on different contracts.”⁵⁸ The program was renewed several times⁵⁹ and even became a public law in 1978.⁶⁰ Mexicans who wanted to work in the agricultural field were usually sent to the border states⁶¹ while at the opposite end, the Irish , Italians, Chinese and even Germans⁶² were rejected and were victims of a series of laws that restricted their immigration.⁶³ Mexicans were considered as good immigrants “since they contributed to the US economy”⁶⁴ and because “they will eventually go back home after the end of their contracts.”⁶⁵

During the time of the Bracero Program, the border was easy to cross with few controls. As the professor Isabelle Venous wrote about the Mexican-American border; the fence between Mexico and the United States was barely control until 1996.⁶⁶ The

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, “Mexican immigration in the United States.” United States Immigration 4470, October 17th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

⁶⁰ In 1978 by the Congress.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ These laws are called restriction laws.

⁶⁴ Barbara Curiel. Personal Interview. Op.Cit.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ “World War II and the emerging civil right”, San Diego Mexican and Chicano History, November 7th 2011, Online, September 3rd 2018. <<https://aztlan.sdsu.edu/chicanohistory/chapter08/c08s06.html>>

presence of the border only represented a limitation of the two countries. According to Professor Nestor Gutierrez, the border reunited people⁶⁷ in that people would live in Tijuana and would work in San Diego.⁶⁸ However, even if the immigration from Mexico was well perceived in the United States, Mexicans were still victims of discrimination in the Bracero Program. For instance, Mexicans were promised through their contracts “to be paid a specified minimum of wage, to receive some basic amenities, and to work only agricultural jobs.”⁶⁹ On the contrary, the Bracero workers claimed that they did not receive the minimum wage salary and that they had to face exorbitant charges for food, clothing as well as racial discrimination. During a public lecture by the Professor and historian Lilia Raquel Rosas at the University of Texas at Austin, she claims “the Bracero Program was extremely unfair and Mexicans workers were perpetual victims of violence.”⁷⁰ During an interview with professor Rosas, she mentioned that her father, who was himself a Bracero worker in the state of California, was complaining that their employers were constantly using violence without any apparent reason.⁷¹ Furthermore, Professor Rosas also adds that “some of the workers came with their children who were really young. “She also claims that “their living conditions were terrible.”⁷² Some scholars support Rosas’ interview by saying that “upon arrival, the Bracero found themselves in camps that were falling apart.”⁷³ Historians also mention the idea that “the camps that they lived in were deteriorating and were not well kept. (..) The street unrepaired and outdoor lighting

⁶⁷ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Bracero History Achieves,” Ibid.

⁷⁰ Professor Lilia Rosas. Personal Interview. December 3rd 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Professor Lilia Raquel, Ibid.

⁷³ “the Bracero Program in California”, Immigration Law History, Online, March 7th 2018.

<https://immigrationlawhistory.weebly.com/camp-life.html>

cut, some unites demolished (...) there is not, of course, any pretense of housing management.”⁷⁴

B) The United States, a Creditor to Mexico.

The 1929 Great Depression in the United States is followed by the 1930s recessions in Latin America. The lending boom of the 1920s, which saw an increasing number of people from Latin America borrowing money from other individuals in the United States, leads to a depression that changed the economy of Latin America.⁷⁵ Mexico, which had a lot of debt,⁷⁶ decided to adopt the Import Substitution Policy (ISI). This is an economic policy that adopts protectionism with the goal of reducing importing and exporting. The ISI aimed to create new enterprises, to create employment in the country, and to domestically produce all the products that were previously imported in order to be less dependent on other nations, such as the United States. The governments intervened frequently in the economy by controlling all companies in every sector. Protectionist barriers were adopted by “easing the balance of payment problems.”⁷⁷ The ISI policy was a response to the fact that the United States, which adopted a politics of protectionism in certain sectors, did not import much from Latin America. In other words, the United States and Mexico experienced “a decline in trade”⁷⁸ and a “cut of new loans”⁷⁹ to Mexico. Moreover, throughout the

⁷⁴ “Bracero History Archive.” Op.Cit.

⁷⁵ Raul de La Madrid, “The debt crisis in Latin America,” Government 328L, November 7th 2018, University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ “Bracero History Archive,” Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “Bracero History Archive,” Ibid.

crisis, the anger towards the Mexican government started to grow and people pointed out “the incompetence of the government” to deal with the crisis. This policy of the economy of protectionism was practiced until the 1970s.

In the 1970s, Latin America and especially Mexico had massive financial difficulties. In 1972 the price of the oil increased a lot with “the instability in the middle east.”⁸⁰ Moreover, many people were falling into poverty due to a worldwide recession. It is estimated that in Latin America 136 million people were living in poverty.⁸¹ Latin America including Mexico needed money in order “to construct their roads, their schools etc.”⁸² For all those reasons, Mexico started to borrow money from American banks. Furthermore, in the 1970s, some countries in the Middle East such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia decided to invest their money earned through the sale of oil in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in particular to some banks based in the United States. The banks decided to lend money to Mexico with a high interest rate that increased between 1978 to 1979 with the Iranian Revolution.⁸³ This money borrowed by Mexico was also used to buy oil from Saudi Arabia and/or Kuwait. This petro-dollar recycle⁸⁴ led to a huge debt crisis in all of Latin America which could not pay its debts given the high interest rate placed on their borrowing. Moreover, in Mexico the projects took a long time to be completed. In 1982 the finance minister of Mexico went to Washington declaring that “Mexico could not

⁸⁰ In 1973, The Kippur War happened in the middle east. Egypt and Syria did a coalition in order to attack Israel during the Jewish celebration of Yom Kippur. This war is the result of the war that happened between Egypt and Israel over territory in 1967.

⁸¹ Raul, de La Madrid, Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ The Iranian Revolution saw the overthrow of the Shi'a of Iran who was replaced by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This replacement of political regime led to an increasing tax rates and interest rates since the value of the petrol increased as well.

⁸⁴ Coach Red Pill, “Why is the Petrodollar Recycle. Online video clip, You Tube, January 23rd 2018 Web, December 15th 2018.

make its coming payments to American and other foreign banks.”⁸⁵ The United States banks decided to react by “rescheduling their agreements” that is to say to remove the high interest agreement, through the Brady Plan⁸⁶ in order to reduce their debt. The United States government under the Reagan administration and the international banks, also demanded that Mexico change its economic policy. Continuing what the Mexican president José Lopez Portillo⁸⁷ initiated, Miguel de la Madrid⁸⁸ adopted a series of neoliberal reforms supported by the United States. For example, a devaluation of the pesos was applied with all the public spending cut by the government. Furthermore, all the companies in the country of Mexico were privatized⁸⁹ with a financial liberalization with new autonomous banks which were opened to investment from foreign countries. There was also a trade liberalization with the goal to “enhance trade” and to turn the Mexican economy to exportation especially towards the United States. Various trade agreements were signed such as NAFTA. NAFTA was signed in 1994 and was an agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The goal was to have tariff-free trade between the three countries. In the 1990s many “binational agreements were negotiated to create a special zone along the border within which companies could import unfinished input into Mexico, assemble them into final goods, and then re-export them back to the US paying tax only on the value added.”⁹⁰ This new economical interdependence

⁸⁵ Eduardo Portes, “From Mexico, some lessons for Europe,” New York Times April 9th 2013, Online, December 27th 2018, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/business/mexicos-1980s-austerity-experience-holds-lesson-for-europe.html>>

⁸⁶ The Brady Plan is a plan that was proposed by creditors to Latin American countries to change their economic system in order to pay back their rents. The reforms concern the liberalization of the economy by highlighting the exportation.

⁸⁷ José Lopez Portillo was president of Mexico from 1976 to 1982. He started a politics of privatization of public companies.

⁸⁸ Miguel de la Madrid was the president of Mexico from 1982 to 1988. Under his presidency, Mexico continued its politics of privatization and opened the market to foreign investments.

⁸⁹ Raul De La Madrid, Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

between the two countries became the norm. The professor Marc Morestin of the Université Paul Valéry mentions that the United States and Mexico saw an increasing interdependent relation throughout the years.⁹¹ This increasing interdependence and this economic collaboration are seen in the political sphere as well. For example, President Carter spoke Spanish and welcomed his Mexican counterpart.⁹² The United States president claimed that the common history and their common purposes between the United States and Mexico have always link those two countries.⁹³ The professor Morestin highlights that Carter and Lopez Portillo tried to work together. Carter was openly interested in Mexico since the beginning of the cold war, the United States tried to understand Mexico and to elaborate a coherent politics. He also added that after Carter's second meeting with Lopez Portillo in 1979, the Carter administration emphasized all relations concerning Mexico. Carter's administration tried to keep some good relations and at the same time promoting the US interest. However, Carter did not succeed in the whole Latin America. He ended his presidential terms with an extreme tension with Lopez Portillo. The tension between the two countries can be partly explained by the fact that Lopez Portillo did not trust the U.S president, by many conflicts of interests and by Carter's weak position even inside the United States. Moreover, in this short period of time, Mexico was in position of power with its oil resources. Therefore, Mexico could stand against Washington. The two countries had to face many disagreements about oil and natural gas, about immigration, commercial exchanges and environment problems.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Marc Morestin, *Etats Unis-Mexique Fascinations et Répulsions Réciproques*, (Paris : Ecole Polytechnique :1996) 4.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

C) An Economic Interdependence and Economic Crisis that Leads to Mexican Immigration to the United States.

However, with the debt crisis, millions of people fell into poverty. The liberalization of the economy in Mexico led to the privatization of the companies and an increase in unemployment⁹⁵ Furthermore, the free trade agreements led to the lands being taken, especially near the border, in order to create maquiladoras⁹⁶ and roads for new trade between the three NAFTA countries. During liberalization, people especially in the agricultural field could not compete with new foreign companies from the United States. As a result, this led to huge migration from the rural part to cities such as Mexico City.⁹⁷ However, this concentrated poverty led some people to migrate to the United States.⁹⁸ During an interview that two immigrants granted me⁹⁹ they stated that poverty was omnipresent in Mexico City and in small villages too. They added that they had to leave if they wanted to eat, and that they believed in the American dream.”¹⁰⁰ Some researchers point out the fact the migration from Mexico to the United States concerns more people that are trying to escape poverty¹⁰¹ with their neighboring nation, the United States, which potentially offer a better and safer future for their children. Sociologists also mention that some Mexicans already had some family members in the United States who could help them. The economic issues that some Mexicans have to face in society represents “the push” forces that lead to the immigration to the United States. The pull forces such as better opportunities of work and the presence of members of their family already in the United States, represent the pull forces that attract immigrants to the United States.

⁹⁵The privatization of the companies led employers to fire a large number of people.

⁹⁶ Maria Corral-Rocordi, “Mexican immigration to the United States.” Sociology 342, February 2nd 2018, Humboldt State University. Lecture.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Nestor, Rodriguez, Ibid.

⁹⁹ Martinez-Acosta, Ana and Acosta, Levi. Personal Interviews. February 7th 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ MariaCorral-Rocordi, Loc.Cit.

3-The Mexican-American Border, A place of Discrimination towards Mexican Immigrants

A) *Mexican Immigrants Crossing the Border and the Way the United States Responds.*

According to the Pew Research Center¹⁰² in 2016, twelve million immigrants from Mexico live in the United States. Fewer than half of them, that is to say about 45 percent are in the country illegally.¹⁰³ At the end of the twentieth century the immigration from Mexico became by far the largest source of immigration in recent years.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, immigration from Europe fell from 70.4 to 18.5 percent of the total between 1970 and 2000.¹⁰⁵ As previously explained, Mexican immigration has always been part of the history of the United States. However, the increasing number of people coming from Mexico in the twentieth century due to economic issues continues to accelerate the debate on Mexican immigration, and divide public opinion with some people viewing it as a threat to America.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, according to sociologist researchers,¹⁰⁷ Mexican illegal immigration usually concerns people with a less level of education compared to the ones from India and China. This could be explained by the fact that the United States and Mexico with a common border attract

¹⁰² Pew Research is a center that provides statistics, poll etc.

¹⁰³ Krogstad Jean Manuel, Jeffrey S. Passel and Cohn D'Vera, "5 facts about illegal immigration in the United States," Pew Research, November 28th 2018 Online December 3rd 2018, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/28/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>>

¹⁰⁴ Krogstad Jean Manuel, Jeffrey S. Passel and Cohn D'Vera. Op.Cit.

¹⁰⁵ George J. Borjas, *Mexican Immigration to the United States*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 10, February 11th 2015, Online, November 4th 2018. <<https://www.nber.org/chapters/c0096.pdf>>.

¹⁰⁶ Meggan Flynn, "An invasion of illegal alien the oldest immigration fear mongering metaphor in America." *The Washington Post*, November 2nd 2018, Online, December 3rd 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/11/02/an-invasion-illegal-aliens-oldest-immigration-fear-mongering-metaphor-america/?utm_term=.867edb4e48e0>

¹⁰⁷ Nestor Rodrigueux, Ibid.

people with less resources and who could try to cross the border. Whereas for countries that are further away such as India, for people with less income, the journey to the United States with the price of the plane tickets due the distance is more complex and more difficult.¹⁰⁸

The fact that poorest people from Mexico decide to come to the United States, contributes to feed the debate about immigration. For example, whether or not the countries should close the border with Mexico.¹⁰⁹ President Ronald Reagan suggested the idea of a wall, usually called a fence¹¹⁰ by the previous administrations. During the last presidential campaigns in 2016, Donald Trump placed the fight against illegal immigration from Latin American, and especially from Mexico at the center of his political campaign. For the first time, the proposal to build a wall between Mexico and the United States became the main priority of an American political leader. Donald Trump spoke about “an invasion of illegal aliens”¹¹¹ and the arrival of criminals¹¹² in the United States. On December 22, 2018, Congress and the White House did not agree on the inclusion of a bill of 5.7 billion dollars per year requested by President Trump for the construction of an additional 234 miles of fencing to be added to the existing security barrier along the US border with Mexico.¹¹³ This

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Meggan Flynn, “An invasion of illegal aliens: The oldest immigration fear mongering metaphor in America.” Loc.Cit.

¹¹² Salvador Rizzo, “Fact Check: Trump’s false claims on Obama’s immigration policy and criminals in Caravan” *Chicago Tribune*, November 27th 2018, Online, December 23rd 2018.
<[Tps://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/factcheck/ct-fact-check-trump-immigration-20181127-story.html](https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/factcheck/ct-fact-check-trump-immigration-20181127-story.html)>

¹¹² Robert Longley, “Causes and Effects of Government Shutdowns.” *ThoughCo*, January 26th 2019, Online, February 1st 2019 <<https://www.thoughtco.com/history-and-effects-of-government-shutdowns-3321444>>

¹¹² Ibid

disagreement provoked a government shutdown where 800 000 people who ended without any income.”¹¹⁴

A sociologist Nestor Rodriguez, specialist of immigration, in an interview that I conducted, says that the purposes are usually different between men and women who try to immigrate to the United States.¹¹⁵ In most cases men tend to aim to find work opportunities in the United States. Women who go the United States aim to be reunited with their husbands. During a conference at the University of Texas at Austin, Professor Irma N Guadarrama also says that children represent an increasing number of immigrants from Mexico. Some of them are accompanied and some of them are not.¹¹⁶ According to Rodriguez who collected interviews from Mexican children, the children who are by themselves usually have a terrible family situation.¹¹⁷ In many cases they are orphans who try to find a family member in the United States.¹¹⁸ Some of them dream of being adopted in the United States. For example, a child Fernando, eleven-years-old, claimed “I want to find a family in the United States that could adopt me and I will be happy.”¹¹⁹

According to research led by Professor Rodriguez, immigrants tend to leave between the months of May and July.¹²⁰ Different tools are used in order to cross the border. Some of them enter with a tourist visa then stay in the United States when their visa expires. A student at Humboldt State University said, “I crossed legally with a car and with a tourist visa¹²¹ from Tijuana to San Diego, and then we stayed on.”¹²²

¹¹⁵ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Fernando Castillo, Interview by Nestor Rodriguez, Laredo Texas.

¹²⁰ Nestor Rodriguez, “Immigration process,” United States Immigration 4470, December 4th, University of Texas at Austin Lecture.

¹²¹ Tally Chavez. Personal Interview. August 11th 2018. Arcata, California.

¹²² Ibid.

Some of them use documents from people who more or less look the same with passports that already have United States visas and are sold by their owners to criminal networks.¹²³ Another way used by immigrants is to cross the border with the help of smugglers, who are also called coyotes that are paid by the immigrants themselves. A lot of immigrants spend all their money trying to pay the smugglers.¹²⁴ Immigration is also done by sea with boats between California in the United States and Baja California in Mexico, but also through the desert by walking after digging under the border barriers.¹²⁵

Principal destinations are usually the states by the border such as California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas which already have a large Hispanic community thus making it easier to find work.

B) The Violence at the United States - Mexico Border

As previously mentioned, the fight against illegal or undocumented immigration from Mexico became the priority of the current president Donald Trump. However, it is important to remember, that according to the data given by the Pew Research Center¹²⁶ the immigration law responsible for deportation of those people started to be enforced in 2005 under the presidency of George W. Bush. Undocumented immigrants had to return with a deportation order while prior to that, there was no real order.

¹²³ S.Damia Bonmatti, "A day in life of a coyote." *Univision News*, December 2016, Online, January 15th 2018. <<https://www.univision.com/univision-news/immigration/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-coyote-smuggling-migrants-from-mexico-to-the-united-states>>

¹²⁴ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

¹²⁵ Mahal Attalah, "The United States immigration policy," *Social Justice* 422, November 2016, Humboldt State University, California, Lecture.

¹²⁶ Pew Research, Ibid.

The Border Patrol working at the United States - Mexico border has always been at the center of a lot of controversy due to the violence that those Mexican immigrants have to face. For example, during the George Bush administration, some organizations such as Humane Borders Fronteras Compasivas pointed out that some government workers took away the water that they had placed in order to help the immigrants crossing over in the desert¹²⁷ Furthermore, “Operation Wetback”¹²⁸ which was implemented in 1954 and was marked by discrimination and prosecution¹²⁹ highlights the violence at the border with guns and projectiles¹³⁰ used as a deterrent. The use of violence displayed by the Border Patrol is often justified as a war against immigration that brings drugs inside the country.¹³¹ However, it is important to highlight the fact that the main drugs entry points usually concern the harbors and not the US-Mexico border.¹³² President Trump talks of American national security that is at stake emphasizing the idea that Mexican immigrants are “rapist and animals.”¹³³ The President also highlights that “Mexico is not sending their best”¹³⁴ implying the fact the immigration from Mexico was calculated by the Mexican government. When undocumented immigrants are caught, they are put in detention centers. Those detention centers are the center of controversy with all possessions of these immigrants taken away by the United States Border Patrols.¹³⁵ According to some

¹²⁷ Maral Attalah, Ibid.

¹²⁸ Funderburk, Brent. “Operation Wetback.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Operation-Wetback>>

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ ibid.

¹³¹ Maral Attalah, Ibid.

¹³² Instagram Washington Post, “Drugs from Latin America,” Published January 9th 2019, Online, January 9th 2019.

¹³³ Korte Gregory, Alan Gomez. “Trump ramps up rhetoric on undocumented immigrants: ‘These aren’t people. These are animals.’” *USA Today*, May 16th 2018, Online, August 21st 2018.
<<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/16/trump-immigrants-animals-mexico-democrats-sanctuary-cities/617252002/>>

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ The Shadow of the All Violence and Migration, University of Arizona, April 24th 2018.

journalists, the main difference with the previous administration is that, before the Trump administration, deportation mainly concerned gang members.¹³⁶ Professor Rodriguez adds that the meaning of the word “criminal” has changed through the years and with the implementation of different administrations.¹³⁷ Nowadays being deported from the United States is easier since the word criminal also means having a police file of any kind.¹³⁸

Moreover, according to some Coyotes, drug cartels that control the United States- Mexican border are tickets to the United States¹³⁹ Those cartels have become a source of violence for immigrants. Professor Barbara Curiel from Humboldt State University mentioned in an interview¹⁴⁰ that “those immigrants are often part of a human trafficking. This human trafficking is about the kidnapping of some immigrants by some criminal organizations as a way to ask for ransom from the families.”¹⁴¹ According to a coyote named Ramon, immigrants will die if their families don’t pay.¹⁴²

Another important element about the violence taking place at the US-Mexico border is the increasing issues in the cities around. For example, an aspect of violence is developing in the cities of Tijuana in Mexico, a city which is located at the border with the city of San Diego in California. We can also mention the city of Ciudad Juarez that is situated at the border with El Paso in the state of Texas. This violence is explained by the presence of drug cartels aforementioned who have the complete

¹³⁶ Salvador Rizzo, “Trump’s false claims on Obama’s immigration policy and criminals in Caravans” *Washington Post*, May 27th 2018. Accessed October 7th 2018.
<<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/factcheck/ct-fact-check-trump-immigration-20181127-story.html>>

¹³⁷ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ S.Damia Bonmatti, Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Curiel. Personal Interviews. August 17th 2018. Arcata, California

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Damia Bonmatti S, Ibid.

control of the area. The Mexican government decided to respond to this level of violence with the deployment of the army inside the cities, which are at the border with the United States.¹⁴³ However, the conflicts between the army and drug cartels paradoxically, escalated and increased yet again the violence at the border.¹⁴⁴ The public decided to raise their voices about this increasing violence. International human rights organizations have documented record-breaking numbers of human and civil rights violations on the part of Mexican federal forces.¹⁴⁵ Melissa Wright explains with regard to the former president of Mexico, Felipe Calderon, in 2009: “the violence demonstrates the state success in disrupting the drug trade, such that the increase in violence directly reflects an increase in state power.”¹⁴⁶

Another point in regards to the increasing violence is the arrival of an internal migration from different parts of the country to the cities around the border. The presence of the maquiladoras¹⁴⁷ attracted millions of workers to the city. This internal migration concerned women as well. Sociologists¹⁴⁸ talk about “a feminization of the international division of labor.”¹⁴⁹ However, the cities around the United States-Mexican border count an increasing number of feminicide. As a result, domestic and international politics pressured the political leaders of Mexico and the leaders of international business corporations present in the country to find a way to fight feminicide.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Raul de La Madrid, Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Wright Melissa, *Necropolitics Narco Politics and Feminicide*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008) 78. J Stor. Online, 4th November 2018, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1086/657496.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A0795acf78736ddaf79d5759378f21ed1>>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *Maquiladoras* is a Spanish word that refer to the factories located in Mexico, closed to the Mexican-United States border. Those factories have some tax advantages for United States businesses.

¹⁴⁸ Wright Melissa Wright and Nestor Rodriguez.

¹⁴⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, “Women in Migration,” United States Immigration 4470, October 5th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Moreover, Mexican immigrants try to face the violence at the United States-Mexico border by forming organizations that help Mexican immigrants who are crossing the desert. For example, the group of Las Patronas are helping immigrants from Mexico but also from Latin America in general. Las Patronas are a group of women that come from the village of La Patrona in Mexico, in the state of Veracruz. This group provides food to people from Central America and Mexico who try to cross the border with a train named La Bestia.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, organizations try to provide water in the desert. For example, the Humane Borders Fronteras Compasivas¹⁵² in the Arizona desert distributes some 55-gallon blue industrial strength plastic barrels with spigots¹⁵³ and the Border Angel, which is a nonprofit organization based in San Diego. Those organizations gather volunteers that support immigrants at the border between Tijuana and San Diego, give them water, and encouraged people to apply for residency and/or citizenship¹⁵⁴ directly in the desert. Some lawyers also try to defend the rights of people. We can take the example of Maria Coral Ribery a former professor at Humboldt State University who is also a lawyer who helps immigrants. She mentions the fact that her work is to tell them their human rights. She also works in detention centers.¹⁵⁵ There, she had to work with people from Mexico but also from the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.)¹⁵⁶ The Northern Triangle represents the second highest Hispanic immigration to the United States.

¹⁵¹ Arte in English. "Mexico: aboard La Bestia." Online videoclip.Youtube. You Tube, December 7th 2018. Web. January 3rd 2019.

¹⁵² The Human Borders Compassionate Frontiers is a non-profit organization was founded in 2000 in Arizona.

¹⁵³ "Human Borders Fronteras Compasivas" Website by Tagline Media Group, Online, November 14th 2018. <<https://humaneborders.org/water-stations/>>

¹⁵⁴ Border Angels, Online, November 7th 2018 <<https://www.borderangels.org/about-us/>>

¹⁵⁵ Marria Coral Ribordy. Personal Interview. August 7th 2018. Humboldt State University.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

II/ The Case of El Salvador, An Example of the United States Intervention in Central America

“Central America is the most important place in the world for the United States today.” Jeane Kirkpatrick¹⁵⁷

1- Political Situation in El Salvador

In the 1970's, throughout Central America, different countries saw the uprising of Guerillas.¹⁵⁸ These Guerilla movements emerged in reaction to the powerful right-wing parties that controlled Central American countries for decades. At that time, the United States, in the context of the Cold War¹⁵⁹ was concerned about the rise of the leftist movements that had emerged in Nicaragua. In the case of El Salvador, the country had high income inequality with a repressive authoritarian regime under the president of the country Julio Aldoberto Rivera.¹⁶⁰ The historian,

¹⁵⁷Walter Lafeber, *The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America*, (New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1994) 42.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2150256?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

¹⁵⁸ The Guerillas refer to small groups army that try to fight a political power.

¹⁵⁹ The cold war is an ideological war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Union States which wanted to put a limit to the expansion of communism and leftist movements in the world.

¹⁶⁰ Julio Aldaberto Rivera was the president of El Salvador from 1962 to 1967. Rivera was one of the leaders of the army. When he arrived in power, he adopted diverse.

Marc Becker mentions that fourteen families controlled most of the land, the entire banking system, and most of the country's industry.¹⁶¹ As a result José Napoleon Duarte, who was part of a centrist political party won the election in the year of 1972.¹⁶²

The military refused the result of the election and decided to arrest, beat him and sent Duarte to exile in Venezuela.¹⁶³ In reaction to the control of the military over El Salvador, the leftist guerilla movements emerged throughout the whole country.¹⁶⁴ However, they could not agree on the tactics to adopt and started to fight each other.¹⁶⁵ The military responses to the emergence of the guerillas were brutal with opponents that were arrested, tortured and killed with links to Guerillas, resulting in approximately 1000 people killed per month in 1972.¹⁶⁶ The victims were targeted by appearances and any link with the guerillas could lead to punishment.¹⁶⁷ For example, when someone had a tattoo that could look like one from a guerilla group, this person could be arrested.¹⁶⁸

When I interviewed Salvadorians who left the country in 1982 and live currently in Texas, they mentioned the fact that in El Salvador, in 1979 under the Jimmy Carter administration, the right-wing parties gained an increasing power with arms and training.¹⁶⁹ In 1981, when the president Ronald Reagan gained power, the fight against communism and the obsession to control Cuba and its influence¹⁷⁰ led to

¹⁶¹ Mark Becker, "Guerilla Welfare in TFCLAR," (Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 42

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Maren Goldberg, "José Napoléon Duarte President of El Salvador," The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, February 19th 2019, Online, December 5th 2018, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jose-Napoleon-Duarte>>

¹⁶⁴ Raul De La Madrid, Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Jonathan Scott Armstrong. Personal Interview. January 7th 2019. Austin, Texas.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

an increasing support of the military power in El Salvador through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). However, Cuba which was then Fidel Castro supported the opposition i.e the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN). For instance, the Cuban administration lobbied for Salvadorian cohesion of the revolution.¹⁷¹ The FMLN which reunited different guerilla organizations entered into a civil war with the right-wing parties from 1980 to 1992 and created a civil war in the context of the Cold War.¹⁷² Moreover, the success of the Cuban Revolution taught a lesson: “radical transformation was possible, but only through arment insurgency.”¹⁷³ This was a radical transformation that fueled the guerilla movements.¹⁷⁴ As a result of the civil war, 75000 Salvadorians were killed.¹⁷⁵ Professor Irma N. Guadarrama mentioned during a public lecture at the University of Texas at San Antonio the fact Human violations increased and became extreme all over the country.¹⁷⁶ This extreme violence led to a wave of immigration¹⁷⁷ to the United States where people could seek asylum in case of immediate danger in their country due to their political situation.¹⁷⁸ During interviews, women have emphasized the fact that there was a constant fear.¹⁷⁹ They claimed that the only way to survive and to save their family was to take their children with them and ask for asylum.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ Andrea Oniate, *The Red Affair: FMLN-Cuban Relations during the Salvadorian Civil War 1981-1992*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, May 2011, p 8.

¹⁷² Andrea Oniate, Ibid, 11.

¹⁷³ Andrea Oniate, Ibid, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Raul de La Madrid, Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Irma N. Guadarrama, *In the Shadow of the Half Moon*. Austin, (University of Texas at Austin Press, 2018.) 37.

¹⁷⁶ Irma N. Guadarrama, “The northern triangle in the 20th and 21st century.” Conference, October 17th 2018, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Scott Armstrong, Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Carolina Vigil Hernandez, Marianna Nejia. Personal Interviews. November 13rd 2018. Austin, Texas.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

2- The Consequence of the First Wave of Immigration in the United States, during the Salvadorian Civil War.

The immigration to the United States consisted of approximately 500 000 to 1000 000 Salvadorians who migrated to the United States during the civil war of the country. During my research about the Salvadorians communities in California and Texas, I interviewed ten Salvadorians (who left the country between 1980 and 1992) in Los Angeles, California and ten other Salvadorians in the city of Austin, Texas. My main purpose was to understand why they chose the United States. A common answer was the fact that the important presence of the United States in El Salvador.

According to one of the interviewees “El Salvador was the baby of the United States”¹⁸¹ in that in the country, people could tell that the United States was in El Salvador since the American military bases were dispatched all over the country. This proximity that they had with the American soldiers and the information that they could hear from television made them want to try to get a better and safer life in another country.¹⁸² They believed in America and in the American dream. When Salvadorians arrived and settled in cities such as Los Angeles, they gathered into neighborhoods. Sociologists talk about ethnic enclaves,¹⁸³ meaning that communities tend to gather together, once in new country.

The cities in Southern California which had already welcomed a huge community of Mexicans, has witnessed the arrival of Salvadorians who thought that it would be easier to find a job since people speak Spanish.¹⁸⁴ However, upon the arrival of this new Hispanic community, the Salvadorian community started to know

¹⁸¹Rodrigo Martinez Acosta. Personal Interview. August 11th 2018. Arcata, California.

¹⁸² Irma N. Guadarrama. Op.Cit.

¹⁸³ Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbault, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. (Berkeley:University of California Press,2006.) Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁴ Jonathan Scott Armstrong,Ibid

unemployment¹⁸⁵ and was marginalized in Los Angeles. Josué, a Salvadorian who lives in the city of Los Angeles, explains that many conflicts started to grow between the Chicano gangs¹⁸⁶ in Los Angeles and that Salvadorian gangs started to grow. For example, the Mara Salvatrucha commonly known as MS-13 is a gang that was created in Los Angeles by undocumented Salvadorians. This gang rapidly became powerful with the accumulation of arms and the violence rapidly increased between the Mexican and Salvadorian communities.¹⁸⁷ Even today, the tensions between the two communities remain. In an interview with a Mexican American, Victor Martin claims that in Los Angeles the two communities still fight.

3- The Return of the Salvadorian Gangs from Los Angeles to El Salvador

After the end of the Civil War, the United States started to deport the undocumented Salvadorians who were before, protected by their Asylum status.¹⁸⁸ Those deportations of gang members created an increase level of the violence in El Salvador, they started to organize new gangs in El Salvador and to control a gun trafficking business between El Salvador and the United States.¹⁸⁹ Today, those gangs are accused of human rights violations and human trafficking in El Salvador. According to the interviews led by Professor Irma N. Guadarrama, women from El Salvador, were, in their tellings, the constant fear in the streets. A constant fear and the presence of the gangs in the streets led people to decide to leave their country for the United States. The number of gangs members counted approximately 60 000, mostly young people, which is staggering by any measure but an extremely serious

¹⁸⁵ Irma N. Guadarrama, Op.Cit.

¹⁸⁶ Maria Corral Ribordy, Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Maria Corral Ribordy. Op.Cit.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

problem for a country of 6.5 million people.¹⁹⁰ According to a political science specialist the government of El Salvador does not do anything to stop the gang members in the country because the Salvadorian government, with its backing of the powerful economic, political and social elite has chosen for doing as little as possible in order to maintain their status quo, as long as the violence is contained within the working-class population.¹⁹¹

4- The Second Immigration to the United States.

Professor Irma N. Guadarrama who conducted interviews with people who have made the decision to migrate because of the violence said that they took all they had, all their belonging to save their families. In her book, *In the Shadow of the Halfmoon* she relates the story of Katarina who left El Salvador because her family was the target of a gang. She collected money and took her two sons and went to the United States. Her story is one of those hundreds of ones of women who have tried to escape violence in El Salvador.¹⁹² Different ways were used in order to immigrate. Diverse techniques included, for example, to pay smugglers or to try to cross with a caravan.¹⁹³ The main difficulty is to cross the country of Mexico due to the fact that the United States has paid Mexican Border Patrol to control the frontier with Guatemala.¹⁹⁴ According to a PhD student, who works on the immigration from El Salvador to Mexico, Mexico reproduces the discrimination to Central Americans that happen at the United States- Mexico border, a discrimination supported by the United

¹⁹⁰ Irma Guadarrama N. Irma, *In the Shadow of The Half Moon*, Op.Cit. p 40.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.p 41.

¹⁹² Irma N Guadarrama, Personal Interview.Ibid.

¹⁹³ BBC News. "Migrant Caravan: What is it and why does it matter." > November 26th 2018, Online, January 3rd 2019. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>>

¹⁹⁴ Nestor Rodriguez ,Lecture, Op.Cit.

States.¹⁹⁵ For example in 2001, the Plan Sur was created by the Mexican government under Vicente Fox with the financial support¹⁹⁶ and the pressure of Washington under the Georges W. Bush Administration.¹⁹⁷ The Plan Sur consisted “over a period of 15 days, starting on June 4th (...) the southern border of Mexico was the stage for a large scale police action that resulted in more than 3000 deportations of illegal aliens to El Salvador from Mexico.” However, through the years we can notice that the international relations between Mexico and the United States concerning the immigration from Central America is still full of ambiguity. Between the two neighboring countries, there has been a constant shift of positions shenanigans and the mutual betrayals had a negative impact.¹⁹⁸ A good representation of this ambiguity is the conference led in 2014 by Felipe Calderon where the former president of Mexico claimed that he would welcome Central Americans who seek asylum in Mexico in the name of human rights.¹⁹⁹ However, this open door to Mexico was a political decision that the United States did not give approval for.

According to the data of the Pew Research, the people who migrated to the United States from the northern triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador included) were families, that is to say, that children represent an important population of people who left the country.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Salvadorians such as Maria²⁰¹ explained to me that she had to leave with her four-year old daughter and her one year old son in order to

¹⁹⁵ Jonathan Scott Armstrong, Op.Cit.

¹⁹⁶ Nestor Rodriguez, Lecture. Op.Cit.

¹⁹⁷ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ricard Serge, *États Unis-Mexique Fascinations et Répulsions Reciproques*, (Paris L' Harmattan, 1996) 5.

¹⁹⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Cohn D'Vera, Passel S. Jeffrey, Gonzalez Barrera Ana. "Geography and characteristics of northern triangle immigrants." *Pew Research Center*. December 7th, 2017.

<<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2017/12/07/geography-and-characteristics-of-northern-triangle-immigrants/>>

²⁰¹ Maria Gonzalez. Personal Interview. November 6th. Austin, Texas.

survive. However, some other women had to make the decision to leave one of their children at their home with other family members. However, when women and children try to cross the border to the United States, some of them are taken immediately into detention centers. In 2018, the cases of these women who were separated from their children called the attention of the international community. The United Nations reacted to this policy of separation.²⁰² However, the Trump administration reacted on social media stating that “Obama separated children from parents, as did Bush etc. Because that is the policy and law. I tried to keep them together but the problem is, when you do that, vast number of additional people storm the border. So with Obama separation is fine but with Trump it is not.”²⁰³ By emphasizing the fact that the politics of separation have occurred under the previous administrations, they attempt to discourage women to try to cross the United States-Mexico border to save children from danger.²⁰⁴ Women were often accused and sued for being smugglers which emphasized the idea that criminals are part of the migrant caravans travelling from Central America to the US- Mexico border.²⁰⁵ In the process of my research, my goal was to understand the difference between the current administration and the previous ones. According to some journalists the difference mainly rests in the zero tolerance policy that the Donald Trump administration led, but the key difference is that in April, the justice department rolled out a ‘zero tolerance’²⁰⁶ policy of prosecution all adults caught crossing the border illegally. As a

²⁰² Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

²⁰³ Salvador Rizzo, “Trump’s false claim that Obama had the same family separation policy,” *The Washington Post*, November 27th 2018, Online, November 29th 2019.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/11/27/trumps-false-claim-that-obama-had-same-family-separation-policy/?utm_term=.b0506308e553>

²⁰⁴ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Salvador Rizzo, Op.Cit.

²⁰⁶ The zero-tolerance policy was adopted by the Trump administration. This policy concerned the illegal immigration to the United States from Mexico and Central America. Women and kids were separated in order to discourage people to cross the United States-Mexico border.

result of this, the decision of the Department of Homeland Security in May was adopted in reference to all illegal crossing cases by federal prosecutors. Families apprehended at the system were always separated.²⁰⁷ Moreover, Professor Rodriguez said that the separation of children from their parents was not systematic and there were extreme cases that otherwise would have brought possible danger to the kids such as sickness or suspicion of human trafficking.²⁰⁸

5-The Economical Consequence of Immigration from El Salvador to the United States

The immigration from El Salvador caused in the country, a dependence towards the United States. This economical dependence is seen through the remittances sent from the United States to El Salvador. Rodriguez mentions that those remittances represent the first incomes in the country.²⁰⁹ Moreover, the deliverance of the Temporary Protection States (TPS) that was before mentioned, allows people to work in the United States for two years. As a result, the number of remittances increased.²¹⁰



²⁰⁷ Salvador Rizzo, Op.Cit.

²⁰⁸ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

This picture was taken on February 7th 2019 by myself in Austin, Texas. This picture shows an ATM that enable people to send money from the United States to El Salvador. ATMs that are specialized in the transfer of money from the USA to El Salvador are omnipresent in the city of Austin but also in Los Angeles and San Francisco. As a result, we realize the importance of remittances between both countries. Moreover, as Rodriguez mentions El Salvador, dependent on the United States, always supports the International Relations of the United States. For example, in 2003, El Salvador sends troops to support the US army in Irak.²¹¹

//// The International Relations between Cuba and the United States. An immigration supported by the United States.

“In the meantime, over half a million of your fellow citizens have migrated to the United States, where their talents and hard work have made a major contribution to our society. We welcomed them and we’re proud of their success.”²¹² Ronald Reagan

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ronald Reagan addresses the people of Cuba (1984), Alpha History
<<https://alphahistory.com/coldwar/ronald-reagan-addresses-people-of-cuba-1984/>>

1- The Political Situation in Cuba from 1933 to 1962.

Fulgencia Batista was a colonel in the Cuban army that overthrew the power of Gerardo Machado²¹³ through the uprising of a military junta²¹⁴ in 1933.²¹⁵ This military junta was controlled by the sergeants Pablo Rodriguez and Ramon Grau San Martin. When the two sergeants took power in Cuba, they implemented a new series of laws which emphasized the sovereignty of Cuba after the island was previously controlled by other nations.²¹⁶ However, the United States did not appreciate these reforms. As a result, they supported some other members of the army, such as Fulgencio Batista who became President of Cuba in 1940. According to César A. Salgado, "the regime under the president Batista became pro-American²¹⁷ and Cuba became one of the wealthiest countries in Latin America."²¹⁸ However, the unequal retribution of the money with the "boom-bust economy with the dependence on sugar"²¹⁹ and the resentment against American intervention in Cuban affairs led to an increasing frustration on the island. For example, the United States corporations and wealthy individuals controlled almost half of the sugar plantations.²²⁰ Moreover, Batista "with the help of the United States, governed with dictatorial powers and had a repressive regime towards any possible threats."²²¹ At that time a law student from

²¹³ Gerardo Machado was the president of Cuba from 1925 to 1933. He came into power with the support of the army.

²¹⁴ A military junta is a group of military officers who rule a country after taking power.

²¹⁵ Raul De La Madrid, "Cuba international relations with the United States," Introduction to Latin Government and Politics 38440, October 11th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

²¹⁶ Cuba was controlled by Spain. After the United States-Spanish war, Cuba gained their independence. However, the United States tried to keep political and economic power over the island.

²¹⁷ The regime of Fulgencio Batista encouraged United States investments in the island.

²¹⁸ Cesar Salgador, "History of Cuba," Latino Caribbean Culture Diaspora in United States 45900, November 2nd 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

²¹⁹ Raul De La Madrid, Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Cuba named Fidel Castro travelled to Bogota, Colombia. There, he attended riots with some left-wing students who were protesting for their rights.²²² The time spent in Colombia deeply influenced the young Fidel Castro, who decided to run for Cuban presidency in 1952. He was convinced that Cuba should follow the revolutionary path recommended by Karl Marx.²²³ However, the 1952 election was called off. In 1953, Castro decided to lead an insurgency against the Batista government, promoting communist values.²²⁴ However, half of his troops died and he was sent to prison.²²⁵ In 1955, he was exiled from Cuba and went to Mexico. There, he prepared an insurgency with the colonel Che Guevarra from Argentina.²²⁶ Fidel Castro and Che Guevarra had the conviction that the Marxist ideas should be institutionalized in Cuba as soon as possible. In 1956, through a growing insurgency, Castro “developed a fairly strong guerilla warfare with popular support.”²²⁷ Moreover, Batista went into exile to Spain, after he lost the support of the United States.²²⁸ When Castro took power in Cuba in 1959²²⁹ “he became increasingly authoritarian.”²³⁰ He was also the army chief, and adopted nationalist policies, with an increasingly anti-American sentiment.²³¹ Furthermore, he adopted a policy of wealth redistribution and a series of social reforms.²³² These reforms led to a “polarization of Cuba.”²³³ In other words, the

²²² Cesar Salgado, Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

²²⁶ Che Guevarra was an Argentine revolutionary and diplomat. He travelled through Latin America and was astonished by the poverty. He led a revolution with the idea that Latin America had to overthrow capitalism controlled by the United States.

²²⁷ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ History.Com editors, “bay of pigs’ invasion.” H.History.com, A&E Television Networks. September 19th 2009, Online, September 3rd 2018. <<https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/bay-of-pigs-invasion>>

²³⁰ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

²³¹ History.com editors, “bay of pigs’ invasion, Ibid.

²³² Raul De La Madrid, Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

Cuban society was divided between a group of Cuban people who claimed that these reforms were unfair, and another group who thought that the reforms led to more equality.

2- The United States Intervention in the Fidel Castro Regime.

In the context of the Cold War²³⁴ between the Soviet Union and the United States, the American government was increasingly worried about Fidel Castro who “established a diplomatic relationship with the Soviet Union.” From 1959 to 1961, the United States attempted to overthrow Castro.²³⁵ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), “started to think of a way to eliminate Castro.”²³⁶ For example, in 1960 the Eisenhower administration,²³⁷ developed an anti-Castro propaganda.”²³⁸ The United States trained 1,400 Cubans in Guatemala in order to “prepare a para-military force to overthrow the regime.”²³⁹ On April 15th 1961, under President Kennedy, a group of Cuban exiles invaded the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. However, the professor César A. Salgado mentions that the United States “did not go too far and could have done more.”²⁴⁰ As Kennedy claims that the United States did not want to abandon Cuba to the communists,²⁴¹ but also believed that they did not want to “start a fight that might end in a World War III.”²⁴² As a response to this invasion, the Soviet Union under Khrushchev installed missiles in Cuba. These missiles could have reached any

²³⁴ The Cold War is an ideological war that opposed the United States and The Soviet Union. The United States aimed to contain the expansion of communism. The United States wanted to avoid a direct confrontation and provoke a World War III. As a result the confrontations were always in other part of the world such as in Latin America.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ History.com editors, ‘bay of pigs’ invasion, Ibid.

²³⁷ Dwight Eisenhower was president of the United States from 1953 to 1961. Eisenhower authorized some CIA operations around the world to fight against communism.

²³⁸ History.com editors, “bay of pigs invasion.” Loc.cit.

²³⁹ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid

²⁴⁰ Cesar Salgado, Ibid

²⁴¹ History.com, ‘bay of pigs’ invasion. Loc.Cit.

²⁴² Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

American city.²⁴³ The USSR indicated to the United States that they would remove the missiles in Cuba if the United States would remove theirs in Turkey.²⁴⁴ While Cuba dismantled the missiles, Castro demanded that the United States airlines leave the country. As a result, the United States reacted by adopting an embargo²⁴⁵ against Cuba. The embargo cut all commercial exchanges between the two countries.

3- Immigration from Cuba Supported by the United States.

The arrival of power and the social reforms of Fidel Castro led to an increasing polarization of Cuban society.²⁴⁶ Castro declared that 125,000 enemies of the revolution could leave the country as long as “they arranged to have somebody to pick them up on a boat and convey them to Florida.”²⁴⁷ From April to October 1980, Cuban opponents of Castro’s regime left the country from the Mariel Harbor in Cuba. However, Fidel Castro also gave freedom to prisoners²⁴⁸ and to people who were in mental health facilities.²⁴⁹ Those people also escaped Cuba from the Mariel Harbor.

In 1980, President Carter reacted by creating “camps in Southern Miami.”²⁵⁰ In 1981, when Ronald Reagan became president of the United States, immigration from Cuba was supported by the United States. Ronald Reagan talked about Cuban refugees as “my kind of immigrants.”²⁵¹ At the time, the political refugees were given legal status and reunifications of families were a priority.²⁵² For example, in 1994

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Don Munton and David Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, (New York, Oxford University Press 2012) 45.

²⁴⁶ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Andrew Glass, “Castro launches Mariel boatlift April 20, 1980.” *Politico*, Alex Lezelere. April 20th 2018. <<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/20/castro-launches-mariel-boatlift-april-20-1980-528819>>

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Nestor Rodriguez, “Immigration from Cuba.” *Sociology* 352, December 17th 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

²⁵² Ibid.

and 1995 a bilateral accord was adopted between la Havana and Washington. An accord established the “dry foot, wet foot policy.”²⁵³ That is to say that, “Cubans who were intercepted by US authorities at sea are sent home while those made landfall in the United States were allowed to remain and pursue permanent residency after one year.” Throughout the years, Cuba kept emphasizing the idea of fighting against imperialism and the values of the United States.

4- From “Good Immigrants to Bad Ones.”

In 2008, during his presidential campaign, Barack Obama, insisted that it was time ‘to pursue direct diplomacy’²⁵⁴ with Cuba. In 2015, Obama went to La Havana and met Raul Castro, the brother and successor of Fidel Castro. The handshake between the two political leaders represents the end of the policy that allowed Cuban immigrants to be considered as refugees claiming asylum when they touch the American soil. On one hand, some Cubans decided to demonstrate, claiming that the “dry foot, wet foot” policy was essential for Cuba’s political refugee. On the other hand, the Castro’s supporters saw in this handshake a desire from the United States to control Cuba.²⁵⁵

The perception of Cuban immigration has changed over time. For example, according to Saul Landau, “tens of thousands of daily new stories (...) have focused on Cuban communists, human rights violations from totalitarian governments, the

²⁵³ Andrew Glass, Ibid

²⁵⁴ Claire Felter, Danielle Renwick, Cara Ricio “US-Cuba Relations.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. February 26th 2019. Online March 1st 2019 <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-cuba-relations>>.

²⁵⁵ Nestor Rodriguez, “Immigration from Cuba.” Ibid.

failure of its economy.”²⁵⁶ The professor César Salgado highlights that the media portrayed Cuban immigrants as good ones. He claims that “the immigrants were considered as people that had to be saved.”²⁵⁷

However, from a present point of view the media image of Cuba has changed. During an interview that I conducted with Carlos Lopez, a Cuban political refugee,²⁵⁸ he claimed that “the immigration from Cuba is now considered as a threat for the United States.”²⁵⁹ The immigration from Cuba, previously supported by the United States, is now at the center of debates similar to debates those on immigration from other Latin American countries. According to the Migration Policy Institute, “for decades, immigrants from Cuba have held a uniquely preferential position in U.S immigration law (...) Cubans have been among the top ten immigrant populations in the United States.”²⁶⁰

IV/Argentina and the United States, the United States Intervention in South America.

1-The Military Coup d’Etat in 1976 with The Support of the United States.

²⁵⁶ Saul Landau, “US Media Images of Postrevolutionary Cuba: Shaped by government Policy and Commercial Grammar.” *Latin American Perspectives* Vol 33, No 5, *Cuba and the security frame*, September 2006. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27647963?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents> p118.

²⁵⁷ Cesar Salgado, Op.Cit.

²⁵⁸ A political refugee is someone who tries to escape a political persecution in their country. In order to ask the political refugee status, people had to demonstrate that their lives, their human rights are in danger. In order to ask for the asylum status, immigrants need to reach the land of the country where they want to seek asylum for.

²⁵⁹ Carlos Lopez. Personal Interview. September 5th 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

²⁶⁰ Doris Meissner, “Taking action to reflect current reality: Obama administration Ends ‘Wet foot policy, Dry foot’ policies on Cuban Migration,” *Migration policy Institute*, January 2017. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/taking-action-reflect-current-reality-obama-administration-ends-wet-foot-dry-foot-policies>

After the Cuban revolution, the idea of a revolution started to influence other parts of Latin America. During an interview, Luisa Ramirez an Argentinean Professor and Historian at the University of Texas at Austin said that the idea of a revolution found an echo in people.²⁶¹ As a result, societal movements grew challenging the entrenched privileges of local oligarchies as well as U.S. political and economic interests.²⁶² The South American military states decided to counter these social movements throughout the Operation Condor in 1975.²⁶³ The Operation Condor was an “operation system created (...) through which the South American military states shared intelligence and seized, tortured and executed political opponents in one another’s territory.”²⁶⁴ In another interview that I conducted, Professor Raul de la Madrid claimed that the United States supported the Operation by providing arms and by training the military.²⁶⁵ The operation led to people being interrogated and tortured in clandestine prisons.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Luisa Gomez, Personal Interview. November 7th 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

²⁶² Patrice Mc Cherry J, “Operation Condor: Deciphering the US Role.” *Global Policy Reform*, July 2001, Online, May 15th 2018, <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/168/28173.html>> Accessed January 2019.

²⁶³ Luisa Gomez. Personal Interview. November 7th 2018. Austin, Texas.

²⁶⁴ Patrice McSherry J, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Convert War in Latin America*. Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. May 26th 2005. Page 1.

²⁶⁵ Raul De la Madrid. Personal Interview. November 3rd 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

²⁶⁶ “Operation Condor: Former Argentine junta leader jailed,” BBC News, May 28th 2016. Online, December 3rd 2018. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36403909>> Accessed August 3rd 2018.

²⁶⁶ TeleSur English, “The US supported Argentina’s ‘Death Flights,’” December 18th 2016, Online Youtube, April 27th 2019.



These pictures show US support in Argentina. The US army helped the right wing military party to dump bodies of opponents into the ocean. In the text that we can read ,that the American vice president Mondate writes “As a token of our interest we have taken steps to release exports licenses for ambulance aircraft, helicopters, airport radars.”²⁶⁷

In Argentina, the former president, Juan Peron died in 1974. His wife, Isabel Peron became his successor. The military decided to side under the leadership of the General Jorge Rafael Videla. The military led a coup d’état and arrested Isabel Peron. The ambassador of the United States in Argentina reacted to the coup by highlighting the common interest between the U.S. government and the new Argentine regime.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, General Videla promised that he would quickly create a climate for investment more favorable to U.S. interests.²⁶⁹

2-The Dirty War in Argentina and Immigration to the United States from 1974 to 1983.

When the military arrived in power, the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance was created by the military dictatorship in order to fight any enemy of the right-wing parties. From 1974 to 1983, 30,000 people disappeared and acts of tortures were

²⁶⁷ Patrice J. Mc Sherry, Op.Cit.

²⁶⁸ Ibid

common in the whole country and human rights were constantly violated.²⁷⁰ The war against communism was declared in the whole country including among students and old people. This period in Argentina's history is called "the dirty war." Moreover, Operation Condor extended the dirty wars across borders.²⁷¹ For example, people tried to flee to Europe or to the United States. Teresa Contestla, an Argentine woman who fled to Austin, Texas claims that they had to find a way to leave the country.²⁷² According to the Department of Homeland Security, immigration from Argentina in the 1970's concerned political refugees: "The 1970's political refugee were less educated and more diverse."²⁷³ Professor Nestor Rodriguez mentions that the difference between the political refugees between Cuba and Argentina is that the immigration from Argentina was not supported by the United States. People who could flee from Buenos Aires were the ones who already had a family member in the United States and entered thanks to the family reunification policy.²⁷⁴

3-The End of the Dirty War and the Second Immigration to the United States from 1983 to Today.

In 1983, with the economy stagnant owing to the debt crisis that touched the whole Latin American continent, the continuing violation of human rights, and with the loss of the Falkland Islands,²⁷⁵ the military dictatorship lost the support of its

²⁷⁰ Ibid

²⁷¹ J. Patrice Mc Sherry, Op Cit.4.

²⁷² Teresa Contestla. Personal Interview. October 3rd 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

²⁷³ Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "South American Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Policy Institute*, November 7th 2018, Online, Accessed December 7th 2018.

<<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/south-american-immigrants-united-states>>

²⁷⁴ The family reunification program aims to reunite family members. U.S citizens and green card holders can sponsor immediate relatives such as spouses, parents, daughters and sons. This program is also called by the Trump Administration as "the chain migration."

²⁷⁵ Raul De la Madrid, Ibid.

people.²⁷⁶ The first processes against the military for crimes against humanity were conducted. A brain-drain of talented people left the country. The sociologist Nestor Rodriguez explains that when the debt crisis touched Argentina, the people who could leave were the ones who had money.²⁷⁷ During an interview that I conducted with a group of Argentinians, who immigrated to Austin after the Dirty War, people claimed that finding a job was pretty easy in the United States, since companies supported the immigration process. In the group of twenty people that I interviewed, all of them were financially supported by hospitals and schools. The Argentine Roberto Ruiz explained that the debt crisis led people to a bad economic situation; the people who had the opportunity to leave were the ones who already had a good economic situation.²⁷⁸ As a result, the brain drain²⁷⁹ from Argentina to the United States increased a lot. Nestor Rodriguez mentions that such as other countries, the cost of the journey from South America to the United States, is a tremendous obstacle for the low classes to immigrate.²⁸⁰

Overall, throughout the twentieth century, the United States intervention in Latin America is undeniable as we saw with the example of Mexico, El Salvador, Cuba, and Argentina. The political, economic, and social changes led people from Latin America to immigrate to the United States. However, immigrants are different from one country to another. We see examples of diversity in the immigration from Latin America to the United States. From the political refugees supported by the United States in Cuba, the more controlled immigration from El Salvador, the brain drains from Argentina and the economic immigration from Mexico to the United

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Nestor Rodriguez. Personal Interview. September 3rd 2018. Austin, Texas.

²⁷⁸ Roberto Ruiz. Personal Interview. November 22nd 2018. Austin, Texas.

²⁷⁹ The brain drain is an immigration of highly educated people from one country to another. Those people are seeking better opportunities elsewhere that they could not find in their countries.

²⁸⁰ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

States. When immigrants from these countries arrive in the United States, they are lumped by the United States government and by public opinion into one community: the Hispanic community.²⁸¹ Surveys made by the government are good examples of the process of grouping people from different countries into one category of people based solely on the fact that they share the same language which stems from a shared history of Spanish colonization.

In the second part of this research paper I will examine how this grouping of different ethnic groups into the same community has resulted in a unique Hispanic identity that helped them to have a sense of community while integrating into American society.

Part II- Hispanics in the United States between Integration and Rejection

I/ The Situation of the Integration of Mexicans in California and Texas before 1981. The Union between Mexicans to Integrate.

- A) Similarities and Differences between the Mexican Integration and Integration of other Communities in the United States.

1-The Rejection of Languages: The Discriminations towards Immigrants.

²⁸¹ Barbara Curiel, Ibid.

The nation of immigrants is often used to describe the United States.²⁸² President John F. Kennedy points out that “another way of indicating the importance of immigration in the construction of the United States is to point out that every American who ever lived, with the exception of one group, was either an immigrant himself or a descendant of immigrants.”²⁸³ After the establishment of the thirteen English colonies in America, new immigrants arrived in the United States.²⁸⁴ Those immigrants had to integrate into an existing core.²⁸⁵ This existing core was composed of English people with their values.²⁸⁶ For example, the Anglo people who lived in the United States emphasized the ability to speak the English language. Therefore, the non-use or the partial use of the English language was according to them, problematic. For example, children from Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, who could not speak English when they arrived in New York, were viewed as having a lack of intelligence.²⁸⁷ The core perceived this inability of speaking the language as an obstacle to the process of integration to the country.²⁸⁸ Another example of the English-only ideology as a sign of integration was the case of the German community in the twentieth century.²⁸⁹ Anglos demanded that new German immigrants integrate into the Anglo culture by leaving aside their language. The prohibition of German books was the primary tool to make people adapt to the English only policy.²⁹⁰ President Theodore Roosevelt claimed that speaking English is a question of loyalty

²⁸² Bernard A. Weisberger, “A Nation of Immigrants,” *American Heritage*, March 22nd 1994, Online, September 7th 2018, <<https://www.americanheritage.com/nation-immigrants>>

²⁸³ John F. Kennedy, *A Nations of Immigrants*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1964) 15.

²⁸⁴ Nestor Rodriguez, “English Colonies,” *United States Immigration* 4470, October 12th 2018. University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

to the American culture.²⁹¹ Benjamin Franklin believed that German immigrants would change the meaning of being American because of their supposed lack of intelligence.²⁹²

This prejudice against non-English speaking immigrants in the US continued in the case of Hispanic immigration. Those cases found an echo with the example of the Hispanic integration in the United States. Some scholars saw the people who only spoke Spanish or both languages as people who do not want to integrate.²⁹³ Moreover, those scholars also claim that the use of Spanish in the United States could lead to the death of the Anglo culture and the English language in the United States.²⁹⁴ During the interviews that I conducted, the interviewees often mentioned that in their childhood the use of Spanish was associated to the fear of not being accepted. They explained that their parents refused to speak Spanish because they believed it would give their children the chance to better integrate into the new society.²⁹⁵ In other words, the process of leaving aside a language to learn another language is often associated with a complete integration by many institutions and by the immigrants themselves.²⁹⁶ Moreover, many interviewees explained that American society does not value the process of learning a foreign language. They took the example of the United States high school education system, which only requires two years of any foreign language.²⁹⁷ This idea that the institutions do not support bilingualism is shown by the professors and sociologists Alejandro Portes and Ruben

²⁹¹ Alejandro Portes, Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1990) 216.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of the World*, (London: Simon Shuster, 1997) 45

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Luis Hernandez Ramirez. Personal Interview. Arcata, California.

²⁹⁶ Nestor, Rodriguez. Op.Cit.

²⁹⁷ Luis Hernandez Ramirez. Op.Cit.

G. Rumbaut.²⁹⁸ Professor Rodriguez adds that although the the United States is a country with numerous languages; it is also a country where languages are dying.²⁹⁹

2- The Discrimination against Mexicans through Religion.

Another aspect concerning the integration of immigrants in the United States is the question of religion. The first waves of immigrants in the United States were mainly composed of people who fled from religious persecutions in Europe.³⁰⁰ At the time, Protestantism was the most common religion in the United States. However, Irish and Italian immigrants were mainly Catholics. Italians and Irish were lynched because of they belonged to the Catholic faith.³⁰¹ Here again, we see the parallelism between those cases and what is happening with the Hispanic immigration in the United States. Professor Samuel Huntington claimed that Hispanics are too different from American culture, due to their religious beliefs as members of the Catholic Church.³⁰² He claims that “the American creed is the unique creation of a dissenting protestant culture.”³⁰³ Portes and Rumbaut explain that the Protestant majority tried to keep the nation culturally and religiously homogenous.³⁰⁴ Angelica Huerta, a former HSU student, explains that as a Catholic in the United States, she was often categorized as non-Christian by other Christian communities.³⁰⁵

3-Mexican People that were always Considered to be Brown People.

²⁹⁸ Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 163.

³⁰⁰ Nestor Rodriguez, Op, Cit.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Samuel Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, (London: Simon and Shuster, 2005) 41.

³⁰⁴ Alejandro Portes, Ruben G. Rumbaut, Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Angelica Huerta. Personal Interview. August 3rd 2018. Arcata, California.

However, Hispanic issues of integration are also different from previous waves of integration. In the case of immigrants from Europe, their communities eventually became “white” in other words, the perception that people had of those immigrants changed through time. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Italians immigrants were considered as brown³⁰⁶ and the very opposite of Anglo culture. The color of their skin was used as evidence that they were naturally inferior.³⁰⁷ However, after some years in American society, those same Italians were classified as white. According to the research of historian David R. Roediger, those Italians were placed into a state of in-between that is to say above people of color and below white people.³⁰⁸ The German immigrants in the nineteenth century were also considered as non-white by President Thomas Jefferson.³⁰⁹ However, eventually as they became more wealthy, they were incorporated into the American core.³¹⁰ Furthermore, those people became progressively white in opposition to new waves of immigration. According to Professor Curiel, Mexicans always seemed to be different from the core. For some sociologists, the more likely you look white in the United States, the easier it is to integrate. In other words, the ability to find work and to be able to climb more easily the social hierarchy of the society could depend on the color of your skin.³¹¹ The existence of this ideology was affirmed by professor Curiel³¹² who claimed that according to personal experiences, that white privilege and supremacy in the United States do exist. Professor Curiel points out that in her case the fact that she is light-skinned helps her in her daily life. She noticed the difference

³⁰⁶Nestor Rodriguez, Op.Cit.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and The Making of America*. (New Westminster: Post Hypnotic Press Inc,1991) 57.

³⁰⁹ Ibid,65.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Georges Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press,1998)100.

³¹²Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview. Ibid.

between her own experiences and those of her little sister who is brown and who had troubles finding housing. In her poems, she emphasizes how difficult it is to find a house in northern California for people of color.³¹³

Moreover, another tremendous difference is that Hispanic immigration started with Mexican immigration. As mentioned before, since the creation of the country, Mexican immigration was part of the history of the United States. In other words, Hispanic immigration started long before the different waves of immigration. According to Rodriguez, the people who came first to a country usually become better integrated.³¹⁴ For the more recent immigration, sociologists claim the process of integration would take longer for new waves of immigrants. However, in terms of access to work and education, Hispanic immigrants from Mexico are still behind immigration from Asia and Europe. As mentioned before, those differences could be explained by the fact that immigration from Europe concerns more people with a higher level of education. Whereas, the migration from Mexico generally involves less educated people who try to cross the border between Mexico and the United States due to the proximity between the two countries.

Those similarities show that immigration from Latin America is also at the heart of debates. However, nowadays, those differences also bring new discussions with new challenges.

- B) Integration of Mexicans Immigrants in Texas and California Before 1981: A Slow and Difficult Road towards Integration in the United States in the Twentieth century. Mexicans Unifications to Fight Discrimination and to Try to Integrate.

³¹³ Barbara Curiel, *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems* (Florida: Anhinga Press Tallassee, 2014) 4

³¹⁴ Nestor Rodriguez. Personal Interview. September 3rd 2018, University of Texas at Austin.

1- The Cases of Transnationalism between the United States and Mexico at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. Mexican People not considered by the Core as People that Needed to be Integrated.

Mexicans who worked in the United States but lived in Mexico were also victims of discrimination. However, the core did not see the need to integrate them since Mexicans came to the United States through programs that were economically advantageous for America industry such as the Bracero program. Professor Rodriguez claims that the questions of integration were not at the center of public debates for Mexican workers who came with agricultural programs. Mexican people may have been present in the US society, but it was commonly thought that they would have to go home eventually after the end of their contracts.³¹⁵ Professor Lilia Rosas mentioned that transnationalism³¹⁶ of the people who came with the Bracero Program immigrants or the people who lived between the two countries were not problematic. Some people stayed during the time of their contracts in the United States and went back to their country frequently, while others were crossing the border every day to go to school. Victor Martin, a Mexican American who lives in San Diego, explains that in 1970 he had to cross the border every morning. His school was in San Diego and he had to go back home every night to Baja California in Mexico. According to Martin, even though the United States became the home of millions of Mexicans the integration into the core of the United States did not become central to the core's preoccupations.³¹⁷ People felt Mexicans were closely linked to the United States. However, according to Professors Portes and Rumbaut, the people who underwent transnational activities were more likely to be established and to have access to better

³¹⁵ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

³¹⁶ Lilia Rosas. Personal Interview. October 11th 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

³¹⁷ Victor Martin. Personal Interview. January 25th 2018. University of Texas at Austin.

education.³¹⁸ Even though they were seen as outsiders by the core, they still had some elements of integration in society.

Furthermore, the integration from other parts of the world was more at the center of debates than the integration of Hispanics. For example, the integration of Russian and Chinese people was of more concern than the integration from Mexico. The fear of communism pushed American society to promote a quick integration of those immigrants.

2- Spatial Discrimination of Mexicans at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century and its Current Consequences.

Mexicans living in the United States were victims of discrimination. In my research in the Mexican neighborhood situated in East Austin, the first thing that I noticed is the presence of many manufacturers and the water pollution in this part of the city. Maria Gonzales, a 65-year-old woman, explained to me that the neighborhood is entirely forgotten by the city.³¹⁹ Some history majors at UT Austin told me that the funding for middle school and high school has always been lower in this part of the city.³²⁰ According to two teachers who work in East Austin, the differences concern lower investments in the teaching materials but also in the funding for low-income students' breakfast at school.³²¹ Concerning the pollution of the water and the air, professor Rosaz explains that since the creation of the city of Austin Texas, minorities were placed in the area with less suitable environmental conditions.³²² Austin is not the only city in Texas that is affected by environmental

³¹⁸ Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, Op.Cit.40.

³¹⁹ Maria Gonzalez. Personal Interview. November 14th 2018. Austin, Texas.

³²⁰ Nicholas Salazar and Rohan Mirchandani. Personal Interview. February 3rd 2019. Austin, Texas.

³²¹ Destiny Ramirez and Rosa Perez. Personal Interview. December 1st 2018. Austin, Texas.

³²² Lilia Rosas. Ibid.

racism. For example, in El Paso air pollution has been noted to be much higher in the Mexican neighborhood due to decisions that were taken by city planner.³²³ The city decided to build a metal scarp yard a few feet away from an elementary school.³²⁴ They also built a maquiladora next to the river.



This photo was taken by Naveena Sadasivam in El Paso Texas in 2017.³²⁵

Inhabitants of those neighborhoods directly point out contamination that they are victims of and ask for better access to education. The fact that there is not enough funding in education from the State and the fact that the life of these people are in danger in this area, are evidence that spatial discrimination does exist. Moreover, this idea of environmental racism in Mexican neighborhoods is confirmed by Professor Jennifer Najera who explains that during the third-decade of the twentieth century, Mexicans were deliberately segregated from the “white group”.³²⁶ Najera studies the case of the city of La Feria in southwest Texas, near the border with Mexico. She explains that this spatial separation of Mexican people from the core is an obstacle to

³²³ Lilia Rosas.Ibid.

³²⁴ Naveena Sadasivam, “Alleging ‘Environmental Racism,’ El Paso Activists File Civil Rights Complaint Against School District,” Observer, December 2017,Online, March 2nd 2019.

<<https://www.texasobserver.org/alleging-environmental-racism-el-paso-activists-file-civil-rights-complaint-against-school-district/>>

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Jennifer Najera, *The Borderland of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Texas: The University of Texas Press,2016) 23.

integration and evidence of racial exclusions.³²⁷ Najera concludes that Mexicans were seen by the core as inferior by nature and therefore were constant victims of discrimination.³²⁸ She points out the fact that Mexicans were seen as ineligible citizens and their claim to belonging to the United States always seen as limited.³²⁹ Najera compares the Anglos and the Mexican neighborhood in La Feria. She notices that the houses of the Mexican neighborhood "were constructed such that they would be five-ten feet apart, the minimum amount of distance to comply with a fire safety code"³³⁰ and with a "significant lack of infrastructures."³³¹ She interviewed Antonia Garza who claims that in the 1930s the Mexican neighborhood was composed of a big circle and a lot of people in the area lived together there. He described an outhouse in the center that everybody used.³³² Furthermore, she also argues that in her research on the local newspaper of la Feria, the Mexicans are barely mentioned in the farming industry, despite representing a considerable proportion of the working force in this field.³³³ In other words, Mexicans were excluded entirely from the core of La Feria even when they were spatially present.³³⁴ To emphasize the importance of segregation to Mexican communities, Najera interviewed Mr. Martinez who lived in La Feria. Mrs. Martinez explained that he could not feel the discrimination because the only culture that he was surrounded by was the Mexican culture.³³⁵ This example shows us that the social interactions between the Mexican immigrants and the core were rigid even if they shared the same location. Najera explains how these rigid

³²⁷ Ibid,19.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid,29

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Antonio Garza. Interview by Jennifer Najera.Ibid,30.

³³³ Jennifer Najera.Ibid,42

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Mrs Martinez. Interview by Jennifer Najera. Ibid,36.

racial boundaries are present in Texas.³³⁶ Professor Curiel also adds that the spatial integration of Mexican people always started with integration into a Mexican core but not into an American core.³³⁷ In other words, Mexican neighborhoods started to grow and to have a separate social space inside the United States. Najera explains that her interviewees called their neighborhood, "Mexicanita" which is to say Little Mexico, this shows the link with immigrants and their integration into space but not into the United States. Moreover, the segregation of people is also seen in the common areas between the different communities. Jesse Rosas, a native of San Antonio, explains his experience with public transportations in the 1950s. "When I was a child, all the Mexican folks had to go to the back of the bus. Everybody knew their place and where they should sit."

C) The Political Integration of Mexicans before 1981: The Fight Against Discrimination.

1-The "Sleeping Giant of the United States"?

In the United States, the Mexican minority is often referred to as "the sleeping giant." This nickname refers to the political inactivity of the Mexican minority.³³⁸ However, Mexican people did try to fight the discrimination they had to face and to integrate into American society into the political sphere. For example, since the 1950s in the state of Texas, the Mexican community has tried to gather into political organizations to make their voices heard. Their main goal was to preserve their culture and to fight discrimination towards their community. For example, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which was created in 1929 in Corpus Christi in 1929 aimed to advocate for more civil rights for the Mexican community.³³⁹

³³⁶ Jennifer Najera, Ibid, 52.

³³⁷ Barbara Curiel. Personal Interview. Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization, Avant-Garde of The Chicano Movement in Texas* (Texas: University of Texas Press 1995) 5.

The Mexican American Youth Organizations (MAYO) created in 1967 in San Antonio was another important political organization which aimed to run candidates against the dominant Democratic Party in order to build up Mexican political power.³⁴⁰ Those organizations gave a sense of community that the historian Emilio Zamora referred as “a cultural frame of reference for Mexicans in public life.”³⁴¹ For example, Mexican people demonstrated together against injustice at the Cristal School Walkouts in the spring of 1969.³⁴² They were also organizing some conferences to explain their goals like La Conferencia de las Mujeres Unidas³⁴³ where women gathered in order to talk about racial inequalities in Texas.³⁴⁴ The conferences and the demonstrations were the main tools of those organizations.

2- Chicano Movement in the United States and Political Engagement

These organizations were part of the Chicano movement born in the 1960s³⁴⁵ in response to social oppression from the American core.³⁴⁶ The word “Chicano” initially refers to the Mexican American populations in the United States. They reacted against the lack of Hispanic representatives in politics and discrimination towards farm workers.³⁴⁷ The labor organizer Clemente Idar points out the suffering and the state of semi-slavery in which Mexican workers in the agricultural field lived.³⁴⁸ He talks about the “barbaric state of Texas” that put Mexicans in a state of

³⁴⁰ Ibid

³⁴¹ Gabriela Gonzalez, *Redeeming La Raza Transborder Modernity Race, Respectability and Rights*, (Oxford University Press 2018)9.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Armando Navarro, Ibid,7.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish, *Viva La Raza A History of Chicano Identity and Resistance*, (Seattle:Red Letter Press,2008)9.

³⁴⁷ Miguel E. Gallardo, “Chicano,” Encyclopedia Britannica, Online, January 7th 2019
<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chicano>>

³⁴⁸ Nadra Kareem Nittle, “History of the Chicano Movement,” ThoughtCo, January 21st 2019, Online, February 3rd 2019. <<https://www.thoughtco.com/chicano-movement-brown-and-proud-2834583>>

tyranny.³⁴⁹ He also emphasizes the idea that people were so unhappy that Mexican workers clearly expressed their desire to go back to their home country.³⁵⁰ Moreover, these organizations enable Mexican immigrants who were from different parts of the country from Oaxaca to Zacatera to find a collective voice in the political sphere of the United States.³⁵¹

The members of MAYO decided to create a political party to have a voice in the political system and not prevent economic abuse of Mexican laborers.³⁵² On January 17th, 1970, La Raza Unida Party was created. This political party embraced the idea that Latin American is part of a cosmic race. This cosmic race emphasizes the idea that the new leaders of the world would be those who are from a mixed-race.³⁵³ The ideology created by the philosophers José Vasconcelos was used as gospel in different demonstrations in favor of Chicano rights.³⁵⁴

La Raza Unida won two legislature elections in 1964 with Maria Castillo Adelfa Callejo and Silvia Hernandez.³⁵⁵ The party which was born in Texas grew in other states, especially in the state of California.³⁵⁶ Corona Bert, an active member of La Raza Unida, explained in a speech that the Mexican community is considered alien all of the United States, not only the State of Texas. However; at the end of the 1970s, the leaders of the party began discussing “the rise and fall of La Raza Unida.”³⁵⁷ The Mexican party had to face disorganizations and the lack of motivation of the new generation.³⁵⁸

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Gabriela Gonzalez, Ibid,10.

³⁵³ Ibid

³⁵⁴ Ibid,11.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of The Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004)* 41.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 54.

³⁵⁸ Ibid,75.

D)The Fight against Language Discrimination in the Mexican Community in the United States.

1- Segregation as a Pattern of Domination.

As previously studied, the question of integration in the United States was also seen through language. The Spanish language during the first part of the 20th century was to be eradicated through education. The documentary *Stolen Education*³⁵⁹ explains how children were degraded and dissuaded from speaking their native language.³⁶⁰ The documentary gives the example of Lupe a nine year old second grader who stayed for three years in the same class because she was Mexican-American.³⁶¹ In 1956, eight students testified in front of the federal court in order to end the discriminatory practice in southwest Texas.³⁶² Professor Gutierrez at UTA explains that in his childhood in Laredo, Texas, he had to take the same exam that examined fluency in the English language with the more recent immigrants despite being born in the United States. All these examples show that Mexican children were discriminated. In California, Mexican children were also victims of discrimination. This indicates that the segregation was a practice that concerns people at a national level.³⁶³ The historian Gilbert G. Gonzalez explains that in Santa Ana³⁶⁴, California, the segregation of Mexicans developed at the beginning of the twentieth century until the mid-century. He also claims that the segregation continued a pattern of domination that started with the war between Mexico and the United States.³⁶⁵ He

³⁵⁹Rodolfo Luna, "Stolen Education," Prime Video, Enrique Aleman, Esperanza Aleman, 2017
<<https://www.videoproject.com/Stolen-Education.html>>

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Gilbert G Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, (Texas: University of North Texas Press, 1990)58.

³⁶⁵ Ibid

explains that the goal is the Americanization of those children in order to train them for certain occupations open for Mexicans with US citizenship or not.³⁶⁶ The segregation enabled the core to use a less costly education for Mexicans.³⁶⁷ The teachers who had to teach Mexican children were paid 80 to 100 dollars less per year than teachers for Anglo children.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, the school was divided between the white folks that were also in academic preparation and manual training for Mexican³⁶⁹ This segregation of children shows us that the discrimination of Mexican touches every field in the United States. Mexican children who were also called “Spanish children” had to emphasize on the use of writing and the speaking of the English language in their education.³⁷⁰

2-Mexican-American Fight against Discrimination

However, people did fight; organizations such as MAYO fought for the conservation of Spanish. The link with the language was a way to fight discrimination and to value their culture in the United States. Moreover, the majority of the conferences of La Raza Unida were conducted in the Spanish language. In the archives of the Benson Library at UTA, I consulted the letters that Martha Cotera wrote to her brother.³⁷¹ She was talking about the importance of the Spanish language and the preservation of the culture that has to be the priority of the organization in order to face discrimination.³⁷² As a result, the newspapers which were linked to those organizations were written in Spanish.³⁷³ Professor Rosaz mentions that some Mexicans parents tried to teach and to convey the Mexican values in their house. A

³⁶⁶ Ibid,62

³⁶⁷ Barbara Curiel, Ibid

³⁶⁸ Gilbert G. Gonzalez,Ibid, 58

³⁶⁹Ibid,59

³⁷⁰Ibid

³⁷¹ Martha Cotera, “To Roberto Cotera,” November 7th 1965. El Paso,Texas.

³⁷² Ibid

³⁷³ Ibid

parallel education is born where the community united to teach the Spanish language on the basis that the language should be saved.³⁷⁴ The Mexican values were also emphasized.³⁷⁵ However, these struggles did not mean that Mexicans did not want to impose their culture in the United States. On the contrary, they were trying to combine their culture into the American culture. Professor Gutierrez explained that in her childhood people embraced their double culture as Mexicans who were born and raised in the United States. Furthermore, he also emphasized that, in his classroom, most of the children spoke Spanish and English perfectly.³⁷⁶ The historian Gabriela Gonzalez emphasizes the biculturalism and the bilingualism of the people who live by the border. She also adds that members of LULAC, for example, pledged allegiance to the United States, used English as an official language and considered LULAC to be a patriotic organization.³⁷⁷ It shows us that Mexicans embrace their double cultures and are not trying to impose their culture to the United States by highlighting their two identities.

II/The new waves of Hispanics in the United States since 1981.

A) The Integration of New Waves of Hispanics, between Acceptation and Rejection.

1-An Ambiguous Position of the US Government towards the Integration of Hispanics since 1981.

In the 1970s, as previously explained new waves of immigration came from El Salvador, Cuba and Argentina increased in the United States. Those immigrants came whether to escape a political situation in their countries or find new

³⁷⁴ Lilia Rosas, Personal Interview, Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁷⁶ Nestor Gutierrez, Personal Interview, Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Gabriela Gonzales, Op.Cit.3

opportunities in the United States.³⁷⁸ When Reagan's administration took power in 1981, he committed his administration to do whatever possible to prevent the power of the Soviet Union.³⁷⁹ As a result, the integration of the immigrants who were escaping from communism was supported by the United States.³⁸⁰ He also declares that “Latinos are Republicans; they just don't know it yet.”³⁸¹ This sentence shows us that immigrants were welcome in the country as long as they were perceived to have the same political, values as the United States. As a result, in 1986 the Immigration Reform Act (IRCA) was adopted. This law gave amnesty to three million immigrants that were in an illegal situation in the country. However, this law came hand in hand with the reinforcement of the act that condemns companies that hire illegal immigrants. Moreover, the control of the security at the border increased.³⁸² The legalization of those immigrants led to an increased number of people who asked for a green card through the 1965 Amendments.³⁸³ This amendment allowed immediate relatives to be reunited with a member of their family who has US nationality or a green card in the United States.³⁸⁴ Moreover, in 1992 under the Georges H. W. Bush administration, the Temporary Protected Status was established by Congress. This law protected immigrants in case of natural disasters and social unrest in their country of origin.³⁸⁵ The TPS holders were allowed to work and study in the United States

³⁷⁸ Nestor Rodriguez, “Central America and United States,” United States Immigration 44790, University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

³⁷⁹ Thomas Carothers, *In The Name of Democracy U.S Policy Toward Latin America In the Reagan Years*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1993) 25.

³⁸⁰ Ibid

³⁸¹ “Ronald Reagan On Immigration”, On The Issues, Online, February 3rd 2019, http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Ronald_Reagan_Immigration.htm

³⁸² Barbara Curiel, Ibid.

³⁸³ “Ronald Reagan On Immigration,” Ibid

³⁸⁴ Nestor Rodriguez “Protection of Immigrants”, Ibid, December 3rd 2018, Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid

during two years. However, as mentioned before, this TPS led to an increase of remittances³⁸⁶ in the countries of origin. In other words, the dependence of Latin America economies on the United States increased.³⁸⁷ Due to the earthquake that occurred in January 2001 and the gang violence in El Salvador 262,500 people were granted a TPS status in the United States.³⁸⁸

Moreover, Ronald Reagan, after the arrival of the Mariel Exodus of 1980, talked about the Cuban immigrants as his “kind of immigrants.”³⁸⁹ As a result, political refugee status³⁹⁰ was granted to immigrants in order to make their integration quicker.³⁹¹ Between the years of 1981 and 1990, 145,000 Cubans were administered in the United States. The author Achy Obejas described in her novel that “in all a formality because this is 1963, and no Cuban claiming political asylum gets turned away.”³⁹² However, after the Mariel Exodus, the Cubans started to get “entrants pending social status.”³⁹³ In other words, they were still accepted in the United States but without the rights of political asylum.³⁹⁴ Meaning that, they could be deported from the United States at any time.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, Portes and Rumbaut emphasize the idea that the presence of delinquents and people with a mental health condition stigmatized the immigrants from the Mariel boat.³⁹⁶ As a result, according to a poll, Cubans were perceived

³⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁸⁷ Ibid

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

³⁹⁰ A refugee is someone that fled for political, social or environmental reasons their country and stay in another country

³⁹¹ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid.

³⁹² Achy Obejas, *We Came All The Way From Cuba, So You Could Dress Like This*, (New Jersey: Cleis Press: 1994) 14

³⁹³ Ibid

³⁹⁴ Ibid

³⁹⁵ Ibid

³⁹⁶ Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, Ibid, 112.

by Americans as the second less desirable group of neighbors.³⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the case of the integration of immigrants from Argentina, the position the United States is also ambiguous. As previously mentioned, immigration from Argentina consisted of people with a high level of education. Some Argentineans that I interviewed mentioned the sponsors that they got and emphasized the idea that the US government was supporting their integration with rapid actions from administration.³⁹⁸ Professor Rodriguez mentions that in the history of immigration and integration in the USA people with a high level of education were supported by the USA.

2-The Integration of the Undocumented Hispanic Youth in the United States.

Furthermore, more recently, Barack Obama, in the United States adopted in 2012 the program Differed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This program aimed to help the children who were brought illegally to the United States and were less than 31 before the year 2012. Those people had to have lived in the United States continuously since 2007 without any illegal experience.³⁹⁹ The eligible people also must have graduated from high school or be involved in the US military. Tally Chavez, a 22 years old HSU student explains the importance of the DACA program in her life. She explains that she needed the DACA program to have the possibility to work in the United States and to continue her undergraduate degree. She points out the fact that every two years, she has to

³⁹⁷ Jorge Duany, "Cuban Communities in the United States: Migration Waves, Settlnent Patterns and Socioeconomic Diversity." OpenEdition Journal , Online, September 6th 2018

<<https://journals.openedition.org/plc/464?lang=en>>

³⁹⁸ Stefan Robles and Florencia Ini. Personal Interviews. July 5th via Skype.

³⁹⁹ Daca Information, University of California At Berkeley, Online, December 27th 2018, <https://undocu.berkeley.edu/legal-support-overview/what-is-daca/>

apply for the renewal of her status that costs 650 US dollars. She also explains that the process of renewal takes a long time. As a result, she could not get her job or apply for any scholarship when her status was pending.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, according to the research of William Schwab, the recent federal court had to take a decision to follow President Trump's decision or not to cancel the DACA program.⁴⁰¹ In the case that they do, the DACA holders would lose their protection in March 2020.⁴⁰² In other words, the status of the DACA holders is still fragile. Another student HSU student and DACA holder, Eduardo Perez, explains that the DACA program was a way to integrate more people, but the process takes a while and is not a path to citizenship.⁴⁰³ The DACA program was not the first program that was introduced in order to protect the undocumented youth in the United States. For example, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (Dream Act) was a bill proposed in Congress in 2001 that provides legal status in the United States for undocumented youth. This bill aimed eventually to provide a path to citizenship to those people.⁴⁰⁴ Eduardo Perez reminds us that he feels first American and sees a difference between the Mexican youth and himself. He points out that all his life was in the United States and, like a lot of DREAMERS, he doesn't see his life in his country of origin. However, this bill never passed.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, since Donald Trump presidency, young Hispanics in the United States according to polls are concerned of possible

⁴⁰⁰ Tally Chavez. Personal Interviews. August 4th 2018 via Skype.

⁴⁰¹ William Schwab, *Dreams Derailed Undocumented Youths in The Trump Era*, (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2018) 40.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Eduardo Perez. Personal Interview. August 4th 2018 via Skype.

⁴⁰⁴ "What is the Dream Act and Who are the DREAMERS," ADL fighting Hate For Good, Online, February 1st 2019, <<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-is-the-dream-act-and-who-are-the-dreamers>>

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

deportation for themselves and/or for one of their relative's due to the increased presence of ICE.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, Portes and Rumbault emphasize the idea that, for people who immigrate, the context of reception and inclusive policies from the receiving government is important since they can have an easier process of integration.⁴⁰⁷ In other words, a government which supports immigrants enables integration to be faster.⁴⁰⁸ Furthermore, when Portes and Rumbault looked at data from the Chiswick poll which analyzed the earning of Hispanics, they found that people who came from Cuba before the 1980s did not receive as much as they did after the 1980s when immigration was encouraged.⁴⁰⁹ The people who had access to education in the United States were more likely to have a higher income that is to say three times more than those who could not afford an education.⁴¹⁰

B) The Integration of Hispanics in the United States Through the Construction of a New Collective Identity.

1-Hispanics: A New Identity in the United States.

The term “Hispanics” is a word that was invented in 1970 by the USA Census Bureau⁴¹¹ with the goal to describe communities from Latin America, who had a link Spanish and live in the United States.⁴¹² In other words, the communities that were from different parts of Latin America started to be categorized as the same people in

⁴⁰⁶ Nestor, Rodriguez. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, Op.Cit.139

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

⁴⁰⁹ Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, Op.Cit.136

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Barbara Curiel, Ibid

⁴¹² Ibid.

the United States. Helen Acosta a 20 years old student from Los Angeles, whose parents are from El Salvador claims that in the US, people instantly think that since the Hispanic community speaks Spanish that means that they all have the same culture and come from the same place, Mexico.⁴¹³ She explains that cultures from El Salvador to Argentina are entirely different from one another even in the way that people eat and speak.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, the professor Curiel points out the fact that the US government started to gather people into the same communities, this provoked a reaction from public opinion. They considered this categorization as a form of discrimination. In other words, the non-acknowledgment of the different and diverse cultures of Latin America was the subject of debates.⁴¹⁵ However, throughout time this labeling caused the Mexican, Cuban, Salvadorian, etc. communities to feel close to each community that was from Latin America.⁴¹⁶ Professor Curiel explains that by gathering people from Latin America, they started to develop a sense of community based on a common element: the Spanish language.⁴¹⁷ The Argentinian Francisco Chada explains that his parents felt Argentinean when they first came to the United States and through time started to feel integrated into the Hispanic community. They became more and more aware that they were from Latin America and not only from Argentina since the US society made them feel that they were the same.⁴¹⁸ Another Argentinean, Lucia Varlega, explains that this identity as Hispanics started to grow always along side with other communities in the United States.⁴¹⁹ As a result, the Hispanic community started to use the words “Hispanxs or Latinx” in order to be

⁴¹³ Helen Acosta, Personal Interview, August 3rd Via Skype.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Barbara Curiel, Ibid

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Francisco Chada. Personal Interview. University of Texas at Austin.

⁴¹⁹ Lucia Valega. Personal Interview. Austin, Texas.

inclusive as much as possible. Then the word Hispanics, which was initially used and seen as pejorative became a word that was commonly accepted and embraced by people from Latin American heritage in the United States.⁴²⁰ Moreover, as previously seen, the Chicano movement was born for the Mexican-American community in the United States. Throughout times, the word Chicano started to include all people from Latin America as well.⁴²¹ As an example, La Raza Unida the political power that reunited the Chicano community in Texas started to grow in California by including all the Hispanic communities.

However, the name Hispanic was not the only the representation of this new group of people, language became a real tool to unify the Hispanics in the United States as well. As previously said, Professor Samuel Huntington claims in his book, *the Clash of Civilization and the Remaking World of Other* that Hispanics represent a threat to the Anglo culture and the English language.⁴²² He argues that people from Latin America are trying to impose Spanish. However, according to the research of Professor Rodriguez, the people who arrived in the United States try to integrate through the English language.⁴²³ Rodriguez explains that second generation of Hispanics speaks both languages. The third generation usually only speaks English. Furthermore, after the arrival of immigrants, a mixed language started to grow in the United States, the Spanglish language. The Spanglish language is a symbol of the new identity that is formed in the United States. The sociologist Llan Stavans talks about the unification of the language throughout the United States. He points out that the Spanglish spoken by the different Hispanic communities was different from one community to the other. However, there is a homogenous process of the Spanglish

⁴²⁰ Barbara Curiel, Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid

⁴²² Samuel Huntington, Op.Cit.199.

⁴²³ Nestor Rodriguez. Personal Interview. Austin, Texas.

language.⁴²⁴ Moreover, the Spanglish language is not a reflection of a desire to not integrate or a desire to impose the Hispanic culture since again according to the research after two to three generations people do speak English most of the time. Angelica Huerta a Mexican Americans who lives in Northern California explains that the fact that they could use both languages at the same time makes her feel close to other Hispanics from other states. Nicholas Salazar, a Mexican American from San Antonio, explains that it gives a sense of community and it reminds them of the heritage of their parents while also in the United States, since the Spanglish is predominantly prevalent in the United States.⁴²⁵

All of these elements show that a new identity was created in the United States with the different communities of the United States that are from Latin America. This new identity as Hispanics in the United States is a tool for those people to integrate more in the United States.

2- Hispanics of the United States are United to Integrate into the United States and Fight against Discrimination.

In the United States, some scholars claim that the presence of millions of Hispanics in the country represents a threat to the United States as their cultures are different.⁴²⁶ They claim for example, that the Mexican people want to take back the lands that were previously part of Mexico and that Mexican people call Azlan.⁴²⁷ They also highlight the fact that Mexicans claimed that they did not cross the border

⁴²⁴ Llan Stavans, *Spanglish The Making of New American Language*, (New York:Harper Perennial,2004) 67

⁴²⁵ Nicholas Salazar. Personal Interview. November 7th 2018, Austin, Texas

⁴²⁶ Samuel Huntington,Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

and that the border crossed them and used that as evidence of the Hispanics desire not to integrate the United States.⁴²⁸ However, as Professor Fernando Castillo explains, remembering history and people's heritage does mean necessarily that there is a rejection of the United States and its culture. Professor Rodriguez explains that as a group, the Hispanic population represents a considerable percentage of those involved in the US army.⁴²⁹ According to Pew Research, 15 percent of the US army is Hispanic.⁴³⁰ This percentage keeps climbing.⁴³¹ In other words, Hispanics do try to integrate.

Moreover, Hispanic people also gathered into the neighborhood after being separated in different parts of the city. For example, the Mexican neighborhood and the Salvadorian one are now connected to the town of Austin, Texas. When I was walking in the Mexican neighborhood, I noticed the dominant presence of the Salvadorian supermarkets. Professor Rodriguez explains that those neighborhoods are the result of a collective identity as Hispanics that grew up in the United States. When the new immigrants arrived in the United States, they try to settle first in the neighborhood of their home country in the United States. Portes and Rumbault talk about "Ethnic enclaves" that help the immigrants when they arrive in the United States through the social network that the previous immigrants created.⁴³² This spatial integration created a shared identity where people can help each other find work

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, "Integration of Hispanics in The American Army," Ibid, December 1st 2018

⁴³⁰ Kim Parkey, Anthony Cillufo, Renee Stepler, "6 facts about the U.S. military and its changing demographics," Pew Research Center, April 13rd 2017, Online, January 22nd 2018
<<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/13/6-facts-about-the-u-s-military-and-its-changing-demographics/>>

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, Op.Cit, 241.

together. However, after some time in the ethnic enclaves, people start to go to other Hispanic neighborhoods to find more jobs and more social networks.⁴³³

This mutual help between different communities of Latin America has one goal to integrate into the United States. For example, Ana Castillo a Mexican student who arrived at the age of nine in California, explains that she got employed with the help of the Salvadorian people that she knew. She claims that the Hispanic community does help in order to find work. She remembers that, in Orange County she attended a school that was predominantly Hispanics. She explains that the Hispanic community was always helpful concerning the process of learning the English language. The previous generations are helping the ones that are newly arrived.⁴³⁴ In other words, the social networks created by Hispanics are always related to a desire to integrate. In Universities, the Hispanics also gather in order to integrate. For example, in both states in California and Texas, in the Universities of HSU California and UTA, groups of Hispanic students work together to help their communities become more accepted in the United States. For example, in Northern California HSU, the Scholars Without Borders was created. This organization aimed to help undocumented youth on campus. They try to keep them in touch with potential jobs offer and support them financially. They also created a safe place to talk every Friday.⁴³⁵ This organization works hand in hand with the Latinx department. In UT Austin, the Hispanic Student Association tries to become a bridge between Hispanic students of UT and some American companies. Sabrina Herrero, a 20-year-old student and vice president of this organization, explains that some US companies try to be more diverse in terms of employees. That is the reason why they reached out to

⁴³³ Ibid

⁴³⁴ Ana Castillo. Personal Interview. December 7th 2017 via Whatsapp.

⁴³⁵ Ibid

student organizations. She points out the fact that they sent approximately 80 Curricula Vitae per month.⁴³⁶

C) California and Texas on the Integration of Hispanics.

Moreover, when I conducted my research, I wanted to compare the process of integration of Hispanics in California and Texas. According to ten Hispanics students who were originally from California but grew up in Texas, they felt more welcome in California than Texas. The majority of them mentioned the fact that they did not feel welcome in big cities such as Houston or Dallas. However, they point out the exception of Austin which they considered as “the blue water drops in the red ocean.”⁴³⁷ In the level of the state, my goal was to see whether the Californian state was more cooperative or not concerning the integration of Hispanics. Since the creation of the status of sanctuary cities in 1979⁴³⁸ twenty cities/counties in California decided to declare that they were sanctuary cities, with the city of Los Angeles as the first one.⁴³⁹ This status limits collaboration with the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.⁴⁴⁰ Texas does not count any cities with this status. However, San Antonio which is not an unofficial sanctuary city has its characteristic. Moreover, at the beginning of the year 2018, a law has been passed in the Court of Texas that allows police officers to control the papers to check people are papers of based solely their physical appearance.⁴⁴¹ However, the number of sanctuary cities does not mean that the state of California has a perfect process of integration for the Hispanics

⁴³⁶ Sabrina Herrero. Personal Interview. December 12th 2018, University of Texas at Austin.

⁴³⁷ Personal Interviews. February 1st 2019, University of Texas at Austin.

⁴³⁸ Bryan Griffith and Jessica M. Vaughan, “Maps: Sanctuary, Cities and States,” Center for Immigration Studies, April 16th 2019, Online, April 18th 2019, <<https://cis.org/Map-Sanctuary-Cities-Counties-and-States>>

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Lilla Rosas, “Texas laws,” Tejanas Cultural Studies MAS 374, University of Texas at Austin, Lecture.

population. The professors and sociologists Rafael Alarcon, Luis Escala, and Olga Odgers gathered some interviews of Mexicans who came with the American dream in mind. Those immigrants were trying to integrate into US society in Los Angeles. Some of the interviewees from Zacatecas, a state in the middle of the Mexico pointed out the fact that they have to work in the informal sectors and that they were often stuck into the most precarious employment.⁴⁴² The sociologists mention that these immigrants came when the context of reception was not in favor that is to say after 1986. As a result, they were excluded from the regularization process with the IRCA program.⁴⁴³ Moreover, the process of integration became more complicated.⁴⁴⁴ In other words, the process of integration, whether it is in California or Texas, still depends on national laws.

To conclude, the process of integration in the United States is not an easy path. From language, religion and environmental discriminations, Hispanics had to fight a constant battle. However, by gathering into the same community and learn from one another, Hispanics in the United States, do try to integrate in the United States society by helping each other in California and Texas.

Part III- Literary Comparative Analysis

Introduction:

⁴⁴² Rafael Alarcon, Luis Escala, Olga Odgers, *Making Los Angeles Home* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016) 209.

⁴⁴³ Ibid, 2010

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

“For a long time, immigrants have been exclusively considered as workers. They were not supposed to be politically active; even less were they expected to be interested in culture and arts, especially as producers and artists” Marco Martiniello and Jean Michel Lafleur⁴⁴⁵

For centuries, Mexican people were considered “the sleeping giants” of the United States by other communities.⁴⁴⁶ In other words, the Mexican community was treated as people who did not have a voice in the political sphere and also in American society. They were considered as people who do not fight for those rights. This supposed silence was broken with the emergence of Mexican-American literature, also called Chicano literature.⁴⁴⁷ The Chicano literary movement emerged in the 1960s⁴⁴⁸ and as part of an Ethnic- Minority movement that was born in the United States.⁴⁴⁹ Through literature, people from minorities in the United States express their history as immigrants in the United States to readers. Through their art, they also show the discrimination towards their communities and their struggle to integrate into American society. In other words, literature becomes a place where

⁴⁴⁵ Marco Martiniello and Jean Michel Lafleur, “Ethnic Minorities’ Cultural and Artistic Practices as Form of Political Expression: A Review of the Literature and a Theoretical Discussion on Musiel,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Stephen Kinzer, “Waking the Mexican Sleeping Giant,” *The Boston Globe* February 17th 2017, Online Article, March 21st 2019 ,
<<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/02/17/kinzer/DUd3Wkx0zPUeVCnTQj39bJ/story.html>>

⁴⁴⁷ Barbara Curiel. Personal interview. Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Iris D. Cruz, *Reclaiming Composition For Chicano/as and Other Ethnic Minorities*, (Baginstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 157.

immigrants become participants in defining their own identities and realities. Barbara Brinson Curiel claims that by creating a shared space for Hispanics to express themselves, Hispanics become united to show that they do try to integrate and fight discrimination. The memoir of Reyna Grande *The Distance Between Us* published in 2012, the novel of Bettina Restrepo *Illegal* in 2011 and the poems of Barbara Curiel *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems* written in 2012 are perfect examples of this Chicano literary movement. In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande Professor at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), tells her story as an undocumented immigrant child, who crossed the border between the US and Mexico to arrive in the state of California. The first part of her book relates her life in Mexico and the departure of her parents to the US to survive and give their children something to eat and a better life. Then, she relates when she crossed by herself the border and her new life in the United States. Throughout her book, Grande points out the suffering that children of immigrants have to face, that is to say, long years of separation to their parents to the crossing of the US-Mexican border illegally. Between pain and hope, the author shows the reality at the border. Grande, by giving an identity to the people who crossed and depicting the reasons why they cross, self-determines her story and the story of millions of immigrants.

In the novel of Bettina Restrepo *Illegal*, Nora the main character sees her father leave to the state of Texas in the United States, with the goal of working in order to have enough money to buy some food for his family. After years of waiting, Nora with her mother, decides to cross the border and to find her father, who does not call his family anymore. After she arrives in this new country, she finds out that her father died, Nora decides to stay in the United States and to fight to have access to education and to integrate in the US society with the help of other Hispanic communities. This

novel which was written for young readers highlights the importance of uniting as a community in order to integrate in the US society.

The poems of Barbara Curiel, *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems* deal with the question of immigration and integration of Hispanics in the United States. She denounces discrimination in every aspect of an immigrant's life. The first poems also deal with the importance of the union of the Hispanic community with the goal to integrate. The second part of the book deals with poems that tell the story of Jenny Wenner, that is to say, Mexican Jenny. Curiel explains that she was reading an article in a textile art magazine about the story of a prostitute from Mexico named Jenny that lived in the 1920s. According to the article, Jenny was incarcerated in Colorado because she was accused of the murder of her husband who beat her for not coming back home with enough money. Curiel who could not find any record about this woman decided to use her imagination to write different stories for Jenny through the art of poetry. In one of her stories, she imagined how the life of Jenny would be different if she were born in Colorado with a father from Germany. She also points out all the prejudices that she has to face as an immigrant and a woman in the United States when the reality was different. In our comparative analysis of these three books, we are going to see the process of self-determination through literature in order to fight discrimination and to show the struggle for integration in US society. Throughout these three books, the authors also highlight the voice of the minority in the minority, that is to say the voice of immigrant children and immigrant women in the Hispanic community in the United States.

[I/The History of Millions of Immigrants from Mexico to the United States.](#)

A) The Link with Mexico

1- Mexico, a Country Described between Love and Tradition.

Throughout the three books, the evocation of the country of Mexico and its regions is omnipresent. The authors describe a deep connection with the home country. This description of Mexico and the traditions related to this country emphasize the hardship of leaving the country. In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande talks about Mexico with pride. She mentions that her sister, Mago told her that she should be proud to have been born in Iguala because the first Mexican flag was created there and the first national anthem was sung there.⁴⁵⁰ However, after some years in the United States, she mentions that Mago tried to erase Mexico from her memory and her accent. Reyna Grande claims that she does not want to forget Mexico because she loves her country of origin.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, she points out that her mother, as soon as she became a legal resident in the United States, tried to go back to Mexico every year and to keep the link with the home country.⁴⁵² The same idea of a unique link with Mexico appears, in the novel *Illegal* of Bettina Restrepo, the image of the trees which is mentioned a few times throughout the book.⁴⁵³ The image of the trees symbolizes the roots and the link with Mexico. This idea is supported by a comment made by Nora's grandmother, when she says "it's your birthday gift. It came from Mexico to remind you where we come from."⁴⁵⁴ The grandmother also mentions that when the family members become US citizens, they can visit Mexico whenever they want.⁴⁵⁵ Barbara Curiel's poems also highlight that the link with the country of origin is still active. In the life of Mexican Jenny, she describes with a

⁴⁵⁰ Reyna Grande, *The Distance Between Us*, (New York: Washing Square Press,2012)49.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid,282.

⁴⁵² Ibid,275.

⁴⁵³ Bettina Restrepo, *Illegal*, (New York: HarpersCollins Publishers, 2011)18,125.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid,250.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid,232.

positive connotation the country of Mexico with “trees, flowers, and birds.”⁴⁵⁶ This particular link with the country emphasizes the idea that immigrants did feel attached to their lands. Immigrants throughout literature tell their own stories and how Mexico is still an important part of their identity. Moreover, traditions are emphasized throughout the three books. First, with the presence of the grandmothers: In *The Distance Between Us*, the grandmother, Abuela Evila is the one that takes care of the children when the parents have gone to the United States.⁴⁵⁷ In *Illegal*, Nora’s grandmother also takes care of her in Texas when she could come to the United States thanks to the family reunification law.⁴⁵⁸ In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, the presence of the grandmother is the link with the country where the family is from.⁴⁵⁹ Throughout the process of the preparation of the food,⁴⁶⁰ the grandmother is the symbol of traditions that go from one generation to another. Curiel's grandmother claims, "wherever the diaspora has flung you, once you have masa your possibilities are endless."⁴⁶¹ She continues by saying: “La tradicion continues, just as it’s been doing for 500 years.”⁴⁶² Furthermore, other elements in the three books are linked to the Mexican culture. For example, the quinceanera⁴⁶³ is often mentioned in the three books. The Mexican soap opera telenovelas⁴⁶⁴ and the Virgin of Guadalupe as well.⁴⁶⁵ All of these references to the Mexican culture are still omnipresent in an immigrant’s life and her or his attachment to their roots. However, the books of Grande and

⁴⁵⁶ Barbara Curiel, *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems* (Tallahassee: Anhinga Press, 2014) 20.

⁴⁵⁷ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit. 11.

⁴⁵⁸ US Family Reunification Program allows people who live in the United States with a Green Card to ask for a visa for the immediate family members. That is to say, their parents, children (under the age of 21 and unmarried) and their spouses and husbands.

⁴⁵⁹ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit. 49.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 50.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 208; Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit, 43; Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit, 23.

⁴⁶⁴ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 54.

⁴⁶⁵ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit. 23.

Restrepo have a closer link to the country of origin. In *The Distance Between Us* and *Illegal*, the action is set in Mexico. In contrast, in the poems of Curiel, Mexico is only mentioned a few times. Barbara Curiel explains that as a third generation American, she still feels love for the Mexican culture that she grew up in. But at the same time, as with many third-generation immigrants, she feels closer to US culture. Moreover, she points out that in the story of immigration and an immigrant's relationship with Mexico, she could only write according to her grand-parents and acquaintances' memories. She also used her imagination to write "Immigrant's pantoum."⁴⁶⁶

2-Mexico: A Country Touched by the Economic Crisis. The Story of People Living in Poverty.

Throughout the three books, the authors deal with the theme of poverty in Mexico: the poverty that was linked to the debt crisis that all of Latin America had to face in the 1980s. The authors emphasize the situations that led millions of people to leave a country that they love to go into a new country that is to say, the United States. In *The Distance Between Us*, the parents of Reyna Grande had to leave in order to have enough money to feed their children and to build the house of their dreams with electricity, gas, a refrigerator, and running water in an indoor bathroom.⁴⁶⁷ The children of the family comment on the situation at home saying that they were eating oil and were eating like beggars.⁴⁶⁸ They also regret the fact that their parents left to the United States because of the lack of work and the economic situation in Mexico. She also mentions the devaluation of the peso in the 1980s that led Mexico to a high rate of unemployment: "Mami was unable to find a job", "if we

⁴⁶⁶ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit.4.

⁴⁶⁷ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit,58.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid,19.

had tree with special dollars like in the United States, Papi wouldn't have to leave.”⁴⁶⁹

Poverty is also felt in the whole city. The author gives an example of the equipment at school. Grande explains that there was no running water but at least there was a toilet although they had to squat on the ground.⁴⁷⁰ Similarly in *Illegal*, Restrepo also describes poverty as the reason for the father's departure. The parents who had to find any work available otherwise they would not survive.⁴⁷¹ This poverty led to the desperation of the whole family, “if we don't get something today we can't pay any bill.”⁴⁷² In Curiel's poems, poverty in Mexico is emphasized in the poem *Immigrant's Pantoum*; she writes “what wealth we had could be held in a palm, hidden in a sack, an apron pocket. We looked to see in our children eyes for the sign.”⁴⁷³ She explained that in this poem, she wanted to describe what her grandfather related to her about the situation in Mexico and that the only way to survive is to leave. Poverty is also seen through the first poem dedicated to Mexican Jenny. Curiel emphasized the extreme poverty that children had to face “Girls like me come from alleys from dirt floors.”⁴⁷⁴

Throughout their writings, the three authors depict the situation in Mexico. As a result, the reader understands more the reasons that people had to leave their country. Literature becomes a way to express to a larger public the history of a country and the story of immigrants. Immigrants are self-determining their identity and the reasons why they left. They are emphasizing the idea that they are not rapists or drug dealers but simply that they are people who are trying to feed their children.⁴⁷⁵ As much as they love their countries, people had to leave because they love their children.⁴⁷⁶ This

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid,46.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid,49.

⁴⁷¹ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit.,44.

⁴⁷² Ibid,12.

⁴⁷³ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit., 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid,19.

⁴⁷⁵ Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

self- determination of their identity enables the author to show humanize immigrants and make their desires for a better future relatable to all.

B) The Frontier between Dreams and Realities

1-The Other Side, the Better Side. The image of the United States: The Reason for Crossing the Frontier for a Better Future.

After the Mexican economic crisis, the United States became the only chance for millions of people to survive. In the three books, the United States is presented as a dream for immigrants. For example, in *The Distance Between Us*, the book starts from a quote “Nothing happens unless first, we dream.”⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, throughout the book, Grande calls the United States, “El Otro Lado,” that is to say “The Other Side.” This nickname means that the United States, which is geographically on the other side of the frontier, represents the opposite of the situation of poverty in Mexico. Grande wrote “like most immigrants, my father had left his native country with high expectations of what life in El Otro Lado would be like,”⁴⁷⁸ “being born in the US is a privilege”⁴⁷⁹, “From what I’ve heard, El Otro Lado is a very beautiful place but here.”⁴⁸⁰ She also points out the mystic characteristic of that place, “as if somehow in El Otro Lado time stood still.”⁴⁸¹ A place that people never come back from because life is so perfect, “the men who leave from El Otro Lado and never return”⁴⁸², “as our economy, everyone is leaving for El Otro Lado, not the other way around.”⁴⁸³ In the same idea, Restrepo also mentions the American dream and what this country represents for people who live in poverty. She wrote that “In American magazine,

⁴⁷⁷ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit.,7.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Reyna Grande,Op.Cit.,64.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid,56.

⁴⁸² Ibid,72.

⁴⁸³ Ibid,10.

beautiful girls wearing pink and white skirts, those girls were dreams printed on glossy paper.”⁴⁸⁴ Curiel’s also talks about the US as the land of all the possibilities. For example, in the first poem dedicated to Jenny, she wrote about the US, “Those gold mining towns.”⁴⁸⁵ This image given by the authors shows to the reader the exact reason immigrants chose the United States with this idea of the American dream conveyed by media. Mahal Attalah explains the authors told their hope for a better future, as opposed to what some politicians claimed, shows that they had the same dreams as millions of immigrants, who came previously to the United States from different parts of the world. However, we can notice some differences in the way that the United States is perceived after the arrival in California or Texas. The reality in the United States is described as not as perfect as they could have imagined in *The Distance Between Us*. For example, Grande explains that, even though her parents found work in the United States, they wore clothes that looked as if they had mopped the floor.⁴⁸⁶ She also adds that her father realized that dollars were not as easy to make as the stories people told made it seem.”⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, when she arrived in the United States, her stepmother Mila, a US citizen, indicates, “In the United States, women are treated like servants.”⁴⁸⁸ In Curiel’s poems she also described the disillusionment when the character of Jenny arrived in the United States, she wrote: “I found dust.”⁴⁸⁹ On the contrary in *Illegal*, there is no mentioning of a specific disillusion after the arrival in the United States. It shows how personal the American dream can be. As Curiel explained, the American dream can be real depending on the

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid,35.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid,42.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid,149.

⁴⁸⁹ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit.,19.

individual⁴⁹⁰: A dream that immigrants were ready to suffer for by crossing the frontier.

2-The Crossing of the Frontier.

Throughout the three books, the experience of the crossing of the frontier is described. The crossing of the border is related to the desire to be reunited with their parents for *The Distance Between Us* and *Illegal*. In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, the crossing of the frontier is related to the desire of escaping poverty mentioned before. In *The Distance Between Us*, the train is mentioned several times, “they ride the train to Mexico City, transfer to another train and ride it to the border, we could save up some money, buy the tickets and go.”⁴⁹¹ When the father comes back to try to cross the border with his children, they called a coyote that tries to make them cross the border by walking. Grande describes: “we rushed into the bushes, but the border patrol sent us back to Tijuana.”⁴⁹² She continues: “the second time we had the same bad luck, I couldn't keep up with the rest of them. The heat of the sun's rays beating down on my head gave me a headache, and I saw a man lying not far from me, I saw the flies buzzing over him and the big bump on his forehead.”⁴⁹³ After some years, she claimed: “I am grateful now that back then when I was too young to grasp the extent of the danger. I am glad I did not know about the thousands of immigrants who had died before my crossing and who have been dying ever since.” In *Illegal*, the character of Nora also calls a coyote. Nora and her mother cross the border by using a truck that carries products from Mexico to the United States. They had to stay long

⁴⁹⁰ Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Reyna Grande, Ibid, 118.

⁴⁹² Ibid, 153.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 154.

hours in the truck, barely breathing with little air from outside, barely breathing from outside.⁴⁹⁴ In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, describes the journey of the immigrants as they cross the border on foot. In Mexican Jenny poems, Barbara Curiel writes: “In 1907, I crossed the narrow border that intersects splintering sidewalks of faded towns.”⁴⁹⁵ In the three books, people who crossed the border had sacrificed all the money they had left in order to have the chance to cross. Professor Attalah mentions that, by talking about what happened at the border and the way that immigrants cross it, readers understand the sacrifice and the violence that occur. The fact that they sacrifice and risk their lives for a better future shows how desperate their situation is back home. People do not cross with joy in their heart but more with hope of a better future.⁴⁹⁶ Moreover, they are showing that they came without the intention of being a danger for the country to the United States, but are trying to save their own lives.⁴⁹⁷ In *The Distance Between Us* and *Illegal*, the description of the crossing the border is more at the center of the books than in the poems of *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*. This difference can be explained with the fact that, again the writers Reyna Grande and Bettina Restrepo, crossed the border themselves. Whereas Barbara Curiel is a US citizen and third generation American. As a result, the crossing of the frontier is more present in the two other books than in Curiel’s art.

II/ Immigrants and their Fight to Integrate in The United States.

A) The value of Education in the Process of Integration.

1-The Desire to Integrate through The English language.

⁴⁹⁴ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit.,59.

⁴⁹⁵ Barbara Curiel,Op.Cit., 22.

⁴⁹⁶ Maral Attalah, Personal Interview, August 12th 2018 via Skype.

⁴⁹⁷Ibid.

Throughout the three books, the process of learning a language in order to integrate is often mentioned. For example, in order to show that she was well integrated into the United States, Reyna Grande says that “back then in Mexico, I could never have imagined that one day, I would speak English better than I speak my native tongue.”⁴⁹⁸ However, throughout the book, she described how hard the process of learning another language was as she mentioned the “knot in my stomach.”⁴⁹⁹ She continues by saying that she could see her teacher “Mrs. Anderson’s mouth open and close, open and close as she talked, I wish I could understand and didn’t have to sit here in a corner and feel like an outsider,”⁵⁰⁰ and that “she was scared to get lost in translation.”⁵⁰¹ She also points out that, in the US education system, schools are not prepared to welcome immigrant children in the classroom. For example, she describes that she arrived at a school with only English speakers with a teacher that could not speak Spanish when she could only say two English words.⁵⁰² She points out the lack of funding for immigrants to put them into specialized/ language classes.⁵⁰³ In *Illegal*, Nora also points out the difficulty of the process of learning the language as an immigrant child but also the desire to learn the language. She says, “I understand a lot. I want to learn more.”⁵⁰⁴ In Curiel’s poems, the process of learning the English language is not emphasized at all throughout the poems. However, Curiel uses the Spanglish language that is considered as a transition towards the English- only language.⁵⁰⁵ The use of the English language mixed with the Spanish language shows the desire for immigrants to integrate and adapt to the US culture. For example, in the

⁴⁹⁸ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 45.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.172.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.174.

⁵⁰² Ibid.171.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit.,99

⁵⁰⁵ Nestor Rodriguez, Ibid, Lecture.

poem “Recipe: Hinterland Tamales.” Curiel uses both languages “No seas mesa, pues.”⁵⁰⁶ Wherever the diaspora has flung you, and yours dusts off your food processor and make tamales with masa fresquita.”⁵⁰⁷ In *Illegal*, Nora emphasizes that Spanglish helps her understand and learn the English language, “I could hear that he mixed English and Spanish. I understood the Spanglish.”⁵⁰⁸ In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande mentions that the mix of both languages became a transition point to learn the English language.⁵⁰⁹ After that, she mentioned that she was eventually able to speak English exclusively, “I took a deep breath and answered in English as much as I could.”⁵¹⁰ Throughout the literature, the authors depict the process of learning the English language that becomes evidence of their desire to integrate. Moreover, the literary critics Vigil Suarez mentions that “the boom of the Hispanic and Ethnic Literature in the United States is explained by the fact that authors do not use Spanish as was the case with writers of generations and centuries past, this is a key difference.”⁵¹¹ In other words, the three authors delete by choosing the English language show that Hispanics do try to open their literature to US readers. Furthermore, in *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande mentions that when she was at school, she met people from El Salvador.⁵¹² As a result, with those students who had the same mother language, they were able to learn the English language as a group. In *Illegal*, Nora meets a schoolmate from Colombia. Together, they went to

⁵⁰⁶ Barbara Curiel, Ibid, 49.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Bettina Restrepo, Ibid, 56.

⁵⁰⁹ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 166.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Vigil Suarez, *The Cutter: Pioneers of Modern U.S Hispanic Literature*, (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1979) 42

⁵¹² Reyna Grande, “The Distance Between Us Conference,” Arcata, California, December 5th 2017;

English as a Second Language (ESL) program.⁵¹³ The process of integration was engaged through the help of other Hispanic communities.

2-The Importance of School as an Essential Factor of Integration in the United States.

In *The Distance Between Us*, the school became a tremendous factor of integration for Reyna Grande. As she explains, “In 2008, I received my MFA in creative writing from the University of California Santa Cruz.”⁵¹⁴ Her Master’s degree and experience enabled her to teach in different universities in California. During a conference in 2017 at Humboldt State University, she mentioned in her presentation that her degree allows her to get a good position in society. Throughout her book, Grande’s father keeps repeating to his children that the reason he brought them to the United States is linked to his wish to see his children have access to a good education and “become someone.”⁵¹⁵ He reminded his children about the importance of doing well at school, “and you three better do well in your classes, because if you don’t, I’ll send you back to Mexico myself.”⁵¹⁶ Reyna Grande also pointed out in her conference the fact that she was the only one who graduated from college in her family.⁵¹⁷ However, in her book, she wants to remind the readers that: “but between us, my siblings and I have thirteen children. I know that soon I won’t be the only college graduate in the family.”⁵¹⁸ Reyna Grande shows that as generations pass, the process of integration gets better. As Nestor Rodriguez claims, with every new generation, Hispanics have a better education.⁵¹⁹ In *Illegal*, Nora, who is undocumented in the country, does everything to have access to education. The

⁵¹³ Reyna Grande, *Ibid*,209.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*,320.

⁵¹⁵ Reyna Grande, Conference, *Ibid*.

⁵¹⁶ Reyna Grande, *Op.Cit.*, 244.

⁵¹⁷ Reyna Grande,Conference, *Ibid*.

⁵¹⁸ Reyna Grande,*Op.Cit.*320.

⁵¹⁹ Nestor Rodriguez, *Ibid*.

character goes to school and tries to find a way to have access to education with the few English words that she knows, she says “I like to go to school.”⁵²⁰ The fact that the novel ends with Nora's entrance at school in Texas, shows the importance of education as an essential step towards integration. In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, education is seen as a weapon against discrimination and prejudice. In the poem “family picture” Ramona is a social justice teacher. As a result, she could move from Colorado to California. Through education and teaching, Mexican-Americans can move from one place to another.⁵²¹ However, in the poems concerning Mexican Jenny, education is not mentioned in Jenny’s life. Curiel explains that she purposely did not include the theme of education in Jenny’s life because, in the character’s life, education represents a privilege that she could not afford and think about.⁵²² In other words, investing in the education of minorities is also an investment towards a faster integration of undocumented children who grew up in the United States.⁵²³



This picture that I took,⁵²⁴ shows Edgar Fidel Lopez, an English major, who graduated in 2017 from the University of California at Los Angeles. In his graduation

⁵²⁰ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit., 50.

⁵²¹ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit., 3.

⁵²² Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Picture took in May 2017 in Los Angeles, California.

cap, we read “El Exito Cruza Fronteras” which means “Success Goes Beyond The Frontiers.” Lopez, who is a US citizen who lived in Mexico crosses the US-Mexico border every morning and went back to Mexico every night, for 17 years. Even as a US citizens, Lopez who grew up in Mexico, could not speak English when he arrived in elementary school in San Diego. Lopez points out the lack of funding concerning children who have to cross the border every day to go to school, even if they are citizens of the United States.⁵²⁵ He also claims that he managed to have access to an undergraduate program with hard work and determination.⁵²⁶

B) The Struggle to be seen as a Minority that Matters in the United States.

1-The Fight to be Recognized Legally in The United States.

However, despite their desire to integrate, Hispanics face discrimination from US society. The three books relate first the hardship to be seen. In *The Distance Between Us*, Reyna Grande’s father mentions that he is tired of living in the shadow.⁵²⁷ As an example, he cannot take his children to see a medical doctor or a dentist due to their situation.⁵²⁸ This example echoes the situation of millions of undocumented children who grew up in the United States without having access to healthcare.⁵²⁹ In *Illegal*, Nora as mentioned before, who did not have access to education, tries to fight to be able to learn. In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, Jenny has to fight to have her voice heard legally after she was accused of killing her American husband in the United States, she claims “what could I do.”⁵³⁰ However, in *The Distance Between Us*, the whole family got legalized with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

⁵²⁵ Edgar Lopez. Personal Interview. May 2017, Los Angeles California.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 44.

⁵²⁸ Ibid,274.

⁵²⁹ Barbara Curiel,Personal Interview,Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Barbara Curiel,Op.Cit.,35.

(IRCA) which enabled 2.9 million people to get the legal residency.⁵³¹ Grande also celebrates the arrival of her green card in the United States; she claims “I would be somebody in this country (..) We had become legal residents in the United States! Finally, we could let go of our fear of being deported and look to the future with hope.”⁵³² In the same idea, Nora could have access to education after she became legalized. On the contrary, in Curiel’s poem, Mexican Jenny could have access to legal recognition only when she got married to a US citizen. However, when she supposedly killed him, all her legal status disappeared, and she did not have any rights.⁵³³ In other words, the book of Grande and Restrepo depicts the life of Hispanic immigrants in the United States who succeeded to being recognized legally in the country. On the contrary, Curiel describes a situation where immigrants are sent back to Mexico and did not have any chance to give up on their dreams.

2-A Minority that has the desire to be seen as People Who Work.

As previously seen, Mexican Americans are often called the sleeping giant of the United States.⁵³⁴ Throughout the books, the hard work of immigrants is highlighted in order for them to be seen as people who contribute to the society. For example, in *The Distance Between Us*, the authors claim that her father was not the kind of person who stays at home doing nothing.⁵³⁵ She continues by saying that he was working hard to provide food for his children.⁵³⁶ In *Illegal*, Nora’s mother is described as a hard-working woman who did everything to get employed.⁵³⁷ In Curiel’s poem, “Immigrant’s Pantoum”, immigrants are going to work every day, “as we go to work

⁵³¹ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 251.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit., 36.

⁵³⁴ Stephen Kinzer, Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 219.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit., 130.

each day.”⁵³⁸ This line, which is repeated twice in the poem emphasizes the constant work day. Curiel also highlights that she wanted to show that immigrants were trying to escape poverty and that immigrants were conscious about their desire to integrate. The literary art enables people to tell their stories, to self- determine their story and pay tribute to people who worked hard and sacrificed a lot to be in the United States.⁵³⁹

III/The Voices of Women and Hispanic Children Immigrants in The United States.

A) Unheard and Unknown voices.

1- *Denunciation of Discrimination towards Hispanics in the United States.*

Throughout the three books, the discrimination that Hispanics had to face is highlighted by the authors. Curiel claims that her goal was to show that Hispanic authors do have the courage to denounce discrimination in their writing. In *The Distance Between Us*, Grande writes that they were frequently called “wetback” by other students.⁵⁴⁰ This word, which referred to people who crossed the Rio Grande to arrive in Texas and were deported back to Mexico, became a pejorative word used in the United States. In *Illegal*, Bettina Restrepo mentions the fact that Nora was called wetback when she arrived in Texas.⁵⁴¹ Moreover, Nora also describes the way that her father died. Her father, who was working for a construction company fell “from a large building where they didn't have much safety equipment.”⁵⁴² She also highlights the fact that the company was afraid that police would know that they were hiring illegal immigrants, “buried Nora’s dad by the work hall.”⁵⁴³ This example shows the

⁵³⁸ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit.,4.

⁵³⁹ Barbara Curiel,Personal Interview,Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Reyna Grande,Op.Cit., 211.

⁵⁴¹ Bettina Restrepo, Op.Cit., 96.

⁵⁴² Ibid,130.

⁵⁴³ Ibid,131.

discrimination that immigrants have to face where they cannot even have a burial place when they die. Professor Attalah mentions that this is the story of millions of immigrants who died without any burial. In the same idea in *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, Curiel's also highlights the discrimination that immigrants have to face in the US society. In the poems dedicated to Mexican Jenny, Curiel uses an anaphora with the subject "they" in order to highlight what society creates and tells about immigrants. The character of Jenny claims: "They say I lied about my age. They say he was my third husband; They say I believed I'd get away."⁵⁴⁴ She keeps going by saying: "They'll tell you I shot him, They'll tell you on New Year Eve, They'll say I ran, They even say I swam the Rio Grande into Mexico, though that kind of entrance has never been necessary."⁵⁴⁵ Curiel explained that she wanted to show throughout this poem the constant attempt of society to keep immigrants in silence and to tell them who they are and define their realities. She continues by saying, when President Trump said "They are bringing drugs, They are bringing those problems with them, they are bringing drugs, They are bringing crime, They are rapists."⁵⁴⁶ He also tries to define the lives of millions of immigrants who did not come for those reasons but who came, to have a better life and to give food to their children.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, in the poem "Family Picture" Curiel describes a situation that she lived. She tells the story of Ramona, who is a Chicano Literature teacher in Ohio and who decided to teach in Northern California. As a friend Curiel helps her to find a place to live in the city of Arcata. The landlord who only talked to Ramona via email requested a picture of her, so that "he'll know what kind of people they are."⁵⁴⁸ The situation that Ramona had

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ "Drug Dealers, criminals rapists: What Trump thinks of Mexicans," Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit.,3.

to face is also a description of what the Hispanic minority and other minorities in the United States have to face. Furthermore, in the poem “Note to the owner of the restaurant where my daughter works,” she tells the story of her daughter who is discriminated because of her name Dolores. She describes a situation where the owner of the restaurant “only sees other Doloreses who've washed chopped or stirred.”⁵⁴⁹ The last sentence of the poem is “learn her name.”⁵⁵⁰ Curiel explains that writing about and denouncing the struggle that immigrants have to face in their daily lives is a way to fight against discrimination. She points out that one of her students who had to face discrimination and racism in her life, thanked her through a letter. The student was happy not to be alone in this fight. In other words, literature becomes a place where people can share their experience and find others facing the same struggles.

2- The Voice of Women Latina Writers in the United States: Unknown Voices in the Ethnic-Minority in the United States.

The critic Edith Blicksilver mentions that in the American Ethnic minority, women writers have not yet received the literary recognition or critical attention that they deserve. On the whole, for the past two decades, the American authors from minority groups who have gained national recognition and attention have only been males. In other words, throughout time, the Ethnic-Minorities Literature in the United States was only written by men. Through the process of writing women can define their realities as minorities within the minority. In *The Distance Between Us*, Grande mentions a few times her violent father who never hesitated to beat up her pregnant sister and herself.⁵⁵¹ During the conference she held at Humboldt State University, she mentions that throughout her books she wanted to highlight the toxic masculinity

⁵⁴⁹ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit., 52.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit. 307.

that is present in the Hispanic culture.⁵⁵² Throughout literature, there is an emancipation of the voice of Latina women.⁵⁵³ Grande also mentions the way that she discovered other Latino writers who are from the United States, “I hadn’t been exposed to Chicano/Latino literature until my friend Diana introduced me to it. I wished I hadn’t wasted all those years reading Harlequin romances when I could have been reading more powerful and meaningful books. But I hadn’t even known, that Chicano literature existed.”⁵⁵⁴ This sentence shows that ethnic- minority literature is still a field that is unknown and is still growing. She also points out that her friend gave her other books that were written by Latina authors, that is to say, Isabel Allende, Julia Alvarez. During the conference, she explains that by reading those authors, she realized all the common link that she had with those authors, that is to say, the desire to talk about immigrant's realities in the United States.⁵⁵⁵ Furthermore, in *Illegal*, Restrepo also gives the voice of three women, Nora, her mother, and her grandmother. Throughout the book, by providing the central voice to women characters, the writers also emphasize voices that are not often heard and are unknown from the public opinion. In the same way, In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, Curiel only uses the voices of women. From Jenny to Curiel’s grandmothers, all the characters are only women. The three books emphasize voices that are not often unheard. Curiel explains her choice of only using women immigrant’s voices in order to show what is behind the unknown.

⁵⁵² Reyna Grande, Conference, Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 320.

⁵⁵⁵ Reyna Grande, Conference, Ibid.

B) Literature as a Way to Express Children Immigrants Realities in the United States

1-The Theme of Family Separation in the United States. The Reality of Immigration.

The theme of family separation is omnipresent in *The Distance Between Us*.

Reyna Grande, who saw her family divided between two different countries: Mexico and the United States, highlights all the suffering that goes around the theme of separation. The issue is seen through the title of the book, *The Distance Between Us*. During the conference at HSU, she mentions the fact that what she lived is also the reality of millions of children in Mexico who saw their parents leave with the hope of a better life. Throughout the book, her father had to go first, then her mother followed. After eight years, her mother came back, divorced from Grande's father and she left again. Her dad came back two years later to take his children to the United States. Grande talks about her childhood, a time when she was constantly waiting for her parents to come back, with the goal of escaping poverty. At the end of the book, she claims: "I taught adult school, where many of my students were mothers and father who had left their children behind. In them, I saw my parents."⁵⁵⁶ She continues by saying, "the cycle of leaving children behind has not ended. Nor will it end, as long as there is poverty, as long as parents feel that the only way to provide something better for their children is by leaving."⁵⁵⁷ Throughout her memoir, Grande gives us the voice of a child who has to cross a border and risk her life with the dream of being reunited with her parents. The theme of loneliness is also present throughout the whole book and is a direct consequence of family separation. For example, when Grande wrote a letter to her father in order to tell him of her despair, she wrote: "Look at my

⁵⁵⁶ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 320.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

loneliness.”⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, another consequence of this forced separation, is the fact that the child and teenage Reyna Grande always tries to find a mother. First, through her sister Mago⁵⁵⁹ then through her aunt Emperatriz⁵⁶⁰ and eventually through her stepmother Mila.⁵⁶¹ Throughout the process of writing, Grande highlights the consequences of separation and poverty.⁵⁶² She points out that, through her literary work she wanted to let the young undocumented generations know that they are not alone and that they could have access to a successful life, if this young generation works hard and if communities try to fight poverty. Furthermore, in the same idea in *Illegal*, Restrepo also emphasizes the theme of family separation that was caused by poverty. Nora is separated from her father until he died in Texas. As a consequence of his departure to the United States, Nora crossed the border with her mother and decided to stay in the United States. Throughout the book, Nora is described as “always crying for her father.”⁵⁶³ This example also emphasizes the difficulty of the separation between family members. In Curiel’s poem “Immigrant Pantoum”, the separation due to poverty is highlighted with the line “We looked to stars in our children’s eyes for maps.”⁵⁶⁴ Curiel explains that giving the voice to children is as important as giving the voice to women in order to understand everybody’s struggles.⁵⁶⁵

2-Hispanic Children and the Construction of a Double Culture.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 118.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, 144.

⁵⁶² Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid, 307.

⁵⁶⁴ Barbara Curiel, Op.Cit., 4.

⁵⁶⁵ Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

Reading about the experiences of a child crossing the border, we can also see the way those children tried to integrate into the American society and their feelings towards this new country. In *The Distance Between Us*, Grande, when she arrived in the United States, she claims that she considered Mexico as home but tried to learn the US customs and the English language.⁵⁶⁶ After some years in the country, she explained, “In 2002, I became a citizen of the United States. I have now been in this country for twenty-seven years. The United States is the place that allowed me to dream, and later to make those dreams into realities, but I have never forgotten where I came from. I consider myself Mexican American because I am from both places. Both countries are within me.”⁵⁶⁷ In the conference, Grande explains that immigrants children have to construct their lives around two different cultures, sometimes feeling one more than the other and for even some those cultures become one throughout the years. The critic Ilan Stavans from Amherst College claims that “we ended up endorsing literature as a written expression that conveys the search for identity.”⁵⁶⁸ In other words, through literature, the process of finding who we are as child immigrants is displayed. The literary work of Chicana authors gives a voice to children who experience the quest for identity. Through this process, the children who crossed the border feel connected to each other in the struggle to integrate into both cultures with their search for a place to call home or into the definition of being American. In Restrepo’s book *Illegal*, the author also depicts the search for identity by giving life to the character of Nora, who ends up in the two cultures. Throughout the book, the desire of Nora to speak English as well as Spanish shows the double cultures and the

⁵⁶⁶ Reyna Grande, Op.Cit., 144.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, 320.

⁵⁶⁸ Ilan Stavans, “What Defines Latino Literature,” Smithsonian.com, December 2nd 2010, Online, March 7th 2019. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/what-defines-latino-literature-73399798/>

desire to adopt the US culture and the Mexican culture in her life. The critic Ilan Stavans explains that the language is an essential evidence of this bivalence of cultures, he explains that Hispanics children grew up by questioning their link to the languages that they are in contact with "what are our words, are they Spanish or English? Or are they found in Spanglish? Latinos are united by their language and minority status."⁵⁶⁹ In *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems*, Barbara Curiel, as a third generation of immigrants, at the opposed to Reyna Grande and Nora who were looking to be American as much as Mexican, describes in the poem that is dedicated to her grandmother, her continuing desire to be attached to the Mexican culture. In the poem "cooking menudo" where she shares her love as a child for the Mexican culture, the author tries to represent the Mexican population in the United States. This double culture that those children are adopting becomes a complete part of the Ethnic Literature in the United States. Those authors use their experience that they lived when they were children to give the voice to millions of children who immigrated to the United States.

Moreover, the critic Bridget Kevan explains that their doubled ethnic identities and their complicated relationship to their communities with the difficulties in representing their communities become part of their work in the larger American Canon. He also argues that Latina Literature is a vital part of American literature. During an interviewed that he conducted he claims that Latina writers who were interviewed consider their work to have a legitimate place in the canon of North American Literature. They have been trained in many cases in American literature programs and have responded to the North American Literary Tradition; they even

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

claim that Latina Literature is no longer an appetizer but the main course.⁵⁷⁰ It shows that Hispanic literary work does integrate into the American way to perceive literary work. Moreover, the fact that the description of what those children lived and underwent is depicted in the English language shows integration in American society, since people from the entire country could be potential readers.

Conclusion

To conclude, *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande, *Illegal* by Bettina Restrepo and *Mexican Jenny and Other Poems* by Barbara Curiel create a common identity as Hispanics from the United States in the states of California and Texas. The three books with different tools and with different angles deal with the special link with Mexico and its culture. The authors describe poverty and starvation in Mexico as the reasons their families had to leave a country that they love to go to the other side of the border. Through the process of creating a common narrative as immigrants in the United States, the authors create a common place where their community can recognize and gather to talk about their experience as immigrants from Latin America. Moreover, through their stories, the writers show their readers that immigrants from Latin America do share the same dream for a better future, as other people and immigrants who came to the United States.

The three writers also point out the process of integration. They describe the union of Hispanic communities in order to learn the English language and try to

⁵⁷⁰ Bridget Kevan, "The Hispanic Absence in the North American Literary Canon," *Journal of American Studies* Vol35, (Cambridge: Cambridge University:2011)95.

achieve the same access to education and rights as other Americans. Education, which is a major value in the three books, is the key success in the stories of those three Chicana authors. Their writing emphasizes their own successful paths to show their communities that education can be a tool that enables them to progress and reach their dreams.⁵⁷¹ This message of hope stands against the discrimination that they have to fight and alludes to a better tomorrow where integration is possible. In the three books the struggle to be seen as a minority that matters in the United States is highlighted. A struggle that concerns not only a legal recognition but also a social one by emphasizing the hard work of immigrants in the United States. Moreover, the fact that Barbara Curiel is a third- generation American shows that discrimination still goes on even across generations.

Eventually, this ethnic-minority literature also enables other minorities to express their voices. Women and children's voices are highlighted throughout their writings. Chicana authors express voices that were unknown to the audience in the United States. The books, by pointing out the feelings of being an immigrant woman in the United States, open the meaning of ethnic literature in the United States. The voices of children are also highlighted with the stories of kids who suffer from family separation caused by poverty and the departure of parents. The authors show the way that those children could grow up with two cultures, as Hispanics but also as citizens of the United States.

⁵⁷¹ Barbara Curiel, Personal Interview, Ibid.

Conclusion

“Immigrant integration in the United States is proceeding steadily, but unevenly. Remarkably, the process has unfolded almost entirely without the help of policy intervention.”⁵⁷² Tomas R. Jimenez

“Both countries are within me. They coexist within me. I am Mexican American.”⁵⁷³ Reyna Grande

Immigration from Mexico represents a significant part of American history, with millions of workers who contributed to the US economy, culture, and society. However, since the creation of the country, this community has been facing constant discrimination. As a result, Mexicans in the United States tried to gather and make their voices heard politically, in order to have the same rights as other American citizens. Moreover, during the Cold War, the United States started to intervene in Latin America to impede the expansion of communism in the area. After, the economic and international crisis that concerned different regions in Latin America, immigration to the United States started to increase and was even in some cases, supported by Americans.

⁵⁷²Tomas R. Jimenez, *Immigrants in the United States: How Well Are They Integrating Into Society?*, Migration Policy Institute and the European University Institute, 1. May 2011, Online, April 2nd 2019. <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/integration-Jimenez.pdf>>

⁵⁷³ Reyna Grande, *The Distance Between Us*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 2012) 240.

Furthermore, the United States, after the arrival of these new communities, decided to gather them into the same label with the term *Hispanics*. As a result, by creating a new community in the US, people from different backgrounds have developed a collective identity. In that sense, the art of literature has enabled them to express their feelings, their experiences, and their lives as people from Latin America living in the United States. Moreover, this Hispanic community tries to integrate into the American society despite the obstacles that they have to face. They gather and help one another to speak English, they fight politically and socially to have access to the same opportunities as other Americans and to feel fully apart of this country. The fact that Hispanic community gathers in the same geographical area in the United States, also called ethnic enclaves represents a first step towards the integration in the country. Since, after some years, this community tends to move on from these places and go to other areas in the country. However, the lack of financial support in favor of integration and the constant accusations of representing a threat to the country led to a slow-down of the process of integration. In the meantime, even if Hispanics are still closed to their countries of origin, they do not forget their belonging to the United States.

During the process of researching the immigration and integration of Hispanics in the United States, I adopted the point of view of a sociologist. Throughout my research, I have come to realize how tricky this field could become. As I conducted interviews, the first challenge that I had to face concerns the fact that from one interviewee to the other the meaning of integration of the Hispanic community that they were part of and the perception on the way that communities try to integrate in the country, changes a lot. As a result, I decided to see the common points that were often brought up. To be more specific, they told me that generally speaking, Hispanics were

more likely to say that, the process of integration into the American society starts first with an integration into the Hispanic community of the United States. After reading historical books and talking to my teachers, I noticed that indeed, people tend to gather with the same communities that share a common characteristic with them but only as a bridge to integration in the United States. From this idea, I started to look for evidence with the help of my teachers and the help of libraries specialized on Hispanics in the cultures and communities in the United States.

Another challenge that I have had to face concerns the different fields that my research deals with. For example, the areas of international relations and diplomacy are as important as the fields of sociology and literature. As a result, I realize how international relations, politics, and diplomacy deeply affect an individual's life. Thanks to this process of researching, I had the opportunity to work with teachers and professionals that had different backgrounds. This process has enabled me to see how different fields are connected between them.

Furthermore, another challenge that I had to face is the fact that as a non-Hispanic, a non-American student from Polynesia, who conducted her research for a French European University, I was often questioned about my interest in the field of immigration and integration of Hispanics in the United States. Whenever I was in the Hispanic neighborhoods or when I was trying to organize interviews in my host universities in California and Texas, people were suspicious about the theme of my work. However, after some time talking to them, they started to give me more information about their lives and experiences. For example, one of my interviewees mentions the fact that people who usually work on this topic or have interviewed him in the past were all Hispanics. Therefore, he was surprised that foreigners would be interested in his community's voice. This observation shows that even if universities

start increasing ethnic studies on minorities, the path towards a national recognition is still long.

Eventually, for future research on the same topic, different angles would be interesting to adopt. For example, during a conference that I had the chance to attend in California, the main topic was the immigration and integration of Hispanics in Canada. The meeting was organized by one of my teachers from California. The fact that a Mexican-American teacher was interested in the process of integration of Hispanics in another country in North America caught my attention. Therefore, I started looking at the politics of integration in this country and the different laws that were adopted there. As a result, it would be an interesting topic to compare the way that immigration is perceived in both countries and how the issue of integration is addressed. Why do we talk about Canada as the model of integration? Can we say that the United States fails at the process of integrating of immigrants?

Moreover, during my interviews, another critical element that I noticed is that some immigrants who were brought illegally as children into the United States or people whose parents have themselves crossed the border, now accuse new waves of immigrants from the same country of not integrating enough in the American society. In Texas or California, I heard many first-generation Mexican-American families who also claimed that the current immigration from Mexico was too foreign. Therefore, after the integration in the core of the United States, it would be interesting to see what are the elements that make people reject newcomers, who are specifically from the same country? Is it a modern phenomenon that developed throughout the different waves of immigration in the United States? Another angle that is important to remember in this topic is that my research mainly concerns the states of California and Texas. As a result, it would also be interesting to deal with other states that involve a lower percentage of

Hispanics. In other words, to see how politics of integration vary from states that are far from the border to the ones close to it.

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