

Challenges Faced by Contemporary Hispanics in New Mexico

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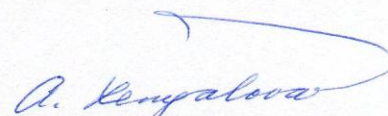
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ABSTRAKT

Práce se zabývá současným pohledem na Nové Mexiko, co se týče hispánské (především Mexické) populace žijící v tomto státě. Obsahuje stručný náhled do historie Hispánců na tomto území od dob osídlení po současnost a poukazuje na důležitost americké a španělské rasové hierarchie. Jsou zde popsány nejzávažnější otázky populace hispánského původu odvíjející se od nezákonné imigrace osob z Mexika a jejich dopad na současnou populační strukturu Nového Mexika. Důraz je kladen především na vztahy obyvatel hispánského a nehispánského původu ve státě s přihlédnutím na protichůdné názory na přizpůsobení Hispánců americké společnosti. Také jsou zde projednány současné pohledy na etnickou diskriminaci a její dopad na obyvatele hispánského původu.

Klíčová slova:

Nové Mexiko, Hispánci, kultura, národní příslušnost, imigrace, jazyk, rasová a etnická diskriminace, kulturní přizpůsobení, Spojené státy americké.

ABSTRACT

This work explores the current view of New Mexico regarding the Hispanic (primarily Mexican) population living in the state. It briefly documents the history of Hispanics in this area, from settlement till the present, and highlights the importance of American and Spanish racial hierarchy. Major concerns of Hispanics are described, including undocumented Mexican immigration and its consequences for the current population structure of New Mexico. It emphasizes the relationship between Hispanics and non-Hispanics in the state with regard to the conflicting opinions on Hispanic assimilation into American society. It also discusses the current view on ethnic discrimination and its impact on the people of Hispanic origin.

Keywords:

New Mexico, Hispanics, culture, national identity, immigration, language, racial and ethnic discrimination, cultural assimilation, United States of America.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubting New Mexico's roots. In Las Cruces, NM, Hispanic culture is prominent, with Spanish names of dishes on restaurant windows, adobe brick houses that are so typical for southwestern U.S. cities, bilingual Wal-Mart stores and most importantly, the people, slightly dark-skinned, some of them immigrant, some native-born. New Mexico, part of what was formerly called New Spain, still maintains strong ties to its Spanish past. Even 500 years later, it is a borderland between two cultures. Las Cruces, like many other New Mexican towns, is not Spanish, nor is it American. Instead, it is a mixture of the two.

One might think that the Spanish legacy is fighting for survival, but this is simply not true - the Spanish influence is still very strong in New Mexico, with many people represented in all kinds of fields from politics to education. One might think that white Americans feel threatened by this influence - this might be true. As is often the case with borderlands, there is a seemingly never-ending cultural struggle taking place in New Mexico.

There have been many waves of immigration to the United States during the centuries, but none of them was this strong, and still ongoing, like an immigration of Hispanic people from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and many countries from Central and South America. Every year more than one and a half million newcomers cross the border and enter the United States in search of better life. So no wonder non-Hispanic Americans feel threatened, they are fighting for their own nationality, their identity, and they tend to build walls to protect themselves. Hispanic people then, having to overcome these walls, encounter all kinds of problems while trying to incorporate themselves into American society in which they came to pursue their hopes and dreams.

This thesis will identify some of these problems Hispanic people have to go through in the United States every day and find reasons and explanations for such problems happening. It is difficult to discuss all these problems because they are mostly very complex and extensive, but understanding some of them might clarify the current cultural dispute in the country.

1 BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of New Mexico in 2010 was 2,059,179, which made it the sixteenth least populated state in the United States of America.¹ However, what New Mexico lacks in population it makes up for in diversity. As also demonstrated by the census, New Mexico is a veritable melting pot of various ancestries, cultures, and traditions. Furthermore, it has a truly unique and significant population composition. In 2010, 953,403 people in New Mexico were of Hispanic origin, which is 46,3% of the total population.² Due to very low population density (17 people per square mile) New Mexico also has the highest proportion of Hispanics of any state in the U.S.A. Part of the Hispanic population immigrated or moved to New Mexico, but unlike most U.S. residents, the rest of the Hispanics living in the state did not immigrate, nor did they move. They lived in the area long before the admission of New Mexico into the United States of America in 1912.

1.1 Race vs. ethnicity

To understand the contemporary challenges of Hispanic people living in New Mexico, it is crucial to understand the differences between race and ethnicity. For a long time, these two concepts were considered to be the same although there are substantial differences between them. While the U.S. government considers ethnicity and race as two different concepts, the general public still does not seem to differentiate these two terms properly. Race is a social construct rather than a biological distinction. In the U.S.A., the notion of race developed partly in order to justify slavery and to elevate whiteness. In the first half of 19th century, three main race categories were created by Georges Cuvier, mainly explained by those visible biological differences "such as skin color, hair form, bone structure and body shape."³ These three categories consist of whites, or Caucasians; blacks, or Negroid race; and Mongoloid race, also called yellow. The race categorization was then also

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "2010 Census Results," 2010 Census Data, <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/> (accessed April 20, 2011).

² U.S. Census Bureau, "Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race," American FactFinder, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_PL_P2&prodType=table (accessed April 20, 2011).

³ Victor M. Fernandez RN, BSN, "What Is Race?" Cultural Diversity in Nursing, <http://www.culturediversity.org/what%20is%20race.htm> (accessed January 18, 2011).

extended to include Amerindians and other native tribes as well as mixed races, such as Mestizos, Mulattoes, or Zambos.⁴ Although the racial system is more or less socially made up, the U.S. Census Bureau still uses it to determine the populations of the United States.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, is a notion developed from cultural background. It is labeled according to common culture - customs, traditions - language, and behavior of a certain group of people. The process of an ethnic group evolution occurs when a cultural group "decides or is forced...to live in close contact with a different cultural group, ..." ⁵ This is the case of the United States, where many ethnic groups live close to each other, and then the differences in cultural traditions of each group can over time blend together and create one ethnic group - in the U.S. case, Hispanic.⁶

Clearly, knowledge of the race and ethnicity system is crucial for understanding the term Hispanic. Hispanic is considered an ethnic group and any mixture of race and ethnicity is possible; for this reason there can be white Hispanics as well as black Hispanics. Or, in other words, people of any race can be considered Hispanic or non-Hispanic.⁷

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people of Hispanic origin are determined by the country of their origin. Question number 8 in the 2010 Census form asks whether a person is of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. If the person filling out this form is Hispanic, he makes a decision between four options, whether he is of Mexican (or Chicano), Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. These are ethnicities included in the Hispanic panethnicity that are most prominent in the population of the United States, followed by many other. The Hispanic panethnicity, though, has to be identified more specifically by stating the person's country of origin.⁸ The last option is "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin", and in this case the person is supposed to state the country of their origin.

⁴ Justin Wolfe, *The Everyday Nation-State: Community and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 156.

⁵ Nicolas Kanellos, *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Anthropology*, 1st edition, ed., eds. Thomas Weaver and Claudio Esteva-Fabregat (Houston, TX.: Arte Publico Press, 1994), 87.

⁶ Elizabeth Brumfiel, "Module 6: What Is Ethnicity? Affiliation," *Making Archaeology Teaching Relevant in the XXI Century*, http://www.indiana.edu/~arch/saa/matrix/aea/aea_06.html (accessed January 18, 2011).

⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "U.S. Census Bureau Guidance On the Presentation and Comparison of Race and Hispanic Origin Data" <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/compraceho.html> (accessed January 16, 2011).

⁸ Eileen Diaz McConnell and Edward A. Delgado-Romero, "Latino Panethnicity: Reality or Methodological Construction?" *Sociological Focus* 37, no. 4 (November, 2004): 309.

Differences between the terms Hispanic, Latino, and Spanish will be explained. These three terms are somehow connected to two languages: Spanish and, to some extent, Portuguese. The word "Hispanic" has its origins as far as 218 BC when the invasion of Romans to the Iberian Peninsula occurred. One of the first villages founded in the region was called Hispalis, named after a hero from Greek mythology. After Spanish people conquered the new territories in South America, the New World was consequently called Hispania and the people were referred to as Hispanics. Nowadays, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are located on an island called Hispaniola. The term Hispanic was used mainly for people of Spain, although Portugal also lies on the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, people of Hispanic origin are considered those from the territory once conquered by Spaniards, which is Mexico, Central America, Caribbean, and countries of South America, except for Brazil which was settled by Portuguese. Therefore people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Argentina, and many others are each considered different ethnic groups, but are all included in the general Hispanic ethnic group.⁹

As for New Mexico, the majority of the population uses the term Hispanic for new immigrants from Latin America and also for direct descendants of Spanish settlers who lived in the territory before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853.¹⁰

Even though the ethnic group is called Hispanic, the nationalities sharing this name never called themselves Hispanic in their countries.¹¹ This term is exclusively used in the United States in order to differentiate the population of Anglo and Spanish descent. Thereafter Mexicans, for instance, call themselves Mexicans in their country, although in the U.S.A. they fall into the Hispanic ethnic group.

The term Latino comes from the geographical designation of Latin America. Thereby Brazilians are also included in this category. The word "Latino" itself developed from

http://www.asu.edu/clas/transborder/documents/diaz_pdfs/Latino%20Panethnicity.pdf (accessed January 16, 2011).

⁹ Nicolas Kanellos, *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Anthropology*, 1st edition, ed. Thomas Weaver and Claudio Esteva-Fabregat (Houston, TX.: Arte Publico Press, 1994), 18.

¹⁰ Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Hispanic / Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), 3.

¹¹ Committee on Transforming Our Common Destiny and National Research Council, *Hispanics and the Future of America*, ed. Marta Tienda and Faith Mitchell (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2006), 4.

languages like Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian which altogether are included in the category of Latin languages.

The last term, Spanish, is considered to constitute the people of Spain on the Iberian Peninsula as well as the descendants of early Spanish settlers. However, in contemporary American society the term Hispanic happens to be used more.

Along with these names, "Chicano" is also important to know in order to understand a certain part of the Hispanic population in the USA. This term evolved from the designation of people of Mexican origin, or Mexicanos. Over the years people started to drop the initial part and changed it into "Xicanos" and the term Chicanos began to be used afterwards. This term was long time ago used as a derogatory remark for working class Mexican Americans who resisted Anglo supremacy, and some older people of New Mexico nowadays still do not accept it as a usual name.¹² Nevertheless, the term nowadays is used to describe people of Mexican origin exclusively.

Besides this terminology, it is also important to understand the history of the region and the colonization of the land that now represents the state. With new centuries, Hispanics had to face new challenges; from settling the region to submitting to the Anglo-Americans conquering the land. All the following historical events contribute to the present situation of Hispanics in New Mexico.

1.2 First explorations

The first European expedition into modern day New Mexico was made as early as 1540 by the Spanish conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. In order to find treasure and the mythological Seven Golden Cities of Cibola, he and 1,400 soldiers, traversed the eastern part of Arizona and continued eastwards into New Mexico. When they arrived at the legendary Cibola, the expedition was deeply disappointed to find a humble Pueblo of Zuni people and no treasures. The explorers desperately continued their journey all the way to present-day Salina, Kansas, where the expedition ended and returned to New Spain.¹³

¹² Sarah Horton, "Where Is the 'Mexican' in 'New Mexican'? Enacting History, Enacting Dominance in the Santa Fe Fiesta," *The Public Historian* 23, no. 4 (Autumn, 2001): 49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379635> (accessed August 10, 2010).

¹³ Bob Katz, "Francisco Vázquez de Coronado," *Desert USA*, <http://www.desertusa.com/mag98/sep/papr/coronado.html> (accessed April 20, 2011).

More serious attempts to colonize New Mexico occurred in 1598. The Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate was sent by King Philip II of Spain to discover Northern territories of New Spain, to set up new settlements, and to spread Catholicism while establishing new missions throughout the country. The route which Oñate explored was called El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (the Royal Road to the Interior Lands) and it was the first well-known European trail in North America, beginning in Mexico City and ending in San Juan, New Mexico. Oñate gathered a caravan of 129 soldiers with their families accompanied by priests, many native Indians, and also followed by cattle and sheep. The expedition made many stops and encampments on the way, including the towns of Zacatecas, Durango, Parral and Chihuahua in Mexico. Continuing North, through present-day El Paso, Oñate claimed the territory for the Spanish Crown. With the help of the priests, a number of missions were built along the way, forcing native Indian tribes to pledge allegiance to the King of Spain and to convert to Christianity. Oñate continued northwards through the Jornada del Muerto desert and decided to end the journey in the Ohkay Owingeh village, which he renamed San Juan de los Caballeros. Later it became the first Spanish capital city in New Mexico, which was afterwards moved to Santa Fe in 1609. The trail itself was very long and difficult, meandering through a hot and dusty desert. With limited water supplies, many travelers died along the way.¹⁴

Unlike Coronado's interest, the purpose of Oñate's expedition was to build new settlements in the territory. Between 1598 and 1680 around 3,000 people settled in New Mexico, most of them in Santa Fe and present-day Socorro. The route also served many different purposes. For example, the Spanish used it to transport silver to the cities of Guanajuato or Zacatecas, following the orders of King Philip II. Therefore the trail is also known as the "Silver Route". The route was used frequently by new settlers till the arrival of railroads in New Mexico in 1880 and also cars travelled across the trail which then later became the first highway connecting El Paso with Santa Fe.¹⁵

However, the settling of the New Mexico territory was not as easy as it seemed. Many encounters with native tribes occurred, and many Amerindians did not agree with giving up

¹⁴ Southwest Crossroads Spotlight, "Juan de Oñate and His Expedition of 1598-1604," Southwest Crossroads, <http://southwestcrossroads.org/record.php?num=906> (accessed February 8, 2011).

¹⁵ El Camino Real International Heritage Center, "El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro," El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail, <http://www.caminorealheritage.org/camino/camino.htm> (accessed March 19, 2011).

their faith and submitting to Christianity. They organized numerous rebellions against Spanish priests, but almost all of them failed. In response to the rebellions, the Amerindians were cruelly punished: they were hanged or sold as slaves. The long-lasting indignation of native people finally resulted in the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. The natives planned carefully many years before the revolt began and intended to kill anyone of Spanish descent. The revolution lasted several days and terminated in Spanish defeat. The King of Spain, resentful at the results of the revolt, appointed Diego de Vargas a governor and sent him to re-conquest the region. Countless battles against many different tribes were fought during the years 1693 and 1694. The struggle resulted in another Pueblo Revolt which ended in the defeat of natives in 1696. During these battles and rebellions, more and more settlers were coming to New Mexico. The settlements were also better protected against the Indian raids and therefore this period is considered the most successful in terms of the New Mexico colonization. The Spanish settlers also did not force natives to assimilate and in fact demonstrated respect for their indigenous habits and culture.¹⁶

Despite all the efforts to cooperate with indigenous peoples, the colonies were constantly threatened with enemy raids, mostly by nomadic Comanche, Apache, or Navajo tribes. In the 18th century, the Comanche tribe had spread out on a quite large area of Texas, Colorado, and also of northeastern New Mexico, representing a major threat to the settlers of New Mexico. It was clear that the survival of Spanish colonies depended on the suppression of this tribe, and therefore a governor Juan Bautista de Anza was sent to today's Colorado to fight Green Horn, the leader of Comanche. Green Horn was killed in the battle and in 1786 the peace treaty with the tribe was adopted.

Although the settlements were unceasingly attacked by nomadic tribes in the 18th century, the expansion of Spanish colonies continued. With increasing number of settlers, new colonies had to be built. Today's Albuquerque, for example, was established in 1706, at that time called San Felipe de Albuquerque. But not only Spanish settlers were coming to the newly built towns. Many Indians who lost their tribes and adjusted to the Spanish

¹⁶ Richard W. Etulain, ed., *New Mexican Lives: Profiles and Historical Stories* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 49-50.

culture were also part of the communities. Thus, the growing population of *mestizos* (people with Spanish and Indian blood mixed) can be seen in this period.¹⁷

1.2.1 Black and White legends

It is commonly known that the only interest of Spanish colonists, who either disembarked in Florida in 1513 or entered today's United States inland, was to acquire gold, silver, furs, and other transportable wealth. Blinded by the prospect of wealth and prosperity, they continued to the north, destroying everything that stood in their way, killing indigenous people and committing horrific crimes, including slavery. This thought was first published by Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish historian and priest who documented the Spanish colonization of Americas. Casas was a well-known protector of American indigenous people and did not agree with the behavior of Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. In his book *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* he described Spaniards as cruel and inhuman creatures using violence and brutality in order to convert Amerindians to Christianity.¹⁸

This concept later became known as a Black Legend, *la leyenda negra* in Spanish, and to some extent survives up to this day. Many politicians and other influential people nowadays base their opinion on the legend while discussing contemporary immigration of Hispanic minorities to the United States. There is lot of truth to be found in this legend. However, many experts say that Casas' testimony is rather exaggerated. The Anglo-Americans did not behave any better in the times of the colonization and were as cruel and violent as Spaniards while settling the land. The Black Legend also contains several inaccuracies. The notion of Spanish presence in the Americas to plunder the landscape only, is completely wrong. For example Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, one of the 16th century explorers, gave a clear instructions to his people. They had orders to remain and settle in an area, if they found it suitable for settlement.¹⁹

¹⁷ Robert Torrez, "New Mexico in the 18th Century," New Mexico Office of the State Historian, <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=21410> (accessed March 19, 2011).

¹⁸ Tony Horwitz, "Immigration — and the Curse of the Black Legend," *The New York Times* (July 9, 2006): 1., <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/opinion/09horwitz.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5088&en=713eb1dd87fa4796&ex=1310097600&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss> (accessed February 5, 2011).

¹⁹ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America (The Lamar Series in Western History)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 64.

Compared with the Black Legend, one contradictory version of Spanish colonization of American continent also developed. So called White Legend (*la leyenda rosa* in Spanish) shows Spanish colonization in a better light. It describes Spanish deeds as noble, in order to civilize indigenous population and bring them to the right faith. Spanish intentions on the American continent were also seen as a nationalistic support to the native land and the citizens of Spain.

1.2.2 Spanish racial system at the turn of the 19th century

It is important to understand the social make-up of Spaniards and their view on race in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Before Americans started exploring the New Mexico region, Spanish society in New Spain was clearly divided into five groups. The first group consisted of white Spanish colonizers and their descendants. These were considered the top of the social pyramid, were usually awarded high-level positions, such as viceroy or bishop, but their numbers were very low at the same time. This group was further divided into people born in Spain (*peninsulares*) and those born in New Spain (to both parents Spanish) – *criollos*.²⁰ The people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, known as *mestizos*, created the second group. Most of the New Mexico's population at the beginning of the 19th century comprised of *mestizos*, as the original Indians mixed with the Spanish newcomers. *Mestizos* were considered slightly lower class, but still made up a part of Spanish elite. Below *mestizos* were *genízaros*; Indians who became part of Spanish society and adapted to the Spanish life style. Most of them were forced to do so after they had been captured by Spaniards during the Indian raids on the settlements. At an even lower level of the Spanish racial hierarchy were Pueblo Indians (Pueblo means town, or people in Spanish) living in their villages all over the region. These Indians cooperated with Spanish settlers and therefore were racially and socially distinguished from the other nomadic tribes, who acted hostile towards Spaniards and attacked their settlements. These nomadic Indians were left at the very bottom of the racial hierarchy.²¹

²⁰ Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 62-63.

²¹ Laura E. Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 54.

The question of whiteness did not have its roots only in the racial system. One could earn a higher social status through the ownership of land and other private property, or economic prosperity. These were the indicators of a traditional status of Spaniards in the New World and when a person proved these characteristics to the society, he could gain the whiteness through them.²² To some extent the social class of *mestizos* relied on a social status of their fathers as well.

It is also essential to mention that this hierarchy was somewhat relaxed in the northern frontier, where the Spanish administration did not have as much power over the inhabitants as in central Mexico. Similarly to *mestizos* and *genízaros*, black African slaves who happened to be at the very bottom of the racial pyramid (even below nomadic Indians), too found comfort in moving to the northern frontier and work freely, which they would not be able to do in Mexico.²³

Spanish racial hierarchy though was to become unstable and highly threatened after Anglo-Americans started to gain power in the region, as well as applying Anglo-American racial order in the Southwest.

1.2.3 American racial order at the beginning of the 19th century

The Anglo-American racial order was traditionally based on racial superiority of whites, making all the other races subordinate and not able of self-governance. Black Africans were legally considered as slaves. Pushed forward by Manifest Destiny, Indians were regarded as primitive and were ordained to be subdued by a stronger and more sophisticated race of whites. When the Anglo-Americans firstly encountered Mexicans at the beginning of 19th century, they were not really sure where to place them in their racial hierarchy. Based on the color of their skin, Mexicans were more likely to fit in the inferior racial model of Indians and African slaves. On the other hand, given the Spanish ancestry of many Mexicans, Americans decided not to compare them to the Africans but rather put them somewhere between whites and Indians. They also had to consider the fact that most of the Mexicans were of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, therefore not completely white.

²² Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 14.

²³ Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 66.

In any case, Anglo-Americans put themselves at the top of the racial hierarchy, followed by white Mexicans (descendants of original Spanish settlers). The whiteness, similarly to the Spanish racial order, could be enhanced by economic prosperity or property rights. Below white Mexicans were people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood (*mestizos*), the Indians were one level lower and black Africans and other mixed races could be found at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.²⁴

After the clash of the two racial systems in New Mexico, Mexican elites who used to enjoy the privileges of the highest social class tried to reach the level of whiteness again by holding different high-level positions, such as lawyers, jurors or translators. With the development of American judicial branch in the Southwest, Mexicans found themselves in a very favorable position, as Anglo-Americans spoke no or little Spanish. Furthermore, given the small number of American inhabitants to New Mexico in the first half of the 19th century, most of the jurors were Mexicans.²⁵ Another marker of the Mexican elite's desire to be considered as white was the fact that a growing number of Mexican households owned Indian slaves in the 19th century. This way they were showing their racial superiority to native Indians and thus getting closer to the white status.²⁶

1.3 First encounters with Americans

After Napoleon Bonaparte sold the Louisiana territory to the United States in 1803, which doubled the size of the country, the Americans could start exploring the new land and spreading their colonies to the west. First American explorations of the west were performed by Lewis and Clark; however, their expedition led northwest through today's Montana into Washington. The first expedition that reached New Mexico in 1807 was led by a soldier and explorer Zebulon Pike. Unfortunately, his journey was unexpectedly interrupted when he reached Conejos County in modern-day Colorado. There he was arrested by Spanish people and escorted to Chihuahua in today's Mexico, where Spaniards could translate his documents and identify the purpose of his expedition. The soldiers led him through Santa Fe, Albuquerque and El Paso and he could observe the Spanish missions and even talk to the priests. Pike found Spanish people very hospitable and

²⁴ Laura E. Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 58-59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

gracious and was fascinated by their culture.²⁷ In Chihuahua Pike's expedition met other Americans who had been captured during the years and after Spaniards translated Pike's documents, they escorted all the Americans to today's Louisiana and released them. They realized that Americans could represent a major threat to New Spain and did not want to oppose them.²⁸

After arriving in the United States, Pike published a book about the expeditions he made. His description of the Western lands caught the attention of Anglo-American traders, who saw New Mexico as a place for a business opportunity. But it was not until 1821, when Mexico earned its independence from Spain and opened its market to American trade. One of the first traders who came to Santa Fe in 1821 was William Becknell from Missouri. The trail he used was later called the Santa Fe Trail, and during the following years it became the busiest trading trail in the Southwest. American merchants travelled with their caravans to New Mexico annually, selling different kinds of goods ranging from clothing to tobacco. The most valuable thing that was sold in New Mexico at those times was a printing press, which was later used for publishing the first schoolbooks in the area.

Among all the goods that were traded in New Mexico, the fur market expanded rapidly. In the early 1820's many American trappers, including the famous Kit Carson lived in the area, hunting the animals illegally and selling the furs in Taos, the headquarters of the fur trade at the time. Many businessmen moved into New Mexico and established their markets mainly in Santa Fe and Taos, and after some time they gained a full control over the economy, making the area completely dependent on the imported goods.²⁹ Moreover, in 1824, Mexico passed a national colonization law, allowing Anglo-American immigration to the Mexican territory in the North. With this law, the white American population largely increased in the area.³⁰

²⁷ Calvin A. Roberts and Susan A. Roberts, *New Mexico*, Revised ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 70.

²⁸ Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, "Zebulon Pike: Hard-Luck Explorer or Successful Spy?" The Lewis and Clark Journey of Discovery, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/jeff/lewisclark2/circa1804/westwardexpansion/earlyexplorers/zebulonpike.htm> (accessed April 20, 2011).

²⁹ Calvin A. Roberts and Susan A. Roberts, *New Mexico*, Revised ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 87-91.

³⁰ Eugene C. Barker, "Mexican Colonization Laws," Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ugm01> (accessed April 30, 2011).

Not long after passing the colonization law, Mexicans were outnumbered by Anglo-Americans in the Mexican northern territory. By that time, the intension of white Americans to annex Texas came clear and the conflict between them and Mexicans began to intensify. The annexation of Texas in 1845 and ongoing disputes over determination of boundaries resulted in the Mexican-American War, lasting three years, from 1846 to 1848. Unlike in other southwestern states, the beginning of the war in New Mexico was quite peaceful. General Stephen Watts Kearny marched to Santa Fe in 1846 only to find out that the New Mexican Governor retreated and left the territory unprotected. At the same time as Kearny introduced the first American laws to the region, the civil uprising was being planned among the Mexican and Indian population. The civil governor Charles Bent was unexpectedly killed in Taos in 1847. With this attack, series of battles were fought in the area, and this event became known as the Revolt of 1847. After a short battle in Santa Cruz de la Canada, the defeated rebels retreated to Taos where they barricaded themselves in a church. Colonel Price, leading the Anglo-Americans, ordered to destroy the church with a canon. Many of the insurgents died in this inhuman attack. Following this rebellion there was a small number of riots in New Mexico, followed by a capture of rebels and their execution.³¹

The Mexican-American War officially ended on February 2, 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. The treaty determined the border between Mexico and the United States, claiming almost the whole area of the present Southwest.³² The citizenship of Mexicans living in the ceded territory was also discussed in the treaty. Basically, they were given three options: they could leave the United States and move south to Mexico, retaining Mexican citizenship; or preserve Mexican citizenship while staying in the United States. The third option was to stay in the United States, and not select the Mexican citizenship; they would become American citizens after one year. More than 115,000 people chose this option, not aware of the concept of citizenship as U.S. Government saw it. These people were given federal citizenship, as New Mexico was claimed a federal territory, not yet a state. Therefore they could not enjoy the full citizenship rights among

³¹ Robert J. Torrez, "New Mexico and the Mexican American War," Mexican-American War - 1846, <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=21394> (accessed March 16, 2011).

³² David M. Pletcher, "Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo," Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/nbt01> (accessed March 13, 2011).

which, most importantly, were the political ones.³³ The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 represented another part of Mexico that was obtained by Americans. This land included a large part of Arizona and New Mexico and had perfect conditions for the construction of the transcontinental railroad. With the Gadsden Purchase also, the southern border was officially fixed for good.³⁴

1.4 19th century till present

The following years showed the Mexican loyalty to the land of New Mexico. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, many Mexicans volunteered for military service, ready to defend their homelands. Most of them did not speak English and had to face severe racial discrimination during the military training.³⁵ The start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 forced thousands of Mexicans to migrate north to the United States. 219,004 Mexicans arrived between 1911 and 1920 and 459,287 more between 1921 and 1930. With the shortages in the labor market during the World War I and II, many of these immigrants filled in for Anglo-Americans in their jobs in agriculture.³⁶ Large numbers of them also did not hesitate and enlisted in the military. The population of New Mexico greatly declined during World War II as numerous New Mexican Hispanics who served as volunteers in the World War II found new homes all across the United States and did not return to New Mexico.³⁷

Even though Mexicans actively participated in the interests of white Americans, their recognition in the society was never adequately evaluated. On the contrary, since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 when they were deprived of equal rights, they received very discriminatory treatment because of their ethnic origin. Mexican children were forced to study in segregated schools, and the school system itself was also very limited for them.³⁸

³³ Laura E. Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 43.

³⁴ Calvin A. Roberts and Susan A. Roberts, *A History of New Mexico*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 212.

³⁵ Ron Tyler, ed., *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, vol. 91 (Denton, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 1987), 399, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht101211/m1/3/> (accessed April 22, 2011).

³⁶ George Ochoa and Carter Smith, *Atlas of Hispanic-American History*, Revised ed. (Checkmark Books, 2008), 137.

³⁷ Calvin A. Roberts and Susan A. Roberts, *A History of New Mexico*, 3rd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 302.

³⁸ Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (Hispanic Civil Rights)*, 2 Revised ed. (Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1997), 104.

Moreover, they were taught that the Mexican culture is a negative influence and causes “backwardness” for further development of Mexican Americans.³⁹ Disapproval with the ongoing Mexican immigration to the United States was rising as well, and the immigrants were very often a subject to racial discrimination and desperately low wages at work. The people of Mexican origin living in the United States demanded fair treatment and equality and expressed their disagreement through a movement which became known as the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. With the help of this movement, Mexicans started establishing organizations for the support of their equal rights, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (founded 1929), the National Council of La Raza (1968), or the National Hispanic Institute (1979). These institutions are designed to help improve the overall living conditions with respect to the rights of Hispanics living in the United States.

As the names of these organizations suggest, they were created to help raise the living standards of not only Mexicans, but also Dominicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and people from other Latin American countries. Focusing on New Mexico, Hispanics still make up a considerable part of the total population. Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, as well as people of other Hispanic origin are of course included in the New Mexico population as well. The 2000 Census revealed that there were 4,488 Puerto Ricans, 2,588 Cubans and 147 Dominicans in New Mexico.⁴⁰ However, with respect to the position of the state in the Southwest, it is understandable that the largest Hispanic group in the state is created by people of Mexican origin. In 2008, the Hispanic population of the state was 895,150 and 61% of them were of Mexican origin.⁴¹ And because of their constant prominence in New Mexico at the present time, this thesis will deal primarily with them.

³⁹ Jr. Carlos Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement (Haymarket Series on North American Politics and Culture)* (London: Verso, 1989), 26.

⁴⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States, Regions, Divisions, States, and for Puerto Rico, 2000*.

⁴¹ “Characteristics of the Population in New Mexico, by Race, Ethnicity and Nativity,” (2008), Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., <http://pewhispanic.org/states/?stateid=NM> (accessed March 20, 2011)

2 THE CHALLENGES

Hispanics have to face many difficulties in their everyday lives. However, many of them are launched by one main problem: immigration. The documented, as well as undocumented immigration from Mexico to the United States is markedly changing the demographic profile of New Mexico. Along with this rise, the way Hispanics are treated is also changing.

2.1 Immigration

There were times Mexicans were welcomed to the United States and their immigration was even supported by the government. However, as the number of Mexicans coming to the country increased during the decades, the immigration restrictions increased as well.

2.1.1 Important events of Mexican immigration to the United States

A significant milestone in terms of immigration occurred in 1924, when the U. S. Border Patrol was created. Mexican immigration itself was not restricted, and it was more or less dealt with on a state by state basis. The Bracero Program, which began in 1942, was instituted by government to help the American farming system because of the labor force outflow during World War II. For this purpose, around 4.6 million Mexicans immigrated legally to the United States to reinforce agricultural production. Many of these jobs were very low-paid, while the farmers enjoyed the advantages of a cheap labor force.⁴² Besides this legal form of immigration provided by the Bracero Program, large numbers of undocumented Mexicans were also entering the country in hope of obtaining better jobs. The U. S. government did not accept this immigration, and with increasing exploitation of the Mexican workforce and raising crime rates, in 1954 the government started Operation Wetback (the term was used as a derogatory remark for Mexican workers, mostly undocumented). The aim was to deport as many undocumented immigrants as possible, while the operation was concentrated on Mexicans exclusively. The main force in this process was the Border Patrol, but many state and federal authorities also took part. More

⁴² Center for History and New Media, "About," Bracero History Archive, <http://braceroarchive.org/about> (accessed March 30, 2011).

than one million Mexicans were deported during this program, including some U. S. citizens of Mexican descent.⁴³

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 allowed many undocumented immigrants to apply for legal status. Another purpose of this act was also to penalize those employers who hired undocumented immigrants, aware of their immigration status at the same time.⁴⁴ The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 also reinforced the governmental actions against undocumented citizens. The Act set general regulations concerning deportation of undocumented immigrants and their possibilities of coming back to the United States. The immigrants who stayed in the country more than six months after their visas had expired would be forbidden to return to the United States in the next three years. Those who stayed more than a year unlawfully would be banned for ten years.⁴⁵

2.1.1.1 Senate Bill 1070 – the state of Arizona

Senate Bill 1070, which passed in Arizona in April 2010, unleashed a series of protests and demonstrations in the state. Its aim is to fight illegal immigration to Arizona, and it is said to be one of the strictest immigration laws enacted in the United States. It gives the authorities the right to inspect any individual who they suspect to be in the country unlawfully. It also focuses attention on employers who knowingly hire unauthorized aliens, or people who transport, shield, or conceal these aliens.⁴⁶ Bill Richardson, the former Governor of New Mexico, expressed disagreement with SB 1070. “It is going to lead to racial profiling,” he said.⁴⁷ However, the bill theoretically cannot work. The state of Arizona does not have the federal right to deport people, and the bill in its nature violates the citizenship rights given by the U. S. Constitution. Moreover, deporting all illegal citizens from Arizona would have enormous negative consequences on the state economy.

⁴³ Fred L. Koestler, “Operation Wetback,” The Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqo01> (accessed March 30, 2011).

⁴⁴ Vicki Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 341.

⁴⁵ Siskind Susser Bland, “IIRIRA 96 - a Summary of the New Immigration Bill,” The Immigration Law Portal, <http://www.visalaw.com/96nov/3nov96.html> (accessed April 1, 2011).

⁴⁶ Arizona State Senate, Senate Bill 1070, 49th legislature, 2nd sess.

⁴⁷ Meena Hartenstein, “New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson,” *NY Daily News*, July 18, 2010. http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/2010/07/18/2010-07-18_bill_richardson_new_mexico_gov_arizona_immigration_law_oks_racial_profiling_may_.html#ixzz0u4G4SKPD (accessed April 9, 2011).

According to the Center of American Progress and the Immigration Policy Center, the mass deportation would “decrease total employment by 17.2 percent” and “eliminate 581,000 jobs for immigrants and native-born workers alike.”⁴⁸ Apart from the possible consequences of this deportation, the passage of the bill has had certain effects on the current Arizona population. A huge number of illegal citizens have already left Arizona in fear of deportation. The results of their departure can be seen, for example, on the number of children enrolled in schools.⁴⁹

In comparison with Arizona, New Mexico is not so strict when it comes to immigration. Bill Richardson, who was in office from 2003 to 2011, maintained a positive stance to immigration, giving newcomers the opportunity to incorporate into the New Mexican society. During his governance, the authorities were allowed to issue driver’s licenses to everyone, regardless of their immigration status. The current Governor Susana Martinez, who took office in 2011, holds a slightly stricter opinion towards unauthorized immigrants than her predecessor. Her executive order 2011-009, passed on January 31, commands New Mexico authorities to ascertain the immigration status of arrested criminal suspects. Although the purpose of this order, as she claims, is to enhance the safety in the state, many organizations have expressed their opposition through protests, and have called for the modification of this order. They argue that the implementation of the order could lead to racial discrimination, similar to the consequences of the Arizona SB 1070.⁵⁰ Martinez recently tried to pass another reform against illegal immigration in New Mexico; one that would ban issuing driver’s licenses to unauthorized aliens. The reform failed to pass, but Martinez demonstrated her negative stance towards unlawful citizens to New Mexico.

2.1.2 Reasons for the recent Mexican immigration

The close proximity of the United States and Mexico is the basic reason of Mexican immigration to the U. S. There are also enormous differences in the quality of life in these

⁴⁸ Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda and Marshall Fitz, *A Rising Tide or a Shrinking Pie: The Economic Impact of Legalization Versus Deportation in Arizona* (2011), 2, http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/rising_tide_final.pdf (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁴⁹ Dave Gibson, “Sb1070 Has Resulted in Mass Self-Deportation of Illegal Aliens, Makes Critics Look Foolish,” *Examiner*, July 26, 2010. <http://www.examiner.com/immigration-reform-in-national/sb1070-has-resulted-mass-self-deportation-of-illegal-aliens-makes-critics-look-foolish> (accessed April 9, 2011).

two countries, including better job opportunities, educational attainment, and living conditions in the U.S. These facts, and many other, largely motivate Mexican citizens to consider migrating to the United States.

2.1.2.1 *Economic situation in Mexico*

The driving force behind recent Mexican immigration is still the economic situation in Mexico. The vast majority of Mexican immigrants are coming to the United States for economic reasons; to find better-paid jobs and improve their living conditions. In 2010, the daily minimum wage in Mexico was \$4.45.⁵¹ This wage is insufficient, and many people cannot survive in these conditions. For this reason, immigration seems the only way to save themselves and their families. Many of the migrants do not plan to stay in the United States forever, as they want to earn some money to support their families back in Mexico, or at least to earn enough money to start a business there. Yet, many of them also decide to stay longer, as they fear the risk and hardship of crossing the border again.⁵²

It is said that the Mexican economy still suffers from the consequences caused by NAFTA. The North American Free Trade Agreement implemented in the United States of America, Mexico and Canada in 1994 had very good results in both Canada and the U. S. A., but a negative impact on Mexico. The implementation of the free trade forced many domestic industries to close, as the trade barriers disappeared and big multinational companies started importing goods tariff-free. The consequences were the worst for local farmers who could not handle such strong competition and low prices of agricultural products.⁵³ Therefore, many of them decided to quit farming and look for different, more prosperous jobs.

The promises of economic prosperity in Mexico given by the Agreement were not fully kept. In some fields, the results were opposite to what they were supposed to be. It is true that NAFTA markedly raised the amount of export; at the same time it also raised the

⁵⁰ Kent Paterson, "Immigration Battle Breaks Out in New Mexico," *Frontera NorteSur*, February 3, 2011, under "Immigration," <http://www.nmsu.edu/~frontera/> (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁵¹ Embassy of the United States, "U.S. – Mexico At a Glance," January, 2010, http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mexico/895/pdf/2010_Poverty_Fact_Sheet.pdf (accessed April 5, 2011).

⁵² Chris Hawley, "Migration Is a Two-Way Street For Many Mexicans," *USA TODAY*, July 26, 2007. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-07-25-mexico_N.htm (accessed April 1, 2011).

⁵³ Roger Bybee and Carolyn Winter, "Immigration Flood Unleashed by Nafta's Disastrous Impact On Mexican Economy," *Common Dreams*, April 25, 2006, <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0425-30.htm> (accessed April 6, 2011).

export of human capital and is still causing many Mexican citizens to migrate North in search for jobs. Mexican economics professor Gerardo Esquivel blames the Mexican government for the continuing economic failure in the country. He claims that the government lacks the organizational capability to create useful reforms to regulate individual sectors of Mexican economy.⁵⁴ For this reason, there are few expectations of economic improvement in the near future.

In his speech about immigration given at New Mexico State University in 2008, the former president of the Institute of the Americas, Jeffrey Davidow, recapitulated the whole Mexican immigration issue. According to him, the recent immigration from Mexico is a matter of push and pull; both of these factors are based on job opportunities in the United States and their lack in Mexico. He noted that the recent phenomenon of a growing undocumented immigration is, to some extent, caused by migration restrictions of the U. S. government and the effort to close the U. S. – Mexico border to the migrants. “It used to be that someone would come up, work for six months, nine months, head back down, tend to his own land, and stay with his family,” he says.⁵⁵ The current restrictions do not allow this process to continue, as it is more costly and dangerous to cross the border. Therefore, not like in the past, workers coming to the United States illegally tend to stay in the country longer.

2.1.2.2 *Drug conflict*

Another factor that is increasing Mexican immigration to the United States is the drug conflict in Mexico. More and more Mexican citizens are leaving the country because of the continuing unrest connected to the drug trade. Since 2006, more than 30,000 deaths have been reported in Mexico, according to the BBC. All of them were associated with drugs and government attempts to stop the drug cartels in the country. The war is caused by a relatively high demand for drugs in the United States, and for this reason, the drug-related violence is prevalent mainly in the states in the North of Mexico neighboring directly with

⁵⁴ Elisabeth Malkin, “Nafta’s Promise, Unfulfilled,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/24/business/worldbusiness/24peso.html?adxnnl=1&pagewanted=1&adxnnlx=1302080689-449qGAGkHYi7eqHKiA2p/A> (accessed April 6, 2011).

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Davidow, Remarks on Immigration, transcript, Luncheon Hosted by the International Relations Institute, New Mexico State University, April 16, 2008. <http://iri.nmsu.edu/documents/jeff-davidow-speech-only-0408-3.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2011).

the United States.⁵⁶ There has been little progress made in the case of Mexican drug war, since there is a high rate of corruption among the police force and government officials, to some extent promoted by death threats and intimidation. Kidnappings and killings happen on a daily basis in the country, and a high number of civilians are among the victims. Mexican citizens realize the threat the war is posing on them and their families and are seeking asylum in the United States. These refugees fall into a specific category of immigrants; they do not seek better economic conditions, but safety and protection. The asylum is mostly provided to journalists, who face a death threat from the drug cartels. However, there is a slight possibility of the greater public applying for refugee visas, as the authorities fail to protect the citizens of Mexico from the consequences of the war.⁵⁷

2.1.3 Reasons for immigration restrictions

Such a drastic approach to undocumented immigrants as demonstrated by the Arizona SB 1070 law is based on many factors. The overwhelming majority of them are based purely on the lack of information among the wider public, while some of them are created by well-known facts. One of these facts is that Hispanics comprise a large part of American society. In many states they cannot be even considered a minority anymore. Non-Hispanic Americans feel threatened as the numbers of Hispanics constantly increase, year after year, and may worry about losing their identity. White Americans are shocked by such a huge influx of mainly Mexican people, and therefore they see immigration as something unbeneficial and almost crime-like.

The general belief that people of Mexican origin are not assimilating is caused by the arrival of the most recent immigrants, who speak little or no English, are poor and lack adequate education. Their concentration in the southwestern states also creates a common idea that government should intervene and help the immigrants towards quicker assimilation. However, some of the governmental interventions into the question of immigration are not as beneficial as they are supposed to be. The governmental approach to recent Mexican immigration stresses multiculturalism and supports bilingual education in

⁵⁶ BBC News, "Mexico's Drug War: Number of Dead Passes 30,000," *BBC News*, December 16, 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12012425> (accessed April 5, 2011).

⁵⁷ Andrew Becker and Patrick J. McDonnell, "Mexico's drug war creates new class of refugees," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2009. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/latinamerica/la-na-asylum4-2009mar04,0,2188107.story?page=1> (accessed April 5, 2011).

some states. For this reason the Mexican immigration seems different, and it helps the assumption that this immigration should be treated differently from others. This attitude only stresses the dissimilarities between Americans and immigrants and leads to discrimination. Moreover, this approach gives the new immigrants a choice whether to assimilate or not, and explains why there is such little progress seen in the Mexican immigrants' assimilation.⁵⁸ On the other hand, some say that Hispanics are assimilating quickly. In general, the children of Hispanic immigrants achieve better educational results than their parents and even obtain college degrees. Hispanics also reach better-paid jobs, which is a big improvement from the past generations.⁵⁹ To some extent, the assimilation of Mexican immigrants in the United States can be seen in a negative way also; both the divorce rates of Mexicans in the United States and the tendency to become obese are rising.⁶⁰

Another reason for such a big misunderstanding of Mexican immigration is a fabrication about immigrants being a drain on the economy. Although the recent influx of poor migrants from Mexico is a challenging problem to the American welfare system, the immigration itself, including the illegal one, represents a significant contribution to the U. S. economy. According to 2010 Pew Hispanic Center estimates, there were 8,000,000 undocumented immigrants participating in the total U. S. labor force (5.2 %). The share for New Mexico is slightly higher at 5.6%, or roughly 50,000 people. With the estimates of total unauthorized immigration of 85,000 in New Mexico, a very large number of undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy of the state.⁶¹ Mexican immigrants, including the unauthorized ones, are suitable workers for some jobs that the local labor

⁵⁸ Daniel Griswold, "Mexican Migration, Legalization, and Assimilation," *Cato Institute*, October 5, 2005. http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10922 (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁵⁹ Immigrants, Especially Hispanics, Assimilating Quickly, Report Says, *Arizona Daily Star*, September 2, 2010. http://azstarnet.com/news/national/article_6303be19-d3a3-5b82-b230-9bff9b41d4c4.html (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁶⁰ Bret Schulte, "Mexican Immigrants Prove Slow to Fit In," *U. S. News*, May 15, 2008. <http://www.usnews.com/news/national/articles/2008/05/15/mexican-immigrants-prove-slow-to-fit-in> (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁶¹ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010," *Pew Hispanic Center* (February 1, 2011): 15, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2011).

market would not cover (mostly the low-paid ones) and thus are filling the gaps in the American labor market.⁶²

2.1.4 Solutions to consider

The contemporary negative approach to immigration is hurting not only immigrants; it also has a negative impact on the American economy, as well as the commonly held conception of the United States as a land of opportunity. New Mexico, as well as other U. S. states where there is a large number of unauthorized immigrants, should take a different view on the immigration system in general. The call for worthwhile immigration reform is decades old, and the importance of the issue increases in step with the number of illegal immigrants to the country.

Many people of Mexican origin have lived in New Mexico for years, if not decades. One of the possible options to relieve the pressure constituted by the number of unauthorized aliens is to legalize those living in the state for a long time. Ten years and more is definitely enough time to fully assimilate American customs and culture. By changing their immigration status from undocumented to documented, the labor market would experience many positive changes. The immigrants included in the workforce who currently work illegally could openly participate in the labor market. This change would bring them many new opportunities, including free movement in the market and more job options. It would increase the wages of the immigrants, as well as benefits connected with job positions and better working conditions too. With higher income, they would be more open to investing into further education or skills development. Moreover, they would be given the freedom to work together with law officials and other authorities. On the national level, the money spent on illegal immigration issues could be used more effectively. The Border Patrol could concentrate on the safety of the borders and on decreasing the crime rates throughout the country. And, it would be a relief for the immigrants as they would not have to live in fear of deportation.⁶³

⁶² Daniel T. Griswold, "Willing Workers: Fixing the Problem of Illegal Mexican Migration to the United States," *Individual Liberty, Free Markets, and Peace*, <http://www.free-trade.org/pubs/pas/tpa-019.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2011).

⁶³ Daniel Griswold, "Mexican Migration, Legalization, and Assimilation," *Cato Institute*, October 5, 2005. http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10922 (accessed April 9, 2011).

Another issue to consider is creating temporary jobs for Mexicans, similar to the Bracero Program of 1942. Workers would travel across the border, work in the state for a short period of time, and then migrate back to Mexico. Allowing this kind of labor would be more understanding towards the poverty rates in Mexico, and it would increase the living standards of Mexican citizens, while staying in their country of origin. This would also result in the elimination of human smuggling across the U. S. – Mexico border, as there would be a legal way how to gain employment in the United States.⁶⁴ The whole matter of unauthorized immigration from Mexico has to be viewed from the other side of the border as well. More efficient reforms concerning immigration, labor force, and crime rates in Mexico are needed for an overall improvement of the question.

2.2 Assimilation

One of the most pressing contemporary problems for Hispanic people in New Mexico is their assimilation into the “American” way of life. The conditions in which many Hispanic people presently live (poverty, low wages, and high unemployment rates) hint at the fact that Hispanics are not assimilating well into mainstream American society. Assimilation, for the majority of Americans, not only means adapting the American way of life, culture and traditions. It also means learning the English language. For most European immigrants that came to the USA in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, learning English was the most important aspect of assimilation. As such, many whites even today tie integration to language. However, assimilation, as viewed by Latinos, is considerably different, involving primarily the acceptance of the American racial hierarchy. This is very discriminating against Hispanic immigrants who come to the state in hope of better economic conditions. In fact, they want to adapt in the country and they expect it will improve their social status, but adaptation for them sometimes means moving downwards, not upwards. Facing this discrimination, they can never reach economic prosperity. Whiteness is still a major issue in the United States, and colored races are still largely

⁶⁴ Frank Laczko, “Opening up Legal Channels For Temporary Migration: A Way to Reduce Human Smuggling?” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 5, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 343-60, <http://www.springerlink.com/content/t42227172v678164/fulltext.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2011).

considered to have lower social status. Even English language proficiency is not a solution for race matters.⁶⁵

2.2.1 Language

Assimilation of Hispanics, with respect to language matters, is no longer needed. As already stated, it was crucial for earlier immigrants to learn the English language to be part of the American melting pot. The current situation is different though, as American society in the southwest allows Hispanics to preserve their culture and language, providing most services in both English and Spanish. This is given by the numbers of Hispanics now living in the southwestern states; with rise of these numbers, most businesses in the area try to offer their services to the wide public (that includes Hispanics also) and that means wider usage of Spanish language by these companies to attract the Spanish speaking population as well. Hispanics living in the communities also do not necessarily use English in their everyday lives.⁶⁶

The efforts to learn English, though, are increasing with the generations of Hispanics born in New Mexico. Hispanic parents who immigrated to the state are aware of the importance and advantages of speaking English and are encouraging their children to learn the language. Many Hispanics are also born to the families that are linguistically fully assimilated, and English is the only language spoken in their homes. These new generations of Hispanics tend not to learn Spanish at all and are proficient in English only.⁶⁷ A report of the Pew Hispanic Center shows that English proficiency is rising among later generations. Only 23% of Hispanic immigrants spoke English very well, compared to 88% of the children of the immigrants. 94% of Hispanic children born in the United States could speak English very well. This rise in the English language proficiency is a direct sign of language assimilation among Hispanics.⁶⁸ In comparison with these statistics though, there are still some families living in Spanish speaking communities where learning

⁶⁵ Aviva Chomsky, *"They Take Our Jobs!": and 20 Other Myths about Immigration* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 104-9.

⁶⁶ Ricardo A. López, "'U.S. Hispanics Need to Learn to Speak English!' Says Who?" Latino Opinion, entry posted April 19, 2009, <http://www.latinoopinion.com/2009/04/%E2%80%9Cus-hispanics-need-to-learn-to-speak-english%E2%80%9D-says-who/> (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁶⁷ Nicolas Kanellos, *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Anthropology*, 1st edition, ed., ed. Thomas Weaver and Claudio Esteva-Fabregat, vol. 4 (Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press, 1994), 20.

English is not really a necessity, and even though the children learn to speak English at schools, they have hard times complying with the language if it is not used by their parents and people in their natural environments.⁶⁹

2.2.2 Education

Another issue of assimilation, as how whites see it, is acquiring higher education. The more educated the person is, the more job opportunities available to that person. In terms of education, Hispanics have to face difficulties that are associated with their economic and immigration status, as well as the educational achievements of previous generations. Many of them lack sufficient financial resources. Especially recent immigrants from Mexico, who did not have satisfactory financial base in their country and who came to the United States for this reason, still struggle economically. In 2008, among the total Hispanic population in New Mexico, 21,34% lived in poverty.⁷⁰ The children of people with limited economic resources lack means needed for adequate prenatal care, and cannot afford necessary educational materials. This absence of resources influences the educational future of the children and largely lowers their chances to succeed in schools. The most recent immigrants mostly did not achieve high educational levels, and also lack the experience of how the American school organization works. Moreover, because of their low educational achievements, their children lack the motivation to study while living in communities with little or no education. For this reason too, there are no successful role models that they could follow. In addition, school achievements closely correspond with leisure-time activities, including sports, arts, or other. Hispanic children do not usually take part in such activities; since most of the participants consist of non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics do not feel like part of the society.⁷¹ None of these issues represent a problem to non-Hispanic

⁶⁸ Shirin Hakimzadeh and D'Vera Cohn, "English Usage Among Hispanics in the United States," *Pew Hispanic Center* (November 29, 2007): under "Executive Summary," <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/82.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁶⁹ Ricardo A. López, "'U.S. Hispanics Need to Learn to Speak English!' Says Who?" *Latino Opinion*, entry posted April 19, 2009, <http://www.latinoopinion.com/2009/04/%E2%80%9Cus-hispanics-need-to-learn-to-speak-english%E2%80%9D-says-who/> (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁷⁰ Pew Hispanic Center, "Characteristics of the Population in New Mexico, by Race, Ethnicity and Nativity: 2008." *Pew Hispanic Center*, 2008, http://pewhispanic.org/states/pdf/NM_08.pdf (accessed April 18, 2011).

⁷¹ Ricardo A. López, "We Are Not Paying Enough Attention to Latino Education!" *Latino Opinion*, entry posted May 8, 2009, <http://www.latinoopinion.com/category/education/> (accessed March 27, 2011).

whites, who have lived in the United States for generations, have experience with the school system, are well educated, financially stable, and do not face racial discrimination.

However, concerning education in general, there are visible signs of assimilation among Hispanics. Especially the children of Hispanic immigrants achieve better results in education than their parents. As research of the Center of American Progress indicates, since 2000 more Hispanic children finish high schools and many also attend college and earn higher college degrees.⁷² Nevertheless, a great gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic educational achievements is still present. There are high numbers of Hispanics who drop out of school before finishing. The main reason of these drop outs is the economic instability of the families and the necessity of the students to support them financially. Therefore, many students are forced to find jobs and are unable to continue their studies. Another reason is the limited language skills of the students. Given the linguistic assimilation of the Hispanic generations living in the United States, such a reason is most prevalent among recent immigrants, as they did not develop their English proficiency sufficiently. Many Hispanic students also do not have satisfactory financial resources to afford the studies and therefore look for jobs instead.⁷³

For this reason it is important to raise the educational attainment results of Hispanics. An effort to do so can be seen in the New Mexico Hispanic Education Act that came into effect on July 1, 2010. Governor Bill Richardson signed this act in order to “close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates” of Hispanic students, and also to “encourage and foster parental involvement in the education of their children.”⁷⁴ Given the often financial problems of Hispanic families, there are also many scholarships and grants designed for Hispanic students in New Mexico, funded by federal and state governments as well as many private organizations. Some of the most prominent federal grants awarded to Hispanics are Pell Grant, or Federal Supplement Education Opportunity Grant. These are designed for low-income students and do not have to be repaid. When it comes to scholarships provided, the New Mexico Alliance for Hispanic Education contributes

⁷² Dowell Myers and John Pitkin, “Assimilation Today: New Evidence Shows the Latest Immigrants to America Are Following in Our History’s Footsteps,” *Center of American Progress* (September, 2010): 18, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/09/pdf/immigrant_assimilation.pdf (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁷³ Mark Hugo Lopez, “Latinos and Education: Explaining the Attainment Gap,” *Pew Hispanic Center* (October 7, 2009): 16, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/115.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁷⁴ *Hispanic Education Act*. 2010. New Mexico Legislature, 2010 regular session, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/10%20Regular/final/HB0150.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2011).

largely to the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. This fund sponsors Hispanic students in twenty five colleges in the country, including New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and the University of New Mexico Albuquerque.⁷⁵

2.2.3 Culture

Hispanics, mainly Mexicans, are also very loyal to the identity beliefs of their countries of origin, and even after immigrating to the United States they keep to the traditions and cultures, while refusing the American one.⁷⁶ The level to which Hispanics feel as a part of American society and to which they follow the American identity largely corresponds to the assimilation rate. Given the fact that Mexico borders the United States, the assimilation of people of Mexican origin in the American southwest is more difficult than of any other immigrant group, as Mexicans can preserve all the ties with their home country. In general, the longer a person stays in the country, the more he assimilates into its culture and identifies with its traditions and values. The cultural assimilation rate of Mexicans in New Mexico is somehow slower, mainly on account of the relatively recent entry of Mexican immigrants to the state. Acculturation itself can be recorded in a longer period of time and for this reason, a very slow assimilation rate can be seen among the most recent immigrants, if any at all.

There are some traditions that people of Mexican origin preserve even while living in New Mexico for many years, but they do not necessarily indicate their non-assimilation. Traditionally, the strong family ties among the Hispanic population in New Mexico are one of the most important features suggesting prevailing Mexican habits. Family is the most important unit that holds together and determines the attitudes and decisions of its individual members.⁷⁷ Therefore it is important for people of Mexican origin to maintain the ties with their family members living in Mexico, and the close proximity of the United States and Mexico allows this preservation. On the other hand, the possibility of preserving these ties can result in an assimilation slowdown, as the people of Mexican descent can renew their identification with the local culture.

⁷⁵ The New Mexico Alliance for Hispanic Education, "About the Alliance," A fundraising arm for the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, <http://www.nmalliance.org/about.html> (accessed April 13, 2011).

⁷⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 241.

⁷⁷ Ned Crouch, *Mexicans and Americans: Cracking the Culture Code*. (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2004), 180.

The assimilation of cultures, on the other hand, is not totally expected anymore. Some of the habits and traditions that originated in Mexico are even supported by local institutions. The traditional religious sculptures called *Santos* are one of the most promoted Mexican customs that symbolize the “presence of a holy personage” and maintains the “principles of Christianity.”⁷⁸ New Mexican Hispanics are increasingly encouraged to create new *Santos* art and to maintain the old-style techniques and methods.⁷⁹ The Spanish Market, an event that takes place in Santa Fe once a year, displays old Hispanic arts and crafts including pottery, basketry, ironwork, and even furniture and is one of the biggest in New Mexico. The purpose of the Spanish Market is not only to display and promote the traditional Hispanic cultures, but also to encourage young artists to take up these arts to preserve them in the future.⁸⁰

Concerning cultural assimilation, there are visible patterns of a reverse assimilation that is, of non-Hispanic Americans towards Hispanic culture in New Mexico. Given the prevalent presence of Mexican populations in the state, non-Hispanic Americans tend to embrace some values of Hispanic culture. One such example is Mexican cuisine. Mexican food is gaining popularity in New Mexico and the number of restaurants serving Mexican food constantly increases. The same pattern can be seen in the popularity of Spanish language in schools. Nowadays it is one of the most prevalent foreign languages taught at the primary and secondary levels, and in most colleges in the country as well.⁸¹ Spanish language is a significant contribution to American education, as it raises language skills of non-Hispanic Americans.

2.2.4 Society

Societal assimilation may be considered the extent to which Hispanics see themselves as a part of the society. A survey made by the Pew Hispanic Center asked Hispanics how they identify themselves in the American society. Of those asked, 48% said they identified

⁷⁸ Mary Caroline Montaña, *Tradiciones Nuevomexicanas: Hispano Arts and Culture of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 25.

⁷⁹ Cody James Hartley, *Painted Faith: Traditional New Mexican Devotional Images* (Santa Barbara, CA: Westmont College Reynolds Gallery, 2004), 1, <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa226c.htm> (accessed March 21, 2011).

⁸⁰ Santa Fe Unlimited, “Spanish Market: Traditional Hispanic Culture and Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico,” A Comprehensive Guide to Santa Fe, New Mexico, <http://spanishmkt-sf.nm-unlimited.net/> (accessed March 21, 2011).

themselves by their country of origin, 26% answered Hispanics and only 24% self-identified as Americans.⁸² As such, there is a visible pattern that prevails among American Hispanics in which they identify with the culture of their country of origin or their ethnic classification. Only a small percentage of Hispanics feel fully assimilated with the American culture.

Politics also represent a significant marker for Hispanic involvement in the society matters. New Mexico has always had a big representation of people of Hispanic origin in the state legislature. Ezequiel Cabeza de la Baca was the first Hispanic Governor of New Mexico, elected as the second NM Governor in 1917. Bill Richardson, the thirtieth governor, is also Hispanic as well as the current Governor, Susana Martinez. Furthermore, a significantly large part of the current New Mexico Senate and House of Representatives is Hispanic. The degree to which Hispanics feel integrated in the society is connected largely to their representation in leading political positions in the government. To see Hispanic representatives in the state legislature is a very important factor in the lives and societal acculturation of the Hispanic residents. These political leaders and their influential attendance in the political sphere of the state serve as role models for other Hispanics and also as a motivation for their larger involvement in the society.⁸³

The citizenship status also largely contributes to the speed of societal assimilation. If a person is not documented as a citizen in the United States, he does not have the citizenship rights and other advantages of legal American citizens. U.S. citizens can permanently live, study and work in the United States and can travel freely across the country. Undocumented citizens are very disadvantaged as they have limited access to job opportunities and other society matters. For this reason also, their incorporation is largely delayed. Given the illegal entry and residence of mostly recent immigrants from Mexico, they cannot apply for naturalization since they do not meet the requirements. Citizenship

⁸¹ Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 242.

⁸² Jeffrey Passel and Paul Taylor. "Who's Hispanic?" Pew Hispanic Center, May 28, 2009. <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/111.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2011).

⁸³ Ricardo A. López, "Stop the Latino Apathy and Become an American Participant!" Latino Opinion, entry posted November 28, 2009, <http://www.latinoopinion.com/2009/11/stop-the-latino-apathy-and-become-an-american-participant/> (accessed April 14, 2011).

through naturalization can be only granted to legal permanent residents who are physically and continuously present in the country.⁸⁴

All these factors generally explain the assimilation rate of Hispanic immigrants. Nevertheless, an issue that creates a sound foundation for acculturation is a public opinion about the Mexican immigration to the United States. It is not only the view how non-Hispanic Americans see immigrants of Mexican origin, but also conversely; how Mexicans see white Americans. In a recent public forum in Washington, the Mexican President Felipe Calderón expressed his apprehension concerning public attitudes of the two countries. He stated that “bad feelings are growing on both sides of the border.”⁸⁵ These feelings include Americans’ growing intolerance of illegal migration from Mexico and their misunderstanding of Mexicans in general. A similar view is growing in Mexico, where people take a negative stance towards Americans and their general perception of Mexicans. The stormy relationship between the United States and Mexico certainly does not benefit the people of Mexican origin living in the United States. The negative attitudes towards them lead in most cases to discrimination and again, it is slowing down the process of their assimilation and a sense of kinship in the society.

2.3 Discrimination

There are many types of discrimination Hispanics have to face, but for purposes of study they can be categorized into four basic forms. Verbal abuse is the first. This form includes derogatory referring to one’s ethnic background. The second one is a denial of social resources, such as education, health care, or justice. Aggression towards an individual or group of people represents more serious discrimination, followed by the most extreme form, genocide.⁸⁶ A 2010 survey concluded that Hispanics nowadays face more severe discrimination than blacks. 81% of Hispanics stated so, along with 59% of non-

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Citizenship through Naturalization,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=d84d6811264a3210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=d84d6811264a3210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCRD#> (accessed April 17, 2011).

⁸⁵ Edwin Mora, “Mexico’s President,” *CNSNews*, March 4, 2011. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/mexico-s-president-anti-american-feeling> (accessed April 17, 2011).

⁸⁶ Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 60.

Hispanics.⁸⁷ In general, it is difficult to track down discriminatory actions, because many of them are not reported. However, people of Hispanic origin living in New Mexico face more or less the same kinds of discrimination as Hispanics in any other American state.

2.3.1 Reasons for discrimination

Although there are some exceptions, most discriminatory actions are driven by prejudice, bad assumptions and false perceptions. One would say that the recent undocumented flow of immigrants from Mexico would suffer from discrimination the most, given their illegal entry to the United States and their slow assimilation rates. However, this particular group of people creates a basis for greater discrimination trends among American society. A person of Mexican origin who is a documented American citizen is often a victim of discrimination because of his physical appearance, by which he is associated with the recent undocumented immigrants and the problems connected to this immigration. It is not only the immigration status that is harmful to non-immigrants; it is also the general view (or stereotype) of immigrants as uneducated, not willing to pay taxes, taking jobs from white Americans – in general, most likely to be a burden to the United States. The view of Mexico as a poor country, the drug conflict and the high rate of criminal activity recorded there can have negative impacts on American citizens of Hispanic/Mexican background. Therefore, these people can, along with recent immigrants, have problems with discrimination.

Another reason for discrimination against Hispanics can be simply a bad personal experience with one person of Hispanic origin followed by so-called selective perception. In such a case, one is convinced that people of particular ethnic origin are the same, and notice only facts that support their conviction while ignoring the facts that contest it.⁸⁸ These people then refuse particular ethnic groups on the basis of prejudice and tend to judge them without knowing them personally. In consideration of the drug war in Mexico and the general stereotyping of immigrants, many people of Mexican origin are viewed as criminals, drug dealers, or connected to some kind of illegal business.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Alan Fram, "Poll Finds Discrimination Against Hispanics Is High," *Seattle Times*, May 20, 2010. http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2011916375_biaspoll21.html (accessed April 24, 2011).

⁸⁸ Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 53.

⁸⁹ Stephanie Greco Larson, *Media and Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment (Spectrum Series)* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 122.

One of the contemporary assumptions of white Americans is that the inflow of Mexican people into the country should be called invasion, rather than immigration. Many white Americans fear that they will be overrun by a “brown-skinned, Spanish-speaking tidal wave”⁹⁰ that will not assimilate and will end the supremacy of Anglo culture in the United States. They think that Mexicans are slowly taking over the land they once owned and that was taken away from them by Americans in the nineteenth century. This fear is another driving force for discrimination of people of Mexican descent; immigrant or non-immigrant.

All of these reasons for discrimination are based mainly on ethnic background and physical appearance of Hispanics. The color of their skin suggests their origins and with this hint, white Americans usually make assumptions about qualities and characteristics of Hispanics, according to the general racial prejudice. Obviously, the matter of race is still a significant feature of American society.

2.3.2 Discrimination in schools

People who are most affected by discrimination are undoubtedly students at schools. The way their closest environment treats them every day has a direct impact on their academic successes and failures. Many Hispanic students face racial discrimination in American schools, and it prevents them from developing their academic skills and incorporating into society. The National Council of La Raza made a thorough research on discrimination against Hispanic students in four cities and described the most common forms of discrimination and their consequences for Hispanic students. The research concluded that Hispanics often face ethnic stereotyping not only by their schoolmates, but also teachers and supervisors. The students are judged by the color of their skin and are automatically associated with Mexicans and the negative ethnic stereotype of people of Mexican origin. Some teachers then assume that Hispanic students will probably not graduate and consider teaching them a waste of time. Many teachers also do not expect that Hispanics will want to continue their studies at college, and therefore Hispanics are not informed about their possibilities, or given any additional information for applicants. This unequal treatment and ignorance of Hispanic culture is largely demotivating for the

⁹⁰ David Coates, *A Liberal Tool Kit: Progressive Responses to Conservative Arguments* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 85.

students; they are overlooked and isolated from the school activities, and their knowledge attainment is generally slowed down.

Language also plays a substantial role in the behavior of teachers towards Hispanics in schools. Teachers often judge students based on their race or ethnic origin, and believe that these students are not proficient in English. For this reason, the students are unfairly placed in the ESL courses (English as a Second Language), no matter their English proficiency. Not only is their language development radically slowed, it also promotes the isolationism of Hispanics in schools and prevents them from their future progress. Cases where teachers forbid students to speak Spanish in schools are also present. Most of these students are aware of the importance of studying; they want to succeed in life and realize that education is also an important factor for their integration into society. However, with the obstacles they have to face in schools because of racial prejudice of their teachers, their future success is considerably limited.⁹¹

2.3.3 Discrimination at work

Many Hispanics face racial discrimination at work as well. A 2002 survey reported that 78% of Latinos thought discrimination was a major problem in the workplace.⁹² Moreover, given the continuing undocumented immigration from Mexico and recent immigration restrictions, this number is undoubtedly higher these days. The reasons for discrimination toward Hispanics in the workplace are similar to those in schools; ethnic origin and negative stereotyping connected to origin, English language proficiency, and legal status. Hispanic youth with personal work experience claims that there is a “clear ethnic hierarchy and discrimination in the workforce, with different standards for hiring, paying, and treating Latinos in many jobs.”⁹³ The question of hiring is connected to ethnic stereotyping. Employers who are looking for highly skilled workers are influenced by unfavorable stereotypes about people of Hispanic origin and the general assumptions related to them.

⁹¹ Patricia Foxen, *Speaking Out: Latino Youth On Discrimination in the United States* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2010), 15-27, <http://issuu.com/nclr/docs/youthfocusgroupreport?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Fflight%2Flayout.xml&showFlipBtn=true> (accessed April 25, 2011).

⁹² Pew Hispanic Center, “2002 National Survey of Latinos.” Pew Hispanic Center, 2002, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/15.pdf> (accessed April 25, 2011).

⁹³ Foxen, *Speaking Out: Latino Youth On Discrimination in the United States*, 32-33.

The most common assumptions about Hispanic workers are their lack of conviction or passive involvement.⁹⁴ Employers are also suspicious about the legal status of Latinos on the basis of their ethnic background, and therefore discriminate against them in a process of hiring employees. The legal status also highly contributes to the amount of money they earn. In addition, some employers threaten illegal employees with reports to the immigration authorities, and exploit them as a cheap workforce. These people are not able to defend themselves and often accept low wages as they cannot afford to lose the job.⁹⁵ Another important factor for the treatment of employees is the level of their English. Hispanics, mainly from the immigrant groups, are often not fluent in English and therefore are denied jobs. Some have a strong accent, and even if they have sufficient English vocabulary, they are also not accepted.⁹⁶ All these reasons contribute to the fact that many employers prefer hiring non-Hispanic workers.

Low wages for Hispanics are clearly a matter of discrimination. Better educational achievements and a university diploma are considered a general base for higher earnings. However, Hispanics have to face numerous forms of discrimination during their studies, and as a result their schools results are largely threatened. This fact consequently reflects on their job levels and earnings. Immigrants to New Mexico in general earn lower wages than native-born citizens.⁹⁷ For that reason, their acculturation and level of their English are considered important factors in the labor market.

Another form of discrimination in the workplace consists of a hostile work environment, including verbal attacks by colleagues or employers concerning ethnicity. Poor relationships with co-workers and bad treatment from their side might be a reason for voluntary notice. However, Hispanics with financial difficulties cannot afford to leave the job and they are often forced to endure this humiliating behavior.

Long-term discrimination in the workplace can result in increased levels of stress and develops negative feelings about the work environment in general. These feelings lead to

⁹⁴ Robert Rodriguez, *Latino Talent: Effective Strategies to Recruit, Retain and Develop Hispanic Professionals* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008), 35.

⁹⁵ Foxen, *Speaking Out: Latino Youth On Discrimination in the United States*, 33.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁷ New Mexico Voices for Children, *Immigrants and the New Mexico Economy: Working Hard For Low Wages* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Voices for Children, 2008), 4, http://www.nmvoices.org/fpp_attachments/immigrants_and_economy_full_rpt_6-08.pdf (accessed April 27, 2011).

an overall negative attitude towards employers and colleagues, as well as to signs of depression and the lower psychological well-being of a person. The concentration of an employee who is discriminated against is reduced as well as his motivation to work, resulting in an overall decline in work performance. Employers who are driven by racial or ethnic prejudice can also limit the career advancement of individuals. Hispanics are not only denied promotion, they can also be demoted to a lower position in the company, based on their ethnic origin.⁹⁸

2.3.4 Discrimination in general

Other than discrimination in schools and workplace, Hispanics face all kinds of discrimination outside these institutions in their everyday lives. Many Hispanics are constant targets of police officers, who suspect them of crime on the basis of racial profiling. In states with widespread occurrence of Mexican gangs, Hispanic youths are often considered part of these gangs just because they wear a specific style of clothing or colors that relate to the gang activity.⁹⁹ Many have been searched and arrested for no reason, and were called insulting names by police officers on account of their ethnic origin.¹⁰⁰ In some towns they are not welcome in public places.¹⁰¹ Many Hispanics were born in the United States, yet are still told to go back to their country of origin. They are suspected of being undocumented, uneducated, unemployed, not willing to learn English language or to assimilate in general. All this hatred for Hispanics is based on contemporary undocumented immigration from Mexico, ethnic stereotyping and prejudice.

The way Hispanics are treated by non-Hispanics depends on individuals and their approach to immigration and cultural understanding. It is important to know that Hispanics constitute a large part of American society and highly contribute to the development of the country with hard work and a vision of better life. Therefore it is necessary to change the way Hispanics are viewed by the general public, and to promote values of acceptance, equality, and opportunity.

⁹⁸ Vincent J. Roscigno, *The Face of Discrimination: How Race and Gender Impact Work and Home Lives* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 31.

⁹⁹ Foxen, *Speaking Out: Latino Youth On Discrimination in the United States*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 36, 38.

¹⁰¹ XicanoPwr, "No Hispanics Allowed," YouTube, video file, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xcov24pcHgA&feature=related> (accessed April 28, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Hispanics have been part of New Mexico long before its incorporation into the United States. They set the base for the state demographically and contributed to the growth of the population since the 16th century. With the start of the American rule and construction of the notion of race in North America, many difficulties for the people of Spanish origin were launched. They were put nearly at the bottom of Anglo-American racial hierarchy, and many opportunities they had in the past were restricted to them. Nowadays, some services are still being denied to them on a basis of their ethnic origin. Similarly to the past, present Hispanics face discrimination on account of their skin color, and are being stereotyped by white Americans in association with people of Mexican origin who came to the country recently.

The recent immigration from Mexico is a very complex problem caused by the economic situation and national security in Mexico, and creates many other difficulties for Hispanics mainly in the Southwest United States. High crime rate, lack of jobs in Mexico, and a large number of Hispanics currently in the United States is driving the Mexican workforce across the border. Some of these people do not see legal ways of migration to the United States, and therefore cross the border illegally as undocumented immigrants. As a result, this illegal action causes the white Americans to stereotype people of Hispanic origin. Latinos are then judged by the color of their skin and are automatically considered Mexican. The common negative stereotype of a person of Mexican origin is viewed as poor, uneducated, and unemployed, mostly to become a criminal or a burden to the U. S. A. in general. For this reason they are often discriminated against. Not only immigrant Hispanics have to fight discrimination; many people of Hispanic origin born in the United States (thus legal citizens) face severe discrimination in their lives because of the ethnic stereotyping. These discriminatory actions have serious impacts on their future development and success in life. Many Hispanics are denied opportunities for formal education, which consequently influences their working life. Some are denied promotion and career advancement, some are paid low wages and some are even not hired because of their ethnic background. This considerably lowers their chances to earn a satisfactory income and to fully assimilate into society.

All the past immigrants from around the world were in the U. S. A. required to learn the English language; it was a sign of their assimilation into the American melting pot. Recent immigrants do not necessarily need to learn English, since bilingualism is highly

promoted. This is particularly true for the Spanish-speaking population in the Southwest. With the current number of Spanish-speaking Hispanics living in the United States, there is often no need for them to speak English on a daily basis. This is also enhanced by the most recent immigrants from Mexico who predominantly speak Spanish. Therefore, the general belief of white Americans is that Hispanics living in the United States are not assimilating. However, this is not completely true. Hispanic parents realize how important it is for their children to learn English and gain higher education, for this reason they highly support them in their studies. One of the major signs of Hispanics' assimilation is the fact that large numbers of Hispanic families are fluent in English, and in many of them English is the only language spoken at home. Hispanic people also constitute a great part of American workforce and thus contribute to the wealth of the whole country. Therefore, the degree to which Hispanics prosper has a direct impact on the prosperity and well-being of the American society in general.

The U.S. government should take a different approach to the immigration from Mexico by implementing a constructive immigration reform that would help regulate the number of illegal immigrants, and even consider legalizing the undocumented Hispanics already living in the country. Not only would it have a positive impact on the U.S. economy, it would also raise the living standards of Latinos and help them assimilate faster into American society. Non-Hispanic Americans should also change their negative view of Hispanics and not prejudice because of ethnic background. Hispanic people should not be considered a threat to the American nation, but rather a contribution. Like everyone else, they are merely seeking prosperity and a better way of life in the United States of America.

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