

Mexican-American war and its impacts on today's relations

Jozef Kováčik

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prof. PhDr. Vlastimil Švec, CSc.
děkan

L.S.

Mgr. Věra Kozáková, Ph.D.
ředitel ústavu

ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá vlivy historických událostí na vývoj vztahů mezi dvěma sousedícími národy, v tomto případě mezi národy Spojených států mexických a Spojených států amerických. Nahlíží do společné historie těchto dvou zemí, počínaje událostmi vedoucími k Mexicko-Americké válce až do doby dnešní, kdy jsou jejich vztahy opět vypjaté. Práce se snaží alespoň do jisté míry porozumět nastalé situaci právě na základě okolností, které provázely jejich vzájemné neshody a nepokoje v minulosti.

Závěr se bude věnovat jistým krokům, jenž by podle autora mohly vést ke zlepšení nynější situace.

Klíčová slova: Mexicko-Americká válka, Americký Jihozápad, imigrace, Mexičan-Američan, Mexický imigrant, ilegální imigrant

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns with the influences of historical events on the relations development of two bordering nations, in this case of the United Mexican States and the United States of America. It takes a look into the common history of these two countries, beginning with the ones preceding the Mexican-American war up until today, when their relations are tense again. The thesis tries to comprehend, at least to a certain extend, the arisen situation based on the circumstances which accompanied their mutual disagreements and disputes in the past.

The ending will address to certain steps that, according to the author, could lead to an improvement of the current situation.

Keywords: Mexican-American war, American Southwest, immigration, Mexican-American, Mexican immigrant, illegal immigrant

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INTRODUCTION

The Mexican-American War, 1846-1848, played a significant role in the history of the United States and Mexico. In various books, the common history of these nations is recorded starting from shortly before the conflict. The United States gained 529,000 square miles of valuable Mexican territory and Mexico lost land and resources, cutting its territory by about one third. More importantly though, it played a significant role as far as the relations between the two opponents go.

This thesis' aim is to collect historical data on the topic from various sources and analyze them based on the impacts that the different events had on the society of the American Southwest of the particular time.

I chose this topic because it has again become widely talked about, namely in connection with the illegal immigration of people of Hispanic descent into the United States of America. It appeared interesting to learn not only about their recent disputes but also polemize about whether and how even conflicts 200 years old could impact the relations today.

I. THEORY

1 EVENTS PRECEDING THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

It is March 4, 1845 and James Knox Polk has just been sworn in as President of the United States. One of the points of his preceding election campaign was the annexation of Texas. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, men in power in America at that time had a big appetite for expansion. Many of them actually believed it was their duty to spread the country towards the Pacific Ocean and the Mexican territory lay in the way. They were not thinking only about Texas but also California and New Mexico.

Texas, after gaining independence from Spain in 1810, was part of Mexico. Although the Mexican government allowed for Americans to settle in the territory, after the Tejanos' (American residents of Texas) call for more self-rule, further American emigration to Texas was forbidden. The Texans desire for independence grew rapidly and after a year of fighting in the War of Texas Independence, they gained their independence from Mexico and took a positive stand towards Polk's proposal to become one of the United States. However, Mexico was not willing to give up Texas so easily, much less to their northern neighbor.

The Mexican government, suspecting the next step of Polk's government, warned the U.S. if they annexed Texas it would be a declaration of war. But Texas was independent and the offer was therefore legal. When the proposal was officially accepted, a big wave of displeasure swept through Mexico. The beginning of the war was hanging by a threat.

The U.S. took a last step in alleged "hope to prevent a conflict" and sent a representative John Slidell to Mexico to legally purchase Texas, New Mexico and California. The outgoing Mexican president José Herrera refused to receive Slidell's offer, in fact refused to receive Slidell at all. Upon his return to Washington, President Polk issued an order that set the army led by General Taylor in motion.

These movements naturally created great excitement in Mexico City and the new president Paredes instantly ordered the Mexican troops to proceed northward. The armies met at a shallow stream north of Rio Grande and shortly after, Taylor was notified by a Mexican messenger that "any further advance would be considered an act of open hostility and that the Mexicans would open fire upon any American attempting to cross the line."¹

¹ Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War: The Chicano History of American Civilization* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).



Table 1: The United States and Mexico in 1845²

² University of Texas Libraries, “Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection” The University of Texas at Austin, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/ward_1912/mexico_texas_1845.jpg

2 THE CONFLICT

Both armies camped on each side of the river and the generals started to exchange angry words. General Pedro Ampudia ordered Taylor to return to Corpus Christi, a town which the U.S. army came from and gave him twenty-four hours to break camp. Taylor had been ordered to his position and that was his answer, while emphasizing that he “regrets” the possibility of war but he will not avoid it. Although both sides knew the other enemy would not draw back, the Mexican leadership seemed overly eager in starting the war. As a matter of fact, after the first overt act of war on April 25, 1846, General Mariano Arista (having superseded Ampudia) later boasted: “I had the pleasure of being the first to start the war.”

Due to slow means of transport it took two weeks for the message of the first bloodshed to reach Washington. And before the United States government could officially declare war on May 13, 1846, two battles had already been fought that claimed heavy casualties on the Mexican side.³

Meanwhile, there was a strong argument at the U.S. headquarters, an argument about waging war against Mexico. The approval of the declaration of war on Mexico in the U.S. government was not unanimous at all. Strong calls for justice and ceasing the war were heard from many congressmen, including Abraham Lincoln. The attack was by some of them labeled a slaughter of Mexicans on their soil or robbing them of their country, the northerners even accused the south of attempting to increase the number of slave states.⁴

Whatever the intensions, the war was in full swing and both countries started campaigns to recruit soldiers for the fight. Many battles were fought, mostly with higher casualties in the Mexican lines. Their army suffered desertions and disorderliness, which was one of the reasons why American troops were winning battles even when outnumbered. One example for all, during the Mexican march to fight Taylor at a mountain pass called Buena Vista, Santa Anna lost 5,000 men just due to desertions, still

³ See Singletary, *The Mexican American War*, 13.

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, “Mexican-American War – Declaration of War”, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican-American_War

leaving him with 15,000 against Taylor's 4,600. Even the same night the Mexican army had to withdraw, leaving Taylor in control of Northern Mexico.⁵

On September 14, 1847, Mexico City was taken, which was hoped to convince the Mexican government to talk about peace treaty. However, it took several weeks before it came down to negotiations. This reluctance on the Mexican side was rooted in numerous reasons, one of the major ones being their pride to admit a defeat and the bitterness that they felt for losing a war for coveted territory. After the elections of a new president Pedro Anaya, the conflict suddenly seemed very likely to come to an end.

Finally, on February 2, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, designed to re-establish peace and friendship between the two nations, was signed. In the main part of the Treaty, Mexico approved to cede California and New Mexico to the United States and also that the Rio Grande river would be the boundary between Texas and Mexico.⁶ This, of course, caused bitter feelings not only with the leaders but also with the population of Mexicans and there was a continuous threat of revolts against the government for signing the Treaty. However, on May 30, 1848, both the copies of the document were ratified and exchanged between Mexico City and Washington. The war was over.⁷

⁵ Wikipedia contributors, "Mexican-American War – Northeastern Mexico", Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican-American_War

⁶ See Singletary, *The Mexican American War*, 160.

⁷ See Singletary, *The Mexican American War*, 161.

3 ITS RESULTS FOR BOTH SIDES

The two years of war that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended, had left more than 63,000 dead on both sides and up until that time, it had been the bloodiest and costliest war in American history.

The Treaty gave the victor an enormous piece of land that extended its territory almost by one third (cutting down Mexico by the same figure), including what would later become the states of California and Texas, as well as parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Nevada. And all that in exchange for a ridiculous price of \$15 million. (When John Slidell went to Mexico to negotiate the purchase of the land before the start of the war, he was instructed to offer maximum of \$30 million just for California.) A new border between the two nations was established and the annexation of Texas of officially recognized.⁸

The Treaty also made, almost overnight, American citizens from about 90,000 Mexicans who remained in the area called American Southwest. The document formally gave full support to the U.S. Constitution, one of the main ideas of which was the equality of all citizens. As for the remaining group, this was far from truth: “Americans’ past actions toward the ethnic and racial minorities that composed part of their society made it unlikely that the new Mexican American minority would be afforded anything near equal rights in American society. Indeed, in the half century following the annexation of Mexico’s former northern provinces, the ethnic Mexican population of the region was slowly but surely relegated to an inferior, caste-like status in the region’s evolving social system,”⁹ says David G. Gutiérrez in a chapter called *Legacies of Conquest*. By the end of the 19th century, many Mexican Americans in the territory had been deprived of their land and some historians compare this status to the one that the Indians and African Americans in other parts of the United States had.

In 1854, the U.S. bought from Mexico what is presently southern Arizona and New Mexico. This *Gadsden Purchase* gave the U.S. an important railroad route.¹⁰

⁸ See Singletary, *The Mexican American War*, 161.

⁹ David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 13.

¹⁰ “Gadsden Purchase”, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/dwe/87721.htm>

II. ANALYSIS

4 LOOKING FOR DIFFERENT IMPACTS

As for the American side, the outcomes of the war and the events of the after-period were more than ideal. Regardless the casualties that the U.S. suffered, the annexation of a large new territory was nothing but a gain. With more food the appetite grows and many Americans voiced their thoughts of taking over the whole Mexico, perhaps South America.¹¹

The greediness excused by God's will of the ultranationalists at that time seemed to be limitless. Paradoxically (and luckily for the Mexicans), the xenophobia and perhaps racism of the same representatives with the "annexing ambitions" caused that they were not able to sell their views to American political leaders and public. The reason was their fear of the incorporation of non-white, non-English-speaking people into the United States. Although they did not push through with their "ideals", we can observe these views throughout the history of America and they undoubtedly gave roots to many of the issues concerning Mexican Americans and Mexican Immigrants.¹²

On the other bank of Rio Grande, the impressions from the steps following the signing of the Treaty could not be less exciting. Offending the negotiated Protocol by not providing the Mexicans with the same rights as the other citizens of the U.S., certainly did not help to strengthen the already bruised Mexican-American relationships.

Firstly, no treaty could change the hostility that the Mexicans felt from the Anglo-Americans. The view of the Mexican race was not too welcoming even before the war and due to the defeat that the Mexicans suffered in the conflict, the Americans were even more convinced of the inferiority of their southern neighbors descent.

Secondly, there was no document concerning the legal status of the Mexicans that remained in the annexed territories. Although they were given "all the rights of the citizens", there were no specific conditions that would confer them citizenship. But since they happened to live on the suddenly American land, they were given three options to choose from. They could move south of the new international border, they could "retain their Mexican citizenship in the United States with the status of permanent resident aliens

¹¹ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 14.

¹² See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 15.

by publicly announcing their intention” or they would be, in a year time, considered citizens of the United States.¹³

With these conditions being set, the people had to decide between ceding “their” land to the U.S., showing that they were defeated at all fronts and accepting citizenship of the occupier, giving up their home country.

4.1 The first Mexican immigrants

It was not only the war between Mexico and United States that wrote the history of that era in the area around their common border. Just like the transformation of citizenship, a new wave struck virtually overnight. In early 1848, in the foothills of Sierra Nevada, a farmer found a glittery stone that later on caused a mass-stampede known as the *Gold Rush*. About 200,000 people from all around the world migrated into and flooded California, leaving the Spanish-speaking population in a tiny minority.¹⁴

“From all over the world” also included Mexico but not only its very northern part. The *Gold Fever* got into the whole country and the people coming to California to mine gold brought a lot of experience in this field of mining and precious metal expertise with them. There again is a great example of the opportunist character of the American people in the period of the westward expansion. By the end of 1840s, most all Mexicans (not just from the recently annexed territories) were very welcomed by Americans, who were very eager to learn their techniques. After having achieved it though, the Mexicans suddenly became an unwanted competition in the chase for happiness. Expulsions, taxes for foreign minors (especially Mexicans) and intimidation were some of the methods that were used to dispose of everyone with a Mexican origin. By the 1850’s, violent crimes against Mexicans increased dramatically, which added some more fuel to the flames burning along the *Great River*.¹⁵

Taking into consideration the definition of an immigrant and applying it to the situation back in the half of the 19th century in order to determine who the first Mexican immigrants were, we would have to take this “label” off the miners that came for the

¹³ Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 68.

¹⁴ “Collision of Cultures”, The Gold Rush, <http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/collision.html>

¹⁵ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 19.

purpose of gold-seeking. Instead, this status should be ascribed to the people that lived in the territory that was taken over by the United States after the war. If we allow that a person can leave one country to settle permanently in another without ever moving (which is exactly what happened to those Mexicans), the ascription of the role of the first Mexican immigrants is unambiguous.

4.2 The stems

Despite the affirmation of being treated equally, the conditions for living of Mexican Americans in the annexed territories were not improving and the oppression in the whole South was being taken further and further.

Why is it that people who had “just come” to the area are so refusing of new ones to come onto “their land”? I suppose it is something we could call a *conqueror’s syndrome*. The succeeding conquerors leave their home countries behind, they go through many difficulties without knowing certainly where they will end up and then, at last, they come to the Promised land. We had seen it happen even before, as a matter of fact, not too far away, with the first European immigrants and Native Americans. And just like Christopher Columbus a few centuries before, these conquerors try to rid the land that they “had been given” of everything that could endanger their superiority and ownership.

The effects of this *syndrome* were even supplemented by the fact that the South had been for long very slave-supportive. The southerners had for long been used to racial segregation anyways and so when it has come to the question of cleaning up the newly-gained states, it did not seem difficult for them to take it up on themselves.¹⁶

4.2.1 Texas

If the persecution of Mexican Americans in the 1860s and 1870s was rough in the southern states, it was rougher in Texas. The sanctions that were elsewhere put on the “inferior” inhabitants implicitly, in Texas were done under the name of law, by the Texas Rangers. They were paramilitary units and were persuaded that their job is to keep the Mexicans “in their place”.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 21.

¹⁷ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965).

On Tejanos, the idea of the *conqueror's syndrome* could apply more than on people in any other state. To gain the status they had now, they had had to go through incomparably more troubles. From the French rule, through Spanish to Mexican, they fought out their independence, priding themselves in it openly. Not that being proud of victories in the past is a bad concept! An overly proud people though, can be a difficult obstacle to overcome when it comes to integration of people from different nations.

Despite the experienced hardship, the ratio of Mexican Americans in Texas was still very high and they tried to integrate into various social groups. But the racial prejudice rooted in the Southerners and the bitter feelings from the annexation were making it extremely difficult to merge into the white society. The first generation of Mexicans basically had no choice but to try and adopt the culture, the governing system, the social norms. Having been cut from their roots, the Spanish-speaking population slowly starts to come together.

4.3 First Communities

One of the basic needs that humans have (described for example in Maslow's theory), is the social need. To explain, we look to belong somewhere, to be part of a certain social group, a family. The need for social relations in the Mexican society is indeed very strong even nowadays and it was so (perhaps even stronger) back in the days. I am certain it springs from the Mexican nation being religious and Catholicism putting stress on the family and keeping warm and healthy relationships within it.

One of the basic reactions to repression and prejudice from our surroundings is naturally resistance. After some difficult years in the American Southwest, the Mexican population began to realize their status of ethnical minority and the chance they had in coming together. There is power in unity and who better to unite with than with the individuals who were experiencing the same inconvenience.

Combine this need and reaction and the result must be forming and living in communities. The members of the same cultural and linguistic community began to join together and suddenly the aspects of their origin that they were handicapped for, became something they could pride themselves in. The Mexican Americans knew that adopting to the culture did not work for neither of the sides and therefore built their lives on the values they shared with the other members of the newly-founded ethnic community.

Perhaps feeling strong from the support of the communities formed from individuals of their own blood, the Mexicans began to apply practices that they were most intimidated by when being oppressed from the American side. Perhaps it was the bitter feelings driving Mexican desire to make better living on account of some other ethnic group. This group was no other than the Native Americans, now being driven out of their territories. Mexicans “hired” them for hard labor on fields and farms, treating them no better than slaves. The history repeats itself in an interval of few years, with a change only in the slavers and slaves.¹⁸

Coming the end of the 19th century, there was a completely new, up until then unfamiliar society along the Southwest, all the members of which had to deal with the impacts of it their own way. Saying that all the Mexican Americans calmly withdrew to the communities and minded their own fields would be a generalization and untruth. While others tried to develop and improve the common environment by forming voluntary organizations called *mutualista*¹⁹, others resorted to violence in order to fight with the social subordination they experienced. Perhaps feeling strong from the unification of their own, some decided to revenge, which certainly was not a soothing medicine to the clawed relationships.²⁰

In addition to the description of the society, we should notice the hierarchical system that created at that time. It could be said that it was based on the rule of proportion between the time spent in the Southwestern area and the rank that the given ethnic group had. The Native Americans, being pursued all over the United States ever since Christopher Columbus set foot on the American soil, were taking up the lowest status, although having lived there the longest. Then there were Mexicans on the imaginary second rank, although having lived there long before the Anglo-Americans took over the territory. Perhaps another symptom of the conqueror’s syndrome?

4.3.1 Common aspects

The most common means of expressing one’s feelings whether they are currently good or bitter, was and still is music. The Mexican musicianship most likely originated in the

¹⁸ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 31

¹⁹ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 34.

²⁰ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 35.

religion brought to the land from Spain. Christianity and music had always belonged together and the Mexicans in the period of the Mexican immigration, their music became a big part of their lives. As we see it in the Spanish music, the inseparable part of the typical music was a guitar, an easily-portable instrument on their travels. A new type of music began to develop called *corrido* (*a border ballad*). The music carried stories of their hard times and was a tool to overcome them. But it was not only the reason of singing out their bitterness, there was another dimension to it. It carried news and information of the current event, passed from one singer to another. What a great way to create a media channel, great way to connect the people of the same origin.²¹

Another interesting fact, giving us a better insight into the evolution of the Mexican American view of themselves, are the changes in the terms that this group used. Prior to the Westward American expansion and to the war, the residents of Mexico identified themselves referring to the localities they were from rather than with the Republic of Mexico. After the conflict and the almost-lost identity after trying to be part of a new society, they began to refer to themselves as Mexicanos.²²

Although the pride of the Mexican origin caused and still does cause them inconveniences in the area of integration, it is, in a way, impressive. We can see their acknowledgement of the common roots as an aspect that helped them unite and subsequently push through the difficulties.

4.3.2 Growth of the numbers

The American Southwest continued to progress and with it came many unexpected turns of the American plans for driving out the inferior minorities. These turns did not include only the Mexican ethnic group but also groups from countries east from the U.S., mainly China and Japan.

The industrial revolution was going on in most of the big countries around the world and America was no different. As the demand for low-wage workers grew and there was a big lack, the employers started to look eastward and imported large numbers of Chinese workers. The white society soon recognized the danger of another ethnicity flooding their

²¹ “Land loss in trying times”, Immigration...Mexican, <http://frontiers.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/mexican3.html>

²² See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 35.

land and again reacted with violence. As a result, Chinese workers were officially banned from entry into the country. The need of foreign workers that would not demand high wages did not cease to grow and the employers decided to try their luck in Japan. The scenario was very similar as with the Chinese, in some ways even worse. The Japanese started co-operating with each other, buying and renting land and competing with their former bosses. This, of course, provoked discontentment and led to restrictions on the workers from Japan as well.²³

Meanwhile in Mexico there was a political crisis which projected largely on the job market. Many Mexicans were moving from one place to another in order to find themselves better living. Interestingly enough, they wandered only in within the borders of their own country, not intending to cross the border. Slowly but surely though, the occurrence of the American demand and Mexican redundancy of people willing to work coincided and American industrialists saw in the southern state a great potential for their businesses. By the end of the century, the inflow of immigrants radically increased and began to really flood the neighboring states of the U.S.²⁴

There we can note a big paradox of the Mexican-American history. From the period of the immigration beginnings, the white American society learned that the coming of a large number of members of a different culture and ethnicity does not comply with their strong feel for the superordinate ownership of the land they conquered. Ever since then they had been trying to push the new-comers back where they came from, whether by use of legal means or acts that were only under the veil of the law. Yet it was not the Mexican unquenchable desire to live and work in the United States that raised the new wave of immigration, which was on a much larger scale than the first one around the half of the 19th century. What caused it was the American need of development of the industry, subsequently the economy and most importantly, the living standard of an average American. Perhaps not realizing at the point, Americans (with a minor contribution of other aspects) brought on themselves what they feared the most. The arrival of large groups of Mexicans was more and more frequent and the hopes for white America were being pulled in into the whirl that the new immigration wave created.

²³ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 43.

²⁴ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 44.

Fortunately the society is almost never unified and neither was the Anglo-American. The voices of important people that advocated the reception of Mexicans to the vacancies were heard more often, among which was an U.S. government economist, in whose study from 1908 he lifted some of the Mexicans' qualities, describing them as: "docile, patient, usually orderly in camp, fairly intelligent under competent supervision, obedient and cheap."²⁵

Whatever the opinions of the white society in the U.S., their unwillingness to fill up the positions in harsh and demanding jobs (conditions to which the Mexicans were obviously more adaptable) caused that Mexicans took all the low-skill, low-wage vacancies and "by 1910 Mexican immigrant workers had become the backbone of the work force in many industries."²⁶

4.4 Recent history

From the beginning of the 20th century, through the both World Wars, the Great Depression, Cold war, Civil rights movement and other events that changed the face of the American society up until now, the change in the view of the ethnic minorities in the U.S. went a long way. On the other hand, the status of the community that takes up all the jobs that white Americans are not willing to do, still lasts.

But going back to the 1930s, there was a strong generation of American-born Mexicans who considered themselves more American than Mexican and when the U.S. entered into the World War II, it appeared natural for them to join the U.S. forces. Yet after coming back, perhaps hoping the situation in their homeland had changed, their hopes were pulverized by being denied medical services as the war veterans. Moreover, some of the mourners had to go through a painful experience of being denied the funeral of their dead because of their race.

A big problem in addition to the ones connected with the end of the World War II, was what the historians call "The Problem of the Second Generation". What it concerns is, the two completely different generations that suddenly happen to be in the homes of the

²⁵ Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story, An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farmworkers in California, 1942-1960* (Charlotte, N.C.: McNally & Loftin, 1964), 238.

²⁶ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 45.

Mexican immigrants. The parents came from Mexico (although a long while ago) and it was still their homeland. Their thinking, their habits, behavior patterns, were diametrically different than the ones their offspring was acquiring during his/her childhood. This obviously lead to rebellion against the parents and from rebellion there is only one step to disputes and fights. Therefore, there began to form ghettos of the kids from the “second generation” which were the initiators of many disorders in the suburbs of the American cities, which again hardly contributed to the good impression of the Anglo society.²⁷

4.4.1 The Chicano Movement

The undoubted success of the Civil Rights Movement which was lead by the African-Americans was an ignition to the Mexican-American call for their ethnic identity and recognition. Inspired by the other oppressed group, Mexican-American organizations had by the late 1950s significantly changed their tactics. They decided to be more aggressive in their political campaigns and encouragement of the Mexican population to speak up.²⁸

These activities gave base to the emergence of the Chicano movement which, in the end, did in the transformation of America’s opinion of the immigration issue a lot more than any other event that had taken place before. However, the social situation was changing very slowly and especially high school and college students began to voice their dissatisfaction with discrimination and inferior education. What greatly increased the interest of young Mexican-Americans in the politicalization of their issue, was the adoption and promotion of a new, Chicano identity. “The idea of being Chicano established strong symbolic ethnic boundaries for young Mexican-Americans who explicitly and stridently rejected the notion of inherent Anglo-American superiority”.²⁹

This new wave of young and rash activists soon started to propagate ideas that the older Mexicans could not identify with and therefore the Chicano movement was loosing its power. In the end the Chicano activists, nevertheless, achieved goals changed (at least officially) the perception of this particular ethnic minority.³⁰

²⁷ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 123.

²⁸ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 181.

²⁹ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 184.

³⁰ See Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 187.

4.4.2 New life

As opposed to the slow change in the views of immigration, the bonds to the family among young Mexicans were overridden by a vision of different life quite fast. Saturated with the stories they heard from people that had already lived in the U.S., the young Mexicans men (as well as women) felt a chance for adventure.³¹

The general idea is that sons of Mexican families were sent to the U.S. urban centers as a part of the family strategy to help economically. With single Mexican men though, a survey showed that very few of them went over the border to send money home to support their families. The reported men stated that the purpose of their migration was not to seek money, but a desire for adventure and to see new sights. Despite the hardship that their kin experienced, the migration suddenly became an expectancy and an easy-to-reach dream of new life.³²

Once over the border, these young Mexicans found that sharing their experience with others in the same situation can help them in the harsh beginnings. It must have been also the strong bindings that they had Mexico which contributed to a creation of networks, ties usually among members of one family, but also among friends and acquaintances from the same place of origin.³³

Like their male counterparts, it did not take long for young single women to move to one of the bigger American cities. But because women have always been taking the social network system even further, the impulse did not arise mainly from their desires but from their already established peers in the U.S. The network of young female Mexican immigrants was much stronger and provided a lot better support.³⁴

This social network emergence took place mainly in the 1970s and was a base to the communities as we know them today.

³¹ Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 83.

³² See Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*, 83.

³³ See Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*, 84.

³⁴ See Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*, 87.

4.4.3 Past two decades

The immigration from south to north over the Mexican-American border for over a century brought with itself many unexpected troubles which effects more or less changed the way of life mainly in the American Southwest. But every coin has two sides and this one minted in the United Mexican States is no different. Along with the inflow of problems that engaged the minds of experts in economy, anthropology, etc., there came also advantages that were quite significant for the change of views in the above mentioned fields.

Among the benefits that migration contributed with, let us name at least some. We have already mentioned the undoubted economy advantage of legal and monitored immigration. Many Americans still fail to acknowledge the importance of the low-class jobs to the economy and that prevents them from admitting the position of Mexicans in the U.S. (There is a movie called “A Day Without a Mexican”, whose information value is very low but it gives quite a good picture of when all Mexicans would suddenly disappear, there would be no one to mow the lawn, to serve at the drive-thru window at fast food restaurants, to maid in the hotels, etc.) Then we should remark bilingualism, where the U.S.-born kids speak Spanish at home and English everywhere else, which brings skill-equipped people to the job market and with the growing rates of Spanish speaking population I suppose these people will be highly needed and hopefully evaluated. Moreover, many babysitters and housemaids are just from the Mexican community, which again brings the children being looked after to hear and understand another language from their early age. The last and sometimes seemingly insignificant, is just the benefit of having the opportunity to widen the understanding of how other people live, how they look at different elements of their lives.

Lately the issue of the co-existence of members of the two concerned nations has again become discussed, as the rates of unemployment among the Americans and also other ethnic minorities started to grow. There arose tensions between the different ethnic groups, mainly because all ethnic groups were being boxed out as illegal immigrants, even when having gone through the legal immigration process. These profiles that drew everyone of a Hispanic descent as “an illegal”, was an inevitable stage of the whole development. For the Americans, there was no way to tell who was in the U.S. legally and who was not, as representatives of each of these two groups were able to lead practically the same life.

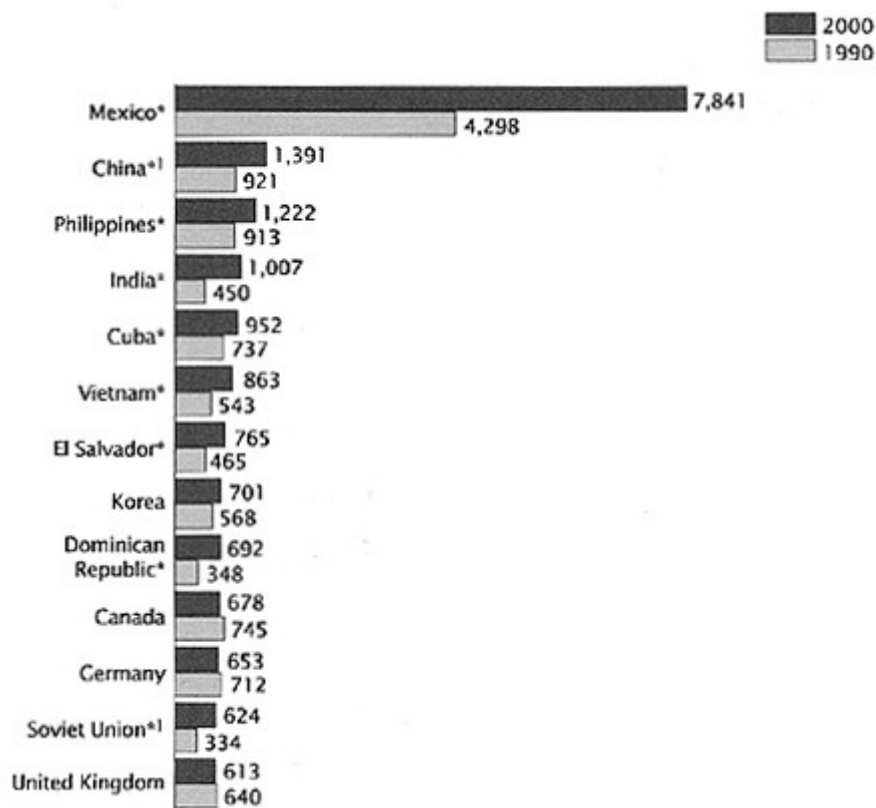


Table 2: The immigration of different nationalities into the United States from 1990-2000.³⁵

From the graph we observe the disproportional inflow of immigrants from Mexico, compared to immigrants from other countries of the world. The Mexican immigration began to be talked about intensively again shortly after 2000, the U.S. census. The government started to act upon these statistics which brought about the discussions seen in the media. It seems like the issue had been put aside for long.

³⁵ American Friends Service Committee, "Immigrant or Refugee?," Numbers of Immigrants, <http://www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/learn/in-us.htm>

5 MEXICAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS TODAY

In the search for information on the current situation, I tried not to only focus on what sources from the general overviews heard and seen in the media but also take into consideration the personal experience. I decided to contact and interview two of my friends, both living in one of the American states bordering Mexico. Rachel, the first interviewee, is a 22 years old female from California. Joe is 30 years old male, living in Arizona. The interviews were not meant as a survey for data collection, rather as opinions of random people who could contribute to the topic.

5.1 Tensions

Even though the interviews were not meant as a search for statistical information, there were some points that did emerge from the interviews and that more or less approved my thoughts:

1. In order to move ahead in solving a problem, we need to admit that there is one. Trying to fudge it or say that everything is good could be just as harmful as the problem itself. Rachel's hesitant answer: "I think there's a little tension, not a whole lot, it's kind of unspoken,"³⁶ when asked whether she feels some kind of tension between Mexican-Americans and Americans, only confirmed my impressions. I think it might be a reaction on both sides to when having to deal with an unpleasant issue for too long. Not coming to a conclusion may lead to a closure that hides behind "all is well."
2. The next one that caught my ear is most likely getting to the very core of the unwillingness to adapt to the arisen situation. It has already been spoken about earlier but not in a direct comparison. It is the pride on both sides of the barrier, on both sides sourcing from different backgrounds:
 - Certainly patriotism is not something we should fear but again, extremes are no good and extreme pride of our origin that makes us look down at others has to be labeled as harmful. Specifically extreme American patriotism is known to have caused aversions, of all just the example of fueling the antipathy in the Middle East.

³⁶ See Appendices, interview no.1

- My friend Joe made a very interesting point about the pride among the Mexicans: “there is a real pride of being Mexican. But this is a generalization. It is a good thing, in a sense, too. Many of them come to the US for the opportunity but at the same time they value their Mexican heritage and nationality more than the US nationality. And some of that comes from many of them being illegal. Not all of them but many of them are illegal citizens and that means they are only of Mexican nationality and I believe that draws one to be prideful, in a good way.”³⁷ Yes, a certain self-confidence is definitely desirable, especially in a situation that Mexican immigrants find themselves in. But there is a very thin line between a healthy self-confidence that helps its bearer and a pride that harms the relations with individuals around him.
3. “I have never really heard anybody talk about that, except jokingly. I’m not sure how familiar modern Mexicans (and Americans) are with those things. They don’t teach that in schools that much” was an answer to a question whether there is a feeling of hostility because of what happened in the history. It was a remarkable point which proved that there is very little, if any, knowledge of the war conflict and the events following it or just simply of the two nations cohabitation history. As a matter of fact, this is one the main ideas of my thesis, that the harms from the past are passed down from one generation to another without doing it purposefully, without any knowledge to support our feelings about a certain nation or an ethnic group. By the way we talk and express our opinions, even by the tone of our voice, we may engrave certain patterns into the heads of our children who will then pass it on. Among all the good things it may be, unfortunately, also bad feelings. The question is, whether realizing what we are passing would stop us from doing so.
 4. Coming down from the general to more specific, next in line is the formation of communities. These impenetrable groups of strangers make it hard to learn the “more” even if anyone from the outside wanted to. The Americans are blamed for not trying to understand and the Mexicans for closing up in the circles of their own. I have to cite

³⁷ See Appendices, interview no.2

Joe Gordon again because he seems like he is able to look at it from a perspective of both concerned sides: “I think most of us prefer to live in communities of people who are much like ourselves and so what they tend to do...live in communities. And I think that also allows them to go to stores where they serve the food that they prefer and sell the food that they prefer. Many of them are Spanish speaking only and so they end up in communities that allow them to speak freely without having to worry about understanding English.”

5.2 Approaches

There are many attitudes that people adopt towards immigration of inhabitants from poorer countries into the ones with a higher standard of living but if we were to divide them into two categories, they would have to be *humanist* and *xenophobic*. I realize we could not put everyone in one of these groups but I am quite sure that a big majority would find themselves somewhere on the imaginary scale connecting the two poles.

5.2.1 The two main trends

Just to briefly explain, a xenophobe is a person who feels aversion, anxiety, hostility or mistrust to anything strange. In our case this characteristics appears in very strict opinions about the people coming into their country. These people are usually quick to decide on displacement of anything unfamiliar that could breach their comfort zone. Of course, some of our “xenophobia” is given but we should not use it as an excuse to take a negative stand.

There would perhaps not be a problem in *xenophobia* if it stayed unspoken. Sadly this view of others does not only deprive us of the positives coming along with the acquainting of people from a new culture, but it also provokes the same kind of feelings on the other side. In my opinion, the xenophobic attitude is very narrow-minded and self-centered, therefore it should not be hard to argue against it. So let us take a look at the arguments that the members of the opposite side give and whether the humanist solution could be the right one.

Again, to clarify what I mean by “humanist attitude”, it was only used as an antipole, by no means it is meant to communicate any negative connotations. Related to the issue of Mexican immigration to the United States, America has been lately admonished by many for taking a negative stand towards it. The liberal humanists say it is natural for people to migrate and they should not be banned from doing so. In order to be just, I have to say that

the extreme humanist attitude could do just as much damage as the its opposite. The undesirable effects of unrestricted immigration are obvious, from the practical ones like a lack of habitation to the economic problems that a rapid inflow of the state-financed facilities users would definitely bring.

5.2.2 Pitfalls of humanism

Humanists base their theories and opinions on acknowledging the values of each human. Yes, the general idea is great and is something we could definitely use more of. But is it really that value-acknowledging? Whose values then?

The new-comers rarely get an opportunity to live on the level of the natives which subsequently creates frustration from a feeling of inferiority. They often leave their families to go ahead and “prepare” the ground for them, where they often do not see them for a year or a lot more. The women then, who stay behind, experience a relatively long marital separation, where their responsibilities expanded. They have to assume new tasks that the men previously did and obviously can not earn as much income as before. In the need of providing fulfillment of the basic needs of their families, they take additional jobs. That results in less time with the family and their frustration.³⁸

A massive outflow of mid-age workforce would not have a positive impact on the homeland economy, which may rise further displeasure with the people to stay. Thus I have to say no, an unrestricted flow of members of one culture into another is not a reasonable solution either.

The golden mean, that is where I personally believe the right path lies. No extreme opinions have ever in the history done too good to minorities, therefore we should try to lean towards the middle as much as we can.

5.3 (Dis)Similarities

The Mexican population status in the United States has gone through a development that might resemble with another ethnic group, African-Americans. Where the different stages of the evolution happened for the African-Americans as a huge landmark, slightly afterwards usually followed events of the same character for the Mexican population and in smaller scale.

³⁸ See Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions*, 62.

Just the emergence of the Delta blues music at the end of the 19th century (so significant in the history of African-Americans in the U.S.) and the first *corridos* appearing shortly after. Or the experience of big oppression and slavery and the breaking free of it. Again, being a lot more “tell-all” for the African-Americans. To continue with the similarities, they both went to the WW II in the lines of the American army, not being acknowledged for it afterwards. The Civil rights movement, the fight for ethnic identity and on and on... All these events might make one wonder, how many connections we may observe in the history of these two minorities, despite their epicenters being far from each other.

My point with this comparison is that although the evolution is in many ways similar, the outcome for the present day is not the same. We can just look at the charts that show job positions of members of each of these two groups and we will see that the actions that both of them took in history did not work out the same. Is it because of the “small-scaleness” of the Mexican-American campaigns or was it the always-later realization of these? Who knows. One thing is for sure though, the Mexican-American population in the United States has still a long way to go to reach the acknowledgement of the African-Americans.

5.3.1 Same concept

Looking at the Mexican immigration with a bird’s eye view, in many features it might seem like something that another continent just over the Atlantic Ocean is struggling with nowadays. And the picture of coexistence of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic culture in Europe is not too overwhelming either. Ghettos being formed in the suburbs of the European cities and frequent disorders involving immigrants from the Muslim countries are a good illustration and maybe a warning for the humanists thinking too liberally.

The difference between the Mexican and American culture might not be so significant, but looking at the process of the settlement of Mexicans in the bordering states of the U.S., one could find many analogies between the issues on these two continents. Of all just a couple: the closing-up tendencies towards the new environment, the unwillingness to give up some of their traditions that may collide with the laws in the destination country, the despise of the consumer lifestyle of the society they are coming into, etc.

But in the search for a long-lasting ethnic minority issue, we could actually stay within the boundaries of our country to find these two approaches of a problem of ethnic

minorities, although a little disproportioned. Just to ask the Czechs about the Romanies, most of us would tell you, with a convincing tone, that literally none of them will ever work and “live like we do” and that they only want to parasite on our system of social support, which the tax-payers have to work for. This is a sweeping generalization that discriminates the ones who have chosen to join in into the social system. But to be objective, there are also those who want to dig and learn more about this particular minority in a search for an outcome that most would benefit from.

We just always need to persuade humanists and xenophobes to find common ground!

5.4 Steps forward

As I said earlier, I think there are attitudes and approaches that could improve on both sides. By stating my views on how to achieve any kind of improvement I am not saying that I have a cure to this wound. I am only suggesting what I believe could help both sides, as a person looking from a distance.

One of the first steps I see that could facilitate the progress of the issue of Mexican immigration, would be educating the current residents of the United States about the pros and cons and how to change the posture of those who are way too far to one or another side of the humanist-xenophobic scales. Only differentiating between the Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants and Illegal immigrants would be a great change, since many still see all of these groups as one. Confusing these terms only adds to the frustration that not only the Mexican, but other minorities have from their surroundings in the U.S. cities. Generalizing all of them as “a part of the problem” only shows apathetic, if not ignorant, attitude towards reaching a reasonable solution. Many of them are legal citizens who work and pay the taxes, even though they have just recently moved from Mexico. I can imagine that being given a label “illegal” most likely builds up grudge and frustration even with those who “try to behave”. Also, learning a little from the history of the joint relationships may be a great step to understand certain behavior patterns and open eyes to the keeping of traditions.

Only to show a friendly face and not to provide any changes for example for the illegal immigrants to “legalize” their residence in the district would get us not even half way in coming to a resolution. After we have acknowledged that the growth of Mexican-Americans is going to be increasing in the future (see tab.2a, 2b), the U.S. government should provide a program for foreigners to go through a process (prior to which would

precede a trial period) to become legal citizens of the United States. A chance of having that opportunity would certainly relieve the tense atmosphere.

My belief is that the main focus should be on the young generation. Not that the older ones should be neglected but if the U.S. manages to raise a generation of the Mexican-American population in a system where there is no discrimination of education, job offers and so on, they will have no reason to bear the grudge that their forefathers do. They will grow attached not only to their surroundings but also to the system that will be worth investing in and once grown, they will have no reason to return to Mexico which would again only use the system temporarily, whereas Mexican-Americans (and all immigrants) need to have certainty to look to in the future. If the young Mexican-Americans get a feeling of equal chance to the white population, there is a good possibility that those coming after them will take this feeling after their parents.

In the search for cheaper labor, many American companies are already going to Mexico.³⁹ With a whole generation educated in business, international relations, economy as well in social studies and crafts, on the top of it speaking fluently both the most demanded languages, there is a great potential for exchange and certain economical increase for the future.

It seems like the melting pot is really melting now under the uncontrolled input of ingredients, partly because it has been overlooking the chance of being overfilled. The issue of Mexican immigration has been put aside for a long while and now it engages long lines of experts. Our vision into the days to come should be that it is never too late.

³⁹ See Appendices, Interview no.2

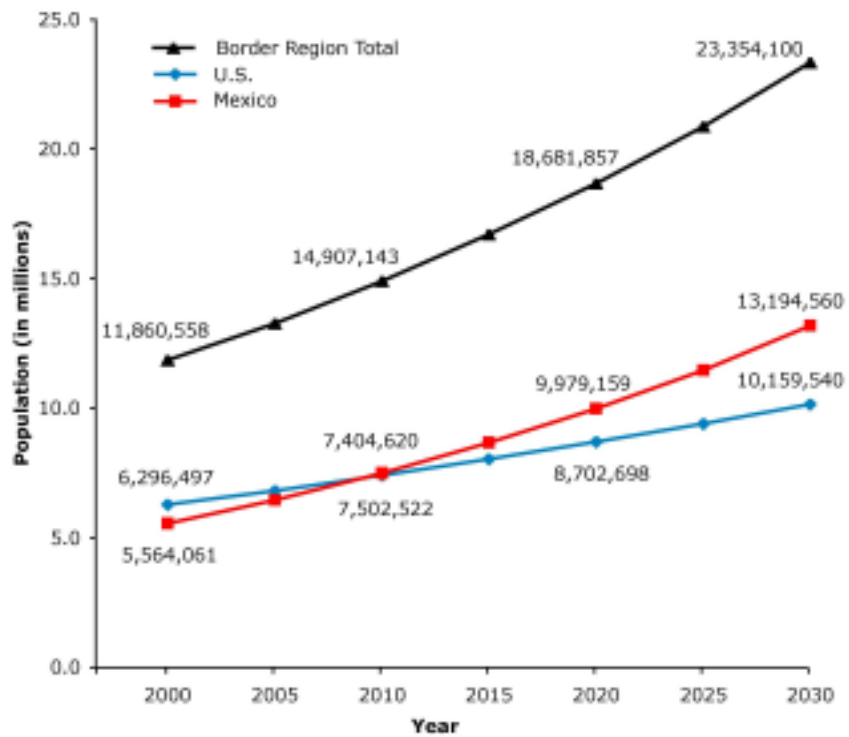


Table 3a: High population projection in the next 20 years.⁴⁰

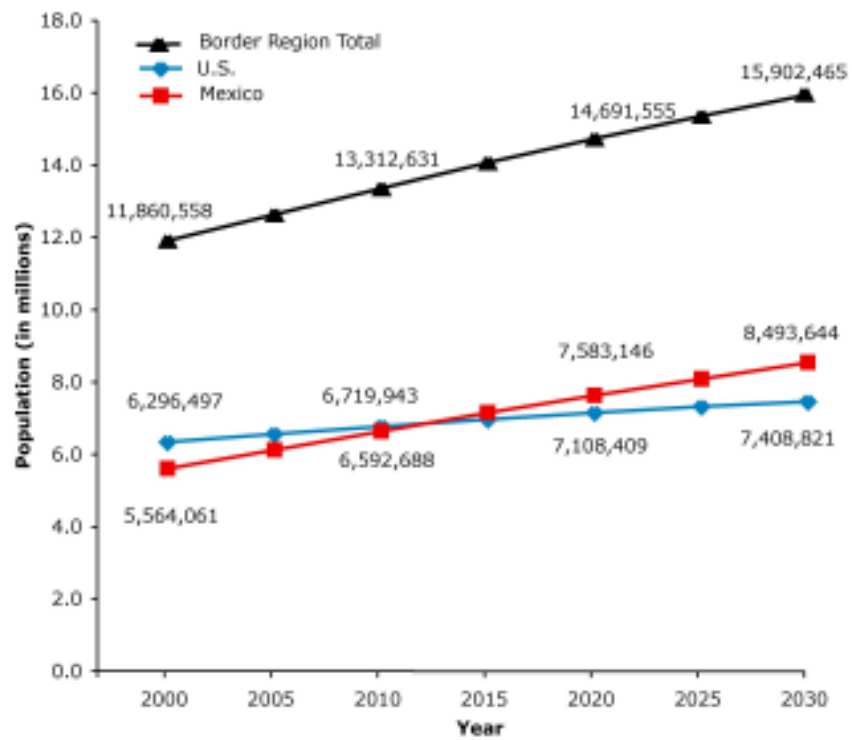


Table 3b: Low population projection in the next 20 years.

⁴⁰ Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy, "Population projections", Border-Wide Population Projections: High, Medium, and Low, <http://www.scerp.org/population.htm>

CONCLUSION

Although the title of the thesis reads “...on **today’s** relations”, I have dedicated a big part of it to the examination of events leading up to present day rather than analyzing the current issues between the two nations. I have focused mainly on the development of the relations in the particular period of time of about one and half century.

Of course, I could have just take the outcome of the war, skip the following 150 years and immerse into today’s news concerning Mexican immigration into the United States. I did not do it because: 1. we all can find an overwhelming quantity of information and analyses on this particular matter anywhere in the media, 2. it is very hard (yet for some very easy) to take an immediate stand without even trying to find out a little more.

I am convinced that “wanting to know more” before we lean to one side or another in our decisions could help many to understand that what we have to deal with today is not an outcome of a couple of years but it goes much further in history. I believe that a nation’s character and qualities, which it is known for, are formed not only by one short-lasting event, yet it is formed for long decades and so are relationships between two neighboring nations.

The common history of the United Mexican States and the United States and the development of their relations perhaps even longer. As we have seen, there had been injustice that happened on both sides that are weaving through the events that the two of these countries participated in. The bitter feelings from these events can still be found today and is easier to pass down then to stop. However, if we are to deal with the problem of joint environment, jobs, schools, communities, social system, etc. (and it seems inevitable), there is a big need for both sides to step out of their comfort zones, towards the “enemy”.

The issue of Mexican immigration has been discussed fiercely for over past five years yet a big number of the debaters’ views of the issue are focused on a short period of time, yet from the second and biggest wave of Mexican migration to the United States, almost a hundred years of co-existence have passed by.

If we truly do want to get to the core of why we acquire certain sympathies or disaffection, we need to try and look into the past to take into account every possible little injustice that has happened to our ancestors, after whom we may have inherited our potential grudge. And even then I do not suppose we will not fully comprehend.

From history we know that it likes to repeat itself in unpredictable intervals, yet most often we find ourselves not willing to learn from the mistakes that have been done in its course. Will the history repeat itself in America's demand for more cheap workers that will flood the Southwest and the tensions become unbearable? Will it continue to dispute and disagree over the matter of Mexican immigration? Or will America, after having moved a big number of their businesses, again get an appetite for expansion?

There had been disputes and disagreements over land in the past, there had also been greediness for new land and they resulted in the Mexican-American war. My perceptions for the future of these nations are not as skeptical but on the other hand, if it is not us who will stop the build-up bad blood, it might as well be spilled. As one of George Bernard Shaw's quotes cleverly says: "*We learn from history that we learn nothing from history.*"

The human kind is a genial breed, we can remember many wrongs for centuries without even knowing where they stem from and I truly hope it will not be the case of United Mexican States and United States of America.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW NO.1

Rachel Osborne, California

How long have you lived in California?

I've lived there my whole life.

I assume there is a lot of Mexican-Americans living there.

Yes. I live in southern California, near Mexico, so there is lots of Mexican-Americans.

How often, would you say, you deal with them?

Probably every day.

Do you think they try to integrate into the American culture or they rather live in communities?

I think that in their family they try to keep their own culture. Family is very important to them and their religion of being Catholic but students a lot of times will try to integrate, it is just somewhat popular. But some of their core values, they still keep.

In general, do you think the Mexican-Americans are rather humble or prideful?

Yes, they are proud of where they come from.

Do you see it as a problem in the integration process?

No, not really.

So you are ok with them bringing their own culture, traditions to America?

Well America doesn't have a lot of its own culture. It's just a bunch of different cultures blended. So they are just a part of that blend. But I'm speaking only from California, I know it's different in other states.

Do you think they are hostile towards Americans or are they glad that they could come to America and work there?

I think it depends on what generation it is. The older ones, they may still be a little more prideful, they don't try to learn English or adapt to our culture at all and so they are a little more prideful or hostile. But the ones who were born in America, not at all.

And on the other side, do you think there is any kind of anxiety or hostility from Americans towards Mexicans?

I think there is some, a little, because sometimes it makes things a little more difficult for us because some of them live there and don't try to adapt or learn and so it's hard to communicate. And they don't even try. Some Americans are upset because some of the Mexicans are excited just to do anything and take some jobs that the Americans would've wanted.

So there is some kind of tension.

I think there's a little tension, not a whole lot, it's kind of unspoken.

Why do you think it is that they are not willing to adapt to America? Do you think it could be still an impact from the history, that they feel like America took their land?

Maybe.

Or why do you think that the older generation, as you said, doesn't want to adapt?

I don't know. It might be because of the war.

How do you see the future?

I see them gaining a lot of ground within our community. There are a lot of programs that help them. Even at my University. The University prides itself in having one of the largest Mexican-American population. In the schools, they have special programs to make sure that they are learning and that they don't get too far behind in their education. A lot of the students at my University are the first from their family to ever graduate from a college so they're making a lot of progress and really making a name for themselves with the community in our state.

So you think that the young generation that is in the States now will be in the future taking equal jobs as Americans today? They'll be like one of you.

Yes, one of us. They'll still celebrate and keep their heritage, value certain things and speak the language in their homes. But when it comes to other things they're willing to adapt. They're making a place for themselves in society.

So generally, you don't see their immigration into the United States as a problem in the future.

Right now, no. I'd say, the only thing would be just them taking jobs that would put Americans out of a job.

Great. Thank you for your answers and for your time!

You're welcome.

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW NO.2

Joe Gordon, Arizona

How often do you deal with the Mexican-Americans?

On a daily basis. Most of the day-laborers and day workers in restaurants are of Mexican descent, or Hispanic descent or Latinos.

Do you have a generally good impression of them?

Very good. They are extremely hard workers, they do hard labor. Generally speaking, family is very important to them. They're spiritual people and so am I, Catholicism is also significant in their culture but it's more cultural Catholicism than...

Do you think they try to integrate into the American culture or they rather live in communities?

I think most of us prefer to live in communities of people who are much like ourselves and so what they tend to do...live in communities. And I think that also allows them to go to stores where they serve the food that they prefer and sell the food that they prefer. Many of them are Spanish speaking only and so they end up in communities that allow them to speak freely without having to worry about understanding English.

Earlier in our conversation, you said something about pride. Could you develop that?

Yeah, there is a real pride of being Mexican. But this is a generalization. It is a good thing, in a sense, too. Many of them come to the US for the opportunity but at the same time they value their Mexican heritage and nationality more than the US nationality. And some of that comes from many of them being illegal. Not all of them but many of them are illegal citizens and that means they are only of Mexican nationality and I believe that draws one to be prideful, in a good way.

Is there or do you observe any kind of hostility towards Americans?

Not really. Arizona is very open to ill...ummmm, Hispanic population and here is why I say that: many of them are employed in American-owned companies. Like I said, of those people, many of them are illegal citizens, so if they were deported, there would be a huge gap in the labor. To make it short, everybody in the US, except for Arizona, southern California, New Mexico, Texas and Florida is very harsh towards illegal immigrants but our states are very open to them because we realize that if we were harsh to them, our economies would fall quickly. Because if you go to any fast-food restaurant, any grocery store, mechanic shop, hotel...a lot of it is done by labor from

citizens of Mexico and many of those people are not legal citizens so if they were to be deported, our economies would stop. There is a movie called A Day without a Mexican. The theory of the movie is what would happen if all the Mexicans disappeared. There is nobody doing people's yard-work, nobody serving at McDonald's and on and on.

So do you think that Americans consider them being equal?

It depends how you define equality. Do you mean that we do the same labor and get paid the same?

Yes.

I don't think an American would do the same labor for the same price. That's why many of the job openings have been filled by Mexican citizens. I'm trying to be careful to say "Mexican citizens" and not "illegal citizens" because they're not all illegal.

So basically the attitude towards Mexicans is positive because they help the economy rather than liking them for real?!

Yeah, I think that's definitely the case. Presumably, Mexican neighborhoods are more run down, much more violent and so on. But this is Arizona. If I was from Michigan, I'm sure my view of illegal immigrants would be pretty harsh, which includes Mexican immigrants.

Have you recently had any incident with Mexican-Americans?

No, but here is an example why they could be problematic. If you are a Mexican and you're illegal, you can't get a driver's license and so you're driving illegally. You can't get insurance, so if you hit another car, there's nothing you can do so you'll probably just take off and run. Because if the police found out and caught you, they're going to either deport you and you might have a family there.

And for the American when this happens, I'll have to pay out of my own pocket and fix my own car. And that's just one example. Another big problem is that they don't pay taxes like everyone but they use facilities paid for from taxes.

Is there still some kind of hostility from Mexicans for Americans taking "their" land in the Mexican-American war?

I have never really heard anybody talk about that, except jokingly. I'm not sure how familiar modern Mexicans (and Americans) are with those things. They don't teach that in schools that much.

How do you see the future of the relations?

Well, it'll be interesting. A lot of our companies are going down to Mexico because there is cheaper labor. Right now it's really stressful in the US because of all this immigration stuff. I see the relations improving over time, if we can develop an opportunity for "illegal citizens" to enter into a process where they can become legal citizens but not offer just straight amnesty to them all.