The Immigration Debate in The United States: Historical Trends, Migration and Educational Issues

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Resumen

El debate migratorio se encuentra en un punto culminante en los Estados Unidos (E.U.A.). Sin embargo, a pesar de que se han realizado, estudios importantes sobre la migración e inmigracion de Mexicanas/os a E.U.A., el fenómeno de la migración aun requiere de más enfoque sobre la magnitud y los contextos específicos regionales de este proceso. En este artículo los autores presentan el caso histórico de la migración Michoacana a E.U.A. para demostrar la importancia y necesidad de realizar investigaciones con enfoques específicos regionales en el contexto migratorio. Este artículo también presenta datos sobre el contexto legal y educacional anti-inmigrante que existe en E.U.A.

Palabras clave: Migración, debate migratorio, inmigración, inmigración histórica y asuntos educativos.

Abstract

There is a substantial body of research related to the U.S.-Mexico immigration relationship from a range of disciplines including: economics, health, sociology, law, political science and education (Bean, Brown, & Rumbaut, 2006; Cortina, de la Garza, Bejarano, & Wainer, 2005; Dinerman, 1978; Portes, 2004; Reichert & Massey, 1980). This research has yielded great insights in understanding the impact of Mexican immigration to the United States. Yet, while this research provides valuable information about the Mexican population that migrates to the United States in general, " a serious problem… is that the foregoing studies are not based on representative national samples" (Durand, Massey, & Zenteno, 2001, p. 108). Much of the data gathered on Mexican immigrants is not inclusive of their regional, demographic, and socioeconomic status prior to entering the U.S. This article presents an examination of general immigration historical trends and educational issues that are related to the current immigration debate in the United States. Despite a lack of abundant data, this article attempts to focus especially on immigration to the U.S. from the Mexican state of Michoacán as a representative case.

Key words: Migration, migratory dilema, inmigration, historic inmigration and educational issues.

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Introduction

Mexico is a culturally rich country and Michoacán, one of its 31 states, is no exception. Among its many features, Michoacán is characterized by its famous Lake Pátzcuaro, its many green panoramic views, islands, and towns along the lakeside, architecture and of equal importance, its indigenous heritage. There are 113 townships (or *municipios*) in Michoacán not to mention countless small rural villages and towns. While Spanish is the official language in Mexico, there are various indigenous languages spoken in Michoacán including P'urhépecha, Náhuatl, Otomí and Mazahua. In the year 2000 there were for example over 121,000 P'urhépecha speakers, 192 elementary bilingual schools (Spanish-indigenous language) with approximately 27,200 indigenous students in 24 *municipios* in Michoacán (INEGI, 2005).

Most of the research on Mexican immigration to the U.S. is not specific to regional areas in Mexico that have a large immigrant output to the United States. The purpose of this article is to explore the literature on the immigration of Michoacanas/os to the United States as representative of the larger immigration phenomenon and also to highlight the need for further contextualization of this issue. The article is guided by the following questions: 1) What are the historical trends and characteristics of immigrants from Michoacán to the U.S.?, (2) What are the issues and political climate surrounding the immigration debate in the U.S.?, and (3) Are immigrant children and youths, as well as those born in the United States from Mexican parents, receiving an adequate U.S. education? First, however, we will start with a brief overview of the historical relationship of immigration between states like Michoacán and the U.S.

Historical Immigration Trends

The U.S. 2000 Census reported that approximately 35 million Hispanics (12.5% of total population), both with and without legal residency status, lived in the United States. Of the 35 million Hispanics, it was estimated that 60% were of Mexican-origin and formed approximately 7.3% of the total U.S. population. The Department of Homeland Security reported that the U.S. was home to an estimated 10.5 million undocumented immigrants in January of 2005. Mexico, with an estimated 8 million residents in the U.S. (INEGI, 2005), is the leading nation with undocumented immigrants in the U.S. However, Durand and Massey (1992) warn that the figures pertinent to unauthorized Mexican-origin persons living in the U.S. are inconsistent across the two countries because there is no definite way to track the extent of the emigration/immigration phenomenon. Durand and Massey further suggest that it is very difficult to attain good estimates since Mexican migration to the U.S. is also sometimes seasonal and temporary.

Men, women, and children, attempt to enter the United States via the U.S.-Mexico border, stretching approximately 1,951 miles in length without inspection daily. The immigration of Mexicans to the U.S., however, has not always been one of unauthorized entrants. Historically, migration to the United States originated in the Western regions of Mexico, particularly Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. The United States sought Mexican laborers as early as the 1900s and this pattern continued throughout the past century. The United States has been eager in welcoming Mexican migrant temporary workers during important historical periods as well as in times of economic need. Notwithstanding, the U.S. has not shied away from changing immigration laws and forcefully removing Mexicans when the economic and labor demand is no longer needed such as during the repatriation policies of the 1930s (Acuña, 2000).

Historically, however, in the early part of the past century, the U.S. entered Mexico with a plan to construct and expand its railroad system with a special interest in the area just north of the U.S.-Mexico border. Mexico's northern border region, however, was largely uninhabited and the U.S. traveled south to recruit laborers from the Western states of Jalisco, Guanajuato and Michoacán. Recruitment of Mexican laborers increased after World War I and further changes in U.S. Immigration law in 1920 limited the entry of Southern and Eastern European immigrants to the United States, making the need for Mexican labor more apparent. The restriction of European- origin immigration favored contracting Mexican laborers as "U.S. employers redoubled their efforts, and Mexican immigration rose…" (Durand et al., 2001, p. 109).

A second trend contributing to the legal immigration of Mexicans to the United States was the Bracero program of 1940 and 1964. Durand et al. (2001) define the Bracero accord as, "…a binational treaty that arranged for the 'temporary importation' of contract workers into the United States for periods of short-term farm labor" (p.110). Many *braceros* subsequently received U.S. residency or "green cards." Under the Family Reunification Provisions of 1965 many of these Mexican-origin legal residents, almost exclusively men, were also able to obtain legal U.S. residency for their wives and unmarried offspring (Reichert & Massey, 1980). The termination of the Bracero Program coupled with changes in U.S. immigration law post-1965 made it difficult for Mexicans to seek legal employment in the U.S. "In total, from the end of the Bracero Program through 1985, some 1.4 million Mexicans were admitted into the Unites States as legal immigrants [U.S. INS 1988], and at least 1.5 million more entered without documents [Warren and Passel 1987; Passel and Woodrow 1987]" (Durand et al., 2001, p. 111).

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 assisted in the legalization of 3.2 million undocumented immigrants, of which three-quarters were of Mexican origin (Durand et al., 2001). Despite this effort to

adjust the status of undocumented immigrants in the U.S., the legal status of millions of Mexicans in the U.S. continued to be undocumented. Durand et al. (2001) note that "from the late 1920s through the early 1990s, between 30 percent and 40 percent of all Mexican immigrants have consistently come from one of the three sending sates – Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacán – and between 50 percent to 60 percent have come from western Mexico, the historical heartland for migration to the Unites Sates" (p.113). At present individuals of Mexican-origin continue immigrating to the United States in large numbers and while there are new sending-states, Michoacán, along with Guanajuato and Jalisco, continue their historical trend of sending large numbers of immigrants to the United States.

The Case of Michoacan

Michoacán is a picturesque state with abundant natural resources that include mountains, valleys, forests, waterfalls, and lakes. Michoacán is located in the Central western portion of Mexico and its capital is Morelia. Major cities in Michoacán include Pátzcuaro, Uruapan, Zitácuaro, Zamora and Lázaro Cárdenas. As one of Mexico's largest agricultural producers, the state of Michoacán produces pears, mangos, coffee, macadamias, melons, rice, to name several of its known produce products, not to mention its world class production of avocados. Within Michoacán many of its villages specialize in traditional arts and crafts that include pottery, *deshilado* and *punto de cruz* (embroidery and cross stitching), straw, stone, clay, metal and wood products. Tourism also forms an important part of the economy, especially in the Lake Pátzcuaro region of the state. One of Mexico's great leaders and former president, Lázaro Cárdenas, was a native of Michoacán. Michoacán is also home to the oldest university built in the Americas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, built in 1540.

Michoacán is not geographically accessible to the U.S.-Mexico border and individuals must travel hundreds of miles before reaching the U.S. Nonetheless, on a daily basis courageous individuals (men, women, and children) make the arduous trip to the border with the hope of living a better life. The *Coordinación General para la Atención al Migrante Michoacano* (COGAMIM) (Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 2006) notes that Michoacán is one of the three states that sends the most immigrants, particularly for labor reasons, to the United States (Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 2006). In February 2005, the National Public Radio (NPR) 'Morning Edition' program reported that "at least one out of 10 [Mexicans that cross the U.S.-Mexico border] are from the impoverished central Mexican State of Michoacán" (Garcia-Navarro, February 18, 2005). Prior studies ((Dinerman, 1978; Durand & Massey, 1992; Durand et al., 2001; Reichert & Massey, 1980) support NPR's claim and further state that Michoacán has an extensive migration rate

to the United States dating back to slightly over a century. Although regional and educational composition is now shifting to include middle class professionals to the migration as well as immigrants from other Mexican states, Michoacanas/os continue to migrate to the U.S. in large numbers. The Mexican National Institute of Geographical and Informational Statistics (INEGI) estimated that in 2000, there were over 107,000 migrants over the age of five from Michoacán alone.

A study conducted by Durand et al., (2001) that looked at the historical patterns of Mexican migrants to the United States is also of great importance. The study was unprecedented in that the researchers obtained access to binational data sets, something not previously done before. Durand et al. (2001) explain that "despite these large numbers, researchers know surprisingly little about the regional, demographic, and socioeconomic origins of Mexican immigrants, mainly because of lack of representative data" (p.108). Prior efforts analyzed U.S. Census and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) data while obtaining estimates of the impact of authorized and unauthorized immigrant populations. Other researchers have conducted surveys and ethnographic work (inclusive of interviews and field observations) of immigrants from specific regions, or specific towns in Mexico and the communities they settle in once in the United States (Leco Tomás, 2003). Although Michoacán is historically one of the three leading states sending immigrants to the United States, not many large scale regional studies regarding emigration/immigration rates and patterns have been done on this specific area.

Migrating to the United States

Michoacán is the ninth most populous state in Mexico with 3,966,073 inhabitants in 2005 (INEGI, 2005) and only a mere eight of the 113 townships (or 7 % of the municipios) in the state report not having significant out-migration to the United States. Stated differently, 93% of township inhabitants have some type of contact with the United States and have first-hand experience with losing a loved one to the out-migration phenomena.

The research review, Mexican Migration to the United States: A Critical *Review,* looked at Mexican immigration studies conducted both in Mexico and the United Sates (Durand & Massey, 1992). According to Durand and Massey's (1992) analysis of Mexican communities studied, "our review of findings from some thirty-two different communities suggests that four leading factors are crucial in determining patterns and processes of migration from Mexican communities to the United States" (p. 33). The authors identified four factors that help determine the reasons why Mexicans emigrate to the United States. According to the study: (1) the age of the potential emigrants is a determining factor, (2) the niche in the occupational-industrial structure

where immigrants first become established determines migratory and settlement patterns once in the U.S., (3) the position of the community of origin within Mexico's political economy is important, and (4) the distribution and quality of agricultural land available to families in communities of origin is also important (pp. 33-34). These four factors can help us understand who is likely to emigrate to the U.S. and the reasons why Mexicans might choose to leave their homes and or loved ones in places like Michoacán.

A study conducted in the late 1970s titled, "*Patterns of Adaptation Among Households of U.S.-Bound Migrants from Michoacán, Mexico*"(Dinerman, 1978) looked at the migration patterns of a small rural village in Michoacán through a social lens. This study also offers important findings in learning about the intricacies of determining who is likely to emigrate to the U.S. from rural areas and under what circumstance. Dinerman explains, it is from an extended household with some form of fairly secure income, or at least with sufficient land for subsistence, that most immigrants come. When there are several adult males to do agricultural work, plus a mature woman who can raise chickens, sell tortillas, or garden products, or embroider and a young daughter-in-law to tend to the household, conditions are ideal for one male to emigrate. In a few cases where there is no male eligible, a woman may do so (p. 497).

Dinerman's findings suggests that in the particular rural town he studied persons from households with minimal economic resources could not as easily emigrate, while simultaneously proposing that individuals from financially secure families did not need to leave their country due to work related reasons. His findings do indicate though that those individuals with some level of economic stability, but not abundant wealth, rather than the very poor or those with affluence are most likely to emigrate.

A similar study conducted by Reichert and Massey (1980) looked at the historical development of the out migration of persons from another rural town in Michoacán between 1940 and 1978. Their findings suggest that contingent upon the era (Bracero period vs. post-Bracero period) there were differences in characteristics (gender, age, and legal status) of those that seasonally migrated to the United States. Of those individuals that left their village for the first time during the Bracero program, all were men ranging from 21.4 to 29.9 years of age. Between 1940 and 1944, the beginning of the Bracero era, it was reported that 93.3% of the male migrants left without adequate U.S. documentation, whereas between 1960 and 1964, 50.9% entered the U.S. legally and 28.1% were undocumented entrants (Reichert & Massey, 1980). Reichert and Massey note that, "beginning with the 1960-64 cohort, townspeople began migrating to the United States for the first time as legals with no previous migrant experience" (p. 486). However, the age and gender composition changed with time, "cohorts have become progressively younger and more feminine. No female migrants left Guadalupe before 1965. By 1975-

78 women made up the majority [47 percent] of those leaving on their first trip north. Similarly, before 1960, the migration of children was unheard of, but by 1975-78, 66 percent of all migrants were under fifteen years of age" ((Reichert & Massey, 1980, p. 477).

An in depth investigation of regional demographic changes within Michoacán and other states in Mexico would be helpful in understanding how towns are affected economically, socially, politically, and educationally by the loss of people who decide to emigrate to the United States. Of equal importance it is imperative that we follow and understand where these individuals reside in the United Sates. Such studies would be of value to gain a better understanding of emigration and immigration patterns throughout Mexico and in the United States.

Settlement Patterns in the U.S.

The U.S. Census 2000 reported a total of 281.4 million residents in the U.S. Of the 281.4 million, people of Mexican-origin represented 7.3% of the total population, and approximately 60% of the total Hispanic population. The Office of Immigration Statistics, a sub-agency to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, reported that in 2005 approximately 6 million individuals of Mexican origin resided in the U.S. under unauthorized status (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, "among Mexicans, 55.3 percent lived in the West, 31.7 percent in the South, 10.7 in the Midwest, and 2.3 percent in the Northeast" parts of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2001, p. 3).

In 2000, California and Texas accounted for almost half of the total U.S. Hispanic population. Specifically, Hispanics made up 32.4 percent of the total California population (10,966,556 residents) and 32.0 percent of the total Texas population (6,669,666 residents). Anecdotally, we know that there are known communities of Michoacanas/os throughout the U.S. In California, for example, cities known to have a strong Michocana/o presence include: Redwood City, San José, Madera, and Los Angeles. Due to the large concentration of Mexican origin individuals in California it is probable that there are sizable concentrations of Michoacanas/os throughout the state as well as in other traditional state destinations like Texas, Illinois, and Michigan, as well as new destination states like Washington, Nevada, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Although information on the destination patterns of Michoacanas/os can be easily gathered based on interviews with immigrants living in the U.S., and or with their families back in Michoacán, a more systematic and large scale way of documenting this migration is needed. However best guesses of destination patterns may be, based on town congregation settlement patterns in the U.S., it is imperative that further research be conducted to fully document

where and how Michoacanas/os settle in the United States. Information important for further research would include from what townships in Michoacán they are from, and what the immigration and transnational migration patterns are in demographic terms such as in numbers, ages, gender, etc.

Closing the U.S.-Mexico Border

Economics often become the main area of debate when it comes to immigration in the U.S. How immigrants (legal and undocumented) will affect the U.S. economy is a point of contention. Especially contentious is the issue of monetary remittances, which in 2005 accounted for over $20 billion U.S. dollars to the Mexican economy, the nation's second largest source of revenue only to oil production. In the U.S. those that support immigration argue that immigration will at best positively affect the economy and at worst not affect the economy at all. Those that oppose immigration claim that immigrants take away jobs from the poorest U.S. born citizens, use benefits and public services, and should be taxed heavily for the monies they send back to Mexico. There are plenty of sources that address the economic issue elsewhere, so we will not address these issues in-depth. In this section, however, we will address the increasing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border by making it more difficult to cross into the U.S. without inspection leading to an increased number of deaths at the border; the closing of the border by way of building a wall, and the loss of rights and the legal exclusion of non-U.S. citizens.

The First Wall: Baja California Norte and the Arizona Desert

Baja California Norte borders to the north with California. The Instituto de Estádisticas Geográficas e Informática (2005) reported that the state of Baja California had a total population of 2,844,469 inhabitants. Between Mexicali and Tijuana, both cities make up approximately 80 percent of the state's total population. Both Mexicali and Tijuana were once popular destinations for people trying to enter the U.S. (legally and undocumented). According to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) agency (2005) there are six Mexican border ports of entry into the United States via this area: Andrade (1), Mexicali (2), Tijuana (1), Otay Mesa (1), and Tecate (1).

Because of the high incidence of border crossing and for other political reasons, this area of the U.S.-Mexico border was one of the first to become heavily patrolled and militarized in the 1990s. Miles of walls between California and Baja California were built to stop the influx of undocumented immigrants, making this a more difficult and more dangerous point of entry. In fact, the CPB (2005) reported that from 2000 to 2005 there was even a steady decline in the total number of persons legally entering California from Baja California.

In 2000, 95,193,632 persons entered California whereas in 2005, 85,112,433 persons crossed the U.S.-Mexico border to California via these entries.

Simultaneously, the walls and heavy patrolling pushed undocumented immigrants to enter the U.S. through the desert regions of Arizona facing harsh, often deadly climates in relatively un-patrolled areas. The increase in number of undocumented immigrants crossing through Arizona eventually gave rise to the minutemen militia squads (*Caza Inmigrantes*), para military groups of men and women that capture, physically abuse, and terrorize immigrants trying to cross over to the U.S. through the Arizona desert. The wall, as a strategic move to push immigrants away from the California border increased the already high death tolls of people trying to cross the U.S. border without inspection every year. Since the 1990s the toll of deaths in the desert area of Arizona is of over 3,000.

The New Wall

As a result of the aftermath of September 11th (9/11), 2001, the U.S.-Mexico border was also politically targeted for further surveillance along with heavier surveillance of Arab and Muslim Americans. President George W. Bush and neo-conservative politicians used the "War on Terrorism" to take a series of security measures in an effort to close the U.S.-Mexico border from alleged terrorism, but more specifically to block further Mexican undocumented immigration. The National Strategy for Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Act of 2002 established the creation of the Department of U.S. Homeland Security in these efforts. The mission of the Department of U.S. Homeland Security with regard to border security states, we will lead the unified national effort to secure America (U.S.). We will prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the nation. We will ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free-flow of commerce (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2006).

Post 9/11, anti immigrant sentiments have soared, especially anti-Arab American hatred, but also hate directed toward Latina/o immigrants, specifically Mexican undocumented immigrants. Such sentiments are being manifested in an increase in border security and a crack down on undocumented entrants such as through proposed legislation HR 4437, which would criminalize undocumented immigrants in the U.S. as well as anyone who assists them in any way. Although there is mention of securing the "borders" in the Homeland Security Mission Statement, only the Southern border has become the target for further patrolling and militarization while the Northern Canadian-U.S. border has received relatively little attention.

On May 15, 2006, President George W. Bush addressed the nation on his vision for Immigration Reform. While Bush supports a temporary

worker program, he pledged to increase the number of border patrol agents along with sending 6,000 National Guard troops to the "southern border to help U.S. Customs and Border Protection combat illegal immigrants" ("The President's Strategy for Accelerating Border Security," 2006). When it comes to immigration reform George W. Bush seems to speak from both sides of his mouth. On the one hand Bush supports the building of a wall (*El Muro de la Verguenza*) to deter unauthorized entrants, particularly persons of Mexican-origin, while on the other hand he feels that "we must deal with the millions of illegal immigrants who are already here" (Office of the Press Secretary, 2006) and supports a guest worker program. Regardless, the U.S.-Mexico border since 9/11 has become the target of xenophobic protectionist measures that include the recently passed 2006 vote by the U.S. congress to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, like the one in California, as well as further militarization of the border area.

The Laws (1996) and Civic Discontent (2006)

Latina/o student movements against proposed legislation HR 4437 took place in various U.S. cities in April and May 2006. Contrary to what the popular media portrayed in the U.S., Latina/o students were not looking for an excuse to not attend classes, in fact, many were exercising their civic duty. Of foremost importance was students' expression of discontent over the criminalization of family members, including their own parents through HR 4437. While the protests gained attention and sympathy worldwide, nativists in the U.S used the media images, especially of the use of Mexican flags, to stir further hatred and xenophobia against, especially Mexican, immigrants. However, according to Jonas (2006) the legal issues leading up to HR 4437 were building for a decade since 1996.

In 1996, after a successful court battle waged by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) against California proposition 187, a proposition that would deny undocumented immigrants public services like medical care and public schooling, the Republican-run Congress passed a series of three laws that resulted in a loss of rights not only for undocumented immigrants, but also for legal resident non-citizens (Jonas, 2006). The three laws included the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Act, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act all passed in 1996. Together these three laws effectively stripped legal and undocumented immigrants of their due process rights, increased denial of naturalization, increased deportation, and denied public services and benefits to all non-citizens. HR 4437 and its attempt to criminalize undocumented immigrants is only a further step in this ten year process of anti-immigrant legislation and hysteria.

Educational Issues

The vast majority of children and youth coming to the United States from Mexico vary with regard to educational access, services and experiences received in their communities of origin prior to arriving in the U.S. However, given the large numbers of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELLs) in California and throughout the U.S., we can surmise that a large proportion of children and youths from Mexico are ELLs, but not necessarily Spanish speakers. This issue raises important questions about the assumptions often made about Mexican immigrants in the U.S., including that for all Mexicans their first language is Spanish. Overall, neglecting the education needs of ELLs have negative implications for the U.S.

Latinas/os, the U.S.' largest ethnic minority group, are also the youngest age group with one third being under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; Suárez-Orozco, 2000). While, "Spanish is the language spoken by the largest proportion of new immigrants…Little is known about immigrant children" (Suárez-Orozco, 2000) yet reform policies such as Proposition 227 passed in California in 1998 (a proposition that eliminated bilingual education), local policies, and the federal mandate No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 are making changes that directly impact the lives of immigrant school children in terms of English Language Learning, segregation, high-stakes testing, and educational opportunity and access to higher education .

Approximately 10% of all students in the United States are ELLs. Of this 10%, 77% are Spanish-speakers and 60% are of Mexican origin. One-third of the nation's ELL students reside in California. In 2004-2005, the California Department of Education and the California Language Census 2005 reported that there are approximately 1.6 million ELLs enrolled in California schools and 85% are Spanish speakers. The majority of ELLs (67%) are enrolled in the elementary grades (K-6) with 33% enrolled in the secondary grades (7th-12th). However, nation-wide, secondary ELL students are the fastest growing segment of the ELL population.

We know that Mexican ELLs enrolled in U.S. public schools enter with particular sets of school challenges that include varying English language skills, different academic abilities, and varying degrees of experience with education in Mexico. Undoubtedly, some school districts, educators and policy makers are genuinely concerned about the education of the ELL Spanish-speaking subgroup. However, time and time again the educational needs of ELLs are neglected. Lastly, many classroom teachers lack the motivation or proper training to teach and assist ELLs and their learning needs.

Most Spanish-speaking ELLs are concentrated in low performing, high poverty schools. This pattern of concentration is contributing to one of the fastest growing forms of school racial and linguistic segregation in the U.S. (Laosa, 2001). School segregation is often based on residential segregation

that is intricately tied to language issues as well as economic and racial status in U.S. society that often manifests in racially separate schools and segregation within schools (Urrieta, 2006). Despite the obvious inequalities, colorblind policies like No Child Left Behind, the national U.S. high-stakes testing accountability model that punishes low test performance at all levels, does not take into account the specific situation and educational needs of ELLs. Low test scores for ELLs often translate into limited access to academic opportunities, low teacher expectations, and placement in remedial courses.

Another result of low test scores is that many ELL students do not have access to rigorous academic content. Even when students arrive from places like Mexico with high academic backgrounds, often the assumption made is that these students lack formal education. Not speaking English is often also erroneously associated with lack of intelligence or ignorance by U.S. mainstream educators (Gonzalez et al., 2003). Because of these stereotypical, blanket generalizations of immigrant Mexican students, immigrant ELLs are regularly placed in remedial courses that hinder their completion of a high school education and possibly limit their access to higher education. Such tracking practices (separation, segregation, etc.) effectively limit educational opportunity and access to higher education for this segment of the population. Overall, according to Gary Orfield of the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2006), when the future majority of a population, like Latinas/os are projected to be in the United States, is undereducated there are bound to be negative effects for the entire U.S. population and for national progress as a whole.

Conclusion

The immigration debate in the United States is currently in full force. While the academic focus of the debate is almost exclusively on economic issues, the public debate is thinly veiled to conceal prejudice and a long history of contradictory messages regarding Mexican immigration. Historical immigration trends in the U.S., like the case presented of Michoacán, teach us that U.S. businesses are eager to use and exploit Mexican labor in times and areas of need, while also not hesitant to change the laws and policies to exclude immigrants from the mainstream. Laws like California propositions 187 and 227 are clear examples of legislation passed targeting immigrants, especially Mexican undocumented immigrants and their children, for exclusion. At the national level, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Act, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, all passed in 1996, are also legal means to exclude and further marginalize not just undocumented immigrants, but also legal resident non-citizens and to deprive them of their due process rights.

In education, immigrant students often encounter neglect and segregated school contexts that are not prepared and sometimes not willing to meet their educational needs. High-stakes testing accountability systems like No Child Left Behind as well as lack of educational opportunity limit immigrant students' access to rigorous academic content. Limited skills in the English language do not equate with lack of intelligence, something mainstream U.S. educators have a hard time understanding. This perception of low intelligence coupled with segregation and lack of educational opportunity often result in high school desertion and low educational mobility.

In order to better understand the impact of emigration and immigration for both Mexico and for the U.S. further studies are needed. Studies on large scale patterns of migration and settlement are important as well as smaller studies that contextualize migration to particular regions of Mexico. We have presented the case of Michoacán as an example to show that there is a need to further contextualize the immigration phenomenon, and yet we lack the necessary information to do so properly.

The flow of undocumented immigrants from Mexico is far from being halted. As long as the labor is exploitable and needed, there will be ways to cross the U.S.-Mexico border without inspection. The costs, however, in deaths and physical abuse at the border, as well as in the marginalizing social, cultural, economic, and legal practices used in the U.S. to exclude immigrants (legal and undocumented) from mainstream participation are great. Until both countries, both the U.S. and Mexico realize and understand the magnitude and importance of the immigration phenomenon and implement laws that protect immigrants and their children, undocumented immigrants, especially Mexicans, will continue to be the target of exclusion and scapegoat for bad U.S. economic and foreign policy.

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