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A comparative analysis of Mexican and Yugoslavian immigrants and refugees

Lana Djuric
San Jose State University

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEXICAN AND YUGOSLAVIAN
IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of The Department of Mexican American Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Lana Djuric

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT
OF MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Dr. Perlita Dicochea

Dr. Marcos Pizarro

Dr. Louis Holscher

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MEXICAN AND YUGOSLAVIAN IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

by Lana Djuric

This study compares Yugoslavian refugees and Mexican immigrants (whom are referred to as economic refugees) who came to the United States between 1994 and 2004. By focusing on immigrants from two different continents, the goal of this research is to understand the impact of laws and policies upon differently categorized immigrants. The goal of this study is to examine and expand the idea of refugees in order to understand why certain groups are granted refugee status (Yugoslavians) while others are not (Mexicans). The method used in this research is qualitative; there were ten interviews conducted with immigrants from both groups. The data allows for understanding how immigrant experiences differ based on their official category of refugee, undocumented, or other such labeling. The purpose of this research is also to document and understand what drives these people to migrate to the United States and to examine how their categorization affects them once they are in the U.S.

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DEDICATION

To my family: Mom, Dad, Igor, and Mitar. Your love and support means everything to me.

“Although social change cannot come overnight, we must always work as though it were a possibility in the morning.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Definitions and Migration Theories

Addressing and characterizing human suffering in immigration studies is important in order to understand how laws and policies treat immigrants and refugees differently, even when both groups are suffering. Paul Farmer quotes the World Health Organization acknowledging that the world's greatest killer is poverty: "Poverty wields its destructive influence at every stage of human life, from the moment of conception to the grave. It conspires with the most deadly and painful diseases to bring a wretched existence to all those who suffer from it" (p. 50). Conversely, to ease suffering and increase chances of survival, some people try to leave their home countries in search of a healthier life and better opportunities.

There are numerous immigration laws and policies that have drastic and sometimes even deadly effects on the lives of immigrants and refugees. Being a refugee from former Yugoslavia, I was able to personally understand U.S. immigration policies when my family was granted legal entrance into the country in September of 1998. My family and I were able to go through the process of legally becoming refugees and leaving Serbia; filling out applications and going through numerous interviews with the American immigration officials became the norm for six months in 1998. The Balkan War had ended in the summer of 1995 and for three years we lived in Serbia as refugees, moving from one refugee camp to another. However, even though the war ended in 1995, the United States of America allowed my family and thousands of others from former Yugoslavia to enter the country as refugees. Prior to migrating to the United

States, my family was not in immediate danger as the fighting had stopped. However, the jobs were scarce and refugees were scapegoated as the ills of society. Economic poverty was an everyday experience for all refugees in Yugoslavia as most of us had to depend on the Red Cross for food and shelter. Our life was unbearable because of economic suffering and our only hope for a new beginning would be to leave Yugoslavia.

In order to understand immigration patterns in the United States, it is imperative to define how labels and categories, such as refugees, are understood by U.S. international laws and policies. Refugees are defined as people fleeing their homes owing to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political group, outside of the country of his/her nationality, and unable to return to home (Holtzman, 2004, p. 1). Refugees are allowed to enter countries, safe havens, such as the United States, when there is a crisis and this unanimous policy is justified with saving the lives of thousands of people who otherwise might die. Some of the examples in the United States' history include refugees such as Cubans, Vietnamese, and from former Soviet Union territory. For example, immigrants fleeing the communist regime from former Soviet Union and Cuba were granted refugee status easily in 1980s because of the anti-communist perspective, also known as the "red scare", in the United States (Weiner, 1999). People fleeing communist countries were seen as worthy of support while opponents of communist regimes generally were not. After the Cold War, communism became less of a threat and the struggle to define a crisis was tackled. The issue of who belonged in the U.S. as a refugee became more complicated and exclusive because defining a crisis became more complex. How do we

define a crisis? What political, economic, or other social forces influence refugee flows that have historically been neglected? Do stagnant poverty and the inability to pay for education and healthcare represent a crisis? What factors determine which groups are granted refugee status? These are some of the questions that I have been thinking about and are a part of my thesis research.

My interest in the U.S. immigration policy has been influenced by my own personal experience as a refugee. I want to understand why my family and other Yugoslavians were granted refugee status, while Mexicans, who might have lived in the same poverty stricken environment, are not, and instead continue to enter the country undocumented. When Mexican immigrants cross the desert or mountains with the help of a coyote, their immediate lives are in danger, and even if they are successful, they are still marginalized and stigmatized as “aliens” or “illegals.” According to 2000 Census information, there were 328,547 Yugoslavians living in the United States. On the other hand, the Center for Immigration Studies reports that there were 8 million Mexican immigrants living in the United States in 2000, mostly settled in the Western states. Justin Akers Chacon and Mike Davis in No One is Illegal (2006) point out that the numbers of undocumented immigrants has declined from 2000 to 2003, and on average 1.1 million Mexicans enter the country without papers (p. 217). I want to explore how differences in immigration laws and policies affect the labeling of immigrants and refugees, which then create different possibilities for entering into the United States and their treatment upon entry. I argue for the redefinition of refugee terminology by the incorporation of “economic refugees” into the United States’ immigration policy. By

interviewing Yugoslavian refugees and Mexican immigrants I want to understand their socio-economic positions prior to leaving their home countries, which will then allow me to draw similarities and differences between these groups. I contend that Yugoslavian and Mexican immigrants, when faced with economic destabilization, have migrated to the United States as “economic refugees.” Economic destabilization is apparent in both countries as both Mexico and the former Yugoslavian republics are being affected by American investment while at the same time these nations are trying to create jobs and compete with the American markets.

While my family and I have been lucky enough to migrate to the United States as refugees, our status enabled us access to higher education and medical insurance, while many of my Mexican high school friends could not attend universities because of their undocumented status. I have also heard stories of Mexican families being separated while parents tried crossing into the United States while children were left with relatives until their parents could send for them. Some parents, like my best friend’s aunt, died crossing the border and I have always wondered why. For these reasons, I became interested in Mexican immigration and Yugoslavian refugee flows as I believe that there are links that make our experiences similar and yet are differently shaped by the U.S. immigration policies.

Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees are placed on opposite sides of the immigration debate. Mexican immigrants face numerous disadvantages by being labeled aliens while Yugoslavian refugees are privileged by their legal status. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut argue that being granted asylum or refugee status has advantages

over other immigration channels. “The central difference is that while refugees have legal status and the right to work and they can avail themselves of the welfare provisions of the 1980 Act (which changed in 1996), those denied asylum have none of the privileges, and if they stay, they are classified as illegal aliens” (p. 31). They further add that “being a refugee is therefore not a matter of personal choice but a government decision based on combination of legal guidelines and political expediency” (p. 31). The authors also argue that depending on the political climate and the relationship between the U.S. and home country, some flows of people may be classified as political exodus while others may be labeled as illegal economic immigrants.

The relationship between the U.S. and Mexico has always been interconnected, especially in terms of economic investment and development. For example, the Bracero and Border Industrialization Programs (BIP), and NAFTA have all redirected development efforts from the state toward foreign capital, which created even closer ties between the countries. This relationship of reciprocity allows the Mexican government to have access to investment and to export its workers who would otherwise be unemployed. However, at the same time, this relationship hurts Mexican workers who have no choice but to migrate to the United States. According to Justin Akers Chacon and Mike Davis in No One Is Illegal (2006), over 1.3 million small farmers in Mexico were pushed into bankruptcy by cheap American grain imports between 1994 and 2004” (p. 121). The relationship between the former Yugoslavia and United States has been antagonistic for decades. Former Yugoslavia was a communist country until 1989, allying with former Soviet Union and therefore representing a threat to democracy.

Tensions between the two countries became more apparent when the Balkan war started and the United States sided with Croatia and Bosnia against Serbia. The American government did not support the Serbian regime and therefore anyone fleeing that country was able to find refuge in the U.S. Political climate and relationship between U.S. and home countries play an important role when labeling immigrants or refugees. I argue that the definition of refugees needs to be expanded and redefined. Poverty in developing countries such as Mexico will continue producing large unemployed and displaced groups of people, and how we define these people is imperative to their incorporation into the American society.

I. Definition of Terms

According to Christopher Mitchell, “The United States immigration policy has often been inconsistent, lacking humanness, and an ad hoc style in policy making” (p. 4). I want to begin with defining what it means to be an immigrant or a refugee, and then focus on U.S. restrictive laws and policies, that are often racist against Mexicans. According to the 1951 UN Convention, Article 1A(2), refugees are defined as people persecuted, or having a well founded fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. There are four types of immigrants: undocumented, legal temporary, legal permanent, and refugee, asylees. Undocumented immigrants are those who enter the country without proper documentation or overstay their visas. Temporary or permanent immigrants are classified depending on the duration of their time in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security’s Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services define the

following immigrant categories: 1) *Alien* refers to any individual who is not a citizen of the United States; 2) *Immigrant* refers to an alien lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency; such people may also be *referred* as lawful permanent residents; 3) *Non-immigrant* refers to an alien who seeks temporary entry to the United States for a specific purpose, such as tourists, temporary workers, business executives, students, and diplomats; 4) *Removal* is the expulsion of an alien from the United States, which may be based on grounds of inadmissibility or deportability; and 5) A U.S. *visa* allows the bearer to apply for entry to the United States under certain classifications, such as student (F), visitor (B), and temporary worker (H).

II. Type of Entrance

There are two ways that immigrants can enter the country: permanent admission (immigrants and refugees) or temporary admission (non-immigrants). People who are admitted temporary admission are classified as lawful permanent residents (LPRs) and are able to receive the Permanent Resident Card (also commonly known as the green card), depending on their further classification. This group of people may work in the United States and apply for citizenship. According to the report written by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO, 2006), “In 2004, the United States admitted about 946,000 people as lawful permanent residents and 5 million temporary visas” (p. 2). The report also addresses purposes of immigration policies, which are to reunite families by admitting immigrants whose family members are already living in the United States; admit workers in occupations with strong demand for labor; to provide a refuge for

people who face political, religious, racial, and other risks in their home countries; and to increase diversity (pp. 4-11).

Immigration has been a subject of U.S. legislation for as long as the country has existed. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant in Racial Formation in the United States (1994), “the state’s main objective in its racial policy was repression and exclusion” (p. 81). For example, the Naturalization Act of 1790 allowed only free white immigrants to obtain citizenship, while immigrants of color could only naturalize in the twentieth century. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, closing America’s borders to immigrants from a different shore. Americans were warned about the “Chinese Problem” and President Rutherford Hayes called for an end to “Chinese invasion” (Takaki, 1993, p. 206). According to Ronald Takaki (1993), “In 1888, the prohibition was broadened to include all persons of the Chinese race, although exemptions were provided for Chinese officials, teachers, students, tourists, and merchants” (p. 207). This is a very good example of dichotomous and exclusionary American legislation targeting immigrants who are perceived as inferior, while allowing professionals and tourists from the same country to work or visit in the United States.

Restrictions and exclusions of immigrants based on their qualities, race, and religion, to name a few, have existed for years. Catholics, Asians, Eastern and Southern Europeans have been banned and prevented from settling in the United States at different periods of U.S. history (Nevins, 2002, Spellman, 2002). Immigration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was characterized as the Open Door Policy, yet the majority of immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe. The first federal law limiting

immigration qualitatively was enacted in 1875, prohibiting the admission of criminals and prostitutes. According to the CBO report, “In 1876, the Supreme Court decided that regulation and implementation of laws and policies was the exclusive responsibility of U.S. federal government and in 1880, the Congress established the Immigration Service” (p. 1). Since the late nineteenth century, immigration policies regulated the entrance of “deserving” and “undeserving” immigrants, and I turn now to such practices.

Even though I focus on restrictive policies of the mid 1990s, it is important to examine past laws in order to demonstrate their legacy and effect on present state and migratory patterns. One of the most restrictive immigration laws was passed in 1924, known as the Immigration Act, which set quotas at two percent of the total of any given nation's residents in the U.S., as reported in the 1890 census. This Act aimed to restrict further migration of Eastern and Southern Europeans (Asian immigrants were excluded previously) and also wanted to reestablish the same “qualities” in immigrants that dated back to Northern and Western Europeans. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965 abolished the quota system and established a categorical preference system, which preferred family reunification and immigrants with specific skills, such as nurses or engineers. The Act placed an annual limit of 170,000 to Eastern Hemisphere, with no more than 20,000 coming from any country and 120,000 to Western Hemisphere, without any restrictions. According to Kitty Calvita (1994) two modifications of INA are important: “First, in 1978, the hemispheric quotas were eliminated and created a single ceiling of 290,000 with a uniform limit of 20,000 per country. In addition, the Refugee

Act of 1980 took refugees out of the preference system; the president, after consulting with the Congress had the authority to establish refugee quotas for any given year” (p. 62). This particular change gave enormous power to the president to decide which groups of people “deserve” refugee status while rejecting the crises of others that were not seen as dangerous or deadly enough. These changes are important because without restrictions on the Western Hemisphere, the numbers of immigrants increased drastically from these regions.

Increased immigration from the Western Hemisphere created a mixture of reactions, from government officials and Americans alike. United States immigration policies after the World War II comprised of oppositional and dichotomous forces. Authors Wayne Cornelius, Philip Martin, and James Hollifield in Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective (1994) discuss how the U.S. policies have changed over time, pointing to such conflicting forces: “1) Between *employers*, seeking a cheap and tractable source of labor, and U.S.-born *workers*, whose bargaining power is threatened by an influx of nonunionized, immigrant labor; 2) Between an *economy* that generates a high demand for unskilled labor and a *political class* unwilling to confront the social conflicts associated with that demand; and 3) Between the *human rights* associated with liberal democracy and the exigencies of *border control*” (11). These oppositional forces have led many Americans to be afraid of immigrants, who are perceived as cheap workers, taking away American jobs. Increased visibility of immigrants, working in restaurants or waiting for work in labor centers, has been used to justify xenophobic and nativist arguments in which immigrants are portrayed as sources of all social ills, calling

for tougher border control and reducing immigrants' access to welfare benefits to name a few (Nevins, 2002). In order to understand why immigrants are subjected to mistreatment and discriminatory practices in the American society, I want to examine migration theories which frame the context of migration, particularly, address the reasons why immigrants leave their countries. In the next section, I will review migration theories that facilitate an understanding of the clashing forces within U.S. immigration policies.

III. Migration Theories

Migration theories are not only important because they frame the public's perception, but also because they influence creation and implementation of immigration laws and policies. As Douglas Massey and Jorge Durand have noted: "The United States would not be the strong, vibrant nation that it is without the contributions made by its millions of immigrants" (p. 35). However, many Americans would disagree with their claim as the focus today continues to be on stigmatizing and scapegoating of immigrants, rather than celebrating their accomplishments (Nevins, 2002, Santa Ana, 2002, Chacon and Davis, 2006). For example, during the May, 2006 protests, immigrants and citizens alike of all skin colors and ages gathered to protest propositions that target undocumented immigrants and their allies, labeling them un-humane and racist. However, many Americans counter-protested, carrying posters and signs that targeted Mexican undocumented immigrants, calling for their arrest and deportation. For that reason it is important to first examine migration theories and how they shape specific policies, which

then affect what groups are granted refugee status while others are left to die in the desert or drown in raging rivers.

A. Push-Pull Approach

Massey et al. in Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the end of the Millennium (1998) study standard economic models that examine migration in terms of push-pull approach, which looks at sending and receiving countries in terms of supply and demand. Standard economic models have difficulties observing changes in the post-industrial world, “whereas one less developed country may have a high rate of emigration, its similarly developed neighbor may not; migrants do not always go to places where wages are highest; migration often ceases before wage disparities disappear; and migration at times occurs in the absence of wage disparities” (p. 8). This argument is important to understand because wages alone do not dictate where immigration flows occur, but other factors, such as networks and the relationship between the sending and receiving countries. Another problem with the push-pull model is that many immigrants do not migrate for specific, calculated reasons. For example, Gilbert Gonzalez in Culture of Empire (2004) examines how in the early twentieth century U.S. domination and imperialism coupled with Mexico’s Open Door Investing Policy extracted valuable natural resources and cheap labor, which was then transported to the United States (p. 7). Gonzalez points out how railroad and mining industries required large number of cheap, disposable labor, but that did not mean that all Mexican nationals left even though the United States was doing better in terms of economic development and political stability. The author’s main goal is to examine “the economic conquest of Mexico and the

consequent migration of Mexicans to the United States”, which cannot exist without one another (p. 13). If migrants were choosing their future based only on economic calculations, then developed countries would be faced with massive influx of immigrants who are fleeing their poverty-stricken developing worlds.

There are many parts of the world where wage differentials are great, and yet little migration has occurred. Massey et al. (1998), Portes and Rumbaut (2006) to name a few authors, debate and deconstruct neoclassical economic theory because of its weaknesses as it only looks at economic gains of migrants, both in the sending and receiving countries. Massey et al. claim that “If the world really worked as predicted by theory, far more people would move and international migration would continue to grow until it produced an equilibrium wage throughout the world” (1998, p. 9). The majority of countries that send immigrants are not poorest of the poor, as migration is a costly process that people learn about through connections, networks, and media.

B. Neoclassical Micro and Macro Approach

Massey et al. examine neoclassical micro and macro theories in Worlds in Motion (1998) and assess the strengths and limitations of each one. According to neoclassical macro theory, migration is caused by geographic differences in supply and demand for labor. Differences in wages across developed and developing worlds causes workers from the latter to migrate where wages are higher and there is a labor shortage. Supporters of this approach believe that “As a result of this movement, the supply of labor decreases and wages eventually rise in the capital-poor country, while the supply of labor increases and wages ultimately fall in the capital-rich country, leading, at

equilibrium, to an international wage differential that reflects only the costs of international movement, pecuniary and psychic” (p. 18). The main arguments of this approach is that international migration is influenced by wage differences between countries and that elimination of these differences will end the movement of labor. The supporters of this theory would argue that the way to control migration flows is to regulate labor markets in receiving and sending countries. However, this argument leaves out family and other networks that influence migration, even if there are no strong economic “push” or “pull” factors, as well as other reasons that create refugee flows.

According to the neoclassical theory, migrants rationally choose where to migrate based on their perceived, calculated net gain, investing in their human capital. Massey et al. further explain neoclassical micro worldview and how “individual rational actors decide to migrate because a cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect a positive net return, usually monetary, from that movement” (p. 19). The migrant subtracts potential earnings in the receiving countries from those expected at home and come up with an expected net return from migration. However, the question then becomes how one can come up with the exact calculations when the decisions are made from within the home country. And does the individual make the decision on his/her own or are other family members consulted?

C. The New Economics of Migration Approach

What neoclassical micro and macro theories lack, the new economics of migration theory tries to address, even though it is limited at times. Massey et al. describe how the new economics of migration moves away from the individual actors making decisions to

include larger networks-families and sometimes even communities “not only to maximize expected income, but also to minimize the risks and to loosen constraints associated with various kinds of market failures” (p. 21). Migration decisions are made within larger networks and families can even decide to maximize their gains by sending a few family members to different parts of the home country and others to foreign communities.

Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (2006) concur as they acknowledge that the new economics of migration leaves out an important question: how do immigrants learn about possibilities in another country?

Portes and Rumbaut in Immigrant America (2006) argue that in order for potential immigrants to learn about economic opportunities three things need to happen: First, there must be a demand for labor. The authors say that “Contrary to invasion theory, the fact is that labor migrants come not so much because they want to as because they are wanted” (p. 17). Second, labor demand must be known and through mass media and other communication technologies, migrants are able to learn about opportunities in other countries. The importance of networks is enormous as many immigrants learn from their families and friends about migration processes, living standards, job opportunities, and education. Third, the authors add that there must be desirable opportunities, explaining that “Desirability is less a question of the gross earnings disparity between sending and receiving countries than of the *meaning* that these economic advantages have for households and communities” (p. 17). Portes and Rumbaut end their critique with a very persuasive argument as they contend, “Most of today’s immigrants, even the undocumented, have had some education and come from cities, for these are precisely the

groups most thoroughly exposed to lifestyles and consumption patterns emanating from the advanced world” (p. 18). Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that Mexican immigrants are invading the United States as numerous anti-immigrant scholars would argue, because we need to expand our understanding beyond either sending or receiving countries. To understand how migration works, we need to examine social, political, and economic environments of both sending and receiving countries together, as immigration is a transnational occurrence (Gonzalez, 2004, Lorey, 1999, Fregoso, 2003). I will return to Mexican context of immigration in the following chapter.

D. The World Systems Analysis Approach

International migrants do not scatter evenly across developed countries, but follow well established links, such as colonial ties, military occupation, or investment practices, as is the case with Mexico. Immanuel Wallerstein in World Systems Analysis (2004) examines transnational geopolitics and how in the 1950s and 1960s anti-systemic movements challenged U.S. hegemony and the capitalist world-economy, whose strength was based on oppression and exploitation of workers. During that time period, new theories emerged that addressed uneven development and inequalities within the expansion of global capitalism: historical-structural (dependency) theory and world systems. Dependency theory is rooted in Marxist-Leninist views which explain migration and problems of immigration control in terms of massive socioeconomic inequalities that exist between the poor and rich, north and south. Massey et al. argue that “Rather than experiencing an inexorable progression towards development and modernization, poor countries in reality were trapped by their disadvantaged position

within unequal geopolitical structure, which perpetuated their poverty” (p. 34). The result was that developing countries became dependent on the Western, developed world and migration is just one of the examples of this relationship. The phrase “Development of underdevelopment of the Third World” captures this relationship in which aspects of globalization, such as access to reserve army labor have detrimental effects on the developing world (Wallerstein, 2004). Wallerstein’s and Massey’s arguments are important because they conclude that migration occurs not because immigrants want to use, for example, social services in the United States as commonly assumed in public debates, but because of the well-established economic systems of exploitation that rely on readily available cheap labor. This point is relevant when examining the representation of undocumented Mexican immigrants, whose labor is essential in agriculture and service sector industries, but yet are portrayed as “illegals.”

In order to understand how countries, such as Mexico and the United States, or former Yugoslavia and the United States, are connected, I want to examine Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory. This theory examines the relationship between core, semi-periphery, and peripheral countries and how their complex associations affect immigration. Core countries, such as the United States are developed, powerful capitalist organizations, while peripheral are opposite: weak and dependent. Semi-peripheral countries, such as Mexico are wealthier and more independent in relation to peripheral countries. Massey et al. note that “The penetration of capitalist economic relations into non-capitalist or pre-capitalist societies creates a mobile population that is prone to migrate. Driven by desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of

capitalist firms in core countries enter poorer nations on the periphery of the world economy in search for land, raw materials, labor, and consumer markets” (pp. 36-37). These theories look at capitalist development and globalization disruption and dislocation, which create migration flows.

The assessment of transnational migration parallels the discussion of globalization. My use of the term globalization draws from Rosa Linda Fregoso’s meXicana encounters (2003) who argues that globalization is “the exploitation and extermination of gendered bodies”, which is most visible in the maquila industry on the Mexico-U.S. border (p. 6). Her analysis centers on effects of globalization on the Mexico-U.S. border, wherein poor, dark Mexican women are exploited, targeted, and murdered. Fregoso traces the murders to 1995, a year after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which is an example of the World Systems Theory. Many scholars, including Fregoso, examine how women are forced to enter paid labor market and migrate to border cities, and eventually cross into the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Well established links between the sending and receiving countries create migration flows that are embedded in the histories of both countries and need to be taken seriously.

American investment in the Mexican markets has historically been accepted as an imperative of industrialization and development, and NAFTA is an example that I want to examine. According to Fregoso, NAFTA is “the treaty that solidified the project of neoliberalism and economic globalization” by opening northern and southern borders to capital flows, while displacing farmers in Mexico who are now seeking work on the U.S.

farms or other industries (p. 6). NAFTA was signed into law by former presidents George W. Bush, Carlos Salinas, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on December 17, 1992 and went into effect on January 1, 1994. Aristide Zolberg (2006) explains that NAFTA made Mexico “abandon its protectionist agricultural policies that enabled subsistence farmers to stay on their land, thereby exacerbating the exodus” (p. 383). NAFTA did not include enough provisions to protect workers in Mexico and immigrant workers in the United States. By examining the World Systems Theory, I want to reiterate that development and free trade provisions have created unstable and violent conditions that immigrants try to escape by migrating to countries such as the United States. As Joseph Nevins notes: “This contradictory (sic) role entails maximizing the perceived benefits of globalization while ‘protecting’ against the perceived detriments of increasing transnational flows-especially of unauthorized immigrants” (p. 7). Opening the border to free movement of goods while targeting undocumented immigrants who are displaced by such flows needs to be re-examined in order to save lives of thousands of undocumented immigrants crossing into the United States. In the case of Mexico, the World Systems Theory helps us understand the United States’ role in producing the immigrants whom, upon the arrival, become aliens.

Economic integration across international borders and divergent levels of socioeconomic development all contribute to immigration complexities that cross continents. Leaving one’s country involves crossing international boundaries, which is also known as the international migration system. Massey et al. (1998) define international migration system as: “Economic, cultural, and political links that hold the

system together” (p. 60). The authors examine this multifaceted relationship between Mexico and U.S. and the way in which American political and economic influence has contributed to migration. “The U.S. has invaded Mexico three times; it annexed one third its territory; it is the primary source of capital for Mexican investment; it is Mexico’s largest trading partner and Mexico is the second most important trading partner for the U.S.; and currently economic integration between Mexico and the U.S. is occurring under the terms of the NAFTA” (p. 67). The United States’ economic and political penetration has therefore created networks which are important for potential immigrants who are trying to improve their future. They also point to the United States’ political and economic intervention in various countries, such as Haiti, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Japan, Nicaragua, and former Yugoslavia, as examples of hegemonic interests. As a result, “The North American migration system is a political economy that reflects the interests of the superpower at its core” (p. 67).

It is important to understand how migration theories, such as push-pull or World Systems Analysis frame immigration policies in the U.S. I have examined migration theories in order to situate the argument for United States policies that target immigrants, such as Mexicans, or refugees, such as Yugoslavians. These theories inform how policies are created and in the Yugoslavian case, the United States’ refugee policies are “protective” and humanitarian. In the case of Mexican immigrants, their migration is seen as voluntary and illegal, fought with viciousness at the Mexico-U.S. border. I want to contrast the political and economic context for Mexican immigration with the United States’ military involvement in Yugoslavia, which created a massive influx of refugees

during the mid and late 1990s. I begin with the historical overview of refugees and the politics surrounding this group of people, starting in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Overview of Migration

I. Refugees

The United States has been highly selective in choosing its refugees. While the refugee definition points out to a well-founded fear of persecution, many authors argue that the “persecution” is a problematic term, often used to exclude certain groups of people, such as Haitians. Authors Ann Bernstein and Myron Weiner in Migration and Refugee Policies (1999) question the politics of “persecution” as it only applies to state agents singled out for harm.

A. Critical Views of Refugee Policies

In Western Hemisphere and the United States Foreign Policy (1992), Lars Schoultz addresses additional problematic aspects of refugee processing and determining refugee status. Further, refugee status does not necessarily mean entrance into the United States. He states, “From among the millions of refugees worldwide, the Refugee Act requires the executive branch, in consultation with Congress, to identify groups of ‘special humanitarian concern to the United States’ or whose admission as refugees is in the U.S. national interests” (p. 196). The President can also provide additional slots if an unforeseen emergency refugee situation arises that cannot be accommodated by the originally announced quota. However, the problem with trusting one person, the president, with great powers to decide what classifies as an emergency and ultimately who lives and who dies has always been controversial. In order to understand how

people are granted refugee status, we must understand laws and policies that address these arguments.

Refugees have not always been accepted into the United States, especially if fleeing regimes friendly to America. Stephen Legomsky in Immigration and Refugee Law and Policy (2005) discusses the selection criteria in the United States. Before the end of the Cold War, it was easier to admit refugees if they were fleeing a Communist regime. People fleeing countries with regimes friendly to the U.S., such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Haiti, had little success. American foreign policy labeled these groups of people as “economic migrants,” fleeing poverty rather than political persecution and, thus, did not grant them refugee status. This example can still unfortunately be applied today, as for instance, Vietnamese and Koreans can enter the country easier than Rwandans or other African nationals, where ethnic genocide is happening in front of the world. According to UNHCR, as of January 1, 2004, there were 13.7 million refugees in the world (UNHCR, 2003 Global Refugee Trends). However, these numbers do not include internally displaced persons (people driven from their homes, but are still within their home countries), and in 2004, there were 22 million of them.

B. Creation of Refugee Policies

How is the entrance of large groups of people, such as Yugoslavian refugees, justified when they enter the United States? Myron Weiner examines what three components are influential in refugee policy making: First, moral judgment, which addresses needs of “our” citizens versus needs of citizens from other countries. Second, questions of national self-image are important because they define what kind of society

the United States is trying to be. And third, foreign policy tries to assess whether international involvement (changing conditions in other societies) would be better in order to stop refugee flows. These considerations also affect asylum policies which are reflected in tightened asylum processes and limited access in the United States through interdictions or the creation of safe havens in third countries. Asylum seekers do not have to be in their home country like refugees in order to apply; they can apply for asylum from any country. Since migration intersects with domestic policy, questions such as employment, interethnic relations, and welfare policies, it is easier to understand how immigrants as well as refugees are restricted in their movement. International law obligates countries to accept refugees, but less attention is given to addressing root causes in sending countries and ameliorating conditions that generate large influxes of such people. If more attention is given to problems in sending countries that are not only of a political nature but also of social nature, such as the lack of drinking water or drought, then countries such as the United States would be more concerned about the well-being of others. In other countries in Europe, for example, the European Union invests money into less developed members, such as Spain and Portugal, to avoid large flows of migration into Germany and England. The United States should be held responsible for creating immigration flows from Mexico, by making changes in its investment practices and immigration laws and policies at home.

The United States refugee policies have always been selective and arbitrary. Both the United States and Western Europe admit only a small fraction of refugees coming from Asia and Africa. This selection is often based on race and political relationships

between the U.S. and home countries. The major institutions in the U.S., such as law and political organizations, have been structured by the racial order (Omi and Winant, 1994, p. 79). Rainer Munz and Myron Weiner note how the burden of refugees is usually placed on poor and developing Third World countries. The authors state that “At the beginning of 1995, when there were 16,267,000 refugees worldwide, Africa had 9.5 million refugees, the Middle East had 5.5 million, South and Central Asia had 1.8 million, compared with 2.8 million in all of Europe and North America” (p. 187). These numbers are disproportionate in terms of development and economic stability that refugees need. Munz and Weiner distinguish among various causes for refugee flows, such as wars, uprising against the government or colonial rule, drought, famine, flood, and environmental disaster (p. 188). They further define four major categories that create refugee flows: interstate wars, ethnic conflicts, non-ethnic conflicts, authoritarian, and revolutionary regimes. “Non-ethnic conflicts” is a broad category and can include numerous examples such as famine, but no country has ever accepted refugees that are fleeing extreme poverty. Those fleeing poverty would instead be classified as economic immigrants and denied entrance.

Ethnic conflicts, a category of interest to my research, incited Yugoslavian refugee flows. According to Munz and Weiner (1997) there are two types of ethnic conflicts that produce refugee flows, “Those involving a struggle for secession or autonomy by people who constitute a majority in the region in which they reside, and those involving territorially dispersed populations, who are, or perceive themselves to be, persecuted” (p. 200). The second type involves clashes and practices of exclusion,

persecution, ethnic cleansing, and pogroms. In Yugoslavia, the latter was seen by Croatian efforts to expel Serbs from Croatia, by Bosnian Croats to expel Bosnian Serbs and Muslims, by Bosnian Serbs to expel Bosnian Croats and Muslims, and by Bosnian Muslims to expel Croats and Serbs. These wars are violent and personal connections and friendships can disappear in one day. For example, when Balkan war started in 1991, that was the last time I ever saw my Croat friends and I do not even know how to find them again. Our friendships were destroyed because we belonged to different religions and ethnic groups.

It is important to understand that refugee crises do not have to necessarily be created by wars and conflicts. For example, authors Rainer Munz and Myron Weiner (1997) claim that “A number of scholars and officials have suggested that virtually all the violent conflicts raging in the Third World can be attributed to a common set of factors, such as high rates of population growth, related land shortages, a rapid increase in the number of young people entering the labor force, environmental degradation (including desertification and deforestation), gross income inequalities, and an economic imbalance between developed and developing countries” (p. 212). Even when conflicts are not ethnic or racial, problems stemming from development can and do create refugee flows that are not acknowledged as legitimate by the U.S. These common factors of development can be applied to many countries in that process, such as Mexico, in which inequality is rampant. With the proximity to the United States, which has one of the largest economies in the world, Mexicans can emigrate and alleviate problems that have been caused by the U.S. and globalization. According to Human Development Report of

2005, commissioned by the United Nations Development Program, the average GDP per capita in U.S. was 37,562 compared to 9,168 in Mexico (p. 219). This example shows that the income and wage disparities are enormous between the West and developing world. However, through networks, which is seen in my interviews, potential immigrants can learn about living conditions and employment opportunities in foreign countries. Through development of communication, media, transportation, and understanding of immigrant rights, these networks have become stronger and more influential (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).

What about other members of society that are vulnerable as a result of membership in a particular group (race, class, etc.)? What about people who are fleeing their countries because they are displaced and live in stagnant poverty, without access to electricity or drinking water? What about people living in societies where they make \$1 a day or \$100 a month and see their children die of malnutrition? Are those people not “members of a particular social group,” members of a poor working class? Can we and should we classify these people as economic refugees as they are fleeing their homes, not because of war or persecution, but because they are persecuted by poverty created by the capitalist world-economy? Socioeconomic inequalities and poverty do cause harm and death. As my interviews show, Mexican immigrants who have migrated to the United States have left Mexico because of an inability to live in an environment that is destructive and unstable. I contend that scholars need to re-examine the definition of refugees to include individuals who seek to escape life-threatening poverty. Wars should

not be the only ultimate classifier of refugees. There are other instances that can lead to premature death and suffering, such as NAFTA.

Stephen Legomsky (2005), an immigration law expert, discusses the right of people to free, international movement and how that can have an effect on immigration and refugee policies around the world. The author argues that the free movement of people is a fundamental right, just like freedom of speech or religion. According to the author, “Free movement implies the right of people who are trapped in overcrowded areas or areas without *sufficient resources* to go where resources are not so taken up. The other, purely more political, is the right of people to move away from oppression, persecution, unfair restriction, or even disagreeable social environments and social orders” (p. 26). The author points to other factors that influence movement of refugees that have not historically been accepted as valid, such as insufficient resources (lack of economic stability, no access or lack of healthcare or education, poverty). Lack of resources that endanger lives of millions of people and lead to unnecessary suffering can and should be enough to legitimize a new category of refugees: economic refugees. However, U.S. policy has found it easier to “explain” entrance of war-fleeing people rather than movement of people who are escaping poverty or AIDS. Many Americans find it easier to justify protection of political refugees rather than economic refugees because the former are somehow seen as more vulnerable and defenseless, especially when imagined fleeing machine guns and bombs.

II. Yugoslavian Refugees

The Balkan civil war, which engulfed all republics of former Yugoslavia, began in 1991 and ended in 1995, leaving hundreds of thousands of people refugees and/or internally displaced. Douglas Massey et al. (1998) point out that after the Balkan war, around 100,000 Bosnian refugees were admitted into the United States (p. 33). The authors further claim that during the same time period, “195,000 Salvadorans, 165,000 Guatemalans, and 16,000 Nicaraguans filed or refilled their asylum requests. U.S. authorities were not too impressed by their claims or those of their respective governments, as shown by the fact that only one-fifth of these applications were approved in the case of Nicaraguans and less than one-tenth in those of Guatemalans and Salvadorans” (p. 33). This example is important because it shows how refugee and asylum policies are crafted in an exclusive way, which prohibits certain refugee flows to enter the country. I claim that Yugoslavian refugees were able to leave Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia after the war in 1995 as economic refugees, moving for the same reasons as Mexican immigrants. As my interviews show, Yugoslavian refugees were in no immediate danger to political or religious persecution. These refugees needed protection during the war, not after the fact.

Michael Parenti in To Kill a Nation (2000) describes the American involvement and fall of former Yugoslavia by relying on well established Western sources, non-government organizations, and members of the U.S. Congress, UN and NATO members. The author points to the selective humanitarian policies of the United States and critiques the country’s non involvement in Czech Republic (mistreatment of Roma), England

(repression of Catholic minority in England), Rwanda, Guatemala, and East Timor (p. 10). Other countries, such as Angola and Turkey have been mistreating their minorities for years and there has been no involvement from the United States. Parenti makes an excellent point by stating that the “U.S. goal has been to transform former Yugoslavia into a Third World region, a cluster of weak right-wing principalities with the following characteristics: (1) Incapable of charting an independent course of self-development; (2) Natural resources completely accessible to transnational corporate exploitation, including the enormous natural wealth in Kosovo; (3) An impoverished but literate and skilled population working at subsistence wages, a cheap labor pool that will help depress wages in Western Europe and elsewhere and; (4) Dismantled petroleum, engineering, mining, fertilizer, pharmaceutical, construction, automotive, and agricultural industries, so they no longer offer competition against Western producers” (p. 19). Parenti’s analysis of the American influence in former Yugoslavia has also been seen in Mexico for hundreds of years. Through programs such as NAFTA, the United States is able to access impoverished labor, which risks their lives to cross the border and work for meager wages, facing discrimination and exploitation.

The United States’ military involvement in many countries around the globe has helped displace thousands and millions of refugees, as the case is in Iraq today. During the Balkan war, when thousands of people, including my family, were spending hours every day and night in underground shelters, there was no protection from any Western country. Why were people not rescued when they really needed to be saved? Why did my family have to witness killings and bombs every day for four and a half years? The

discrepancies in policies that U.S. employs toward immigrants and refugees are well seen in the cases of Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees. It may be concluded that the U.S. is humanitarian selectively, allowing certain immigrant groups, such as Mexicans, to suffer indefinitely while granting refugee status to people fleeing similar circumstances from former Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavian refugees, as my family, have been displaced and homeless since the beginning of the war in 1991. Many refugees currently living in former Yugoslavian republics are unemployed and have to depend on the Red Cross and their extended families for food and clothes. However, their lives after 1995 are not in immediate danger and are not persecuted “for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Ann Bernstein and Myron Weiner, p. 145). The question then becomes: Why were Yugoslavian refugees accepted in large numbers when their claims were not that different from Mexican immigrants, who are labeled as illegal aliens, breaking the law and draining social resources? Even though the cause of migration is different in each case, the outcome is the same. Unnecessary suffering and poverty should be prevented and avoided. For that reason, it is imperative to introduce the term that has hardly ever been used in academia and government, “economic refugees,” to which I return later. The next section deals with an on-going crisis, which can be explained by examining the case of Mexican migration.

III. Mexican Migration

The largest flow of immigration in North America comes from Mexico. Mexican immigration gained momentum in the pre World War I period due to labor shortages and

continued to grow after that. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States sought to treat Mexican labor as an available source, accepted when needed and discarded when no longer useful (Massey et al., 1998; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Nevins, 1997; Cornelius, 2001; Gonzalez, 2004). The Bracero Program, which began on August 4, 1942, and ended on December 31, 1946, sought to address labor shortages in agriculture. The importation of labor thus became a necessity to maintain cheap and available produce, since most Americans rejected working in the fields under miserable conditions and pay. The Bracero program created a large pool of undocumented workers as labor contractors knew that Mexico had a large supply of labor, which did not have to be contracted legally. Kitty Calavita (1994) discusses the importance of the Bracero program which is “interesting not only because it attempted to institutionalize the flexible and temporary nature of the Mexican labor supply (always recognized as its primary virtue), but also because formal and informal policies during this period contributed to the large increase in illegal immigration that characterized the contemporary movement” (p. 59). Understanding historical events, such as the Bracero program and its importation of foreign workers to fulfill labor needs in the United States, is crucial to comprehend present and future immigration patterns and exclusionary practices.

C. Exclusionary Policies

On November 6, 1986, Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was signed into law by Ronald Reagan in order to curtail undocumented immigration. The main provisions were employer sanctions and legalization, and the first was supposed to impose penalties on employers who hired unauthorized workers. However, this provision

was highly unlikely to deter immigrants from coming into the country because the need for workers, especially in agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors was still great. The employer sanctions provision worsened the situation for the most vulnerable immigrants, the undocumented workers, by being even more exploitable due to the fact that their employers could turn them in to the INS at any time. If employers did not want to pay wages to their workers or made them work fifteen hour long shifts, they could always threaten with deportation and stifle the complaints. The second part of the IRCA was a one shot legalization program for undocumented immigrants living in the United States, and a special agricultural-worker legalization program (SAW). The main provision of the IRCA that set the legalization eligibility was for immigrants to prove that they resided in the United States since January 1, 1982. Excluded from IRCA were immigrants who had criminal records or communicable diseases, people who were most likely to become public charges, and people who made fraudulent use of immigrant documents. The last two exclusions are very ambiguous and open to various interpretations, but point to sentiments toward immigrants during the mid-1980s as criminals and “exploiting” public services (Santa Ana, 2003). When the legalization program ended on May 3, 1988, more than 1.7 million applications from undocumented immigrants had been accepted.

The beginning of the 1990s signaled major changes in immigration policy by focusing again on the quality and numbers of immigrants and their use of social services. Xenophobic and nativist sentiments have led to border militarization and the redefinition of social, political, and civil citizenship. Chacon and Davis (2006) define militarization

of the border as “increasing personnel, joint patrols with the armed forces, the infusion of military technology, and the construction of a border wall” (p. 202). At this time, California and other states in the United States were experiencing economic recession, a widening gap between the rich and poor, and massive racial recomposition (Nevins, 2002). Thus, the determination of who would be allowed to become a U.S. citizen depended on where the person came from and the type of entrance. Discussions about annexing California to Mexico and “Quebecization” are just a few examples of language and words used to reinforce this anxiety (Santa Ana, 2003). Paranoid fear and anxiety are crucial driving forces that create tensions and then laws that are implemented to curb immigration. Such fears have “othered” Mexican immigrants, which is then cured by the exclusion and militarization of the border. The Clinton administration began what some consider a war on immigration with Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. Joseph Nevins in Operation Gatekeeper (2002) explains that militarization of the border and technological improvements across the heavily populated San Ysidro/San Diego areas push immigrants into hazardous terrain: deserts and mountains. In 2005, over 460 deaths were recorded at the border, which does not include the unknown number of missing or injured migrants (Chacon and Davis, 2006, p. 205). The migrants had to respond to these changes by using coyotes, which are not only expensive but dangerous as they often abandon migrants and take their money.

Operation Gatekeeper introduced military technology in controlling immigration, such as the system called IDENT, which according to Nevins, “enabled the INS to identify better repeat (unauthorized) crossers as well as so-called criminal aliens-that is,

non-U.S. citizens who have criminal records or pending arrest warrants” (p. 126). The perception of border out of control began to change slowly as media reported on crime rates being lowered in the San Diego area and low apprehension rates. Even though Gatekeeper has curtailed local migrants, such as day crossers, it did not stop others from crossing in the mountains or deserts. Prospective migrants have learned very quickly (with the help of coyotes) to avoid heavily patrolled areas and cross elsewhere. Authors such as Joseph Nevins (2002) and Wayne Cornelius (2001) agree that as a result, one of many unintended consequences is that undocumented immigrants are staying in the United States longer. Immigrants are settling permanently because of the cost and difficulties in crossing without proper documents. There are also many more deaths of exposure to heat or cold in mountains and deserts. Nevins argues that

The Border Patrol and INS officials expected that Gatekeeper would discourage a significant number of migrants from crossing by pushing them out into mountain and desert areas where-after making a cost-benefit analysis-the migrants would rationally decide to forgo the risks and return to Mexico. Given that this is not happening, the INS is arguably responsible (at least partially) for the deaths. By “knowingly” forcing” people to cross risky terrain, the INS is contributing to the numerous deaths that have resulted (p. 145).

Nevins portrays the changes brought by the militarization of the border in terms of immigration patterns. Fear of foreigners, xenophobia, coupled with the increased visibility of darker skinned people, speaking in foreign languages and accents has been alarming to American mainstream society. Natives, who supported Operation Gatekeeper, are afraid that their way of life will be lost to the newcomers. Another example of restrictive measures, whose slogans had written “the end of America” and

“the rise of Mexifornia” was Proposition 187 (Santa Ana, 2003). Proposition 187, “Save our State” initiative was passed in 1994 by the California voters. The proposition sought to deny social services, non-emergency health care, and education to undocumented immigrants. It also required state institutions, such as schools to verify students’ immigration status (as well as of their parents) in order to exclude undocumented residents. All undocumented immigrants were reported to California’s attorney general as well as to the INS, and made manufacture and distribution of false documentation a felony. However, on November 21, 1997, Proposition 187 was declared unconstitutional. Even though the proposition was declared unconstitutional, it is important to understand that majority of Californians felt threatened by immigration, specifically coming from Mexico. The proposition also drew lines between citizens and aliens, and all Mexicans were believed to be “illegals”, regardless of their status (Santa Ana, 2003).

Another repressive measure brought by the Clinton administration was dismantling of Aid to Family with Dependent Children (AFDC), whose main beneficiaries were low-income female headed households and replaced it with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF promoted job preparation, work, marriage, and was limited to a total of five years within an individual’s lifetime. Undocumented immigrants and nonimmigrant aliens were banned from these benefits. TANF also imposed stricter standards for legal immigrants and authorized states to deny immigrants certain types of aid, such as Medicaid. Refugees remained eligible for the first five years and afterwards at the discretion of the states (Folbre, 2001). This preferential treatment of refugees meant unequal access to benefits among immigrants

and refugees. Undocumented immigrants, sometimes single women with children, could not depend on the government for support, even though they worked long hours in sweatshops and factories. TANF further distinguished between “deserving” and “undeserving” immigrants, therefore reinforcing the idea of brown skinned, Mexican immigrants as second-class citizens. If immigrants were using welfare benefits they were labeled as leeches and lazy, therefore, not only ineligible for benefits but also banned from entering the country as they were perceived to become too dependent on the United States. Omi and Winant have named this approach as the “racial project”, which demonstrates a link between essentialist representation of race and social structures of domination (1994, p. 72).

Establishing exclusionary and repressive measures has become normalized practice in the U.S. government. Following in the same restrictive footsteps, President Clinton signed into practice Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). According to Aristide Zolberg (2006), “The Act focused mostly on enforcement aspect of immigration policies; it stiffened civil and criminal penalties to illegal entry as well as for assisting it, and limited the ability of aliens to challenge INS decisions and deportation rulings in the federal court” (p. 418). After the September 11, 2001 attacks, in which foreign “terrorists” were blamed for thousands of deaths in New York, the Patriot Act was passed in the same year. The Act allows deportation without a hearing or presentation of evidence of any alien whom the Attorney General believed to be a “terrorist.” This dichotomy is important because it creates a distinction between immigrants that are perceived as dangerous or safe, with the former having Arab names

and practicing Islam. Events after September 11, 2001 raise questions about the negligence of the Border Patrol agents, even though “terrorist” did not and do not enter the country through the southern border (Chacon and Davis, 2006, Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). Zolberg (2006) argues that “Undocumented immigration, which slowed down after September 11, resumed at its previous levels and rose further in 2003 as tariffs on almost all Mexican agricultural imports from the United States were scheduled to end on January 1, jeopardizing the livelihoods of some 700,000 small farmers” (p. 447). While Mexican immigrants face discrimination and prejudice in the American society, their journeys continue as globalization and development pierce their home country.

Incorporation of immigrants was once again reshaped by creating the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 restructured the INS, and transferred most of its former functions to the Department of Homeland Security, linking immigration and immigrants to terrorism, threat, and security. Through restrictive laws and policies, the U.S. government is taking an easy way out of addressing globalization and human rights that affect immigrants across the globe. Wayne Cornelius, Philip Martin, and James Hollifield (1994) claim that “Curtailing the legal, political, and basic human rights of ‘within country’ immigrants, is a much easier remedy for governments of industrialized countries to pursue than attempting to change the basic market and demographic forces (in both the sending and receiving countries) that now drive most Third World migration to these countries” (p. 37). Targeting and criminalizing undocumented immigrants in the United States is not going to solve the “immigration problem.” Comprehensive immigration policy, which takes into

consideration globalization, development, and poverty, needs to be developed if we want to ensure access to human rights of all immigrants.

Current legislative proposals target immigrants, specifically undocumented immigrants from Mexico. Chacon and Davis (2006) describe how under the “HR 4437 (Sensenbrenner-King Bill), the nation would have to spend more than \$2.2 billion to build five border fences in California and Arizona that would add up to a length of 698 miles-at the astronomical cost of \$3.2 million per mile” (p. 203). This proposal would also make undocumented migration a felony and even further criminalize millions of undocumented people in the United States. Association with undocumented immigrants would be penalized, tearing families apart, with devastating effects to the social fabric of Mexico and the U.S. Families would be torn apart and children would suffer. Border militarization and legislation like this one fail to address “the structural processes that push people to make desperate sojourns looking for work” (Chacon and Davis, p. 206).

IV. Summary and Conclusion

There has been no research done in the past comparing Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees in the United States. It was impossible to find research on Yugoslavian refugees who were resettled in Europe or their experiences as the internally displaced population in former Yugoslavia. There were a few studies done on mental health of Yugoslavian refugees, but no comparison of their migratory experience with any other immigrant or refugee group. However, there have been many studies done on Mexican immigrants and for this research, I focused on the changing patterns of Mexican

migration to the United States. There has not been done any research comparing push factors of Mexican migration to other groups, such as Yugoslavians.

I have examined two studies, published in 2001 that follow continuities and changes in the profile of Mexican migration to the United States. The first study was done by Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Rene M. Zenteno, who have used data from Mexico's Encuesta Nacional de la Dinamica Demografica, the U.S. Census, and the Mexican Migration Project from 1970-1992. In Mexican Immigration to the United States: Continuities and Changes (2001), Massey et al. conclude that Mexican migration has been stable. The authors argue that "Mexico-U.S. migration continues to be dominated by the states of Western Mexico, particularly Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacan, and it remains a movement principally of males of labor-age" (p. 107). Massey et al. point out to flaws of their study because Mexico's ENADID (Encuesta Nacional de la Dinamica Demografica) survey was done before major changes in 1990s and it looked at people who were employed, thus leaving non-workers out (minimizing family migration). In addition, the data does not allow researchers to determine whether more immigrants are settling or not in the United States. The authors' use of Mexican Migration Project (MMP), which covered years through 1994, allowed them to include all immigrants, not just labor-force participants, their occupation, and also enabled them to develop estimates of the probability of return migration (p. 120). Even though this study examined Mexican migration from 1970s to 1990s, it is relevant to this research paper because I learned how participants were chosen and what questions were used. For example, the authors examined demographic and social characteristics, such as age,

occupation, and education, of Mexicans who were working in the U.S. from 1970s to 1992, which helped me frame my interview questions.

Enrico A. Marcelli and Wayne A. Cornelius in The Changing Profile of Mexican Migrants to the United States: New Evidence from California and Mexico (2001) challenged Massey et al.'s conclusion, which stated that the demographic profile of Mexican migrants in the United States since 1970 has remained constant. Their data came from four surveys implemented in the Southern California from 1994-1996. Marcelli and Cornelius concluded that "The more recent cohorts of migrants are more likely to settle permanently in the United State, to have higher proportions of females, to be younger, to have more education, to be increasingly likely to originate in southern Mexico and the Mexico-City metropolitan area, and to be increasingly likely to depart from urban areas within Mexico" (p. 105). The authors focus on the "migration-systems approach", which examines economic and political activity in labor-importing countries, concluding that "the immigrant labor has become structurally embedded in the political economies of receiving countries" (pp. 107-108). Even though the scope of my research did not allow me to address economic and political activity in the U.S. in depth, I was able to focus on laws and policies that affect the way immigrants and refugees are legally labeled. Their research allowed me to better understand the changing pattern of Mexican migration and to ask the participants why they left Mexico and if they belonged to a social network that included U.S. born family members or friends.

It is important to research immigration, starting with the sending country, in order to understand how immigrants are incorporated (or not) into the mainstream society of

the receiving country. Massey et al. argue that “Studies consistently show that international migrants do not come from poor, isolated places that are disconnected from world markets, but from regions and nations that are undergoing rapid change and development as a result of their incorporation into global trade, information, and production networks. International migration does not stem from a lack of development but from development itself” (p. 277). U.S. involvement in countries such as Mexico and Yugoslavia produced thousands of economic refugees who are trying to improve their lives. The combination of poverty and lack of prospects for social advancement with complex links with the U.S. have led to the creation of transnational communities, whose ties and relations are hard to break.

U.S. immigration policies have been restrictive to immigrants in the past. These policies confine migrants to exploitative labor markets, limit the entrance of dependants, discourage long-term settlement, and deport those who enter without proper documents. Massey et al. point out problematic U.S. policies, as they write, “Given a disparity between the structural forces and diverse motives driving immigration and the narrow means employed to regulate it, two common policy trends emerge in the developed world: the *convergence* in the policy instruments chosen for immigration control and a widening *gap* between the goals of these instruments and actual immigration outcomes” (p. 288). U.S. immigration policies push immigrants into clandestine existence, easily exploitable and marginalized by the society. Programs such as NAFTA lower barriers for the exchange of goods, capital, materials, while movement of people is limited, which leads to higher numbers of undocumented immigrants. Massey et al. argue that “As long

as the world's powerful, capital-rich economies are incorporated within global trade, information, and production networks; they will tend to receive international migrants" (p. 288). Some of these international migrants could be classified as refugees.

Refugees constitute a group of people, fleeing a crisis, and usually that crisis encompasses wars and conflicts. However, what if we redefine crisis to include poverty, underdevelopment, and unemployment? If Mexican immigrants come to the United States because the American markets and capital are displacing people in their home communities, is that not a crisis? Alex Stepick argues that "The distinction between economic migrants and political refugees is fundamentally an ideological one with important roots in development of the liberal capitalist state. It serves more as rationalization for policy than as an empirical basis for one" (p. 42). Providing shelter for refugees is justified as protecting basic human rights while allowing immigrants to settle in the United States whose lives are not in immediate danger is not seen as valid and important.

Many people live in situations similar to those of refugees, but do not meet the narrow refugee definition. Some are regarded as "illegal aliens" as is the case of Mexicans and other groups in the U.S., while others are ignored and tolerated, as is the case with Yugoslavians. How do we define what environments are dire? Steven Holtzman in Living in Limbo: Conflict-Induced Displacement in Europe and Central Asia (2004) defines poverty as being hungry, lacking shelter and clothing, being sick and cared for, and being illiterate and not schooled...vulnerable to adverse events and being mistreated, excluded, or both by state and societal institutions. The author argues that

poverty includes “not only material deprivation (as measured by income and consumption) but also low achievement in education and health, vulnerability and exposure to risk, and powerlessness (as measured by civil and political liberties)” (p. 2). State and societal institutions that choose not to address issues of poverty by placing those responsibilities on its members need to be aware that one of the only options for survival is to leave the country and seek healthier environments elsewhere.

American political and economic involvement in Yugoslavia and Mexico has created large flows of people across the borders. However, Yugoslavians started arriving much later as the war ended in 1995. Most Yugoslavian refugees emigrated after the war ended, as it was clear to Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian governments that they could not absorb and integrate thousands of refugees. Stagnant poverty and economic recession made Yugoslavian refugees exploitable and marginalized in their home countries. However, if hundreds of thousands of people, such as myself, have left after the fighting stopped, how are we still classified as refugees? Can't Mexican immigrants who come to U.S. for the same reasons as Yugoslavians be granted refugee status? I argue that Mexicans and Yugoslavians have come to the United States to escape economic recession and poverty in their home countries and yet are treated and categorized differently upon their arrival. Interviews with Yugoslavian refugees and Mexican immigrants will enable me to understand why these groups have chosen to leave their homes, families, and friends, especially if latter are marginalized and ostracized from the mainstream society as “illegal aliens.” Interviews will also allow for a comparative assessment of the social circumstances under which these two groups emigrate.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodological Approach and Research

The purpose of this research is to better understand how the immigration laws and policies affect immigrants and refugees in the United States. This research resulted from personal interviews with immigrants and refugees in the East Bay area. I have conducted ten interviews altogether, equally divided between Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees. All immigrants interviewed for this project came to United States between 1996 and 2004. I chose to first interview Mexican immigrants with the premise that it would take more time to find participants and that they would be more resistant to talk to me since I was an outsider. However, it did not take too long to find participants for my project because I was able through my good friend to interview her sister in-law who then introduced me to her friends. All interviews with Mexican immigrants were conducted in English.

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate education, I was fortunate enough to take numerous classes on Mexican migration and I thought that I would be prepared for what the participants were going to share with me. However, I soon realized that it was going to be very difficult to listen to stories that Mexican immigrants shared with me. Their stories of hardship and near-death experiences reminded me of the war years in Yugoslavia, which I had been fighting so hard to forget. I thought that my role in interviews was going to be “objective,” observing and taking notes, and yet, tears kept rolling down my cheeks as I listened to their stories. The characteristics of Mexican immigrants can be summarized as such: two male and three female participants. Laura,

Maria, Noe, Carlos, and Dulce are all undocumented immigrants who have emigrated to United States within the last ten years, except for Laura and her family. Prior to leaving their homeland, all have been employed in Mexico and yet, could not support their families with their meager wages. Their lives and future have been given to coyotes, which organized their trips and led them into the United States.

Yugoslavian participants in this project are four women and one man. These interviews were conducted in Serbian language and I chose to interview Yugoslavian refugees of Serbian Orthodox ethnicity. I did not want to interview any other ethnic group because the war wounds are still fresh and there is still animosity between Serbians, Croatians and Bosnian Muslims. All participants came to United States as refugees in the last eight years, except for Kim, who emigrated as an au-par and is currently undocumented. Two women, Theresa and Rhea are Croatian refugees who were living in refugee camps in Serbia, while the other participants, Kim, Hope, and Damian are Bosnian refugees. All participants decided to leave Serbia and Bosnia because their homes were destroyed and they were living in camps or houses that were not theirs. Economies in Serbia and Bosnia were devastated by the war and refugees were blamed for recession. As these interviews show, Yugoslavian refugees left their homeland in search for better future, thousands of miles away from home.

It was not difficult to find Yugoslavian refugees because every participant knew who I was since our community is very small and connected. It was challenging to interview Yugoslavian refugees as their stories were all too familiar and listening to them meant that I would have to think about home and war wounds that are slowly healing.

Revisiting my troublesome and war-torn country through memories was not something that I wanted to deal with, but I am glad I did. Now I cannot wait to visit my homeland even if it is only for a month.

All interviews were tape recorded and lasted approximately an hour and a half. Before I began interviews, all participants signed a consent form, giving me their permission to use their interviews for this research. The consent form was written in English and Serbian, since interviews were conducted in both languages. This form explained the purpose of my research and how to contact either myself or my advisor in case there were any questions or complaints after the interviews. All participants chose pseudonyms to keep their identities private. During the interviews, I asked participants twelve questions and the main purpose of these was to understand why each person decided to migrate to the United States (Appendix A). Here are some of the sample questions that I used in my interviews:

1. When did you migrate to the United States?
2. Who did you migrate with?
3. How did you migrate to the United States?
4. Have you ever received any help from the official U.S. government or NGOs?

If so, what kind of assistance?

These questions were designed to compare journeys of Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees, whose experiences would appear to be drastically different. However, my interviews show that both groups have left their countries because of economic instability and poverty. These interviews were later transcribed and used only

for the purposes of this research. The following three sections analyze interviews with Mexican immigrants, Yugoslavian refugees, and then compare and contrast their experiences to understand how the U.S. policies have shaped their paths of entry.

I. Interviews with Mexican Immigrants

A. Laura

Laura is a single mother of four children who left Mexico in January of 1996. Her family lived on the outskirts of Mexico City. Laura worked in Mexico City, two hours away on the bus, cleaning business offices and houses to support her family as she was the only provider. She made on average of \$35 a month. When asked why she left Mexico, Laura responded: "Living on \$35 a month was unbearable because my children lacked basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and school materials." While Laura was working, her eldest daughter had to take care of the siblings because the family could not afford a babysitter or daycare for the children. Laura continued her story with tears in her eyes by telling me: "My children never knew when I would be at home since I was working as many jobs as I could to provide for my family and yet, there were days when my children had almost nothing to eat, even my youngest baby. Sometimes I had to feed water to my baby instead of baby formula and my heart broke."

The family left Mexico because of poverty and inability to make ends meet. Laura's sister lived in California at that time and she encouraged the family to migrate by paying for their trip. The family left their home and flew to Tijuana and with the help of the coyote, crossed the border. Coyotes, professional smugglers who transport people by foot or in truck and vans to safe houses or other designated areas, are very expensive and

are known to leave migrants in the desert or in the mountains (Nevins, 2002). Laura and her family were lucky to come to the United States without any problems because they came before Operation Gatekeeper. However, when Laura's brother died in 2002, she decided to go home for the funeral and almost died crossing the border.

Laura's second trip took her back to the border in December of 2002 and she vividly remembers the rain and unbearable cold as she and ten other migrants embarked on a trip to reunite with their families in the United States. Laura remembers that after eighteen hours of walking, being robbed, and cold, Laura arrived to Arizona and was later driven to California. She further narrates: "I thought I would freeze to death and I wanted to give up, but I knew that my children would be all alone in Oakland and I had to fight for them; for a chance of a better future." For that reason, Laura tells me, "My family and I are never going back to Mexico, unless we legalize our status." Laura cannot imagine putting her children through the nightmare of crossing the border and for now, undocumented entry with the help of a coyote is their only way. Laura also told me that she would never return to Mexico until the economy improves, even though she is currently unemployed due to a work-related injury. When Laura fell down at work, she did not have medical insurance, but her employer was generous enough to pay for her expenses. However, Laura tells me, "After I got better, my employer did not want to hire me back, saying that there was not enough work for me." Laura realized that she became a liability for her employer who will not re-hire her, and yet, there is nothing she can do as she does not exist as a person in the United States. She is undocumented and invisible to laws and policies that protect workers from exploitation and ill-treatment.

Laura and her family do not have medical coverage except for her eldest daughter who has Emergency Medical, which can only be used for emergencies. Another difficulty, in Laura's words is that "No one in the family has a driver's license and we have to depend on others to drive us around. Sometimes I feel like we are a burden on our friends and families." Even though their undocumented status limits them in many ways, such as inability to find better paid jobs (or any jobs) or have access to medical insurance, the family feels that returning to Mexico would be worse. They are afraid that their country would not recognize them as Mexicans anymore, but as strangers. In addition, Laura is optimistic that "Maybe one day my family can become residents and my children can get better education." She feels that there are many opportunities in the U.S., but she first needs to obtain proper documentation in order to be treated equally and recognized as a human being.

B. Maria and Noe

Maria and Noe are a married couple, in their mid and late twenties. Noe was the first one to leave Mexico in 2000 and Maria followed a year later. Noe left because he had family and friends in the U.S. who promised that he would be able to find work, and even send money to his family. Noe explains: "I wanted to provide for my wife and our child, but I did not realize how hard it would be to enter the United States and find a well-paid job." Noe's group consisted of fifty to sixty Mexican migrants who were hopeful about their future in America. All of them wanted to start a new life in the United States, a life that promised good jobs, education to children, and healthcare that many migrants could not access in Mexico. However, their first attempt to cross the border was

unsuccessful because the border patrol caught the group in Arizona. According to Noe, “The agents were nice and offered us water and food as the temperature was in high nineties.” After they were released and taken back to Mexico, the coyote organized the trip once again and they hoped that this time would be successful. Noe’s second group consisted of approximately twenty people: four of whom were women and three of whom were children. “We had to sleep in the mountain”, Noe told me, “and we walked at night in order to escape the watchful eyes of the border agents.” Noe and his countrymen walked in the desert for two days, ran over the freeway, walked through old water pipes, and climbed barbed wire. He remembers the extreme cold at night and scorching heat during the day. After five days of traveling from Mexico to the United States, only four people out of twenty arrived to Arizona. Others who did not make it were left in the desert for the border patrol to pick up and deport back to Mexico.

I asked Noe how he made it through the desert and he simply replied: “My family and thinking about future gave me strength to walk through the harsh conditions and I knew I had to fight for all of us.” He knew why he was walking and that the life in America would potentially bring him security and stability, not just for himself, but his family as well. Noe further explains his journey: “My first stop was Indiana, where I worked for six months in the fields, barely making ends meet.” His next job was in a factory and after a few months, he was fired because he did not have legal papers. Noe then moved to North Carolina, wanting a better paid job, which he found in construction. After six months, Noe tells me, “I finally moved to California and I knew that I would be unemployed for a brief period of time.” Noe lived in his car, which was not insured and

since he did not possess a valid U.S. license, his life was that of a shadow, only visible at night. “I missed my family and could not get in touch with them because I did not have any money.” “I let them down”, Noe repeated several times during our interview. Since he was not sending money to Maria and their child, Noe felt like he failed his family. Finally, through friends Noe was able to find a job in a factory that makes electronics and is now a lead supervisor. With that stable income, Noe was able to afford to bring his wife and their child in 2001.

Maria came to the United States in 2001. She was making \$80 per month working in a restaurant and was living with her in-laws to make her ends meet. Her husband, Noe, was not helping much and sent money only three times in a year as he was having problems keeping a job due to his undocumented status. Maria’s sister lent her money to pay a coyote, who then drove Maria and her son through the border. “I came to California to reunite with my husband. I was tired of raising our son alone.” Finding work in the Bay Area was not an easy task for Maria. She was cleaning houses with her sister, but that was only once a week. Maria explains her work situation by telling me: “Without papers it is impossible for me to find any work other than clean houses, which does not provide much income to support our growing family.” Noe and Maria welcomed another son in 2003 and the family mainly relies on the husband’s income.

Like many migrants, Maria went back to Mexico to visit family in 2006. Her group was caught twice before they made it through the desert into Arizona. “I had to come back because my children and husband were anxiously waiting for my arrival.” Maria knew she had to come even if it took her several times to cross the border because

her family needed her. Maria, like all participants in this research, reports that she wants to settle permanently in the United States because of better opportunities and ability to educate her children. Even though she does not have access to a driver's license, medical insurance, and does not speak English fluently, "Going back is not an option for our family." However, Noe is more worried about their future in the United States. He stated: "I am tired of being a second-class citizen and labeled as an illegal alien. Every time I drive somewhere, I have to look over my shoulder fearing that the police will pull me over." In addition, he cannot keep a job once his employers realize that he does not have proper documents.

Noe, like Maria, went back to Mexico to visit his family. His father's health was ailing and he went to visit him before he passed away in 2004. The trip of coming back was something that Noe does not wish to remember. His second trip made him realize that he will never try to cross the border again. Going back to visit his family was an eye opening experience for Noe. "Going back to Mexico is not an option anymore as I saw how unstable my country has become." Noe claims that drugs and unemployment have created instability that was non-existent when he was living in Mexico. His children have access to better education in California and Noe is afraid that would not be possible in Mexico. Maria and Noe's life is a constant fight to survive in a country that does not recognize them as citizens. They have both experienced discrimination in the United States, for example, while shopping or looking for apartments. "I know that I have an accent, but that does not mean that I cannot communicate while shopping, and clerks often pretend that they cannot understand us", claims Maria. Their inability to fluently

converse in English and their accent makes them easy targets. “We are sometimes treated as though we are children because we cannot speak English fluently”, Noe explains. Even though their life in the United States is a constant battle, Maria and Noe agree that they have made a good decision to leave Mexico and settle in California, at least for the future of their children. Their children are fluent in English and Spanish, and know little about life in Mexico.

C. Carlos

Carlos is twenty three years old. He came to United States from Acapulco, Guerrero, in July of 2005. He was employed full time working in a Corona factory. Carlos worked in the fridge and distribution, which was difficult and hazardous, due to freezing temperatures. Even though he was financially stable at that specific moment, Carlos was not sure about the future. This type of work one could not do for an extended period of time. His sister, who has been living in California for some time now, had sent him money to pay the coyote. Carlos explained: “My experience of crossing the border is something that I will never forget and would never try to do again.” “I crossed the border through Arizona desert and my group had to walk at night because the border agents patrolled more during the day.” Carlos and his group rested in heat and traveled at night which was very exhausting. Carlos further describes his trip by saying that “There was not enough water and the food was scarce as well. After a few days of walking in the heat and running across the freeway at night, we finally arrived to Phoenix, Arizona.” From Phoenix, his group traveled to California and Carlos rode in a trunk for several hours, thinking: “What if I suffocate or fall asleep, never waking up?”

Crossing into the United States has not been easy for Carlos and he is afraid to do it again. He has every right to worry as he has seen people faint and heard stories of migrants dying in the mountains. Upon his arrival, Carlos found work at a local restaurant, working as a cook in a wealthy neighborhood. He currently wants to find another job because he is being mistreated at work by his Mexican manager, but knows that it will be difficult to find work without connections. He explains: "I don't have proper documents, which prevents me to find a better paid job that has medical coverage and maybe even better working hours." Carlos lives with his roommates in downtown Oakland and has been robbed once already, but cannot afford to find a better place. "I am afraid of driving because some of my friends and coworkers have been stopped by the police late at night while driving from work and their cars were repossessed." Carlos cannot commute to work or buy groceries without a car and every day he drives, he risks being arrested and deported. For those reasons, he wants to earn enough money to go home and maybe even buy a house.

The dream of going back is very alive for many immigrants. I still believe that maybe one day I can go home, but I am afraid that as time goes by, that dream is fading away. I know that it will take decades before former Yugoslavian republics are able to function at pre-war standards and by the time it happens, it might be too late for me to move back. The same might be true for Mexico. It takes years before a country is able to offer jobs to millions of unemployed and improve education and healthcare, to name just a few items.

D. Dulce

Dulce came to California from Hidalgo in 2005 when she was twenty two years old. Her economic circumstances were not that different from other participants in my study. “I was the primary breadwinner in my family and we were living on a ranch, which provided basic necessities, such as milk and eggs.” Dulce commuted two hours to Mexico City every day to baby-sit for a wealthy family. “Traveling every day to support my family was difficult” claims Dulce, “and I wanted to try my luck in California.” Dulce did not have any family in the United States, but her friends from Hidalgo who were in California, urged her to come for a visit, telling her that it would be possible to find work as soon as she arrived. Dulce flew to Sonora where she stayed in a “safe house” with other hopeful migrants waiting to begin her trip. Dulce was traveling with three other migrants, ages 11, 17, and 18. The coyote tried to find green cards so they could all drive through the border because he was afraid that the youngest migrant would not be able to walk in the desert. When the coyote could not buy green cards, they were forced to walk instead.

There were fifteen or so migrants in Dulce’s group and the youngest was a baby, two or three years old, constantly carried by her mother. Their first attempt was unsuccessful as the border patrol caught them waiting on top of a hill. Dulce said that the border agents were compassionate, giving them water and later driving them back to Nogales. Their second attempt took Dulce to the desert and they had to run for ten minutes, then walk, run again, then walk, and so on for several hours. Finally, they made

it across the border and after five days of traveling from Hidalgo, Dulce was in the United States.

Once Dulce was reunited with her friends in the Bay Area, she started working the next day in a Chinese restaurant, washing dishes and preparing food for \$5 an hour. She worked from 10:30am until 9:30pm, with a two hour break in between. Dulce spent most of her time at work and was hardly making any money. After realizing that it is impossible to live on \$5 an hour, pay rent and bills, Dulce found work in the service sector again, and is currently working at a local restaurant, preparing salads. Dulce and Noe met at work and now live together. Dulce does not drive because she is afraid of the police. "I do not have medical insurance and I know that I could get a better paid job, but without proper documentation, I am afraid to look for a job elsewhere." Her current manager is exploiting Dulce and others like her because of their undocumented status. For instance, Dulce explains, "We are constantly given more work and late night shifts than other workers that are residents or citizens of the United States." Their manager also came to the U.S. without documents from Mexico, but through marriage became a citizen. She knows what it means to live in hiding and work for mere wages, and yet she exploits and demeans her co-workers and countrymen.

Living without documents is not an easy life for Dulce or any other participants in this study. Dulce still wonders if she has made the right decision to come to the U.S. She misses her family and cannot stand being treated differently because of her status or her accent. Dulce is afraid of raids as she has seen some of her acquaintances being deported. Every time she sees police officers, she is wondering if they will arrest and

deport her empty handed. For Dulce, that is not a way anyone should live, especially someone who participates in the economy and contributes to the society.

II. Analysis

The participants in my study have left Mexico because of economic instability. All of them were employed at departure time, but the money they were making was not enough to support their families. They found employment by cleaning offices and homes of wealthy, or working for Corona. Most participants had long commutes to find work and their children were left in the care of older siblings or, in Dulce's case, she was the sole provider of her family, providing food, clothes, and other necessities for her parents and siblings. Every single participant had either family members or close friends in California who were able to tell them about employment opportunities and education. Once Mexican migrants came to the Bay Area, they found work in restaurants, cleaning homes, and in factories, which all provided stable income. Contacts with immigrants create networks, which proved to be one of the most important factors, along with economics, in deciding to migrate to the United States. Even militarization of the border and restrictive immigration laws do not prevent migrants from coming to the United States. Networks are important because they establish word of mouth communication between Mexico and United States, where new immigrants, such as Dulce and Carlos, learn about cities to travel to, jobs, housing, and cost of living.

Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey in Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project (2004) discuss continuities and changes in Mexican migration since 1987. The authors' analysis points out that Mexican migrants continue to belong to

the working-class; mainly made up of agricultural, unskilled, and semi-skilled laborers, which is the case with my respondents (p.123). If migrants are displaced from their work by development and know that they can find better paid jobs in the U.S., why would they stay in Mexico and suffer? Once they arrive in the U.S., migrants tend to stay longer because of the border build-up. More undocumented migrants, such as Noe, are staying in the U.S. to avoid rising costs and risks of border crossing. For example, when Noe first came to California in 2000, his coyote fee was \$1300 and for his second trip in 2004, he had to pay \$1800. Wayne Cornelius, in Death at the Border: Efficacy and Unintended Consequences of U.S. Immigration Control Policy (2001), notes: “By making it more costly and difficult to gain entry illegally, the U.S. government has strengthened the incentives for permanent settlement in the United States. Thus, it is possible that the current strategy of border enforcement is keeping more unauthorized immigrants in the United States than it is keeping out” (p. 669). And when combined with strenuous and dangerous experience of crossing the border, no wonder many immigrants are choosing to settle permanently in United States.

Immigrant deaths have gone up drastically after the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper and other similar border enforcement policies. From 1994 through 2001, there have been approximately 1,700 deaths reported to the Mexican Consulate along the U.S.-Mexico border (Cornelius, 2001, p. 669). However, these numbers do not include the deaths of people whose bodies have never been discovered; deaths of hundreds of immigrants are still unknown. Mexican immigrants who have been interviewed in my study have all crossed the border without proper documentation. They have all witnessed

first hand what it means to run and/or walk for days to be able to call the United States their home. However, the participants have all been lucky enough to survive their trips as there are hundreds of those who have not. Border enforcement has not succeeded since that would be reflected in fewer undocumented immigrants employed in sectors such as agriculture where Noe worked, or the service sector where Laura and Dulce work. Through networks, immigrants learn about different opportunities available to them in the United States, opportunities that are non-existent in Mexico. For those reasons, as Dulce and Carlos have experienced, migrants try to enter the country until they succeed, no matter how long it takes them. As Cornelius (2001) predicts, “There is a clear potential for much greater loss of life at the border, if a sustained downturn in Mexico’s economic performance were to compel larger numbers of *economic refugees* to join the flow of Mexicans migrating for reasons of economic improvement or family reunification” (p. 680).

III. Interviews with Yugoslavian Refugees

A. Theresa

Theresa came to the United States with her husband and two children in September of 1998. The family was living in Kosovo, Serbia and applied to leave the country in early 1998. Theresa explains: “My husband and I had to go through multiple interviews with the UN refugee organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We had to explain why we wanted to leave as our main concern was the economic instability and lack of belonging.” Theresa explained how her family, as well as other Croatian and Bosnian refugees living in Serbia were seen as strangers

because they belonged to a different ethnic group and spoke in a different dialect. The family was expelled from their home in Croatia in 1995 and had to move from one refugee camp to another. “Living with hundreds of other people was difficult”, Theresa said, “but that was the only way my husband and I could provide food and shelter for our family. We would be homeless otherwise.” Jobs were scarce and refugees were blamed for unemployment in Serbia. Theresa and David could not find any work except working on farms or construction, which did not pay enough to support their family. Living in Serbia was challenging for the whole family as Serbians viewed and treated all refugees as second class citizens. Theresa explained how her children were treated in school: “My younger daughter was told several times how to speak ‘properly’, which meant in Serbian dialect, rather than in Croatian. On another occasion, my children were not ‘understood’ in grocery stores when they went to buy bread, even though the language is the same. My children were humiliated and were ashamed of their dialect.” Theresa knew that she could no longer stay in Serbia because her children would not be able to get higher education and succeed in life. “Even if they enrolled in a university,” Theresa said, “we could never afford to pay tuition and dorms for two children. David and I could never send one child to school while the other one stayed behind.” Without any work, Theresa and David could not offer much to their children, and they decided to apply to leave Serbia as refugees.

Making the decision to leave Serbia and Yugoslavia was not easy. However, Theresa and David wanted to provide stability and education for their children and they knew that it would take years before Serbia was stable and more developed. The family

had to move from Serbia to Kosovo in 1997 because Kosovo offered work for Theresa and David in the Trepca mine. Theresa worked as an accountant and David worked as a forklift driver in the mine. Living in Kosovo was not that different from Serbia and the family was struggling to survive, even though both parents were working. Theresa wanted to leave Serbia and Kosovo and move to the United States to start a new life, knowing well how difficult it would be because of the language barrier.

Theresa and her family came to the United States as refugees and were able to get Medical services and enroll in English learning classes. “Both David and I were employed within two months of our arrival because we had to support our family”, Theresa said. Theresa started working in Office Depot while her husband worked as a helper in a computer company. Since then, Theresa and David have found great jobs that are stable and offer health care benefits, something that was lacking in Serbia. Their children were able to graduate from high school and universities and are building their own future. When I asked Theresa if she would ever return to Serbia and former Yugoslavia, she said she would not. She is afraid of being mistreated and unemployed as economic instability has hit Yugoslavia hard (Parenti, 2000). Theresa does not regret leaving Serbia because her children are happy and have a better future. She understands too, that their refugee status helped them settle and become American citizens.

B. Rhea

Rhea, her husband (they have been separated since early 1990s), and their two children migrated to Oakland in February of 2002. The family lived in a refugee camp in Montenegro from 1995 to 2002. Like many other refugees in former Yugoslavia, Rhea

had to depend on local government to provide food and clothes for her family. Finding work was almost impossible as locals treated refugees as “others”, blaming them for sleeping in stadiums that have been turned into refugee camps, or seeing them begging on the streets. Rhea found work in the local flea market, selling products for others and finally saving money to start her own market stand. “My husband and I have separated in early 1990s when war started and he did not provide money or food for our children” Rhea explained. She further added: “I was the only one taking care of my children and it was difficult.” In addition, her children were made to feel as outsiders. They were corrected when they spoke in their native, Croatian dialect and had to adapt to the Montenegrin way of speaking. How ethnicities relate to each other and clash in former Yugoslavia complicates our U.S. Ethnic Studies. Ethnicities in United States are often “racially identified-their identities are racially constructed-by processes far more profound than mere state policy formation” (Omi and Winant, 1994, p. 23). However, ethnic groups in former Yugoslavia are divided by religion and various dialects, as for example, my family is Croatian Orthodox (Croatian Serb) compared to Croatian Catholics (just Croatian) or Croatian Muslim (Croatian Bosnian).

Rhea remembers her children, especially her older daughter, asking for clothes and money to go to concerts. On several occasions Rhea said: “I would lay awake at night, thinking how I failed my children and wondered if there was anything that I could do to make more money. I would always conclude that my only choice was stealing and I refused to do that.” Making ends meet was not the way that Rhea wanted to live and as a result, she applied in Belgrade to leave the country, together with her family as

refugees. Rhea defended her decision of leaving the country by saying: “I did not want to live in a refugee camp forever and yet I could not afford to rent an apartment so what else could I have done but to try and leave the country and try our luck elsewhere?”

Consulting with her children and estranged husband, the family decided to accept the offer and settle in California.

Coming to the United States, Rhea and her family lived in Oakland with their relatives and a few months later, moved to San Leandro on their own. Both Rhea and her estranged husband enrolled in English learning classes, while the children started middle and elementary schools. As refugees, Rhea explained, “My family and I were able to qualify for welfare benefits for two and a half years and Medical benefits for three and a half years.” Without government help, Rhea and her family would not have been able to survive in the United States on their own and they are grateful for the assistance they have received. When asked if she would go back with her family, Rhea firmly said, “No.” Rhea is currently working as a supervisor and is going to a community college to get an AA degree. She is optimistic that she can succeed in the United States and knows that her dreams are becoming reality. Her daughter is attending a well respected university and her son is graduating from high school. Rhea knows that life in Montenegro would be different for her family and is proud that she was able to provide stability and education for her children.

C. Kim

Kim came to New York in 2003 as a nanny from Belgrade, Serbia. She was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and left her home during the war and re-settled with her family in

Bijeljina, Bosnia. Kim's parents tried their best to support the family since her father was the only one employed. Finding work in Bosnia was more difficult than in Serbia since that part of former Yugoslavia was especially destroyed during the civil war. After graduating from high school, Kim decided to get a degree in physical therapy in Belgrade. Going to school in another republic was not easy for Kim. Her dialect gave it away that she was a refugee like thousands of others living in Serbia. It was also difficult to find work because she was in her late teens and early twenties and there were plenty of other unemployed workers with more skills and experience. The only type of work that Kim was able to find was bartending. Kim explained: "I felt guilty asking my parents to give me money for rent and tuition because I knew how they were struggling on their own in Bosnia."

Being a student in Serbia allowed Kim to be around students who even after getting a degree in political science or economics were unemployed for years. Kim said: "Some former students, desperate for employment, found work in restaurants, coffee shops, and stores, and I knew that my degree would be worthless as well if I stayed in Serbia." When I asked Kim how she made the decision to leave the country all she replied was "very easy." The look on her face said it all; she was thinking about future, just like many immigrants and refugees that I know. Her contract and visa to stay in the United States were only for a year and Kim was hoping that she could learn English and make some money for herself so she would not have to depend on her family. However, when she came to New York, later Chicago, Philadelphia, and finally San Mateo, Kim realized that she could not continue to be a live-in nanny if she wanted to earn and save

money. Kim's work as a nanny never ended because she lived in the same house where she worked, therefore being on call twenty four hours every day. Kim realized her exploited status and was overwhelmed by living with the American family and wanted to leave her job. Kim adds: "I also realized how lonely and scared I felt most of the time, having no one to talk to, except for two children that I was taking care of."

Kim decided to leave her job when she met her boyfriend, who proposed in 2004. The couple fell in love and wanted to get married as soon as possible because Kim's visa and contract were expiring. However, Kim's husband, Sal, who came to United States in 1998 as a refugee from Yugoslavia, is not a citizen due to legal problems and is currently trying to become one, so she can then legalize her status. Kim has been living in the United States for almost three years now without any documents. She is currently unemployed and her husband is the only one supporting their family, which now includes an eighteen month old son. Kim has expressed her frustration on several occasions by saying: "I am tired of being constantly broke. I argue with my husband when we do not have money and our relationship suffers because of that." Her husband works as hard as he can to make ends meet and sometimes they have to borrow money from their friends and family. They are going to stay in the United States for another year or two, to try and get Kim's papers legalized, and if they do not succeed, they will return to Serbia or Bosnia. Kim is homesick, misses her family, and cannot stand being unemployed. However, Kim and her husband are optimistic that she can get an asylum and are trying to save money to afford an attorney. Kim concluded the interview by saying: "We are going to stay in the country as long as we can because our son deserves an education and

a chance to live a healthy and stable life, something that is currently impossible in former Yugoslavia.”

D. Hope and Damian

Hope and Damian are an older couple, in their mid fifties. They emigrated to United States in June of 1998, with their son, daughter, and son in-law. The family was re-settled in Bijeljina, Bosnia ever since leaving their home in central Bosnia in 1993. The family found a new home living in a deserted Muslim house on the outskirts of town. Hope and Damian explained why they wanted to leave: “We never felt at home living in a house that did not belong to us and we worried that we would be expelled when the original owners returned.” Living in a deserted house was a practice that many refugees upheld as they would otherwise be homeless. They knew that once the real owners returned, they would have to move out and would be homeless. Hope was a stay-at home mom her whole life until the war started. Once the family moved to Bijeljina, it became clear that Damian could not support their family on his own. Even though he found work easily through his acquaintances, the pay was never on time. By the time he got paid, the inflation would take its toll and the money was worthless. Hope found work as a cook in a local restaurant as her cooking skills, I have come to learn, are amazing.

Hope and Damian were both employed and they could hardly afford to buy clothes or school supplies for their high school children. Their life was especially difficult when Damian was in the army, which meant that Hope was the only one employed and providing for their children. When their older daughter decided to attend a local college and get a degree in international economics, Hope and Damian knew that

they would have to support her. Their daughter graduated from college in two years and was unable to find work. She worked in a bakery and in a night club to alleviate monetary problems that her family had. The hardest thing for their daughter was to realize that her degree meant very little in a war-torn Bosnia. When I asked Hope and Damian why they left Bijeljina, they told me a very familiar story by now: “There was no future for us there anymore.” The decision to leave Bosnia, their home of more than forty years, was difficult, but Hope and Damian knew that their lives would never be the same if they stayed. Working without pay or being paid three or four months late was not something the family appreciated. They added: “Seeing our daughter graduate with a degree and unable to find work broke our hearts. We decided together as a family to apply through UNHCR to leave the country.”

Hope and Damian came to San Francisco in 1998, influenced by Damian’s brother who settled here in 1997. They found work immediately because they wanted to find an apartment outside of expensive San Francisco and later moved to San Leandro. Hope found work as a cook and Damian works as a welder. They were fortunate to find employment in fields that were familiar to them and were able to start a new life with their children. Hope and Damian have never accepted government help primarily because of Damian’s brother and because they were able to find work so quickly. Hope and Damian have gone back to visit twice and tell me that they would never go back permanently. They consider their life in California successful since they have stable jobs and were able to purchase a condominium. Hope and Damian are proud to see their children live on their own, knowing well that emotional and physical well being would be

impossible for them in Yugoslavia. “Living in poverty and uncertainty was something that we did not want to accept at home,” Hope and Damian concluded. Learning about the possibilities and advantages that the United States has to offer, Hope and Damian are certain that they have made the right decision.

IV. Analysis

Yugoslavian refugees that have participated in my study have left their homes because of lack of employment, crowded refugee camps, lack of education, and inability to imagine their future in a war-torn country. These people were treated as outsiders in Serbia and Montenegro, as their accents and dialects screamed “strangers.” Children were “corrected” in schools and educated how to speak properly. Refugees that lived in camps, such as Rhea and Theresa, had to share living space with hundreds of other people, who until recently were strangers. Living in small spaces, without privacy proved to be difficult for many refugees and they tried to leave their camps.

Many refugees were unable to find work as the economies of Serbia and Bosnia were suffering due to war. The only type of employment found was occasional work, digging canals or picking plums. Some refugees, such as Theresa, decided to move to Kosovo in order to find work because she knew that otherwise, she would never be able to afford basic necessities for her children. Yugoslavian refugees who have stayed in camps, such as Rhea, have stood, on many occasions, in long lines in front of the Red Cross, waiting to be handed out whatever they needed. Fighting over clothes and shoes that were donated to refugees was a daily sight and also a reminder of a co-dependent existence. Inability to find jobs and therefore being dependent on the Red Cross for food

and shelter became the norm for many refugees. Even though some refugees were able to find stable jobs, such as Damian, their pay was two or three months late, leaving them without any money and unable to qualify for Red Cross donations.

The decision to leave Serbia, Bosnia, and Montenegro was not difficult for any refugee interviewed for this project. Everyone agreed that staying in their current homes would not be sufficient. They could not even imagine their future staying in former Yugoslavia. All refugees had to interview with the UNHCR in Belgrade and describe their living situation and why they wanted to leave the country. All of them were successful the first time they applied and were granted refugee status in the United States. Upon their arrival, Yugoslavian refugees were able to enroll in English learning classes, and sign up for Medical benefits and welfare. Without government assistance, some refugees, such as Rhea would not be able to survive on their own. All participants agree that they have made the right decision to leave their homes, and even though they miss their country, they would never go back permanently. They understand that it will take years before the country is rebuilt and can function properly, without corruption and rampant crime. All respondents, except Kim, are residents and/or citizens and are likely to retire in the United States, only visiting their homeland occasionally.

V. Economic Refugees

Francis Gabor and John Rosenquest in The Unsettled Status of Economic Refugees from the American and International Legal Perspectives-A Proposal for Recognition Under Existing International Law (2006) examine what it means to be an economic refugee. The authors claim that the legal status of economic refugees, “the

subclass of economic immigrants who emigrate to permanently escape economic oppression” has been unsettled in American and international laws and policies (p. 276). The authors contrast economic refugees to political refugee by explaining that economic refugees “frequently face many of the same threats, such as death, terror, torture, or starvation as a result of governmental or guerilla activities” (p. 277). Mexican immigrants, who die crossing the border every day, face starvation in their country and the government is refusing to do anything about it. Mexican immigrants live in intolerable conditions, which induce them to leave Mexico and settle in the United States. There are currently no laws or policies in the United States that include legal entry as economic refugees, thus turning these people into illegals, aliens, and wetbacks. The authors agree that the U.S. immigration laws need to be examined “as economic oppression has not been recognized as a basis for refugee status” (p. 278).

The participants in my study come from different continents, but their stories are similar. Mexican immigrants leave their country because they cannot survive on low wages and sporadic employment. Some participants work long hours and their children take care of one another while the parents are at work. Mexican immigrants depend on every peso they make and cannot plan for the future as the priority is day to day survival. The same can be said for Yugoslavian refugees, who have no access to work and have to depend on NGOs for food and shelter. Economic starvation plagues both countries, and only one group of people has been legally recognized as refugees. Economic refugees are the largest group of immigrants in the world and are not recognized in the eyes of nations. Many immigrants leave their homes because they have to and enter Western

countries, such as the United States, England, and France, without proper documents and are labeled illegals. Gabor and Rosenquest make an important note that the Declaration of Human Rights grants *all* people the right to seek asylum in other countries (p. 275). Any person should be able to seek asylum regardless whether they are fleeing wars or poverty because either way, their lives are in danger and can lead to premature death.

All people, regardless of where they come from should have rights to economic welfare, not just political refugees. Articles 55 and 56 in the United Charter outline these rights : (1) “Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; (2) Solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems; and international cultural and educational co-operations and; (3) Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion (Gabor and Rosenquest, p. 283). The U.S. refugee laws and policies hardly ever take into consideration employment or standard of living when declaring a group of people refugees. Genocide, war, and other types of persecution guarantee some refugees (not all, as seen in the case of refugees from Nicaragua and Guatemala) shelter in the United States. However, economic oppression is hardly ever considered a human rights violation and millions of people are left to suffer in their home countries, such as Rwanda.

Gabor and Rosenquest make another excellent claim that immigrants should be granted an economic refugee status “if the affected individual has a well-founded fear that an entire generation will be deprived of basic economic, social, and cultural human rights in the individual’s home country” (p. 283). The authors suggest that if immigrants

can reasonably demonstrate that the economic situation will not dramatically improve during his/her generation, then they should be protected as economic refugees. I believe that Yugoslavian refugees have proven that the economic situation will not improve in any of the republics of former Yugoslavia (now independent countries) anytime soon. What the war did not destroy, the NATO did and rebuilding of the infrastructure will take decades and most of us will not be alive to witness it. Even though Mexico was not destroyed by the war or NATO's air-strikes, the people are suffering in a similar manner as Yugoslavians. Hunger, lack of education and healthcare has the same consequences no matter where we live. If suffering can be prevented then it should be, because we all as human beings have the right to safe and stable environments.

The right to work and earn a decent livelihood is a fundamental right that is taken for granted in many developed countries. Gabor and Rosenquest agree that each government should provide technical training and vocational guidance programs in order to encourage economic stability and create access to paid and regular employment. However, many countries that are in the process of development do not have time to offer such trainings and only focus on immediate needs of the workers, rather than the long term solutions. For those reasons, the authors argue that an individual could be classified as an economic migrant if: "(1) The gross and persistent violation of an economic right, for instance, abuse of equal pay and working conditions; (2) A hardship and a great detriment resulting from the deprivation of the economic human right; (3) A reasonable and well-founded expectation that this particular deprivation will not abate during the individual's lifetime" (p. 284). Therefore, if economic migrants are constantly deprived

of fair wages and their quality of life is undermined by lack of employment, Western countries and the UN should offer legal protection and refugee status to a certain class of economic immigrants.

Shrinking employment practices in Yugoslavia and Mexico have created enormous numbers of unemployed who leave their homes in search of a better future. However, as Gabor and Rosenquest point out, “U.S. immigration legislation pays little attention to the root sources of refugee flows, which involve economic oppression as frequently as they involve persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, group membership, or political activity” (p. 285). As the case is with Mexico, globalization and free movement of goods (i.e., NAFTA) has led to increased movement of workers who are treated as economic migrants, rather than displaced and vulnerable economic refugees. The United States, the country that calls itself an immigrant haven, refuses to accept and legalize millions of economic refugees already settled in the country. And what is even more alarming, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, many politicians and the general population have come to view the immigration debate as a security concern, rather than labor or humanitarian.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion and Future Research

Yugoslavian and Mexican immigrants in the United States have left their homes because of their inability to provide a stable and secure future for themselves and their families. Commuting long hours to Mexico City to clean houses and unable to see her children for days at a time, as was the case with Laura, was not something that any parent should accept as their future, especially if it is preventable. Or not being able to provide food and being dependent on the Red Cross the way my family was, is also not the way people should live in the twenty-first century. Mexican immigrants and Yugoslavian refugees in my interviews share similar reasons for leaving their homes: inability to find work, low wages, dangerous and unhealthy work conditions, and no opportunity for promotion. These groups of people find themselves vulnerable to exploitation and long hours of work, leaving their families unprotected and in need for support. However, Yugoslavian immigrants have been recognized as refugees, in need of legal protection, while Mexican immigrants are seen as economic migrants. The difference is enormous, as Mexican immigrants are scapegoated as “illegals” and “wetbacks” and have no access to state and federal sponsored programs, such as welfare and health insurance. Politicians and the general population have asked many times for the removal and expulsion of all undocumented Mexicans, without being aware of their situation and hardships that they face in the home country. Moreover, the United States has played an important role in creating and/or exacerbating the very circumstances, economic and political in particular, which lead to Yugoslavian and Mexican immigration.

Most Yugoslavian refugees have lost everything they have owned in the Balkan war, but many of us had to stay in the former Yugoslavia and fight for our lives because we had no other choice. My family and I left Serbia in 1998, three years after the war ended, and we came to the U.S. because the future looked grim at home and my parents were tired of living one day at a time. There is nothing wrong with wanting a better future for ourselves and our families and we should not be ashamed of that. Why should some children walk miles to school, without proper coats and shoes, go hungry for days, when Western countries can alleviate such problems? Many Americans view Mexican immigrants as hordes of people trying to take over America, calling for tighter border control, without realizing that Mexican immigrants have become important workers in the U.S. economy (Santa Ana, Nevins).

There has been very little research done on economic refugees, but this idea needs to be further explored because it is central to inclusion of all immigrants in the United States and around the world. People will continue to be displaced by globalization and development, and countries such as the United States need to accept those people as economic refugees, the same way political refugees are accepted. It should not be allowed that countries such as the United States, exploit its undocumented workers while blaming them for higher rates of unemployment or budget deficits. Constant stagnation and hunger should qualify people as economic refugees, the same way political or religious persecution is central to qualifications of political refugees. More research should be done on specific guidelines on who qualifies as an economic refugee. Legislators should pay more attention to the root sources of refugee flows so that we can

be able to study certain patterns and extend our help to such people and countries. We should address the issue of economic refugees within the United States immediately because there are millions of undocumented immigrants, many of them being exploited and in need of government resources and protection.

The next step in my research is to compare economic refugees in Germany or France. Both of these countries are currently battling immigrant “problems” by making it more difficult to become citizens and deporting undocumented immigrants. I want to compare how Europeans view immigrants and refugees and if economic refugees are more accepted than in the United States. I want to focus on how race plays an important and specific role in accepting immigrants and refugees as lawful and valid, while others are rejected as frauds and denied safety. More research should be done on economic refugees as this is the only way to pave the road for inclusion of all refugees, whether they are fleeing political persecution or economic instability. The processing of refugees has historically been problematic and we should make sure that in the future all people are safe and protected, regardless of where they are from. There should be no children dying of thirst and hunger, particularly when entities within and actions on the part of the United States contribute to their suffering. The United States can continue its local and isolated attempts to stave off the human flow of economic refugees, or it can join comprehensive global efforts at reordering economic priorities so that poor and developing countries, which are the source of undocumented immigration, will be able to sustain the poor in their own home countries, thus sparing them and the world their sad odyssey across the global landscape. Global peace and prosperity is what we all should

strive for and for now, I am hopeful that the future will be brighter for all of us. The journey for immigrant and refugee rights has been evolving for many years and I know that we can all make a difference together to end needless suffering and death at the U.S.-Mexican border and around many similar borders around the world.

In this research project, I attempted to analyze why Mexican immigrants are labeled as economic immigrants and not as economic refugees. As I have examined the very complex U.S.-Mexico relations, both countries depend on each other. The U.S. investment practices, such as NAFTA have affected Mexican workers who leave their country looking for work closer, sometimes at the border in maquiladoras, and eventually crossing into the United States. In addition, Mexican government benefits from its own workers in the U.S. because they are not unemployed in Mexico and are able to send remittances to their home country. Mexican workers in the U.S. are viewed as disposable objects; their labor is needed while they are, as unequal members, ostracized from the society. Increased Mexican migration has created xenophobic and nativist arguments in which immigrants, especially undocumented, are seen as threatening and are exposed to exploitation and racism. As long as the American government requires cheap, reliable labor, we will see continued influx of Mexican immigrants. However, until immigration laws and policies are changed to recognize Mexican immigrants as economic refugees, these people will face challenges that most refugees, such as Yugoslavians, do not face.

The U.S. and the world are in dire need of reexamining immigration and refugee policies. If we recognize Mexican immigrants as economic refugees, the American society would be forced to view Mexicans as human beings, rather than disposable

objects. If we allow Mexican immigrants to be re-classified as economic refugees, then we are allowing hundreds of thousands of others to hope that maybe they too will have a chance to a better life. All human beings, regardless whether we come from Africa, Latin America, South America, or Europe, should have access to basic living necessities. If people live in deplorable conditions, then the rest of the world should provide stability and safety to those people. The perfect opportunity awaits in the United States as there are millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants who are living in the shadows, contributing to our economy, yet not welcomed as equal participants in U.S. society.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Your participation in this study is voluntary. I would like to interview you using a tape recorder so that I can accurately record your responses to my questions and any additional information you wish to share with me. Thank you for your participation.

Name (pseudonym): _____ **Date:** _____

1. When did you migrate to the United States?
2. How do you ethnically self-identify?
3. Who did you migrate with?
4. How did you migrate to the United States? Type of visa and status.
5. How has your status impacted your life in the United States?
6. Has anyone discriminated against you based on your immigration status or the country you come from?
7. Have you been discriminated against based on your language or accent?
8. Why did you leave your country?
9. Have you ever received any help from the official U.S. government or NGOs? If so, what kind of assistance?
10. Do you feel this country is your home?
11. Do you see yourself going back to Yugoslavia/Mexico permanently?
12. Do you see yourself settling permanently in the United States?
13. Have you ever gone back to Yugoslavia/Mexico to visit? If so, how were you treated by the border officials?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN SERBIAN

Vase sudjelovanje u ovoj studiji je dobrovoljno. Ja zelim da vas intervjuisem koristeći audio rekorder tako da mogu da tačno snimim vase odgovore i komentare na moja pitanja i bilo koje druge informacije koje vi želite da podijelite sa mnom. Hvala vam za vase sudjelovanje.

Ime (pseudonim): _____ **Datum:** _____

14. Kada ste imigrirali u Ameriku?
15. Kojoj etničkoj grupi vi pripadate?
16. Sa kim ste imigrirali u Sjedinjene Države?
17. Kako ste imigrirali u Ameriku, na koji način? Vrsta vize i vas status.
18. Koji odraz na vas život u Americi ima imigracioni status?
19. Da li je ikad diskriminirao protiv vas na bazi imigracionog statusa ili po zemlji porijekla (odakle ste dosli)?
20. Da li ste ikad bili diskriminirani na bazi vasesg jezika ili akcenta?
21. Zasto ste napustili vasu zemlju porijekla?
22. Da li ste ikad primili bilo kakvu pomoc od oficijalne Americke vlade ili nekih ne vladinih organizacija? Ako jeste, kakvu vrstu pomoci?
23. Da li osjećate da je ova zemlja vas dom?
24. Da li mislite da ćete se ikad vratiti za stalno u Jugoslaviju?
25. Da li vidite sebe da zauvijek ostanete u Americi?
26. Da li ste ikad u međuvremenu otisli u Jugoslaviju u posjetu? Ako jeste, kako su se vlasti na granici ponasali prema vama?