Plane Wreck at Los Gatos (Deportees)

The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'ning,
The oranges piled in their creosote dumps;
They’re flying ’em back to the Mexican border
To pay all their money to wade back again

(Chorus)
Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria;
You won’t have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be “deportees.”

My father’s own father, he waded that river,
They took all the money he made in his life;
My brothers and sisters come working the fruit trees,
And they rode the truck till they took down and died.

Some of us are illegal, and some are not wanted,
Our work contract’s out and we have to move on;
Six hundred miles to that Mexican border,
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves.

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,
We died in your valleys and died on your plains.
We died ’neath your trees and we died in your bushes,
Both sides of the river, we died just the same.

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon,
A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,
Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry leaves?
The radio says, “They are just deportees.”

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
And be called by no name except “deportees”?

(Woody Guthrie, 1961)
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Introduction

Americans have always been of two minds about immigration. The symbolic notion of “a nation of immigrants” is deeply ingrained in the mythology of the American nation. Scholars, politicians and journalists have frequently invoked such sentiments. In 1938 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stated: “Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.” Twenty years later, President John F. Kennedy quoted Roosevelt in his posthumously published book A Nation of Immigrants (1964). Robert Bellah echoed similar notions in claiming that “[a]ll Americans except the Indians are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.” Oscar Handlin pondered in his monumental The Uprooted: “Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.”

Even though all Americans, except for the Indians, are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, Americans have rarely displayed an overtly enthusiastic welcome to the newly arrived. Especially during periods of high immigration, many native-born Americans take a sceptical stance towards immigrants and fear that their foreign heritage will challenge the economic, cultural, and political institutions of the nation. Politicians have frequently responded to public sentiments by adopting stringent anti-immigration legislation, barricade important ports

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5 Bellah, The Broken Covenant, 88.
of entry, denying public benefits to newcomers, and, occasionally, deporting them across the borders.

Restricting or expanding immigration has more than a temporary effect on American society – it is central to America’s national identity. Battles over immigration define the composition and character of the American nation, how Americans perceive themselves as a community, as a nation, and as a people. Although many Americans define their identity inclusively, focusing on shared ideas about government, citizenship, and political ideas, others define American identity in narrow, exclusive terms, identifying who is authentically “American” and who is “Alien.” This binary opposition between Americans and un-Americans or foreigners is central to a phenomenon called “nativism” – also described as “intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign [i.e., ‘un-American’] connections.”

At the end of the twentieth century, nativist sentiment has accompanied the increase in immigration from Asian and Latin American countries. Particularly Mexican immigrants fall victim to nativist feelings. Many Americans are concerned that Mexican newcomers are a source of crime, terrorism, narcotics trafficking and a drain on public education, welfare, and health services. Scepticism towards immigration is also marked by an antipathy towards non-English languages and hostility towards affirmative action and the ideology of multiculturalism in general. In 1994, the infamous California Proposition 187 focused on the drain of public resources by both legal and illegal immigrants, particularly their utilization of public education, welfare and health care services. The most dramatic reform proposal has been the campaign to deny automatic birthright citizenship to U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants – also

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cynically referred to as “anchor babies.” Although guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which reads that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States … are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside,” critics argue that birthright citizenship rewards and thus stimulates illegal immigration.9

Since the early 1990s, many American scholars and politicians have articulated nativist sentiments in best-selling books. These include Richard Lamm and Gary Imhoff, The Immigration Time Bomb: The Fragmenting of America (1986), Lawrence Auster, The Path to National Suicide: An Essay on Immigration and Multiculturalism (1991), Arthur Schlesinger, The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society (1992), Peter Brimelow, Alien Nation: Common Sense about America’s Immigration Disaster (1995), Roy Beck, The Case Against Immigration: The Moral, Economic, Social, and Environmental Reasons for Reducing U.S. Immigration Back to Traditional Levels (1996), Patrick Buchanan, The Death of the West: How Dying Population and Immigrants Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization (2002), Tom Tancredo, In Mortal Danger (2006), and Samuel Huntington, Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity (2004). In his best-selling book Huntington endeavours to answer the question: what is American identity? American identity, Huntington argues, is inherently Anglo-Protestant, as the culture of the founding settlers has fundamentally shaped American society. Anglo-Protestant culture, also called core culture, which has been shared by all Americans and has distinguished Americans from other peoples, includes Christianity, the English language, the English concept of the rule of law, and the Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that Americans have a duty to create a city upon a hill.10

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In the past, all immigrants eagerly subscribed to this American cultural identity. Among those arriving today, Huntington reasons, many refuse to share or even denounce the core culture and retain their own cultural and linguistic heritage. Most disturbingly, immigration from Mexico in particular generates a bifurcation within American society between two languages, Spanish and English, and between two cultures, Hispanic and Anglo-Protestant. Facilitated by the popularity of the policy of multiculturalism, the Hispanization of American society, according to Huntington, threatens the substance of the core culture, and consequently of American culture as a defining element of America’s national identity. The sense of a national identity among ordinary Americans is disappearing and is being replaced by a variety of other identities, including dual-national, trans-national, and sub-national identities.

Huntington claims to be a patriot and a scholar who vigorously wants to defend his native culture and identity and to maintain its purity against foreign influences. In this dissertation I will argue that in his book Samuel Huntington propounds a nativist perspective on the past, present, and future of the United States, which is based on the flawed assumptions that an Anglo-Protestant core culture has predominated in American society for three centuries, to which all previous immigrants have assimilated, and that contemporary immigrants from Mexico fail to assimilate into the American mainstream and threaten the core culture. *Who Are We?* is a highly representative and, due to its popularity, highly influential, example of present-day nativism, which will steer the Mexican immigration debate in a nativist and anti-immigration direction and in this way undermine an inclusive definition of America’s national identity.

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11 Huntington, *Who Are We?* xvi.
12 Ibid., xvii.
1. Samuel Huntington’s *Who Are We?*

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans have increasingly asked themselves: who are we? Are we one people or several? Are we mono-cultural, bicultural, or multicultural? Are we a salad bowl, a tomato soup, or a melting pot? What distinguishes Americans from other nationalities? Is it wealth, religion, race, ideology, ethnicity, culture? Are we a Western nation based on a European heritage? Are we a universal nation defined by values common to all civilizations? What kind of community do we want? Underlying all these questions, Huntington reasons, are the notions of core culture and national identity. The central proposition in *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, as I will illustrate in this chapter, is the belief that a singular American culture, based on Anglo-Protestant values, predominated as a key element of America’s national identity.

1.1 The Durability of the Settler Culture

The thread that runs through *Who Are We?* is the premise that American society was founded by settlers from the British Isles who crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the seventeenth century to create a city upon a hill. The settlers planted certain Anglo-Saxon institutions, values, and cultural traits they had brought from their home country on the shores of North America.\(^\text{13}\) The culture of the initial settler community has fundamentally and definitively shaped American institutions, culture, identity, and development.\(^\text{14}\) Therefore, according to Huntington, American culture has always been (and still is) primarily the culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth century settlers.

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\(^{13}\) Huntington, *Who Are We?* 38.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 39.
For almost four centuries, the culture of the founding settlers has been the lasting and central element of national identity for foreign- and native-born Americans.\textsuperscript{15}

Up until the early twentieth century, Huntington argues, immigrants were attracted by American culture, the political liberties, and the economic opportunities. Therefore, the immigrants and their descendants assimilated rapidly into the culture of the initial settlers. The immigrants adopted the cultural patterns of the host society, entered into the institutions and social structure of the host society, intermarried with members of the host society, and developed an identity conforming to the host society. As immigrants adapted to the cultural framework of the Anglo-Protestant majority, they lost their own distinct identities without fundamentally changing the culture of the settlers. A crucial passage in \textit{Who Are We?} states:

Subsequent generations of immigrants were assimilated into the culture of the founding settlers and contributed to and modified it. But they did not change it fundamentally. This is because, at least until the late twentieth century, it was Anglo-Protestant culture and the political liberties and economic opportunities it produced that attracted them to America.\textsuperscript{16}

To underline the durability and centrality of the core culture, Huntington invokes the metaphor of the tomato soup. This culinary metaphor describes American culture as: “an Anglo-Protestant tomato soup to which immigrants add celery, croutons, spices, parsley, and other ingredients that enrich and diversify the taste, but which are absorbed into what remains fundamentally tomato

\textsuperscript{15} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} 40.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 41.
soup.” Huntington holds the opinion that the tomato soup model, also called the Anglo-conformity model because it focuses primarily on the cultural absorption of immigrants into the Anglo-American mainstream, has been the most prevalent ideology of assimilation in the American historical experience.

The assimilation of immigrants into the Anglo-Saxon mainstream culture, the author of *Who Are We?* argues, has been the greatest American success-story. Assimilating the waves of industrial-era immigration constitutes a large chapter in the success-story. At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans made efforts to ensure that the interests and affections of immigrants would become rooted in the U.S. Politicians, educators, social workers, and businessmen persuaded and compelled immigrants to adhere to the Anglo-Protestant culture, to renounce allegiance to foreign countries or organizations, and reject dual nationalities and loyalties. The compulsive assimilation of immigrants allegedly guaranteed that a singular American culture prevailed and Anglo-Protestant values predominated as a key element of American identity.

**1.2 America’s National Identity**

What is American identity according to Samuel Huntington? Over the course of time, Americans have defined their identity in terms of ethnicity, race, ideology, and culture. For most of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries Americans identified themselves through these

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17 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 129.
18 Ibid., 183.
19 Ibid., 61.
20 Ibid., 134.
four concepts. In the next section I will discuss Huntington’s perception of these concepts. The following chart summarizes his position.  

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<th>COMPONENTS OF AMERICAN IDENTITY</th>
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1.2.1 Ethnicity

Up until the nineteenth century, as most Americans shared an Anglo-Saxon heritage, Americans defined themselves in terms of ethnicity. The issue of ethnicity assumed greater salience around 1900 when in addition to the traditional northern European immigrants, the number of southern and eastern European newcomers sharply increased. Pressured by public opinion, Congress passed severe limits on immigration in 1921 and 1924, which effectively obstructed significant immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The ongoing assimilation of immigrants, however, contributed to the virtual elimination of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity as an exclusive component of American identity. 22 From the Second World War onwards, Huntington insists, America no longer consisted of a coherent Anglo-Saxon population as Asian-, Hispanic-, Irish-,

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21 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 39.
22 Ibid., 57.
German-, Italian-, Polish-, Greek-, Jewish-, and other Americans became part of the American community.\(^{23}\)

1.2.2 Race

White Americans have always felt extremely passionate about race, distinguishing themselves from Native Americans, blacks, Mexicans, and Asians, and excluding these minorities from the American community.\(^{24}\) For much of American history, Americans have exterminated and massacred Native Americans, brutally exploited, enslaved and segregated blacks, discriminated against non-Anglo immigrants, excluded Asians, and marginalized Mexican-Americans. Because Anglo-Americans deprived racial minorities of basic civil rights, white Americans identified themselves as a homogeneous community. In Huntington’s view, the racial component of America’s national identity lost significance by the end of the Civil War, but especially during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The achievements of the civil rights movements and the immigration act of 1965, which eliminated a racially-based system of allocating immigrant visas on the grounds of country of origin, resulted in the disappearance of race as a defining element of American identity.\(^{25}\) As the chart “Components of American Identity” shows, since the 1970s, Americans have defined their identity only in terms of culture and Creed.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{23}\) Huntington, *Who Are We?* 58.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 53.
\(^{25}\) Ibid., 38.
\(^{26}\) Ibid.
1.2.3 Culture

So what is the American core culture? The author of *Who Are We?* believes it is the culture of the Anglo-Protestant settlers. The core culture consists of social and political practices inherited from the settlers, most notably the English language, as well as concepts and values of dissenting Protestantism. Protestant values, such as religious commitment, individualism, and the belief that humans have to create a model society on earth, have shaped American attitudes towards economic activity, public policy, morality, and laid the foundations of the American Creed. Originating in Protestantism, the work ethic stresses industriousness and the responsibility of individuals for their own success or failure. Overall, Americans are said to get less in unemployment, disability, and retirement benefits than people in comparable societies. They work longer hours, have shorter vacations, and retire later. The core culture also includes a British tradition of law, justice, the limits of governmental power, and the concept of the balance of powers. The final component of American culture, in Huntington’s view, consists of a legacy of European philosophy, literature, art, and music.

1.2.4 Creed

The American Creed, or the ideological element of national identity, has united Americans for centuries. It includes the principles of equality, liberty, democracy, human rights, individualism, representative government, private property, and the rule of law. Identifying America with the

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27 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 59.
28 Ibid., 68.
29 Ibid., 30.
30 Ibid., 40 and xv-xvi.
31 Ibid., 41.
32 Ibid., 46.
ideology of the Creed, Huntington claims that Americans have a civic national identity which is, at least in theory, based on a social contract which includes all peoples of any ethnicity, class and, race. American society is said to be more principled, liberal, rational, and civilized than societies with an ethnic concept of nationhood. Ethnic nationalism, which is based on membership in the nation of a people who share certain cultural or ethnic characteristics and the exclusion of others who don’t, is said to be more exclusive than civic nationalism. However, as the treatment of racial minorities in American history indicates, Americans have derived their identity also from other sources than political allegiance, most notably race and ethnicity.33

Although, in Huntington’s view, the ethnic and racial components of American identity have lost significance since the second half of twentieth century, Americans continue to define their identity in the terms of Creed and culture. However, Huntington holds the opinion that the core culture and traditional identity are in danger of disappearing. As the chart “Components of American Identity,” cited above, indicates, he doubts whether at the turn of the twenty-first century, culture will prevail as a crucial component of American identity. In the next section I will discuss his fear that “[c]ultural America is under siege.”34

1.3 The Threat of Mexican Immigrants to America’s Core Culture

The most immediate challenge to American culture (and therefore its identity) comes from a continuing flood of immigrants. The third major wave of immigrants commenced during the mid-1960s and brought people primarily from Asian and Latin American countries. Several characteristics of the post-1965 immigration disquiet the author of *Who Are We?* First, the values

34 Ibid., 12.
and cultures of these immigrants differ substantially from those prevalent in American society. Second, current immigrants can retain their cultural heritage because improvements in transportation and communication have made it easier to keep contact with their country of origin. Moreover, up until the 1960s, immigrants were subjected to intense programs of Americanization, but since 1965 nothing comparable has occurred in the U.S. Quite on the contrary, the ideology of multiculturalism promoted programs to enhance the status of racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities such as bilingual education and affirmative action.

Since the 1960s, Huntington argues, the emergence of the ideology of multiculturalism has challenged the core culture. Advocates of multiculturalism challenged the salience and substance of the image Americans had of their country, namely a nation of individuals with equal rights, who shared an Anglo-Protestant core culture, and who were dedicated to the American Creed. The multiculturalists, instead, emphasized that America was not a community of individuals sharing one culture, one history, and one ideology, but a “conglomerate of different races, ethnicities, and sub-national cultures, in which individuals were defined by their group membership, not a common nationality.” Promoting the enhancement of the status of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, the multiculturalists supported the policies of affirmative action and bilingual education. They denounced the policy of Americanization as un-American.

Of all post-1965 immigration waves, immigration from Mexico takes a prominent position in *Who Are We?* The author feels that “a massive influx of people from a poor, contiguous country” confronts American society and threatens to change it into something less desirable than it is now. Mexican immigrants, along with immigrants from other Latin American countries, advance a process of cultural, economic, linguistic, and social transformation

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35 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 18.
36 Ibid., 142-143.
37 Ibid., 222.
of American society. Along the U.S.-Mexico border, the consequences of this process are
disastrous. As technological advances have made it easier for immigrants to retain contact with
their country of origin, Mexican immigrants remain culturally part of their country of origin. They
form so-called trans-border communities which, according to Huntington, threaten America’s
national identity as Mexican immigrants develop an “other-national identity” instead of an
American identity. As a result, immigration is blurring the border between the U.S. and Mexico,
advancing the emergence of a hybrid society, a half-Mexican and half-American “Mexifornia,”
MexAmerica,” or “Amexica.”

The anxieties of Huntington go beyond the threat of a culturally, linguistically, and
politically fractured American society. Due to their historical presence in the American
Southwest, Mexican immigrants could undertake what no previous immigrant group could have
dreamed of undertaking, namely to challenge the existing political, commercial, legal, educational,
and cultural foundations of the U.S. In other words, Mexican-Americans might grab a large
portion of U.S. territory. Mexican-Americans can and do make that claim. The author of \textit{Who
Are We?} believes that Mexicans do not forget the events of the Texan War of Independence
(1835-1836) and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) in which Mexico lost the territory of
Texas, New Mexico, California, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah to the U.S. Currently, Mexican
immigrants invade the lost territory, which leads toward a social, demographical, and cultural
\textit{reconquista}.

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\textsuperscript{38} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} 221.\\
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 245.\\
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 229.\\
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 246.
\end{flushright}
Charles Truxillo of the University of New Mexico shares Huntington’s concerns and predicts that by 2080 the states of New Mexico, Texas, California, Arizona, and southern Colorado will merge with the northern states of Mexico into a sovereign Hispanic nation called “La Republica del Norte.”

In his chapter “How Mexican Immigration Lags,” Huntington gauges contemporary Mexican immigration according to education, citizenship, occupation, income, intermarriage, language, and identity. He concludes that in the case of almost all of the above-cited indices, Mexicans adopt less cultural traits of the host community than most previous waves of immigrants and contemporary non-Mexican newcomers. The level of education of Mexican immigrants rates below the American norm. In the case of citizenship, Mexican naturalization rates, being among the most important political dimensions of assimilation, are the lowest or among the lowest of all immigration groups in the U.S. The same holds true for occupation and income, as Mexican immigrants have low rates of entrepreneurship and self-employment, are more likely to live in poverty and benefit from welfare than other minorities, and, according to Huntington, lack

43 Huntington, Who Are We? 230-231.
initiative, self-reliance, and ambition. The low rates of intermarriage between Mexican immigrants and non-Hispanic Americans can be summarized as: “Mexicans marry Mexicans.”

In addition to education, citizenship, occupation, income, and intermarriage, Huntington’s scepticism focuses on the language assimilation of third-generation Mexican-Americans. He argues that the use and fluency of English in the first and second generation seems to follow the general pattern of assimilation, but that the third generation might fail to acquire fluency in English. The author expresses fears that Mexican immigrants of the third generation remain fluent in both Spanish and English, and that bilingualism might become institutionalized in the Mexican-American community. If Mexicans want to share the American dream, Huntington insists, they will have to dream in English. Referring to Lionel Sosa’s book of advice and inspiration to Latino entrepreneurs, The Americano Dream (1998), Huntington claims that “there is no Americano dream … there is only the American dream created by Anglo-Protestant society.”

The ultimate criterion of assimilation is the extent to which immigrants identify themselves with the U.S., adhere to the Creed and the mainstream culture, and reject loyalty to other countries. Huntington believes that profound and irreconcilable differences exist between Mexican and American culture. Whereas the standard American attitude includes a Protestant work ethic and the belief that hard work is almost an end in itself, Mexican culture includes a Spanish-Indian Catholic heritage embodied in three common expressions: Ahi se va (“Who cares? That is good enough”); Mañana se lo tengo (“Tomorrow it will be ready”); and El vale madrismo

44 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 254.
45 Ibid., 240.
46 Ibid., 232.
47 Ibid., 256.
(“Nothing is really worth-while”). These values are the primary source of the immigrants’ economic situation as few Mexican immigrants have achieved economic success in Mexico, “hence, presumably relatively few are likely to be economically successful in the United States.”

Assuming that Mexican immigrants fail to assimilate, what are the consequences for American society? Huntington predicts a linguistic and cultural bifurcation of American society into Spanish and English and Hispanic and Anglo-Protestant. Losing cultural and linguistic unity, America might lose its national identity as well. Although Americans could commit themselves to the principles of the American Creed for national unity, it is unlikely that civic nationalism alone can sustain a nation. The values of the American Creed are merely “markers of how to organize a society.” According to Huntington, American society could disintegrate into a loose confederation of cultural, racial, ethnic, and, political groups with little in common apart from their location in the territory of what had once been the United States of America.

In order to save the cultural and political integrity of the United States, Huntington proposes that everyone “should recommit themselves to the Anglo-Protestant culture, traditions, and values that for three and a half centuries have been embraced by Americans of all races, ethnicities, and religions and that have been the source of their liberty, unity, power, prosperity, and moral leadership as a force for good in the world.” In other words, Americans of all ethnicities and races need to reinvigorate their shared cultural values, their sense of national identity, and their national purpose.

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48 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 236.
49 Ibid., 236.
50 Ibid., 338.
51 Ibid., 19.
52 Ibid., xvii.
To curtail the Mexican challenge, Huntington additionally insinuates that immigration from Mexico must come to an end.\textsuperscript{53} A sustained high level of immigration obstructs assimilation because the immigrant population is being replenished by newcomers more quickly than they can assimilate. In this way, the transfer of loyalties, convictions, and identities can not be expected from Mexican immigrants and the great success story of American assimilation of the past will probably fail for Mexican immigrants.\textsuperscript{54} However, if Mexican immigration would suddenly come to a halt, Huntington insists, America’s cultural unity and national identity would be strengthened, and “[t]he possibility of a de facto split between a predominantly Spanish-speaking America and English-speaking America would disappear.”\textsuperscript{55}

In the next chapter I will challenge Huntington’s demonization of Mexican immigrants by arguing that fear of immigrants is not unique to the present situation – as Huntington claims – but has been a central feature of American immigration history. Americans have always distinguished themselves from immigrants to enhance their sense of national belonging and cultural unity.

\textsuperscript{53} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} 229.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 229.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 243.
2. Nativism in America: A Forgetful History

2.1 What is Nativism?

In his fundamental and enduring study *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism* (1955) doyen of American immigrant history John Higham located modern nationalism and ethnocentrism at the core of American nativism. Ethnocentrism, or negative reactions to personal and cultural traits of others, are not necessarily nativist but they become so only “when integrated with a hostile and fearful nationalism.”[^56] Anxious about the changes that could be wrought by immigrants, this form of nationalism is basically defensive in spirit. Uniting ethnocentric judgments, cultural antipathies, and modern nationalism, nativism translates these sentiments into an ardour to destroy “the enemies of an American way of life.”[^57] Although several complaints are hurled at the perceived enemy, all complaints are based on the charge of disloyalty. Fearing a failure of assimilation, internal minorities with some foreign connection are believed to pose a threat to the American political order, economic system, and way of life at the community level.[^58]

Nativism is most commonly associated with hostility to mass immigration. It denotes antipathies towards two categories of immigrants: newly arrived legal immigrants and undocumented immigrants, also referred to as illegal aliens. Efforts to reduce the impact of newcomers include restricting, excluding, or discouraging foreigners to immigrate. Once

[^57]: Ibid., 4.
immigrants reside in the U.S., nativists pressure newcomers to assimilate into the dominant culture. Anti-immigration ideology finds expression in hostility toward immigrants in the form of discrimination, prejudices, and physical violence. In public policies anti-immigration sentiments result in the creation of obstacles at ports of entry along U.S. borders and the adoption of stringent immigration legislation designed to obstruct immigrants from entering American territory. From time to time, officials have even deported people that were viewed as public charges. In 1954, the federal government implemented a mass deportation program, officially known as “Operation Wetback,” which authorized the U.S. Border Patrol to remove undocumented Mexican guest workers. Between 1954 and 1959, “Operation Wetback” was responsible for the deportation of over 3.7 million Latinos, including tens of thousands of American citizens of Mexican ancestry. 59

The expulsion of Mexican-Americans during the 1950s shows that although newcomers have encountered fierce resistance, nativism has defined its enemies more broadly and narrowly than just immigrant or foreign-born. 60 Native-born Americans with an immigration background going back several generations are frequently deemed foreign and face similar bigotry as immigrants. American citizens of European ancestry force them to lose their foreign heritage and assimilate into the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture. Many Americans with foreign roots, especially the newly arrived, face adjustment problems in the process caused by the nativist discrimination. In recent years, Americans of Asian and Hispanic descent have felt the powerful impact of nativism. Native-born children and grandchildren of these immigrant groups, especially those assimilated to white, middle-class suburban communities, are confronted with renewed

accusations of “foreigner” because they look like one of the many newcomers who do not fit the old characterization of an Anglo-American. Many of them feel rejected as equal and full members of the country in which they were born, because their loyalty to American society is constantly being questioned. 

Even though ethnocentrism is common to most societies, in the United States a distinctly negative form of ethnocentrism has developed. The nativist form of ethnocentrism contains a negative and confrontational element of dehumanizing and diminishing the value of the out-groups vis-à-vis the “self.” Combining ethnocentric judgements with a restrictive and defensive form of nationalism, nativist Americans make basic distinctions between who is desirable for the American community and who is not. Identifying who is authentically “American” and who is “Alien” is inherent in the discourse of nativism as every nativist claim emphasises a distinction between “American” vs. “un-American,” of “native” vs. “alien,” of “We” vs. “They,” and of “Us” vs. “Other.” In the contemporary nativist debate, for example, some immigrants are thought to be bad for this country (e.g. Mexicans, Koreans, the Vietnamese, Puerto Ricans, Haitians, and Cubans), while others are deemed good for this country (e.g. Jews, the English, Germans, and the Irish).

The presence of the differential “Other” is crucial in formulating who Americans are and what American national identity constitutes. The nativist logic of inclusion and exclusion strongly shapes the idea that a homogeneous national identity, or a common spirit, or American character predominates in society. A necessary element in the project of imagining a homogeneous identity

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is the figure of the Alien as a source of insurrection, discontent, sedition, and resistance. The “Other” allegedly possesses political traditions and cultural identities detrimental to American dominant customs, values, and beliefs. The continual presence of the “Other” helps ordinary Americans to fashion an exclusionary sense of belonging – a differential mode of national identification. Through the “Other,” Americans can rearticulate cultural belonging, patriotism, and citizenship. The phenomenon of nativism, therefore, can be interpreted as part of a “ritual of purification” designed to ease internal insecurities by creating enemies and blaming them for America’s own problems. The outcome is the construct of a homogeneous national identity as a description as well as an ambition for the future. To use the words of Walter Benn Michaels, Professor of English and the Humanities at The Johns Hopkins University, “this transformation of identity into the object of desire as well as its source … makes the dramas of nativism – the defense of identity, its loss, its repudiation, its rediscovery – possible.”

2.2 Nativism in American History

The United States has a long and at times shameful nativist history. Nativist sentiments were first projected on blacks and conquered minorities such as Native-Americans and Mexicans who were seen as prone to every kind of sinful impulse: savageness, bloodthirstiness, fornication, rampant sexuality, and sloth. In the eighteenth century, English-American colonists and their descendants increasingly resented the intrusion of new immigrants onto what was seen as British

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soil. Newcomers with differing political, religious, and linguistic traits encountered fierce opposition from Anglo-Americans. Certain religious groups, particularly Catholics and Jews, the destitute, and convicted criminals were discouraged from entering the colonies. In the nineteenth century, the American public and many Anglo-American leaders shared negative feelings about new non-Protestant immigrants such as the Catholic Irish and German Jews who had immigrated in substantial numbers during the 1850s. Chinese immigrants were expelled and excluded in 1882 after a disapproving attitude acquired prominence. The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 with Japan had the effect of terminating Japanese immigration for fifty years.

Throughout the twentieth century, nativist sentiments continued to dominate the minds of many Americans. Between 1870 and 1920 more than 26 million people immigrated to the United States, most notably from southern and eastern European countries such as Italy, Austria-Hungary, Greece, and Russia. From the late 1890s to the 1920s the American public opinion shifted to the attitude that these racially different immigrants could never assimilate and should be banned altogether. The restrictionist concerns generated severe reductions in immigration in 1921 and 1924 when Congress passed the national-origin quotas which privileged the “old” migrants from western and northern Europe and discouraged “new” immigration from eastern and southern Europe.

Following World War II, the American public adopted a more liberal outlook on immigration which lasted throughout much of the 1950s and 1960s. The more tolerant attitude was reflected in the 1965 amendments to the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that eliminated the national origins system. Instead of allocating immigrant visas on the basis of country of origin, the amendments placed annual quotas on principles such as family
reunification and certain needed professional skills.\textsuperscript{70} Although the purpose of the 1965 Immigration Act was to increase southern and eastern European immigration, the most far-reaching, and unanticipated, consequence was a major increase in Asian immigration as restrictions based on national origins and race were abolished.\textsuperscript{71} The outcome was, unfortunately, an end to the liberalization of public opinion and the emergence of immigration-restrictionist feelings in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During the last three decades, Central American, Asian, and especially Mexican immigrants have been the targets of renewed public alarm.\textsuperscript{72}

Notwithstanding the fact that nativism has waxed and waned over the course of American history, the binary opposition between natives and strangers has been a constant theme.\textsuperscript{73} Those who considered themselves “natives” have consistently distinguished themselves from the “Other.”\textsuperscript{74} The “Other” has not remained the same though. Every historical period demanded a new representation of who rightfully belonged to the nation, and who didn’t, based on the different character of the newcomers and the different circumstances that brought about specific economic needs, cultural conditions, political emergencies, and social conflicts.\textsuperscript{75} In the following chapter I shall demonstrate that this awareness of the tradition of nativism in American history is largely absent from Huntington’s study.

\textsuperscript{73} Chavez, “Immigration Reform and Nativism,” 66.
\textsuperscript{75} Behdad, \textit{A Forgetful Nation}, 11.
In search of a national identity, the author of *Who Are We?* disregards the nativist element in American history. The author fails to acknowledge that nativism has always been an element of America’s national culture. As a powerful component of national identity, nativism has been a driving force behind the nation’s immigration policies. Through the persistence of nativism, Americans have been able to perceive a sense of community, or national belonging. They have defined their national community in exclusionary terms, separating the “good” from the “bad.” Therefore, Huntington should have focused on nativism, exclusion, and xenophobia as the defining elements of national identity, instead of concentrating on race, ethnicity, Creed, and culture. As I will argue in this chapter, Huntington’s perception of American identity has its roots in historical amnesia. The forgetful narrative of American history enables nativists to imagine a homogeneous national community.76

Four fundamental flaws underlie Huntington’s perception of American identity. Firstly, the normative proposition that American society was exclusively founded on Anglo-Protestant values and principles of democracy and freedom entails a disavowal of the violence and conquest that legitimized the foundation of the nation. Secondly, the illusion that American society has a strictly white, Anglo-Protestant heritage and that all Americans have embraced the Anglo-Protestant core culture since the foundation of the nation, disregards the fact that American culture has been fundamentally influenced by many people with a non-Anglo and non-Protestant background. Moreover, immigrant groups and racial minorities have always retained some degree of cultural distinction, giving the lie to the success of the Anglo-conformity formulation of

assimilation (or Americanization), as advocated by Huntington. Thirdly, a cohesive American identity was not facilitated by culture, but by the exclusion of racial minorities from the American mainstream (e.g. through enslavement, segregation). Finally, the flawed distinction between “old” and “new” immigrants enables Americans to imagine a sense of national belonging. In this chapter I will address these four flaws.

3.1 The Founding of the American Nation

In his lecture “What is a Nation?” delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, French philosopher Ernest Renan argued that a nation is a spiritual principle. Two interrelated aspects constitute a nation: the possession of a glorious legacy of memories and the desire to live together and perpetuate that heritage.\(^77\) The heroic deeds of America’s forefathers in the past and the common ambition in the present to put a specific democratic project into effect can thus be said to constitute America as a nation. Renan demonstrated that in the formation of a nation and the creation of a sense of national unity, forgetful representations of the past are crucial.\(^78\) These forgetful representations, which are a form of historical amnesia, are essential in nation building because in order to legitimize the founding of the nation as a homogenous community, the deeds of violence through which a unified national community was achieved must be omitted. The brutality that lies at the foundation of a unified nationhood are obscured or repressed in the glorious narratives of official national histories.\(^79\) The formation of the nation, usually presented in the form of a narrative, appears to be the fulfilment of a project – a project that was destined

\(^78\) Renan, “What is a Nation?” 11.
\(^79\) Behdad, A Forgetful Nation, 5-6.
to have only one outcome, namely present-day nationhood. However, such a representation of
the origins, continuity and destiny of a nation constitutes a retrospective illusion. French
philosopher Etienne Balibar has noted that “[p]roject and destiny are the two symmetrical figures
of the illusion of national identity.”

Official histories of the American nation are similarly unmindful of the means of
oppression through which the formation of the American polity was achieved. From the
eighteenth century onwards, well-established Anglo-Americans have viewed themselves as
liberty-loving republicans, concerned with the protection of the new nation, as some said, for the
“worthy part of mankind.” They stressed the benign image that the nation was founded by
enlightened Pilgrims who shared a love for equality, democracy and freedom. However, the
enslavement of Africans and the genocide against Native-Americans belie the idealization of
American democracy and liberty.

The myth of a democratic founding refuses to acknowledge that American society was
founded through the conquest of Native Americans, the exploitation of blacks, and the
imperialist annexations of Mexican and French territories in North-America. Indeed, for most
Anglo-Americans the democratic ideals did not encompass racial others. These violent actions
are not denied in the official history of the nation, but rather, stripped of their implications for
the founding of the nation. The occurrences of violence against racial others in the nation’s
founding has to be disavowed and depreciated as an aberration from America’s exceptional
destiny in order to make the U.S. the fulfilment of a seventeenth century democratic project.

The forgetful narrative of the democratic founding produces, to use the words of Ali Behdad, a

80 Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities, ed. Etienne
82 Behdad, A Forgetful Nation, 5-6.
retrospective illusion that “freedom and equality, not brutality and conquest, were the principles upon which the nation was founded.” Such a retrospective illusion also characterizes Huntington.

In light of his fear that Mexican immigrants fail to assimilate, it is peculiar that Huntington pays little attention to the American conquest of Mexican territory in the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. The author takes it for granted that the ideology of Manifest Destiny provided the moral justification for the American nation to conquer Mexican territory. The ideology of Manifest Destiny was a mixture of freedom, democracy, religion, republicanism, and America’s geographical predestination to extend its dominion from coast to coast. Most of all, Manifest Destiny was a racist doctrine that deemed Anglo-Saxons, Protestant culture, and republican forms of government innately superior to all others. In order to extend “the area of freedom,” Mexicans were envisioned as being outside of the destined realm. Mexicans, Americans argued, were an inferior, depraved, authoritarian, backward, lazy, and degenerate people who wasted the land and resources. No wonder that nearly 80,000 Mexican citizens, who lived in the conquered territory, and most of whom had elected to become U.S. citizens under the terms of the peace treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, endured harsh times in their new country. Although the treaty guaranteed the protection of the property rights of all Mexican residents, the retention of their Spanish language, Catholic faith, and cultural traditions, Mexican-Americans were gradually dispossessed of their land and subjected to discrimination, segregation, and outright violence.

83 Behdad, A Forgetful Nation, 7.
85 Raat, Mexico and the United States, 63.
Although the atrocities Americans committed against Native-Americans, African-Americans, and Asians throughout history are thoroughly discussed in Huntington’s book, their relevance for the formation of the American polity and national unity is reduced to a minimum. The author considers them as aberrations in the democratic project of the American polity – a project that has its origins in the values and customs of the Pilgrims. Central to Huntington’s assertions is the premise that Anglo-Protestants alone founded and built the nation. Their collective purpose to create a utopian community culminated in the American nation, and their notions of liberty, democracy, and equal rights have been the source of liberty, unity, and moral leadership and “a force for good in the world.”

It seems that Huntington echoes the words of French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville who, in *Democracy in America* (1835), claimed that the effort made by “civilized man” to construct American society upon a democratic basis was a “great experiment” and the “abode of a great nation.”

The historical amnesia apparent in Huntington’s line of thought is a form of systematic denial in which he takes a self-righteous position by consciously distorting the truth about the nation’s founding. Huntington misrepresents the truth by arguing that the American polity was the destined outcome of the Pilgrims’ vision of a democratic polity. The benign myth of democratic founding fails to acknowledge the importance of the atrocities Anglo-Americans committed against blacks and Native-Americans – facts that impel contemporary historians to characterize American expansion on the continent as “invasion” rather than “settlement.” The ideological justification of Manifest Destiny for the imperial war against Mexico is deliberately obscured to endorse the democratic founding and make the presence of Anglo-Americans in the Southwest self-evident. The forgetful representation that the American nation was exclusively

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87 Huntington, *Who Are We?* xvii.
founded on republican principles supports the additional falsehood that all Americans are collectively connected to the Pilgrims and that a single, identifiable core culture predominates in American society. In the next section I will argue that Americans never embraced a coherent culture – that the so-called core culture is a fabrication.

3.2 Assimilation and America’s Core Culture

“If there is anything in American life which can be described as an overall American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described … as the middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins.”

~ Milton Gordon in *Assimilation in American Life* (1964)

Until the 1960s, the predominant view has been that immigrants should assimilate into the American mainstream. The assumption was that immigrants had the affirmative obligation to adopt the cultural patterns of the majority. Americans interpreted assimilation of immigrants as one-way conformity to the dominant Anglo way of life. By assimilating non-British immigrants and their progeny rapidly into the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture, the impact of the newcomers would be reduced. Driven by nativist sentiments, during the 1830s and 1840s, Anglos pushed Irish immigrants to assimilate to aspects of the dominant culture. At the turn of the century, pressures heated up to Americanize the southern and eastern European immigrants.

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During the heyday of the Americanization Movement (1914-1920), efforts were made to ensure that the affections, loyalties, and interests of immigrants would become rooted in the U.S. Ardent nativists believed that immigrants could be made into good citizens by forcing them to attend classes to learn American history, to listen to patriotic speeches, to speak English, and to get instructions about American citizenship and customs.\(^93\)

The Anglo-conformity model of assimilation finds an advocate in Huntington who firmly believes in the power of one-way assimilation. As noted in chapter 1.1 above, he concludes that the assimilation of the waves of industrial-era immigrants to the Anglo-Saxon culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been a great, possibly the greatest American success-story.\(^94\) Anglo-conformity assimilation assured that, for instance, immigrants and their children rallied to the colors of the American flag and marched off to fight their country’s wars.\(^95\) Moreover, forced assimilation guaranteed the prevalence of America’s core culture and Anglo-Protestant values as a key element of American national identity. For almost four centuries, Huntington reasons, the Anglo-Protestant culture of the founding settlers has been the bedrock of U.S. identity, shaping American institutions, culture, and development.\(^96\)

However, since the 1960s, Anglo-conformity assimilation has been seen in a negative light. Scholars and politicians now vigorously reject assimilation as an “ideologically laden residue of worn-out notions.”\(^97\) For many, it smacks of an era when ethnocentric and patronizing impositions could be placed upon ethnic and cultural minorities. Three features of the old assimilation concept they find objectionable. One is ethnocentrism, which elevates the culture of

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\(^{93}\) Jaret, "Troubled by Newcomers," 40.

\(^{94}\) Huntington, *Who Are We?* 183.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 135-136.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., 39-40.

Anglo-Protestants to the normative standard (or “reference point”) toward which other groups should aspire. Assimilation, in other words, meant becoming more Anglo-Saxon. Another feature is the inevitability of assimilation. As if their cultural heritage did not possess any vital force, immigrants were seen as wanting to “cast off the [old] … skin, never to resume it,” to use the words of John Quincy Adams.98 The natural endpoint of the process of assimilation was the prize of belonging to the middle-class, white, Protestant, European-American framework of the dominant majority.99 The third objection focuses on the one-sided nature of the assimilation process and the cultural homogeneity it allegedly produces. The old assimilation formulation assumed that the core culture of Anglo-Saxons would remain the same, while minority groups would have to change almost completely in order to assimilate. Out of diversity, assimilation would forge cultural homogeneity.100 Indeed, it has been viewed as a form of ethnocentric hegemony, a weapon of the majority to put minorities at a disadvantage by forcing them to live by cultural standards that were not their own.

Intellectual trends and events since the 1960s have made the deficiencies of Anglo-conformity assimilation apparent. Two observations proved crucial. First, the one-sidedness of the Anglo-assimilation concept in defining American culture strictly in terms of Anglo-Protestantism overlooked and downplayed the divisiveness and diversity of settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Various ethnic groups, differing in cultural heritage, religious affiliation, and mother tongue, founded the American polity. During the period of British rule, many non-Britons settled in the North-American territory such as Swedish, German, Swiss, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Filipino settlers. During the colonial period (and

100 Alba and Victor Nee, Remaking the American Mainstream, 4-5.

Secondly, centuries of immigration have contributed to the multicultural makeup of American society. Newcomers introduced new religions, languages, political ideas, family practices, and culinary customs from far-flung corners of the world, which thoroughly influenced American culture. Immigrants from Ireland and Germany in the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese and Chinese immigrants during the second half of that century, and southern and eastern Europeans all brought their own customs and values. As these immigrants became more American, their native cultural traits changed the mainstream culture. American culture, which is variegated in any event due to factors such as religion, class, and gender, transformed with each new round of interactions.\footnote{Alba and Victor Nee, \textit{Remaking the American Mainstream}, 13.} Therefore, American culture is not derived from one single folk tradition or a particular religion, as Huntington claims, but it embodies many religions and many folkways.\footnote{John Isbister, \textit{The Immigration Debate: Remaking America} (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1996), 184.} As Bill Hing observes:

\begin{quote}
“Whatever normative perspective one takes on the subject, the fact is that immigrants do affect our culture, perhaps as much as our culture affects them. As immigrants acculturate, their customs, cuisine, interests, and values are absorbed to some extent by
the larger U.S. society. Our culture and our definition of what it means to be American is ever-evolving.”104

Since the 1960s, theories of cultural singularity have fallen into disrepute as many Americans recognized the value and sustainability of minority cultures. Questioning the much-acclaimed success of Anglo-conformity assimilation, scholars of multiculturalism emphasized the maintenance of sub-cultural distinctions and recognized that American identity has always been pluralistic and multicultural. In the process, they rejected assimilation as an imposition of the dominant culture, and preferred such metaphors as the salad bowl, or a mosaic, to describe American society.105 The civil rights movement, addressing the disadvantaged position of racial minorities and women in American society, showed that minority cultures had retained an extent of vitality not recognized by Anglo-conformity advocates. Although often at the margins of American society, these minorities had retained much of their cultural distinction. Members of social movements of Native-Americans, African-Americans, and Mexican-Americans vigorously identified themselves as hyphenated Americans.

The assimilation of non-white minorities failed, not in the least because the dominant society has refused to accept them as full-fledged members of the national community. The American mainstream has always obstructed the assimilation of racial minorities. Cultural, physical, and linguistic differences from the Anglo norm prevented the complete and unconditional acceptance of racial others by the dominant society.106 In comparison, white

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European immigrants, once regarded as racial and religious outsiders, joined the American mainstream and, eventually, became indistinguishable from the rest of Anglo-American society. Despite initial discrimination, immigrant groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Jews have found it easier to assimilate than racial minorities who were excluded from the mainstream. Many racial groups have not, so to speak, “graduated … from the status of controlled to the status of controller.”

The exclusion of racial minorities from the American mainstream (e.g. through enslavement and segregation) enabled the controllers to embrace a singular, cohesive culture and national identity.

3.3 Racial Minorities and America’s National Identity

“The Mexican … is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer.”

~ The Dillingham Commission on Immigration (1911)

Americans subscribe, at least in theory, to the ideal of civic nationalism. In practice, national identity has revolved around the notion of race. The earliest Anglo-Americans marked a boundary around a white nation by excluding racial others. American citizenship has long been equated with whiteness as the first naturalization legislation in 1790 stipulated that only “free white persons” could become full-fledged Americans. Even after the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed formal citizenship rights in 1868, Jim Crow laws and official segregation ensured that blacks remained a subordinate caste until the 1960s.

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109 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 54-55.
Americans enslaved blacks, they expropriated and exterminated Native-Americans whom they regarded as uncivilized and savage, and against whom they defined themselves. In other words, by subjecting nonwhites, Anglo-Americans could imagine a cohesive national identity.

The fact that the subordination of racial minorities shaped the identity of Americans, giving nationhood a powerful exclusionary dimension, is nowhere explicitly formulated in *Who Are We?* As the author remembers the halcyon days when Anglo-Europeans dominated and American society embraced a cohesive, singular national identity, “he assumes away the existence of the groups who were denied basic membership into U.S. society.” This forgetfulness leads to some peculiar observations. For instance, by excluding blacks, Huntington can claim that “America was a highly homogeneous society in terms of race, national origin, and religion.” In a similar vein, Huntington curiously emphasizes the positive outcome of the decimation of Native-Americans during King Philip’s War when Anglo-Americans concluded that expulsion and extermination were the right policies to follow in the future. These policies afterwards enabled Anglos to define themselves as Americans in opposition to aliens (i.e. Indians), resulting in a homogeneous American identity. The treatment of Mexican immigrants by Anglo-Americans is completely absent in *Who Are We?*

The history of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. involved exploitation, deportation, and segregation at the hand of Anglo-Americans. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Mexican immigrants have provided a disposable and dispensable labor force for American businesses. The first Mexican workers migrated in large numbers to the United States during the Gold Rush in the mid-nineteenth century, shortly after Mexico and the U.S. signed the Treaty of

110 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 53.
112 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 44.
113 Ibid., 53.
Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Their unskilled, manual work was needed by Anglo-Americans who wanted to strike it rich in the Californian mines, and because the Anglo settlers refused to do the low-paying, back-breaking, and often dangerous work in the mining, ranching, agricultural, and railroad businesses.\footnote{Carrasco, “Latinos in the United States,” 191.} The Mexican worker, American entrepreneurs argued, embodied the perfect, docile employee that had no interest in intermixing with Anglo-Americans.\footnote{George J. Sanchez, \textit{Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945} (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 96.} Mexicans were seen as “homing pigeons” who would work for a short time in the U.S. and then return to their families in Mexico.\footnote{Leo R. Chavez, “Immigration Reform and Nativism: The Nationalist Response to the Transnationalist Challenge,” in \textit{Immigrants Out! The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States}, ed. Juan F. Perea (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), 72.} To reinforce their non-permanent presence in the U.S., the Dillingham Commission on Immigration, which investigated immigrant conditions for the U.S. Senate, argued in 1911 that Mexican immigrants had to be excluded from the American polity.\footnote{U.S. Congress, Senate, \textit{Brief Statement of the Immigration Commission with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority}, Vol. 5865, (1911), 690.}

Since the initial encounters during the first half of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Americans have defined Mexican immigrants as a race of people inferior to whites. Emphasizing the “Indian” or “Negro” makeup of the Mexican, Anglos attributed vices such as poverty, laziness, drunkenness, fatalism, and crime to Mexican-Americans. Popular accounts were influenced by scientific theories of racial miscegenation, Manifest Destiny, and the Mexican War. In Texas, Anglo-Americans developed a set of attitudes that might be called the Texan legend. The legend rationalized the violence of the Texas rangers against cowardly and degenerate Mexicans because of the alleged barbarities they committed at Goliad and the Alamo.\footnote{Américo Paredes, \textit{With His Pistol in His Hand}: \textit{A Border Ballad and Its Hero} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 15-23.} On their patrols the Texas Rangers used to sing:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
“O bury me not on the lone praire-ee
where the wild coyotes will howl o’er me!
In a narrow grave just six by three
where all the Mexkins ought to be-ee!”

A popular tale described the scene after the battle of San Jacinto when coyotes and buzzards refused to touch the dead Mexicans “because of the peppery constitution of the flesh” – leading to verbal folk expressions of “chile peppers” and “greasers.” Some accounts describe gruesome tales of Texas Rangers who terrorized the locals along the border at McAllen, Texas, by driving around town with a dead Mexican draped on either fender.

At various times, aggressive assimilation campaigns have been directed at Mexican immigrants in the hope of making them more “American.” Americans have frequently voiced concerns about the so-called retarding influence of Mexicans on modernization and the need for assimilation. Americanization programs were developed after World War I to make Mexicans more productive and efficient workers. In order to imbue the immigrants with American values, social reformers established special schools where Mexican children learned the English language, cleanliness, and ethics. Despite these attempts to Americanize the Mexican community, the existence of separate Mexican communities and a distinct Mexican culture independent of the

123 Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 100.
Anglo norm showed that assimilation in its utopian form never succeeded.\textsuperscript{124} As a group, Mexicans, even those with deep roots in the U.S., retained traditional aspects of their culture and never fully assimilated into the dominant society.\textsuperscript{125}

Several obstructions to Mexican acculturation can explain this phenomenon. Like other racial minorities, Mexicans have found it difficult to assimilate into the American mainstream. Their non-Anglo-Saxon culture, Spanish language and surnames, and their different physical appearance have been obstacles to the unconditional acceptance by the majority of Americans. Even when Mexican-Americans assimilated, the mainstream viewed them as foreign and never accorded them an equal status.\textsuperscript{126} Another difficulty for Mexicans consisted in their relative isolation from mainstream American life. In Texas during the first half of the twentieth century, Mexican-Americans endured virtual caste status in the rural towns and ranches. Farmer towns included separate quarters for Anglos and Mexican-Americans. Mexican residents were confined to their own grocery stores, restaurants, drugstores, cinemas, banks, schools, tailor shops, meat markets etc.\textsuperscript{127} They were permitted to swim in municipal swimming pools on designated days.\textsuperscript{128} Although the law granted Mexican-Americans political and jury participation, through mechanisms such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and blue ribbon jury commissions, they were almost universally excluded.\textsuperscript{129} Until the 1960s, Mexican-Americans were segregated from the U.S. mainstream and remained virtually invisible in American life.

\textsuperscript{124} Johnson, "’Melting Pot’ or ‘Ring of Fire,’" 194. \\
\textsuperscript{125} Sanchez, \textit{Becoming Mexican American}, 272-274. \\
\textsuperscript{126} Johnson, "’Melting Pot’ or ‘Ring of Fire,’" 182. \\
\textsuperscript{127} David Montejano, \textit{Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 160-161. \\
\textsuperscript{128} Skerry, \textit{Mexican Americans}, 23. \\
A strain of ad hoc implementation of arbitrary immigration laws, the selective enforcement of those laws, and the periodic deportation of Mexican workers also obstructed assimilation. During the Depression, as the American hunger for low-wage Mexican workers had rapidly disappeared, close to 400,000 Mexican immigrants were repatriated, among them several thousands of lawful American citizens with Mexican roots. The jobs that Mexicans had been doing for a long time were now being performed by Anglo-Americans such as the refugees escaping the poverty of the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma and Kansas. In other instances, their unpopularity during the Depression and the mob violence it spawned, forced many Mexican-Americans to emigrate.

At the onset of the Second World War, as the Great Depression ended, the U.S. entered into a formal government-to-government accord with Mexico on July 23, 1942. The agreement, which came to be known as the Bracero-Program, provided up to five million cheap Mexican farm workers for American agribusinesses over two decades. During the 1950s, as the number of undocumented Mexicans crossing the border increased, public outcries to “control the border” resulted in the crackdown on undocumented immigration and a massive deportation drive called Operation Wetback on June 17, 1954. Under the direction of a retired army general, Operation Wetback stirred up memories of the deportation campaign of the 1930s as American citizens of Mexican heritage were also deported. Within five years after the start of the program in 1954, over 3.7 million Latinos were deported, among whom were many Mexican-Americans. Operation Wetback violated the civil liberties of American citizens through expulsions, as well as

131 Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers, Natives and Strangers, 244.
132 Ibid., Natives and Strangers, 255.
the human rights of Mexicans as rudeness, disrespect, and intimidation were familiar characteristics of the deportations.\textsuperscript{133}

The general American attitude toward Mexican workers at the time is captured in the song “Plane Wreck at Los Gatos” by Woody Guthrie. In January 1948, a plane crash killed 32 people, among them 28 Mexican farm workers who were being deported by the U.S. Immigration Service. Guthrie was incensed that in a newspaper account of the plane crash, the Mexican immigrants were reduced to “just deportees,” without any names, families, or senses of why they had immigrated in the first place. To most Anglos, as Mark Reisler reasoned in his article “Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen,” Mexican immigrants have always been the peon laborer, never the potential citizen.\textsuperscript{135}

Notwithstanding the fact that Anglo-Americans have long subjected, segregated, and exploited Mexican-Americans in particular and racial minorities in general, Samuel Huntington obscures the implications this has for America’s identity. The American nation consisted of a

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{“Viva La Deportation!” A pro-deportation trucker hat on a rightwing website in 2007.\textsuperscript{134}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{133} Carrasco, “Latinos in the United States,” 197-198.
more coherent national identity at a time when minority communities were subordinated and excluded from the American mainstream. Then, it was easier to imagine “oneness” in American identity. In imagining a unified American community, Huntington represses the fact that nonwhites like Mexican-Americans were subjected and never allowed to fully assimilate.

3.4 Old and New Immigrants

In *The Ambivalent Welcome: Print Media, Public Opinion, and Immigration* (1993) Rita Simon and Susan Alexander, long-time researchers of immigration attitudes, examine books, magazine articles, and media editorials in the time span between 1880 and 1990 on the public opinion vis-à-vis immigration. They observe that when the eastern and southern European countries produced the largest influx of immigrants, the media bemoaned the decline of “the sturdy, independent, hard-working” immigrants from northern and western Europe. The same immigration from eastern and southern Europe “took on a rosy glow” when the direction shifted and the countries of the Western Hemisphere were the major sources of origin. When once again the migration pattern shifted, as Asian countries became the main exporters of immigrants, the media collectively wished to halt, or at least limit immigration of people with a different background and experience from that of the American mainstream.\(^\text{136}\)

Indeed, Americans generally make distinctions between past and present immigration. They tend to hold positive opinions toward previous waves of immigrants, while they negatively evaluate recently arrived immigrants.\(^\text{137}\) During the large influx of immigrants in the late 1800s


and early 1900s, as noted above, public sentiment differentiated between old immigrants (the “Nordic” racial stock) and the racially and culturally inferior new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. Americans blamed the new immigrant “races” for many social ills, including political corruption, gambling, insanity, crime, pauperism, and atheism.138

Ironically, these very same immigrants are romanticized in *Who Are We?* The author goes to great lengths to show that immigrants in the pre-1965 period were extraordinary, enterprising, and self-sufficient people. These immigrants came to the United States because they wanted to join the society the settlers had created.139 At least until the late twentieth century, according to Huntington, the newcomers were attracted to the Anglo-Protestant culture, the economic opportunities, and the political liberties of the U.S.140 Previous immigrants exhibited ambition, initiative, energy, and a willingness to confront uncertainty, to take risks, to suffer the substantial financial, emotional, and physical costs of travel, and to establish a better life for themselves.141 After enduring hardship and risk on their journey, these immigrants “[w]ept with joy when … they saw the Statue of Liberty” and enthusiastically identified themselves with their new country.142

While mythologizing previous immigrants, Huntington derogates contemporary immigration. Today’s immigrants, he stresses, do not necessarily have to have qualities such as determination and commitment because the costs, risks, challenges, discomforts, and uncertainties of migration have largely disappeared.143 New communication and information

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139 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 40.
140 Ibid., 41.
141 Ibid., 189.
142 Ibid., 5.
143 Ibid., 190.
technologies and mass transportation allow migrants to maintain contact with between their countries of origin. Compared to the Irish, Chinese, and eastern Europeans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mexican immigrants today can easily traverse the border and maintain contact with friends and family in Mexico.\textsuperscript{144} As trans-nationalism reduced economic, social, and cultural boundaries between the two countries, many Mexican immigrants have not experienced a “clean break” between Mexican and American communities. Hence, Mexican-Americans have not assimilated into the American mainstream as did past immigrants groups. On the contrary, they form their own linguistic and political enclaves in American cities (e.g. Miami and Los Angeles) and reject many of those Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream.\textsuperscript{145}

Whether or not Mexican immigrants actually fail to assimilate I will discuss in the following chapter. Suffice it to say here that by mythologizing pre-1965 immigrants while denouncing today’s immigration, Huntington creates a sense of belonging among Americans. Indeed, the distinction between previous and present immigration can be described as a differential mode of national identification. The forgetfulness of this narrative enables nativists to imagine a “singularity of national culture in the United States.”\textsuperscript{146} Stressing the positive value of former immigrants and emphasizing the negative characteristics of current newcomers, nativist Americans, like Huntington, believe that new immigrants threaten a homogeneous nation.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{144} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} 223.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 222.
\textsuperscript{146} Behdad, \textit{A Forgetful Nation}, 7.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 126.
4. The Present: The Assimilation of Mexican Immigrants

The triumph of the civil rights movements and the policy of anti-discrimination resulted in the removal of race-based immigration legislation in 1965. The year 1965 can be seen as a watershed in American immigration history, as the discriminatory national origins quota system was officially eliminated from immigration laws and exclusion from the U.S. on the grounds of race belonged to the past. Since 1965 the composition of immigration has changed markedly. Many non-Europeans migrated to the United States as Mexico, China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines became the sources of the majority of immigrants. The absolute level of immigration has returned to the level seen around the turn of the twentieth century. ¹⁴⁸

As mentioned in chapter 1.3, the post-1965 immigration situation has worried the author of *Who Are We?* The “tidal wave” of Mexican immigrants, Huntington believes, will transform American society in unprecedented ways. Refusing to assimilate into the cultural mainstream, immigrants from Mexico are said to challenge the linguistic and cultural fabric of the American community and bifurcate society into two cultures. In this chapter I will argue that most Mexican immigrants in fact do assimilate. I will discuss the Mexican-Americans’ economic, linguistic, and cultural assimilation while placing Huntington’s assimilation critique in a larger nativist context.

4.1 Economic Assimilation

I have left the best of my
Life and my strength here,
Sprinkling with the sweat
Of my brow the fields and
Factories

~ Juan Berzunzolo (Mexican immigrant laborer)

Accusations that immigrants threaten the American economy are a recurring element in Huntington’s study as well as in the discourse of nativism. Especially in times of economic hardship, negative sentiments arise over the possible economic consequences caused by newcomers. Stereotypical images of immigrants as scapegoats for economic difficulties that American society routinely faces help a majority of native-born Americans to explain what seems to them inexplicable. Some have accused immigrants of taking away good, American jobs from native-born workers because some immigrants accept occupations with poorer working conditions and wages. Some Americans have argued that immigration floods will result in higher unemployment rates and a depression of wages. Nowadays, the increasing number of undocumented Mexican immigrants residing in the United States creates anxieties among low-skilled and low-wage native-born Americans who fear job competition.

149 Qtd. in Mark Reisler, By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940 (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1976), ix.
152 Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers,” 43-44.
Next to bemoaning the damage done to America’s economic development, immigration critics have contended that immigrants impose an enormous fiscal burden on taxpayers. They say that newcomers abuse the American welfare system. Immigrants use many costly social programs, schooling assistance, and health programs at a much higher rate than ordinary citizens, while contributing a smaller share of taxes in return. George Borjas, a highly respected scholar within the economics profession, has viewed contemporary immigration with suspicion, arguing that immigrants increasingly participate in welfare programs and receive a disproportionate share of cash benefits. Editor of *Forbes*-magazine Peter Brimelow voiced similar concerns in his 1995 *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America’s Immigration Disaster*. Brimelow believes that Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Mexican immigrants rely too heavily on government assistance and that they are consuming the taxes of ordinary Americans.

Presenting only evidence for the negative impact Mexican immigrants have on the American economy, Huntington disregards the positive economic developments Mexican immigrants bring about. Of the many positive testimonies to the industriousness of Mexicans, not a single one appears in *Who Are We?* Instead, the book accuses Mexican immigrants of disdaining hard work – the Mexican work ethic (or lack thereof) provides the primary reason for the Mexicans’ economic situation in their home country, as well as the reason for their lack of success in the United States.

Statistics prove Huntington wrong. Many researchers believe that immigrants spark economic development as inexpensive and productive workers who accept jobs Americans

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155 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 236.
themselves do not want anymore.\textsuperscript{156} To name just one example, John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge convincingly draw the exact opposite conclusion in their 2004 study \textit{The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America}. They prove that Mexican-Americans and Latinos in general have the propensity to be hard-working, family-oriented and upwardly-mobile, buy their own homes, and start their own business.\textsuperscript{157}

\section*{4.2 Language Assimilation}

I’m told that Sergeant Lopez here put up a sign in his cell, a sign that normally would have been torn down by those guards. But this one was written in Spanish, and his guards didn’t know that “Viva la roja, blanco, y azul,” means “Long live the red, white, and blue.” They may not understand what that means in Iran, but we do, Sergeant Lopez, and you’ve filled our hearts with pride. Muchas gracias.\textsuperscript{158}

\textit{~ President Ronald Reagan at the welcoming ceremony in 1981 for the released American hostages after the Iran hostage crisis}

The nativist discourse has always embraced a concern about the language of newcomers. Outspoken proponents of the English language argued that, as the only “true” language in the United States, immigrants should learn to speak English. Making linguistic homogeneity an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{156} Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers,” 43-44.
\item \textsuperscript{157} John Micklewait and Adrian Woolridge, \textit{The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America} (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 240.
\end{itemize}
ambition, Americans implemented various efforts to teach immigrants English and un-teach their mother tongue. In officially bilingual German-English Pennsylvania, for example, the German community caused misgivings during much of the nineteenth century about their desire to speak their own language. Benjamin Franklin’s famous remark that the “Palatine Boors” might Germanize Pennsylvania resulted in the establishment of charity schools to Americanize the Germans and teach them the English language and customs. In the current nativist climate, special interest groups, also referred to as the English-only movement, advocate proposals that would require the use of English in most settings where public business takes place.159

The scepticism Huntington voices in Who Are We? about language acquisition by third-generation Mexican-Americans is inaccurate, while his alarm about a potential Spanish language takeover is highly exaggerated. Study after study indicates that virtually all second-generation immigrants, including Mexicans, grow up proficient in English, and that a substantial segment speaks English-only by the third generation.160 The leading non-partisan research institute, the Pew Hispanic Center, conducted a national survey in 2002 among Hispanic-Americans and concluded that although many foreign-born Latinos were Spanish-dominant, only a fraction of the second and third generation remained so. The acquisition of the English language follows the exact opposite pattern: few foreign-born Latinos are English-dominant, while half of the second generation and three-quarters of the third generation are dominant English speakers. The figures are shown in the following chart.161

Huntington seems to be blinded by the concentration of Mexican newcomers. His argumentation depends heavily on data collected in the 1980s and 1990s – a time when the rise in immigration had only just begun and the portion of newcomers among the Mexican-American population, and the Latino population as a whole, was high. But when immigration has continued for over two or three decades, transformations occur within the immigrant community. The number of foreign-born Americans who are recent arrivals drops, while the share of settled second- and third-generation immigrants increases. A survey of the USC California Demographic Futures project has estimated that the length of settlement in the United States by Latinos will rise between 2000 and 2030. In 2030 the share of newcomers will have fallen by half, while the portion of young adults who are second or third generation U.S. born, and who are part of a long-settled population, will grow markedly. The figures are shown in the following chart.

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Consequently, the trend in California, and the country as a whole, during the coming decades will be towards a decline in the number of Spanish-language speakers.\textsuperscript{164} The logic behind this trend is simple: long-settled immigrants differ fundamentally from newcomers because they have lived in the United States for many years and have become settled citizens. The former newcomers for the most part do not retain the characteristics of the newly arrived, but have made significant linguistic advances. Huntington, however, assumes that Latinos will retain the same language for years to come, not in the least because “the Spanish-speaking population is being continually replenished by newcomers faster than population is being assimilated.”\textsuperscript{165} In Huntington’s vision there is simply no room for language assimilation or for the lengthening of settlement – a line of thinking which has been called the Peter Pan fallacy and includes the false assumption that immigrants are, like Peter Pan, “forever frozen in their status as newcomers, never aging, never advancing economically, and never assimilating.”\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{164} Myers, Immigrants and Boomers, 108.
\textsuperscript{165} Huntington, Who Are We?, 229.
\textsuperscript{166} Myers, Immigrants and Boomers, 104.
Even the prospect of a bilingual territory along the U.S.-Mexico border is not as bleak as Huntington has envisaged. Several circumstances should be conducive to the retention of the Spanish mother tongue and the relatively weak transition to English-only, most notably the contiguity of the Mexican-Americans’ country of origin, the highly concentrated settlement pattern, especially in California, and the frequent residence of Mexican immigrants in Mexican-American neighborhoods. Indeed, the proximity of Mexico does promote the persistence of bilingualism among Mexican immigrants, but for proficiency in English it makes little difference. 95.6 percent of the native-born Mexican-Americans between the ages of 25-44 who live next to the border speak English well, compared to 96.9 percent in the same category elsewhere in the border state, and 97.6 percent in the same category in the U.S. interior.\textsuperscript{167}

Moreover, in a rapidly globalizing world the influence of the English language has a reach far beyond the border of the United States. In many cases Mexican immigrants have acquired some degree of English even before crossing the border as they have been exposed to American television programs and because U.S. companies settled throughout their countries.\textsuperscript{168} Once they settle in the U.S., most Mexicans realise that proficiency in English is indispensable for them and their children – the claim that Mexicans in the United States refuse to learn English is contradicted by the long waiting lists at adult English language programs and English-as-a-Second-Language centers.\textsuperscript{169} In response to Huntington’s claim that there is no Americano dream, only an American, the picture emerges that “most of the grandchildren of Latino

\textsuperscript{167} Alba and Victor Nee, \textit{Remaking the American Mainstream}, 226-227.
\textsuperscript{169} Johnson and Hing, “National Identity in a Multicultural Nation,” 1379.
immigrants could not dream in Spanish even if they wanted to.”¹⁷⁰ The fact that Sergeant Jimmy Lopez, who was one of the Americans held hostage by Iranian militants in 1979 and 1980, wrote his homage to the United States in Spanish, did not make him less of an American.¹⁷¹

4.3 Identity and Cultural Assimilation

“ Corporal Alexander Martinez, my son, citizen of the United States, was denied a haircut by the City Barber Shop, Rotan, Texas, I resent this with my whole soul. Two other sons are in the army ... We realize that we are in a Holy War against the enemies of Christianity and Civilization, but are unhappily fighting too, for the freedom of those at home, that are persecuting us into death.”¹⁷²

~ Fred Martinez Sr. July 19, 1943

The fear that foreign-born individuals lack the essential qualities needed to be a good American is a recurring theme in the discourse of nativism in general as well as Huntington in particular. This can take two turns. First, the political argument runs against immigrants from countries ruled by governments antithetical to democracy who supposedly fail to overcome their heritage, making them prone to corruption, extremism, and political deviation. Today’s nativists have articulated the opinion that Mexican immigrants are too indifferent and apolitical, thus unwilling to fulfil the

¹⁷¹ Fuchs, “Mr. Huntington’s Nightmare.”
duties of democratic citizens. The fear that immigrants lack certain American characteristics can also take a socio-cultural turn. The habits and languages immigrants bring from faraway countries will change American society and will upset the treasured American way of life. A wide range of deficiencies has been attributed to immigrant groups over time: the lack of ambition, of an industrious spirit, of intellect, of personal hygiene, and of morality. At the turn of the twentieth century, Americans reasoned that certain immigrants would bring about the degradation of American morality by spreading sexual lust, pornography, and obscenities. One of the most common socio-cultural charges is that immigrants cause or at least exacerbate violence and crime, such as robberies, drug smuggling, prostitution, and fraud.

The complaints are based on the belief that newly arrived immigrants bring values that both differ from and conflict with American culture. Retaining their cultural heritage, the immigrants supposedly fail to blend into the modus vivendi and become “real” Americans. Quite the contrary, they cause a cultural fragmentation of the nation which will weaken or perhaps even destroy one of history’s greatest civilizations. Voicing similar socio-cultural fears about Mexican immigration, Huntington argues that profound and irreconcilable differences exist between the attitudes of Mexicans and those of Americans. Mexicans, with a culture derived from Spanish and Indian Catholics, are said to be different from Americans with a Protestant heritage derived from Martin Luther.

The cultural differences Huntington emphasizes, however, are exaggerated. Western civilization (Latin, Greek, and Judeo-Christian) has deep roots in Mexico as a former colony of Spain and France. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Mexico has implemented the separation of church and state, despite the near total predominance of Christianity, and full civil liberties for its

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175 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 254.
inhabitants. Most Mexican immigrants find it highly desirable to live by such Creedal principles as equal protection by the laws, due process of law, freedom of assembly and speech, the separation of church and state, freedom of religion, and a system of limiting government by checks and balances. Many Mexican immigrants are even willing to fight and die for such a system. Roughly 350,000 Mexican Americans participated in the Second World War, distinguishing themselves as reliable, brave and fierce soldiers in the armed services, and garnering various honors and decorations; throughout the course of the war, no Latino soldier was charged with treason, cowardice, or desertion.

Some evidence supports Huntington’s claim that Mexican immigrants identify themselves foremost with their home country – more than two-thirds (68%) of foreign-born Mexicans cite their country of origin as the primary source for identification. However, the primary terms Mexicans use to identify themselves differ dramatically according to how many generations an individual’s family has been living in the U.S. Among second-generation Mexican-Americans almost equal numbers identify themselves first and foremost either as American (35%) or by their parents’ countries of origin (38%). Of the third generation and beyond, over half (57%) identify themselves primarily as an American.

The slow transfer of loyalties – to use some Huntingtonian terminology – is primarily caused by trans-nationalism. Most of today’s Mexican immigrants are trans-nationalists, or people who maintain strong social and economic linkages to both their home country and their host country. While Mexicans have long utilized kinship and social networks for support in coping with migration, in recent years bi-national households have emerged that maintain homes on

\[ \text{(176) Fuchs, “Mr. Huntington’s Nightmare.”} \]
\[ \text{(177) Carrasco, “Latinos in the United States,” 195.} \]
\[ \text{(178) Pew Hispanic Center, National Survey of Latino, 7.} \]
both sides of the border and practice resource pooling, income sharing, and mutual assistance.\textsuperscript{179} 

As a result, Mexican trans-nationalists have developed multiple identities that are situated in communities on both the Mexican and the American side of the border.\textsuperscript{180} For this reason, today’s nativists believe Mexican immigrants challenge America’s “national culture” and the nationalist order of society. In other words, they are concerned because trans-national migrants bring multiculturalism instead of assimilation.

Advocates of a narrow construction of nationhood, like Huntington, denounce multiculturalism and trans-nationalism because the development of multinational identities undermines their notion of a singular American identity. However, despite the irrefutable existence of trans-nationalism, study after study demonstrates that the majority of Mexican immigrants do assimilate. Mexican-Americans assimilate with respect to occupation and income, naturalization, education, intermarriage, and English language acquisition. Moreover, the evidence in \textit{Who Are We?} to support the claim that Mexican immigration challenges the linguistic and cultural fabric of the American community is highly biased. While overstating the costs of Mexican immigration to American society, the author hardly mentions or examines the benefits of Mexican immigration, even though he admits at various instances that the “available evidence is limited, and, in some respects, contradictory.”\textsuperscript{181} The one-sidedness of evidence enables Huntington to manufacture a state of emergency in which cultural America is continuously under threat. In the next chapter I will argue that framing a state of emergency is crucial to the nativist argumentation in \textit{Who Are We?}


\textsuperscript{180} Chavez, “Immigration Reform and Nativism,” 62.

\textsuperscript{181} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} 241.
5. The Future: Framing a State of Emergency

As noted in chapter 2, questioning the loyalty of immigrants is inherent in nativism. The insinuation of disloyalty consists in the suspicion that immigrants have some “foreign” connection. Several immigrant groups have been accused of operating as agents for a foreign power that tries to weaken or destroy the United States. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, newcomers from Ireland, Italy, and Poland allegedly worked for the anti-democratic Catholic Church. After the Russo-Japan war of 1904-1905, many Americans expressed fears of a Yellow Peril in which Japanese-Americans allegedly played a central role. Anti-socialist and anti-communist sentiments have frequently affected Jewish-Americans who supposedly operated as agents of left-wing revolutionary organizations. After September 11, 2001, suspicion and fear of Arab- and Muslim-looking immigrants peaked as accusations of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism were waged against them. The same sentiments have also appeared during the Iran hostage crisis in 1979-1980, the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991, and the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993.

In alarmist terms, Samuel Huntington voices the concern that Mexicans, still incensed by the Mexican-American War, plan to turn the Southwest into Mexican territory. The seemingly premeditated invasion of Mexicans, he believes, constitutes the greatest challenge to the territorial integrity of the United States. However, in a book that is heavily footnoted in this section the author offers no credible evidence that Mexicans seek to form a new state.\textsuperscript{182} Despite some rhetorical declarations of Mexican politicians and anecdotal evidence, not a single reliable or serious example supports this fear. No serious politician or intellectual has made the claim to

invade the American territory. Even one of the most nationalist of Mexican presidents, Venustiano Carranza, formally declined the 1916 Zimmerman proposal in which Germany promised restitution of the territory that once belonged to Mexico.\textsuperscript{183} As for the “authoritative” Charles Truxillo, an obscure academic who predicts the establishment of the new country for the apocalyptic and arbitrary year of 2080, it proves to be correct that “if you Google enough you can find someone to say anything.”\textsuperscript{184}

The lack of credible evidence that Mexican immigrants foster irredentist designs, shows that the central theme in \textit{Who Are We?} can best be described as a theory of fear. By depicting Mexican immigrants as a threat to the foundation of the American nation and by phrasing the immigration situation in alarmist words such as “an illegal demographic invasion” and “America is under siege,” Huntington creates a state of national emergency.\textsuperscript{185} This raises the question: why? Manufacturing a national crisis increases the salience of national identity.\textsuperscript{186} “As long as Americans see their nation endangered,” Huntington reasons, “they are likely to have a high sense of identity with it. If their perception of threat fades, other identities could again take precedence over nation identity.”\textsuperscript{187} The absence of an external “Other,” on the other hand, is likely to undermine American unity and breed divisions within a society.\textsuperscript{188} In various places, Huntington emphasizes the positive impacts of wars which encouraged the development of a strong American identity.\textsuperscript{189} The Spanish-American War, for example, was “a nationalist fiesta,” World War I stimulated patriotism and enhanced the salience of national identity over sub-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{184} Etzioni, “The Real Threat,” 480.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 318, 12, xvii.
\textsuperscript{186} Behdad, \textit{A Forgetful Nation}, 142.
\textsuperscript{187} Huntington, \textit{Who Are We?} xv.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 197-98.
\end{flushright}

national identities, and during World War II national identity reached its peak. The salience of national identity also resulted in discrimination against German-Americans and Japanese-Americans resulting in their incarceration during World War II.

Who will be America’s enemy in the twenty-first century? The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War removed an external, evil empire against which America could define itself and derive a major source of identity. America’s next arch enemy was to be found in Islamic fundamentalism, according to Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) – a depiction which almost seems prophetical in light of the tragic events of 9/11. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda filled the vacuum left by the Soviet Union and offered hope to people like Huntington to reinvigorate American identity. But the threat wore out, mainly because Americans do not see Islam, its people, and its civilization, as its enemy. In the twenty-first century, Mexican immigrants provide a new “Other” against whom nativists can identify themselves.

How should the reader of *Who Are We?* interpret Huntington’s solution to the Mexican challenge? The author insinuates that the “problems” of immigration would miraculously end when the United States reduced the number of Mexican newcomers because by turning the U.S. into a fortress, the debates over bilingual education, undocumented immigration, and assimilation would somehow simmer down. This proposal is unrealistic as migration between Mexico and the U.S. has deep and enduring roots in both nations. Multinational corporations have moved capital investments from American cities to Mexican cities and rural areas throughout the second half of the twentieth century, driving many Mexican peasant farmers and their families from their

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190 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 136.
192 Huntington, *Who Are We?* 11.
193 Ibid., 358.
194 Ibid., 243.
land – and many ordinary Americans out of their secure jobs. American employers have also caused economic “pull” factors by providing low-wage jobs in textile, agriculture, construction, and service firms. In recent years, the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) stimulated the social and economic integration of both countries, relaxing controls over the international exchange of capital, information and goods. The proposition to avert the threat of Mexican immigrants by reducing the number of newcomers fails to take these circumstances into account. Closing the border is not an option. Perhaps Huntington is less interested in solving the “problem” of Mexican immigration than perpetuating the image of a threatening “Other.”
Conclusion

In recent years, nativist sentiments have accompanied immigration from Asian and Latin American countries. Propositions have been made to deprive undocumented immigrants of education in public schools and medical services in public hospitals. Several states passed Official English laws to promote the preponderance of the English language. Some Americans even question the Fourteenth Amendment to change the entitlement to birthright citizenship. Many Americans champion a reduction in the level of both legal and illegal immigration. In 2006, Congress passed a bill, the Security Fence Act, ordering the Department of Homeland Security to construct a 700-mile double fence along the U.S.-Mexican border to provide a clampdown on illegal immigration. Until the actual construction, thousands of American citizens have organized a vigilant border-watch. The volunteers refrain from actual confrontations with “illegal aliens,” but report unlawful activity to the U.S. Border Patrol.

One exponent of the new nativist movement is *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*. At the core of Huntington’s argumentation lies the principle of protecting the American nation, or more specifically American culture. This American culture, which has been transmitted generation after generation for three centuries and has defined what it means to be an American, is now being diluted by Mexican immigrants. As demonstrated, four flaws of forgetfulness underlie this perception of American identity. First, the normative claim that freedom- and liberty-loving Anglo settlers founded the American polity ignores the brutal conquest, enslavement, and expropriation of non-Anglo minorities. By deliberately disavowing occurrences of violence, such as the imperial war against Mexico, or by denying its implications for the founding of America, Huntington endorses the strictly democratic founding myth of the American polity.
Second, defining American culture strictly in terms of Anglo-Protestantism seriously underestimates diversity in American society. Obviously, the Anglo-Protestant majority considerably shaped American political, economic, and cultural institutions, but a variety of non-Anglos and non-Protestants have contributed to the cultural make-up of America. The one-sidedness of Huntington’s approach overlooks the divisiveness of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ settlers and the cultural pluralism among racial and ethnic minorities. Immigrant groups have always retained some degree of cultural distinction – putting the much acclaimed success of Anglo-conformity assimilation in a different light.

Third, the intricate relationship between the subjection of minorities and a perceived core culture needs to be explicited. The fact that exclusion of racial minorities from the American mainstream (e.g. through enslavement, segregation) might have facilitated a homogeneous, cohesive culture and national identity remains implicit in *Who Are We?* Indeed, the American nation consisted of a more coherent national identity in a time when minority communities were subordinated and excluded from the American mainstream. Then, it was easier to enforce “oneness” in American identity. Today, a renewed salience of national identity defined strictly in Anglo-Protestant terms is more difficult to recreate because freedom and equality are fundamental values.

Fourth, the distinction between past and present immigration enables nativists to imagine a homogeneous society. In order to construct a coherent national identity, Huntington takes a myopic stance by romanticizing immigrants in days of yore while derogating contemporary Mexican immigration. The differential mode of identity construction disregards the historical circumstance that many Americans have always seen immigrants as un-American and detrimental to American society. What is more, immigrants in the pre-1965 era were predominantly white Europeans while non-whites constitute the majority of present-day immigrants. As shown, non-
whites have always found it more difficult to assimilate because mainstream society segregated, enslaved, and discriminated against them. In addition, official policies advocate cultural diversity today whereas previous immigrants were pressured to shed their distinctive heritage and assimilate entirely to the existing Anglo-American cultural norms.

Rather than an aberration in American history, nativism has been a powerful component of national identity construction and a driving force behind the nation’s immigration policies. Native-born Americans have persistently distinguished themselves from the newly arrived, whatever the character of the immigrants. Every historical period demanded a new representation of the menacing “Other” as a source of subversion to American society, polity, and economy, and a new answer to the question “Who is an American?” Nativism, which has also been called “the negative, confrontational side of nationalism” because it differentiates between “Americans” and “Others,” enables Americans to imagine a sense of belonging. Through the exclusionary logic of nativism, Americans construct a coherent national identity. The author of Who Are We? fails to acknowledge the productive power of nativism as he never explicitly states that a coherent national identity was achieved by excluding others. Instead, he presents a forgetful perspective of American history in which he selectively discusses the aspects of American history that support his claims.

In Huntington’s narrow formulation of American identity, Mexican immigrants provide the threatening “Other.” By ascribing an alien status to Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans, Huntington rearticulates what he believes constitutes American identity: Anglo-Protestant culture. Ironically, the Mexican “Other” is necessary for him to imagine a national community and emphasize the salience and substance of American identity. Manufacturing a

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state of emergency in which cultural America is persistently under attack by the Mexican “Other” is necessary to bolster an exclusionary and defensive sense of national belonging.

The “detrimental” consequences of Mexican immigration on the Southwest and the United States in general are highly overstated. Study after study indicates that the majority of Mexican immigrants assimilate in the essential areas of business, politics, language, respect for the law, and intermarriage. Mexican immigrants learn English, while their children become bilingual, and the third generation loses fluency in Spanish and acquires proficiency in English. All Mexican-Americans assimilate to some extent: they hold values similar to most Americans vis-à-vis intermarriage, family life, religion, education, work ethic, representative government etc. Mexican immigrants are not nationalist militants, but seek to become part of American culture and society.

Although Huntington is entirely correct in interrelating immigration, national identity, and civil rights, American history demonstrates that adhering to narrow definitions of national identity is dangerous. Restricting and expanding immigration, indeed, has more than a temporary effect on society, for it defines who Americans are and what it means to be an American. However, defining national identity in Eurocentric terms leads to the exclusion of minorities (e.g. Mexican-Americans) from the American polity and consequently to discrimination and subjection. Although Huntington partly acknowledges America’s violent history, he fails to address the danger if the nation embraces a narrow definition of national identity based on culture. Instead of solely concentrating on race, ethnicity, the Creed, and culture as the key elements of American identity, he should have taken a look at America’s nativist history and acknowledge that America’s sense of community was based on exclusion and xenophobia.

The alarmist tone of *Who Are We?* will not contribute to a fruitful dialogue necessary in the issue of migration from Mexico to the United States. Quite on the contrary, the book gives
the argumentation of even more extreme nativists an “intellectual veneer.” The book will steer the discussion in the direction of victimizing Mexican immigrants for America’s social and economic problems. As political scientist Aristide Zolberg observed, the book advances an unimaginative revival of nativist stereotypes. In a multicultural country, Huntington’s nativist argumentation leaves little feasible solutions to bolster a sense of unity. As cultural pluralism has thrived in American society since the civil rights movements, the concept of American identity must respect rather than disregard diversity. The definition of national identity must be couched in inclusive terms rather than exclusive ones. It would be better to set forth a different, non-exclusionist concept of common values as a defining element of American identity. This could include such values as respect for laws, the political and economic system, human rights, and especially diversity. In this way, America’s national Creed as a set of ideas could be inclusive for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, faith, or race.

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