Mexican Migration to the U.S./ Migrant Healthcare issues

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Preface

Immigration is an ambivalent issue in the national psyche that seems to rear its head only during moments of nationalistic sentiment or economic downturn. At times the flow of migrants into the United States is tacitly accepted as a viable option to filling the ranks of our manual labor sectors. Yet, far too often this same flow is seen more as an "invasion" of a foreign race, shrouded in ignorance and misconception. What is the reality? Can the phenomenon of Latino immigration to this country be encapsulated in single explanation? Is there a comprehensive theory that accurately describes and predicts the reasons for migration of hundreds of Hispanics each day? In the course of my research I have come to the realization that there is no simple answer. Obviously, the thorough study of any sociological trend in our complex world will reveal myriad causes and effects. It is no different with the issue of Latino migration. In an effort to make a topic of this magnitude manageable, this section of the project will be divided into four parts:

The first part will seek to set the stage by profiling today's immigrant. This profile will include the different types of immigrants, with the focus mainly on manual laborers in the agricultural sector of our economy. It will cite studies that provide estimations for current levels of undocumented migrants. In addition, this first section will provide historical context by exploring the agricultural and economic background of Mexico. It will also introduce the various themes of migration that will be elaborated on in section II. Finally, the first section will seek to give definitions to several sociological terms that are necessary for this discussion of migration.

The second section, broadly entitled, "Contexts of Reception", will explore the underlying factors of migration to the United States. This section will also examine the various "push" and "pull" factors that seem to supply most of the impetus for the actual migration process. From this point, the notions of social networks, labor markets and living arrangements will be presented.

The third section of part one deals with immigration policies in their many forms. In order to understand how policy is formulated and why it can be ineffective a cursory presentation of several migration theories must precede. Therefore, this section will open with an overview of migration theory. It will also investigate the effects of NAFTA on migration. The focus will then turn to U.S. immigration policy and its deficiencies and then be followed by a brief discussion of alternative policy initiatives.

The final section of part one will explore the obstacles that migrants must face during their entry, assimilation, and life in the United States. It will look at the legal and social ramifications of crossing the border, and provide a glimpse into border enforcement by the U.S. Border Patrol. This section will also present farmworker exploitation issues and discuss the prejudice faced by migrants in general.

I have tried my best to present this vast topic in a somewhat logical order. Yet, the reality is that migration is an enormous web of causes and effects that has no definite structure. I say this to justify the disclaimer that must arch over the entire project: There will be many instances in which information will be alluded to in initial sections, but not presented fully or applied until deeper into the paper. Also, there will be times where a particular aspect of this topic will not be completely presented in one particular location. Better said, this paper must be read with the understanding that it will jump ahead and

fold back on itself. My hope is that this paper will solidify and articulate itself when taken as a whole, with all sections working together (however awkwardly) to bring a better understanding of the process of migration.

As a side note I must inform the readers that the words "immigrant" and "migrant" are used interchangeably in the academic literature

Who is today's migrant?

In his work entitled *Immigrant America*, Alejandro Portes identifies four distinct types of migrants. These four designations reflect the different reasons for migration, the personal profile of the immigrant, and external variables. The first category is known as the Professional Immigrant. He is characterized by legal entry into the country through the proper immigration channels of the INS. Often venturing to the U.S. in search of better employment opportunities or the furthering of higher education, this class of immigrants represents a significant gain in highly trained personnel in this country. This so called "brain drain" from nations such as China, India, and the Philippines is encouraged by increasing numbers of visas provided under the U.S. Immigration Act of 1990. Since the focus of this paper is on the flow of immigrants from Mexico in particular, it is interesting to note that in regard to this professional class, Mexico sends the lowest percentage of professionals across the border. As a point of reference, Indian immigrants have 34% of their total first generation population filling the professional ranks whereas Mexican professionals represent a paltry 2.6% of their total immigrant population (Portes 1996).

The second group coming into the United States is the "Entrepreneurial Immigrants". This designation is delineated by the status of self-employment. Examples of these immigrant enterprises are ethnic grocery stores or restaurants located in areas of concentrated immigrant populations. Among Latinos, Cuban firms (construction, food service, etc.) constitute the largest number of these business ventures with over twice as many as those of Mexican ownership (Portes 1996).

The third classification is the refugee and those seeking political asylum. Due to

the turbulent nature of many nations throughout the world, potential immigrants see the United States as a safe haven from the threat of physical harm at the hands of their country's government. Throughout the 1980's, the Reagan Administration continued the practice of granting visas to this group of immigrants and thus conferring a legal resident status on them. Numbers from 1993 show that roughly 90% of immigrants that fall into this category are fleeing from Communist countries (Portes 1996).

The final designation is the "Labor Migrant". Of the four immigrant classes, the labor migrant group is the largest and is the main target of immigration control efforts (Portes 1996). The classification also represents the largest percentage of undocumented foreigners, mostly from Mexico. For example, in 1993 approximately 97% of all immigrants detained as "E.W.I." (Entry Without Inspection) were Mexican. Gaining access by sneaking across the border, using INS family reunification procedures, or as officially sanctioned "contract laborers", this class of immigrants helps to meet our nation's demand for manual laborers (Portes 1996). These men and women pour into the U.S. and find employment as agricultural workers, landscapers, construction workers, factory workers and domestic laborers. They do the jobs that Americans are no longer accepting, and doing them for less pay. They work long hours at backbreaking tasks day in and day out, especially those working in as farm laborers. According to the INS' 1993 figures for immigrant nationalities, over 45% of legal Mexican immigration for the year was by laborers. Said another way, almost half of the immigrants going though *legal* channels were coming to the U.S. to work in arguably the lowest sector of our work force.

So exactly how many Mexican immigrants are currently in the United States? This is quite a difficult question to answer for one simple reason: undocumented immigrants are not lining up for head counts by the U.S. government. To be an illegal alien in this nation is to carry the burden of constant fear of deportation or job loss. While the legal residents in possession of visas and other forms of documentation are recorded by agencies such as the INS and the U.S. Department of Labor, many *indocumentados* are not willing to divulge such sensitive information to anyone, let alone agencies like that U.S. Census Bureau. Conventional wisdom stated that immigrant flow trends could be noted in U.S. Border Patrol apprehension statistics, but not even these numbers reflect true illegal alien populations[1](Woodrow-Lafield 1998). Using studies generated by 1990 Census information, a plausible range for the level of undocumented immigrants emerges by taking the difference between an estimation of the total Mexican immigrant population and the number of legal residents. With this completed, a mean value of 3.8 million illegal aliens is obtained with an approximate total Mexican immigrant population of 10 million (Woodrow-Lafield 1998). One must keep in mind that these numbers are twelve years old. With the effects of globalism in North America not fully in play at the time of these estimations, it is almost certain that the current level is 50% greater. Actually, the population figures from the year 2000 census of the United States report that there were 32.8 million Latinos residing in this country with 39.1 percent (or 12.8 million) being foreign born (Therrien 2001). We must remember that these statistics do not account for the large numbers of undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.

[1] for reasons mentioned in section IV

Reasons for immigration:

While section II of this paper will delve into the web of factors driving immigration into the U.S. from Mexico, I want to take this opportunity to explore a few motives that occur on a micro scale. Through the course of my research a common theme emerges in the personal decisions to migrate: expectations. The hope of better wages translates into increased consumer goods and ultimately a better life. These increased life standard expectations provide the impetus to migrate in the pursuit of upward mobility (Portes 1996). This notion is credible enough given the steady diet of American cultural values that the nations of the world feed upon through modes of entertainment. Would-be immigrants see the materialism and wealth of our land and it fuels their own aspirations for contentment. This media propaganda becomes so engrained in Latino cultures that, "many immigrants symbolically equate the idea of journeying North geographically with rising economically and socially"(Portes 1996, 33). It is important to note that this is by no means the sole reason for immigration, but rather one that is easily identified on an individual level (Portes 1996). More examples of these micro-level themes are family conflicts (divorce, death, estrangement, etc) or merely the curiosity and adventure that springs forth from some romantic notion of America as the land of opportunity (Portes 1996). Unlike their Mexican counterparts, immigrants from Central America have more motives for migration that center around the political unrest from their native countries. The power struggles between government forces and guerrilla movements equate to violence (Chavez 1998).

These reasons for immigrating by no means constitute the full scope of factors driving immigration. In fact, relative to the broader, more complex factors, the several mentioned here carry little weight. They are simply mentioned as the most obvious, or most noted by the general population of the United States. The bigger picture is quite large. For example, in a study conducted by well-known migration sociologist Douglas Massey (et al) looking hard at the causes of immigration, individual acts of crossing the border were linked to 41 different determinants and predictors (Massey 1997). Clearly there are many more factors that play into the decision to migrate to the United States.

Increase in indigenous migrants:

Another trend that presents itself in the current literature is the increased immigration of indigenous peoples from Mexico. The causes of this phenomenon require a discussion of the effects of globalism in Mexico that will occur later in this paper. For now it will suffice to say that the movement of large agribusiness deeper into the farming economy of Mexico has inadvertently incorporated these peoples into a money-based economy that conflicts with their traditional subsistence living modes. As a result, more and more indigenous people (many speak Spanish as a second language) are migrating to the large cities and ultimately to the United States to seek employment in an effort to support families still located in rural areas (Portes 1996).[2]

Mexican agricultural and economic background:

To adequately cover this issue one would need to trace the historical ties of Latin America all the way back to the discovery of the New World in the late 15th century. For

[2] This issue will be revisited during the discussion of "NAFTA's consequences".

our purposes this discussion will pick up at the dawn of the last century. The first real influx of Mexican immigrants came after the Mexican revolution of 1917. Before the uprising of the original Zapatistas (and others) against the central government, the land ownership was grossly disproportionate. Roughly 5% of Mexico's wealthiest owned close to 90% of all lands in the country. Under the rally cry of "tierra y libertad" the colonial legacy of haciendas was dealt a serious blow as new government reforms reduced the number of peasants obligated to their *hacendados* (Bean 1997). The immediate result was a newly created segment of the Mexican population that was landless and jobless. What followed was a mass exodus of these liberated "serfs" to the United States is search of work. Some estimates say that 10% of Mexico's entire population emmigrated to the U.S., with about 20% from Northern Mexico. This initial surge in first generation Mexican immigrants was counterbalanced by large-scale deportations and a halt of immigration during the Depression in the U.S. during the 1930's (Bean 1997). During the latter part of the 20th century Mexico experienced an economic downfall of their own. Known as "La Crisis", the devaluing of the Peso in 1982 brought a nationwide depression from which Mexico is still struggling to recover (Chavez 1998). What resulted was the spiral of loans and debt repayment to international monetary organizations[3]. Forced into a set of neoliberalist policies dictated by these powerful banks, Mexico shifted its economic focus towards repayment strategies. In terms of food production, the country's agricultural sector converged toward large-scale export food that displaced Mexico's

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[3] Mexico was forced to turn to international monetary lenders like the IMF and World Bank to prevent total collapse of its economy. For several years after "La Crisis" the Peso continued its devaluation all the way down to one-eighth of its previous dollar value. As the economic situation in Mexico worsened, the government took steps to reduce expenditures by privatizing many state-owned enterprises. Real wages declined and living conditions for Mexico's working class and poor steadily worsened (González de la Rocha 2001).

subsistence crops. Essentially, the debts accrued by the nation served to transform the national economy into a "servant to the lender" identity. The move toward large scale, high export value crops like fruits and vegetables posed a problem for many subsistence farmers and those growing staple crops (grains, etc). With a series of four agricultural reforms in the early 1990's the Mexican government essentially cut off the credit, subsidies, distribution of land, secured crop prices, and food distribution services that enabled the smaller farmers to operate. In this gradual withdraw from the agricultural economy the government was encouraging foreign business investment while at the same time abandoning millions in the farming class that was created by revolution some 75 years earlier (Bean 1997). Today the agricultural landscape of Mexico is once again unequal. Large corporate growers own approximately 50% of the farmable land and most engage in the production of specialty crops destined for U.S. markets. Family farmers account for about 40% of the land holdings, and subsistence farmers roughly 10% (Bean 1997). Why is this important? Corporate infiltration into agriculture helps explain migration by virtue of the fact that it signals a gradual "push" of individuals off their land and into new job markets, via migration. Recall the brief statement about indigenous migration. The same principle is at work here: the influx of foreign capital and large transnational corporations into a country like Mexico is going to disrupt set patterns of life and cause people to seek out new ways of survival. One option happens to be immigration to the United States.

Defining terms: Human, social, and migration-specific capital

This initial section will conclude with a statement defining the particular assets that a migrant possesses. In the academic literature sociologists refer to the acquired skills

of a migrant in terms of three types of capital: Human capital, social capital and migration-specific capital. While this "capital" is not used in common financial sense, it does denote particular assets. For instance, to say that an individual had a large amount of "human capital", in the context of labor markets world mean that he had education, skills, and experience that make him competitive in the search for employment.(Massy 948) As we shall see in a later overview of various immigration theories, this type of capital is an important key to an immigrant's successful incorporation into foreign job markets and thus affects the decision to migrate. The second type of "capital" I discuss in this paper is "migration-specific human capital". This set of assets is defined as skills, knowledge, and abilities that a migrant acquires during participation in the U.S. labor economy. As with the general human capital, these acquired characteristics play a vital role in the success of the migration process (Massey 1997). The last type of capital is "social capital". It is the sum of the resources that accrue to a group or individual via a network of informal relationships. In general, social ties can have potential value. Perhaps someone knows another person who can pull some strings and bring about a positive result for him. In turn, he owes a favor, and so on. In the realm of migration these ties to established migrants in the U.S. have all kinds of advantages. New immigrants utilize their social capital of family and friends already in the United States to aid them in finding employment, lodging and assimilating to life in a foreign land (Massey 1997). These terms will come into play in the following section as we look at the reasons for immigration.

II. Contexts of Reception:

The first section of this paper defined what an immigrant is, while touching on some factors leading to migration and defining useful terms. The focus now shifts to the question of migration forces. This portion will look into the various ways in which potential migrants are "pushed" to the United States as well as factors that serve to "pull" them across the border.

Among the many problems in the sending countries that lead people to emigrate there are several that stand out. As the previous section mentioned, political struggles have quite a disruptive effect on life in any given country. Even a glance at regions like Chiapas or areas like Central America will validate this claim. Yet, in the literature concerning Mexico, no current trends of emigration due to political upheaval seem to emerge. Rather, it is the Mexican economy that supplies the pushing force. As stated previously, the devaluation of the Peso and the subsequent shift to the insertion of transnational corporations bring the problem to bear. First, a major motivation to emigrate is the escape from poverty. In a stagnant economy with no increasing development chronic *underemployment* is a problem that most emigrants solve by seeking higher wages. In Mexico, the pie is sliced so many ways that the emigrant realizes that the only way to get a bigger piece to is go somewhere else. I note this distinction between "unemployment" and "underemployment" because unemployment is not the problem. In fact, only about 5% of immigrants (legal or illegal) were unemployed in Mexico. What's more, among undocumented workers in the U.S., 35%-60% were employed in skilled occupations back in Mexico (Portes 1996). Therefore, the "push" in this instance comes not from a lack of jobs, but from the lack of well-paid jobs.

Also operating as a "push" force is the increasing landlessness by farmers in the lower classes. As stated before, the invasion of agricultural corporations has indirectly put many farmers out of business via the Mexican government's gradual withdraw from this sector of the economy. No longer can small farmers in Mexico receive credit and subsidies they need to operate. The result is a change in lifestyle and survival strategy- one that ultimately leads to the border.

What kind of "pull factors" come into play? Basically, it boils down to attraction. The economic advantages that the United States has to offer prove to be a strong lure to those aspiring a better life. The mass media feeds potential immigrants the notion that a "better life" translates into material goods. The U.S. culture that is propagated via the radio, movies and television project these enticements of money and freedom and set the standard of what expectations and aspirations should be (Portes 1996). In short, one could argue that a good deal of immigration today is the consequence of the broadcasting of American cultural values that cannot be obtained in Mexico (consumption patterns, emphasis on luxury). It also stands to reason that those with the most exposure to the media bombardment will be the most likely to cross the border. They are the ones being reached. They are the ones who are being indoctrinated with the idea that happiness and success means dollars, and that the United States means dollars. Conversely, those living in the most abject poverty, who would seemingly have the most to gain do not have the same aspirations. I can testify to this phenomenon through my own personal experience in Peru. Among friends in the middle and upper classes I fielded many questions about life in the States and possible ways of getting there. In the poorer places and among those of lower socioeconomic strata, I did not note nearly as much interest in the United States

or material things. All this to say that the proclamation of the American Dream and an increased level of expectation by immigrants supplies a large pulling force.

Up to this point there has been one large assumption overarching the entire discussion of "push" and "pull" factors. So far this model of immigration has assumed that movement of individuals occurs primarily because of the motivations and actions of the migrants (Portes 1996). Yet, Portes is quick to assert, "immigrant flows are not initiated solely by the desires and dreams of people in other lands, but by the designs and interests of well-organized groups in the receiving country..."(Portes 1996). This assumption shows how the "push-pull" model fails to truly predict migration outcomes. It does not take into account the huge influence that social structures in both the sending and receiving communities exert on the migrant's ability to successfully incorporate himself in a new country (Portes 1996). Portes goes on to say that, "the decision to migrate is group mediated and its timing and destination is determined largely by the social context of networks established over time" (Portes 1996). In the following paragraphs we will go on to see what exactly the author means by this statement. For now, his words make it clear that there is more to the migratory process than a simple estimation of how much a person stands to gain and/or lose by leaving Mexico. In fact, Portes contends that any "migration by [an] isolated individual based on const-benefit calculations is an exceptional event." (Portes 1996).

If this complex process of migration involves is not fueled solely by the aspirations and expectations of the migrant, what really is at play? A quote in the previous paragraph alluded to the notion that migration is: 1) a group event 2) a gradual process occurring over time. In discussing the latter point first it is clear that family and

community histories play a big role in subsequent migration trends. The literature defines the first group of migrants to venture over the border as "pioneers". In a sense this description fits nicely. These men and women travel across the border and establish themselves and their way of life much like the Americans of the 18th and 19th centuries. Historically, many Mexican "pioneers" started their northern migration in response to events in Mexico (e.g. the Revolution of 1921). Still, it is interesting to note that many Mexican family migration histories began in the early 1940's as the U.S. government searched for a substitute labor force due to American enlistment in World War II. Known as the "Bracero Program", this U.S. immigration policy stipulated that employers could hire Mexican labor for a pre-determined period (usually several months), after which the Mexican laborers returned home. The actual program began in 1942 when the labor-intensive cotton industry called on the U.S. government to assist them in their search for workers. It officially ended several years later, but continued to be in effect until 1964. (Chavez 1998). During that 22-year period, 4.6 million Mexican laborers were imported to the United States (Bean 1997).

Needless to say, quite a few Mexican men had made frequent trips across the border. The resulting contacts and migration-specific capital that these laborers created managed to lay the groundwork for subsequent generations. In fact, many of the psychological and social bridges built by the fathers' migration allowed children of Bracero laborers to follow in their footsteps, relying on contacts previously made (Chavez 1998). These contacts might be with a particular employer and ensure employment opportunities upon arrival to the United States. These contacts may also be of a social design. Friends, family and acquaintances that are already settled in the

receiving country are also an invaluable asset to the Mexican migrant. The collective group of these social contacts in one geographic location is known as a "network". Simply put, a network is people who connect origin to destination and provide resources (money, job and housing contacts, etc) for the migrant. For a particular migrant, a network may consist of kinship groups, neighbors, etc, and serves as a motor for immigration (Chavez 1998). This social process of network formation begins as "pioneer" migrants travel North in search of work. These laborers establish economic opportunities and social ties linking the sending and receiving county. These successful migrants return with information to facilitate the journey for other migrants. At a certain point the network grows strong enough to allow migration for more than just economic reasons. These varied reasons might include family reunification, increased educational opportunities, and better care for children of immigrants (Portes 1996). Portes also concludes that "without such knowledge [of networks]...it is very difficult for a person to imagine migrating to the U.S."(Portes 1996, 31). Chavez concludes his own discussion of the important role that a network plays in the migration process:

> Back in the canyon I found it interesting how the farm workers managed to get from a small village in rural Mexico to a specific ranch in the U.S. while knowing so little about the environment in between...The general consensus among the farm workers, however, is that the surest way to make the trip is with someone who has already made at least one migration (Chavez 1998, 73).

The Migrant Labor Market:

Migrants coming from Mexico in search of new opportunities and advancement are often forced into situations that are quite different from their optimistic notions. The average immigrant laborer earns little more than our nation's minimum wage. As is usually the case, employment offering the bare minimum does not include any fringe benefits. Most Mexican migrants receive no medical or dental coverage into their terms of employment. Of course, extra incentives such as vacations and pension plans are excluded as well (Chavez 1998).

Access to work comes in the form of entry-level positions in startup ventures and enterprises needing cheap labor. Since these newcomers to the labor market are usually unsure of job prospects and the availability of any work, migrants tend to take the first offer that they find. There is usually no selectivity on the part of the migrant and most of the jobs held by first-time migrants are secured through connections in the network of the receiving immigrant community. The trend is to initially get "plugged in" to the resources of the network and then accept whatever employment presents itself (Portes 1996). This form of indirect recruitment favors the employer because the responsibility for seeking out work is on the shoulders of the immigrant. Harkening back to the discussion of the Bracero Program, it is evident that the burden of connecting laborers to work started at the official end of this recruitment strategy. By 1947 the war was over and the U.S. government decided that it was time to, in the words of an official government publication, "dry out the wetbacks". The young men who had fought in the fields of battle were now returning to the fields of U.S. agriculture and the demand for Mexican labor was no longer as pressing. Yet, by the 1950's the actual number of Mexican

migrants crossing the border and obtaining work permits was ten times larger than during the war (Bean 1997). Speculation suggests that this increase was due in large part to greedy farmers benefiting from the reduced wages that labor surpluses brought (Bean 1997). In any case, the "official" end of the Bracero program began the move away from formal recruitment (employer seeking employee) and the shifting of responsibility onto the migrant for locating and transporting himself to the job (Bean 1997). In essence, the migrant now had to rely heavily on the resources of networks to gain information about possible employment and to figure out how to get to the job site. This same model holds true even today, but the Department of Labor does have a protocol for employers to acquire laborers from Mexico. Basically, the employer must prove that there is a labor shortage in his area. He then submits a request for seasonal workers to the Department of Labor. This request then flows from the INS to the Mexican consulate and finally to the official port of entry on the U.S.-Mexican border. Thus, in a roundabout manner, the U.S. government is a social network of its own, providing resources (legal entry, employment, transportation to the job) for the migrants (Bean 1997). It is interesting to note that there is more than just an economic factor at work in the manner by which migrants obtain jobs. Portes notes that racial stereotypes often restrict migrants to certain labor sectors of the U.S. economy. Because employers are human and have biases just like anyone else, their hiring practices are affected by racial prejudice. The result is that employers in an area discriminate against a particular ethnic group to the point that only stereotypical jobs are attainable, if at all (Portes 1996). An example would be a young Mexican male who can find no one to hire him except for farm work or some other type of grueling manual labor. Another factor that compounds the discrimination problem is the lack of English-

speaking ability. To an English-speaking employer who knows no Spanish, the prospect of hiring laborers who he cannot communicate with is not entirely appealing. This is one issue that may force laborers into places of vulnerability[4] (Chavez 1998).

Living arrangements:

An important addition to this discussion of the labor market and new employer/employee relations is the issue of housing. In his book *Working Poor* Griffith notes that the need of migrant housing is such a large factor that it is, "a central component of the farm labor market"(Griffith 1995). While some employers do supply their seasonal work crews with living arrangements, (families are housed and men are boarded in barracks) but often this detail is left up to the migrant. One common housing strategy for many migrants is to crowd large numbers of people in a single residence (Griffith 1995). There are a couple of popular theories regarding the actual living situation of Latino migrant that account for this phenomenon, but as Susan Blank proposes, another element must be introduced to bring a complete picture of living arrangements. The first popular notion of Latino housing groups is that the size of a household is a result of cultural values. Latino households are often comprised of an extended kinship groups. Therefore it is assumed that social and cultural norms in the Latino community involve extended households. In addition to this idea, it is thought that migrants are naturally inclined to incorporate themselves in these large households because they are less acculturated to life in the United States. Yet, as Blank explains, this is not necessarily the case (Blank 1998). If one indicator of assimilation to American culture is fluency of the English language, then Blank's study suggests that the level of

[4] see section four

acculturation is not a factor in living arrangements. Therefore, those immigrants who speak English proficiently are just as likely to find themselves in these types of high occupancy living arrangements as those who have just crossed the border. As such, the level of acculturation cannot be pegged as the major explanation in this particular habitation trend (Blank 1998).

Another idea is that economic standing determines the living situation that migrants engage in. The common assumption is that migrants tend to live in large households with the hopes of reducing the cost of rent and aiding in the accumulation of capital (Blank 1998). Yet, like the previous point, quantitative studies conducted by Blank concluded that economic standing does not have a negative independent effect on living in large households for Latino immigrants. Therefore, the extended living arrangements are not solely a phenomenon arising from economic necessity and thus, are not the key explanatory factor (Blank 1998).

How can the pattern of large Latino immigrant households be explained? In her study, "Understanding the Living Arrangements of Latino Immigrants: A Life Course Approach", Blank proposes that immigrant living arrangements parallel life-course events. These events are identified as periods of varying levels of economic dependence, the need for privacy, childcare, elderly care, etc (Blank 1998). In addition, life course variables (that can bring about these "events") are the best determinants in predicting extended kinship living arrangements for Latino immigrants. The variables include, but are not limited to: sex, presence of young children, marital status of occupants, relative ages (Blank 1998). What's more, issues like marriage, parenting and elderly care are vital in understanding the decisions of extended families to share living quarters. For

example, young single adults who are struggling to gain solid financial footing will be more likely to live in a large household. They have less need for privacy and this arrangement can facilitate the accumulation of capital for marriage or other goal. Upon marriage, the couple's increased need for privacy is met by finding less crowded housing. Yet, as children are born, the increased cost of living, new financial vulnerability and need for childcare make these large households an essential part of the family survival strategy. This notion is especially true when the mother works (Blank 1998). Also, care for the elderly, is analogous to childcare in that extended family living provides an alternative to more expensive options like nursing homes. In fact, the trend of Latino elderly living is exemplified in the statistic that the Latino elderly are, "two times as likely to reside in homes of extended family than the U.S. population at large" (Blank 1998, 6).

III. Immigration Policy Issues:

In this section we will take a look at the prevailing immigration theories of the day and the policy initiatives that they bring about. As stated previously, a theory is the explanatory statement that arises from a noted trend or phenomenon and tries to incorporate all facets of the trend in an effort to provide thorough understanding of the causes and effects. Migration theories are no different. These theories try to find the strengths of association between observed events and their causes. Why is this important? Clearly, a theoretical approach to any subject has real-world value only to the extent that practical applications spring forth. So it is with immigration theory and the United States government. The government uses migration theories to dictate migration policies and

enact migration legislation. As we shall see later in this section, government policy does have an impact on immigration and the migrants themselves. The results of this policy can exclude immigrants, passively accept them, or even actively encourage them to enter the U.S. (Portes 1996). We have already seen how the Bracero Program was a fine example of active government recruitment.

In order to adequately discuss the current U.S. immigration policy and its deficiencies, an outline of the various migration theories must precede. As such, the following is an overview of five different theories:

1) Neoclassical Theory of Migration:

This theory states that migrants make a "cost-benefit" calculation as the means of deciding whether or not to migrate to the United States. In other words, a migrant will determine wage differentials based on projected U.S. earnings and those wages he is earning is Mexico. Basically, "How much do I stand to earn in the States? How much am I earning now?" Then, when the projected cost of the move is factored in to the equation, a time frame for when the migrant can expect to "break even" will be evident. The sum total is that if the expected benefits of migration outweigh the anticipated costs, then the migrant will cross the border (Massey 1997). This theory has been the cornerstone of much of the U.S. government's immigration policy and legislation.

Now recall Portes' quote on page 11. He says, "migration by [an] isolated individual based on cost-benefit calculations is an exceptional event"(Portes 1996, 277). Therefore, when the U.S. government subscribes to the neoclassical notion that raising costs of migration while reducing its benefits will curb the flow of immigrants into this country, it is mistaken (Massey 1997). A later portion of this paper dealing with the

deficiencies in government policy will delve deeper into this issue. But for now, we must note that this theory cannot adequately explain migration. If it did put forth a firm explanation for the process of U.S. immigration than a couple of things would take place. First, this theory would make provision for institutions such as networks and other forms of social capital. As it is, there is no mention made of any of these important resources, only the idea of a simple calculation guiding such a huge alteration of the migrant's life. Secondly, this theory would stand up under the historical events that should bring about increased migration. The devaluation of the Mexican Peso in the 1980's[5] did not increase the likelihood of out migration as the Neoclassical theory should have predicted. With a staggering economy in Mexico, migrants stood to calculate a much higher wage differential that should have resulted in a mass exodus of Mexican migrants to the United States. As it turned out, there was actually less migration due to the fact that the currency devaluation made it too expensive to migrate- especially for those without any migration-specific human capital (see page 7)(Massey 962). The bottom line is that this particular theory is simply too limited in scope to be of any true value.

Instead, Massey asserts that migration comes about from forces identified by the "social capital theory" and the "new economics of migration" as opposed to the cost-benefit calculations of the Neoclassical model (Massey 1997). We have already defined the term "social capital" as "the potential value that is inherent in social relationships between people". Given this definition, the Social Capital theory states that migration is a process driven by networks that link the migrant to employers, housing, and other family members. Douglas Massey identified many types of social capital: the migration

[5] see page 6

history of the parents and siblings, the number of sending community members in the U.S. during the migration of another community member, and the number of legalized family or community members living in the United States. In a sense, the Social Capital Theory incorporates the neoclassical theory's cost-benefit calculation by virtue of the fact that these networks and other forms of "social capital" reduce the costs of the migration while providing benefits (employment, housings, etc). Yet, these "costs and benefits" are not strictly in terms of money. Nevertheless, this Social Capital theory is like the neoclassical theory in that it does predict for a decision to migrate based on a favorable cost-benefit analysis (Massey 1997). This social capital theory suggests that the natural result of networks facilitating migration is an expansion of social capital. This will inevitably cause the networks to grow, leading to an increased ability to aid migrants. The social capital creates more migration, which in turn, creates more social capital. It is a self-perpetuating process (Massey 1997).

The second theory that Massey identifies as a good explanation of the forces driving migration is "New Economics". Briefly stated, this theory suggests that Mexicans migrate in the hopes of acquiring capital to fund enterprising ventures back in Mexico. In this theory the true impetus for migration is the need for capital (Massey 1997). Often, Mexican laborers simply do not have access to capital in a home economy that is struggling to stay afloat as it is. As such, many migrants seek out new ways to gain access to capital via migration. The money that is accrued over the employment period in the U.S. is then brought back to Mexico and invested in various manners. A common example is a laborer who wants to earn enough money to buy or construct a home in

Mexico. For this transnational migrant, crossing the border and working in the United States is a means to acquiring the funds with which to build.

The "Push vs. Pull" model (also know as the Neoclassical model) states that it is the wage differential that determines whether migration will occur. Based on this theory it is not the amount of money that the migrant earns in the U.S. that is a driving factor. Rather, it is how far the money that one earns will stretch upon returning to the sending country. Therefore, the principle economic variable that will determine the likelihood of an individual crossing the border is the exchange rate in Mexico, not wages in the United States (Massey 1997). This is definitely a different approach to the explanation of migration trends, but in drawing from my own personal experience I can see merit in this theory. Having worked alongside manual laborers and inquired as to their reasons for traveling such great distances to work for such meager pay (as a fifteen year-old I was making a higher hourly wage than Latino men much older than me) I learned that many of them were saving what little money they did make to buy houses back in Mexico or provide better economic support for families back home- a subject covered in section 4.

In addition to the "Social Capital Theory" and the "New Economics of Migration" there are other migration theories that take different approaches in explaining why Mexican migration occurs. The "Segmented Labor Market Theory" suggests that it is a U.S. based need for labor that influences Mexico-U.S. migration. This theory proposes that the Post-Industrial economy of the United States creates an intrinsic need for people to fill the ranks of the service and manual labor sectors (Massey 1997). Therefore, it is the growth of the U.S. economy that actually encourages migration from Mexico by

virtue of the fact that more people are needed to hand pick the produce, sew the garments, and clean the hotel rooms (Massey 1997).

The "World Systems Theory" was born out of the idea that Globalism and its effects have led to an increase in transnational migration. The insertion of transnational corporations into periphery nations creates a disruptive force that eventually leads to the formation of a nomadic population (Massey 1997). As was mentioned earlier in the background of Mexico's economy, this capital-intensive invasion into traditionally subsistence-living regions and regions of labor intensive production has radically altered the economies of many areas. This shift in means of production alienates many individuals, forcing them into their migratory patterns. The "World Systems Theory" also predicts which areas are most likely the targets of big business and the subsequent out-migration that it brings. On the community level, areas with better infrastructure, better educational programs and more social services are most likely to be invested in by corporations (Massey 1997). This makes sense, because the presence of adequate roads, schools and healthcare already in place decreases the amount of time and money that transnational corporations have invest in an area. Furthermore, it is these areas of increased "development" that boast higher wages and higher levels of self-employment than the underdeveloped rural areas. Massey notes, "[l]iving in a community with high levels of industrial development and wages does not reduce the likelihood of undocumented migration to the U.S.; on the contrary, high levels of development and wages raise it"(Massey 1997, 961). The conclusion is that these higher wage earners and self-employed entrepreneurs are more likely to become migrants. Their home communities are attractive to big corporations. They are the ones who cannot compete

with the influx of foreign dollars and new modes of production. They are the ones who seek out migration as a means of securing capital to try to compete (to some degree) in the new homeland economy that has sprung up. In this way, the "World Systems Theory" ties in nicely to the theory of "New Economics" in that the need for capital to fund enterprises in Mexico is a driving force for migration.

The previous theories promote the means by which sociologists and public policy makers explain trends in migration and seek to create legislation to address the issue (usually with the goal of decreasing the flow of migrants). So in the effort to understand how the U.S. government reacts to the topic of Mexican migration, we must identify the theoretical frameworks that are guiding it. To recap:

The "Neoclassical Theory of Migration" states that migrants decide to cross the border using a cost-benefit calculation. Therefore, the chances of migration are positively related to the U.S.-Mexico wage differential. The larger the wage gap, the more likely Mexicans are to come over the border (Massey 1997). The "Social Capital Theory" states that it is the number and strength of relational connections and the presence of migration networks that provide the impetus for migration. Rather than a wage differential being the key factor in the migration process, it is the amount of social capital that an individual possesses that will determine whether or not he migrates. The theory of "New Economics" proposes that migration is a strategy for acquiring the capital needed for financial ventures back in the migrant's sending community. The level of real exchange rates in the sending economy dictates this migratory phenomenon. This rate will determine the value of the wages earned during the migration and is therefore a key marker in predicting increases in migration from Mexico. As the real interest rates rise,

the level of migration also rises (Massey 1997). The "Segmented Labor Systems Theory" says that migration is positively related to the growth of the United States economy. The United States' need for a larger labor force provides the driving force for Mexican migration. So, in times of U.S. economic downturn, migration is expected to fall off. Conversely, periods of economic prosperity bring increased migration flows from Mexico (Massey 1997). The "World Systems Theory" identifies the current trend of Globalism as a key factor in transnational migration. The theory seeks to predict from where migrant flows are most likely to come: areas of increased development that transnational corporations tend to gravitate towards. So the chances of migration are highest in "dynamic, developing communities" and lower in less-industrialized region.

There is no way of knowing which explanation is the strongest among these five theories. Based on the data complied in Massey's study, each of the theories can be defended only in a "narrow sense". This problem is due to the fact that each theory tries to pinpoint a certain observation as the root cause for a process that has so many interlocking causes. One theory focuses in on wages, while the next looks at the broader "labor economy". Yet, another theory explores interpersonal associations as they relate to migration and still another at the operation of world markets. Each of these theories has its own slant. Perhaps taken as a whole, they might be able to provide a well-rounded picture of what truly is driving Mexican migration to the United States. We now move from the theoretical realm of migration into a real-world context.

NAFTA's consequences on migration:

Off the heels of a discussion regarding World Systems and their effects on migration, we launch into the complex social processes that NAFTA has brought about. First we must ask the question, "what is NAFTA?" The North American Free Trade Agreement was tri-lateral trade pact between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Officially starting in 1994, this agreement created a North American free trade zone in the hope that free movement of goods across the borders would stimulate economic growth for all three countries. Of the three countries involved, Mexico stood to experience the greatest economic surge as international investment by foreign companies seeking easier access to U.S. markets poured in (Bean 1997). The plan was for Mexico to supply the unskilled, semi-skilled products that were labor intensive, while the United States and Canada exported capital, staple crops and capital-intensive products south to Mexico (Riggs 1993). All three nations were going to win. In fact, when NAFTA's proponents tried to sell this agreement in the 1980's and early 1990's, they even went as far as to claim that NAFTA would curb immigrant flow from Mexico to the U.S. Their rationale was this: the economic growth that arose from NAFTA would create more jobs in Mexico and reduce the need for Mexicans to seek work in the United States (Bean 1997). A contrasting claim says that NAFTA will lead to more U.S. immigration because of foreign investment in Mexico. The "World Systems Theory" predicted that infiltration of foreign capital into Mexico would lead to a "displacement" of workers who do not fit into the new economic structure of Mexico. Small and medium-sized businesses in Mexico will be put out of competition by large foreign firms. The labor-intensive means of production by the native businesses employ many more workers than the streamlined

and mechanized processes of the large transnational corporations. The result is unemployment in Mexico and a subsequent move to the U.S. to find work (Bean 1997). U.S. agribusiness does the same thing to Mexico's traditional grain producers. The more mechanized process of grain production in the United States allows its growers to undercut the prices of staple crops in Mexico. As we saw in the first section of this paper, the inability of the Mexican government to impose any protections in favor of Mexican growers or subsidize the means of production has crippled Mexican agriculture. In short, those who were once producing staple crops in Mexico can no longer compete and are forced out of business. Once again, this leads to joblessness and ultimately migration (Bean 1997).

It is evident that the critics of NAFTA have the "World Systems Theory" in mind as they predict the effects of this trade agreement on migration in North America. The movement of capital from a geographical source (in this case, the United States) to another area will invariably draw people to that source. This notion was not truly considered when Congress drafted this bill in the early 1990's. Human Rights provisions were made and environmental guidelines were placed in the agreement, but oddly enough, "NAFTA made no provision for labor migration"(Bean 1997, 274). In so doing, the U.S. government sought to benefit from the good economics of NAFTA and disregard the inevitable social consequences. The author sums it up well in saying, "...experience around the world has shown that economic integration tends to foster social integration. Freer trade encourages investment which generally stimulates cultural interaction and ultimately labor migration" (Bean 1997, 274).

The question then remains: what are NAFTA's true effects? At this point NAFTA is only eight years old. Given the amount of time it usually takes to generate informative studies and perceive valid trends in this type of sociological phenomenon, it is still much too early to draw any solid conclusions. In addition, a lack of accurate illegal immigrant reporting clouds the NAFTA/migration picture. Also, NAFTA's true effects on migration from Mexico will not be understood because the multiple causation of Mexican migration cannot give definitive information. Recall how the five different theories of migration all seek to answer the question of why immigrants were flooding into the United States. Each theory is pertinent and lends valuable insight into migrations causes. Yet, each theory is incomplete by itself because there are too many facets to this topic. The possible effects of NAFTA are simply another facet rather than the definitive answer to the question of why people migrate North to the United States. Still, there are four hypothesis regarding NAFTA's possible effects on migration: First, NAFTA would lead to the steady reduction of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. Second, NAFTA would actually increase the flow of migrants. Third, the effects of NAFTA would increase flow for a period of time and then decrease it. Finally, NAFTA would have absolutely no effects on North American migrant flow whatsoever (Bean 1997). What will occur? That remains to be seen. Still, with the points made in this discussion of NAFTA, it is reasonable to conclude that this trade agreement will have some effect.

Deficiencies in U.S. Immigration Policy:

With a cursory understanding of the various theories that explain Mexican-U.S. migration the focus now turns to policies and legislation within state and federal governments of the United States. To begin this section, we must attempt to find out from

which theoretical framework is the government working. From there, we can discern the origin of perceived problems in the migration policy that results. Let me begin by saying that in the course of my research I have yet to find any sociologist who has words of praise for the United States government's treatment of the Mexican immigration issue. David Massey, a leading sociologist in the field of migration simply says, "the theoretical foundations of U.S. immigration policy are flawed"(Massey 1997, 940). What "theoretical foundations" does the government subscribe to? Alejandro Portes asserts that much of the U.S. government's policy is born out of the "Push vs. Pull" theory and is enacted without thought to the historical and social origins of migration (Portes 1996). Unlike the "World Systems Theory" or the "Social Capital Theory", which make allowances for background forces of history and social interaction, it seems that the U.S. Government's myopic view of the issue considers only the immediate benefits presented to a migrant as the key force pulling him across the border. The prevailing policy solution is roughly this: "If we limit short term incentives then we can reduce the "pull" to this country and immigration levels will decline." Whether the incentives are easy access to employment or social services such as healthcare and education, the wide-spread notion in the U.S. government is that denying access to these attractors will staunch the flow of migrants.

This paper will look at two pieces of legislation (one federal, one from the State of California) that provide a fairly accurate picture of how migration policy is "flawed". The first example came from the United States Congress in 1986. The Immigration Reform Control Act (IRCA) was passed in the mid-1980's with the goal of controlling unauthorized immigration. The first main stipulation of the Act was the implementation

of an amnesty program to regularize the status of illegal immigrants who had already lived for a period of time in the U.S. Those who could prove continuous residence in the U.S. since the beginning of 1982 received permanent amnesty (Bean 1997). The intention was to bring the alien population to the surface and basically wipe the slate clean. The second provision of the IRCA was the civil and criminal prosecution of employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers. By penalizing the employer, the hope was to make it impossible for new immigrants to find work in the U.S. (Portes 1996). Before the final draft of the IRCA was put on the books, pro-migrant business lobbyist succeeded in several additions. The first involved the semantics of the employer's obligation to not hire undocumented workers. With this extra provision an employer was required only to check for documents, not verify their authenticity. Naturally, a counterfeit industry quickly sprang up and essentially nullified the original provision that precluded the hiring of illegal immigrants (Portes 1996). Migrant lobbying also managed to secure a special amnesty for 1.2 million special agricultural workers (SAWs), thus ensuring that employers had ample labor (Portes 1996). With the SAWs, the general amnesty granted under the IRCA ended up legalizing over 3 million undocumented workers (Bean 1997). Essentially, the IRCA failed in its goal to reduce the number of Mexican migrants coming to the United States. The underlying reason for this policy failure is because the social networks supporting immigration and the organized political resources of North American lobbyist proved too strong (Portes 1996). The IRCA's theoretical basis was that employment was the sole attractant for migrants. The sponsors of this bill failed to realize the impact that social connections had on migration. The IRCA called for an amnesty that gave a legalized status to over three million migrants who were previously

undocumented. Consider the amount of social capital that this bill created when it solidified migrants' positions in the United States. From these legalized migrants came stronger networks that were fortified by a newfound legal status as documented residents of the U.S. Furthermore, this legal status could be upgraded to full U.S. citizenship within 3 to 5 years (Portes 1996). Therefore the IRCA only succeeded in facilitating more migration. This notion is especially true given that another bill 4 years later eased the restrictions on "importing" family members from Mexico. The Immigration Act of 1990 actually allowed the migrants legalized under the IRCA to sponsor relatives for legal immigration. The net result of the IRCA's amnesty program was an increase in immigration flows from Mexico. This experience serves as a valuable object lesson for ignoring the importance of social structures and relying on antiquated notions of immigration (Portes 1996).

Another way in which the IRCA fell short was in its plan to penalize employers for illegal hiring practices. The intention of legislators was to threaten employers with stiff civil and criminal sanctions if they hired undocumented workers. This would in turn make the *indocumentados* less appealing and make their employment less of a possibility. Without job opportunities, no migration would occur. The legislation was severely weakened by the addendum of the pro-migrant business lobbyist; without being held responsible for the certification of documents held by workers, U.S. employers continued to hire illegal migrants. In a sense, the IRCA did very little to affect the employer and the employee. Not only was the IRCA a weak deterrent for illegal hiring in the preferred labor pool of Mexican immigrants, but it also had very little authority to actually enforce any penalties if employers were caught. In short, the United States Government did not

realize that, "Mass labor migration does not arise out of the desires of the would-be migrants, but out of the needs and interests of powerful groups in the receiving country"(Portes 1996, 279). Who was backing those lobbyists who succeeded in negating the initial labor restrictions of the IRCA by only requiring documents, forged or real? Could it have been the rural and urban employers who did not want their inexpensive labor to be cut off? The consequences of the IRCA's failure on migrants themselves will be explored later. For now, it will suffice to say that this piece of legislation is a sterling example of misguided policy.

The second example of unfounded immigration policy comes from the State of California. In the effort to remedy the drastic increase of Mexican migrants into the State, California held a plebiscite regarding an anti-immigration law entitled, "Proposition 187". The bill stipulated that all undocumented migrants would be barred access to any and all government services. This action meant that education and public health services (except emergency care) were available only to legal citizens and residents (Portes 1996). The rationale behind "Prop 187" was that denial of "benefits" to migrants would decrease the "pull" of migration and its subsequent flow of individuals over the border. Like the IRCA, this bill narrowly focused on reducing the attraction of the U.S. without taking the social forces of networks and previous migration history into account (Portes 1996). Also like the IRCA, Prop 187 was concerned primarily with the magnet of one attractant (e.g. social services) to the exclusion of other factors. Did this bill work? The answer is no. Proposition 187 backfired in the sense that the restricted benefits (education, healthcare, welfare, etc) had no real statistical effect on the chances of undocumented migration (Massey 1997). In fact, Portes notes that of the 90 percent of

future immigrants who knew about Prop 187, 80 percent stated that the passage of this legislation would have no effect on their decision to migrate (Portes 1996). Even Massey notes in the conclusion of his study, "California's Proposition 187 can be expected to have little overall influence on the arrival of new undocumented migrants" (Massey 1996, 964). The bottom line is that this legislation did not work as an immigration deterrent because it was not aimed at the right contextual forces that drive immigration. No doubt it saved the state government money, but it did not seem to have its intended effect.

This trend in anti-immigration legislation even found its way to the other side of the United States. In taking Proposition 187 to a new level, the State of Florida tried to pass a bill that would provide access to social services exclusively to U.S. citizens. This measure would have blocked even *legal* residents from health programs, social security, job training, housing assistance, etc (Chavez 1998).

Another alarming trend in anti-immigration policy targets not the productive members of migrant society (adult males), but rather the *reproductive* members of society. Women and their young children are now the focal point of immigration opponents because of their increased likelihood to use social services and their ability to bring growth in the Latino migrant population (Chavez 1998). A later section will revisit this point.

Another twist on this strategy to limit the migrant population by limiting reproduction is the reintroduction of guest worker programs. These throwbacks to the Bracero Program of the mid 20th century encourage the temporary immigration and exclude the population growth aspect. It is "production without reproduction"(Chavez

1998). Will these new avenues for disrupting Mexican migration achieve their goals? Only time can tell. A final thought from *At the Crossroads* sums up this discussion well:

> Government action is notoriously ineffective in deterrence of migration flows. If people want to go somewhere, they will usually find a way to get there. So long as unemployment and underemployment persist in Mexico, and more to the point, so long as wage differentials approach ratios of 10:1 - citizens of that country will seek employment in the U.S. And so long as U.S. employers want to take advantage (in many senses) of this labor pool, there will be jobs available. There are limits to what governments and policies can do (Bean 1997, 275).

Having ample criticism for the current state of government migration policy, one must wonder if any course of action can succeed in stemming the tide of Mexican migrants. In a brief aside, I must declare that it is not the intention of this paper to pass judgment on Mexican migration as either a good thing or a bad thing. I believe I have shown their contributions to the U.S. labor force as well as related some anti-immigrant sentiments as evidenced by governmental policies. In so doing, I have strived to keep the focus of my research and paper on simply understanding this topic. There are several alternative policy initiatives that I have stumbled across in the course of my research. While being a little too far-fetched to provide any practical solutions to decreasing immigrant flow from Mexico, these idealistic plans are still worth mentioning. The first alternative strategy to curtail U.S. immigration is to devise a stimulus plan to foster economic growth in Mexico. Upon first mentioning one might remark that this was one of NAFTA's aims. True, but an internal, self-sustaining Mexican economy that would

decrease emigration cannot come about in a system driven by the extraction relationship that NAFTA encourages. Only when national industry can replace large foreign corporations and Mexico is no longer dependent on other nations' capital can this ideal be realized (Portes 1996). One way in which national industry can be strengthened is through the networks and social constructs in the United States turning back and investing capital in their sending communities (Portes 1996). If the U.S. and Mexican governments could find ways to stimulate small-scale production in various industries throughout Mexico, then perhaps Latino communities in the U.S. would invest. Also, within the confines of NAFTA, the flexible trade environment is beneficial to such micro enterprises. The chain reaction of increased industry would boost the Mexican economy, decrease U.S. immigration, and possibly even promote return migration from the U.S (Portes 1996). As stated before, this is a rather utopian view, but one not out of the realm of possibility.

IV. Obstacles to migration:

In this section we will look at the actual event of migrating and the particular difficulties that this act produces. At the dawn of the 20th century European immigrants poured into the United States via New York City. Each individual that made the long journey across the sea had a personal story of his or her voyage to a new home and a new life. Yet, each immigrant's experience was also wrapped up in the larger epic that told of the growth of a nation. So it is with those men, women and children that cross over into the United States from Mexico. While they each have a tale of their own crossing, they are also players on a larger sociological stage. Furthermore, many migrants would say

that the most memorable chapter in their migration experience deals with "La Cruz"- the crossing.

Of the many obstacles that face Mexican migrants today, the most obvious impediment is the actual physical partition between their home country and the U.S. Yet, the U.S.-Mexican border also has a very symbolic separation associated with it. On one hand it is a defined "political entity" and is guarded by fences, men and guns. It is a border that must be broken through under the cover of darkness with the aid of those who have crossed before. On the other hand, this "mere line" also signals a shift from the known to the unknown. The geography two feet inside Mexico is the same as it is two feet inside the U.S. The difference comes in taking the step across. With one stride across an imaginary line the Mexican migrant instantly becomes a foreigner and alien. With this metamorphosis comes the time of "ambiguity, apprehensiveness, and fear" that mark a migrant's border crossing experience.

The actual crossing for first-timers is usually with the aid of a guide. An informal industry of border smuggling guides (known as *coyotes*) exists all along the border. For a fee (usually ranging from 50-300) these men use their wealth of migration-specific human capital to successfully transport their *pollos* into the United States (Chavez 1998). These men are vital for migrants that are new to the border crossing game. Not only must one know the rules of the "cat and mouse" game between the U.S. Border Patrol and the migrants, but the Mexican migrant must also be able to negotiate this danger-filled "no man's land" of the U.S.-Mexican border. The prevailing method of crossing at the point of least resistance usually involves travel through rugged and inhospitable terrain. Thus, it is the most imposing stretches of the border (mountains, deserts) that are usually the

areas free of governmental impediments. No only does the threat of exposure to the elements and dehydration present itself in these situations, but also the danger of robbers who lie in wait for unsuspecting souls to pass by. Criminals of both the United States and Mexico try to capitalize on the vulnerabilities of migrating people as they cross through lonely valleys and dark paths. Robbery, rape, and murder all prove to be a constant threat to determined migrants as they pick their way across the border (Chavez 1998). For example, the eight-year period between 1982 and 1990 saw a 400 percent increase in the murder of undocumented border crossers and a 350 percent increase in robberies (Chavez 1998). Clearly, the initial hurdle of entry into the U.S. is quite a risky one. Yet, for many migrants this momentous passage is not a one-time event. Temporary migration is a common occurrence for many Mexicans. The result is frequent crossings along the border and increased risks associated with these crossings (Chavez 1998).

Previously, I alluded to the fact that the border represented both a physical point of separation as well as a symbolic, psychological barrier. While the U.S.-Mexican border does distinguish two different nations, it also distinguishes two different worlds. The migrant's experience is not only a matter of physical transportation and attachment to a network. It is also one of emotional and psychological consequences that flow out of such a life-altering experience. Therefore, any discussion of the border crossing experience must be accompanied by a look into the psychological ramifications of a journey into a foreign land. Although the subjective nature of personal experience makes the psychological effects of migration difficult to study in the same objective manner as other immigration themes, it is evident that this process can produce profound emotional distress (Portes 1996). This mental stress associated with immigration was noted as far

back as the 1880's, when sociologist and epidemiologist observed an increased prevalence of immigrants among the insane asylums of New England (Portes 1996). In Chicago during the 1930's, the suicide rate for immigrants was three times higher than that of the native born population (Portes 1996). Instability, turmoil, restlessness, alcoholism and depression are not uncommon traits in the immigrant profile. Yet, what is the cause of these ailments and why are migrants, in particular, at risk? Handlin, a nineteenth century sociologist provides keen insight with his remarks:

> ...immigrants lived in crisis because they were uprooted. In transplantation, while the old roots were sundered, before the new were established, the immigrants existed in an extreme situation. The shock, and the effects of the shock, persisted for many years...Their most passionate desires were doomed to failure; their lives were those of the feeble little birds which hawks attack, which lose strength from want of food...Sadness was the tone of life...The end of life was an end to hopeless striving, to ceaseless pain, and to the endless succession of disappointment (Portes 1995, 157).

While he spoke chiefly to the European immigrant experience over 120 years ago, Handlin's words still prove relevant to the Mexican migrant's experience today. Travelling across the border (legally or illegally) means much more than simply leaving the familiar surroundings of home. For many, trans-national migration means the loss of much more. While networks and ethnic communities can provide a level of security, migration involves a loss of emotional support that family and friends in the sending community give. The extent to which this loss is a factor in the migrant's emotional state

depends on the presence of family and friends in the U.S. Furthermore, one could argue that the emotional need for family reunification is an important determinant in the initiation of migration. Second, migration means a loss of employment in Mexico. As stated earlier in the paper, only about 5 percent of Mexican immigrants were unemployed in Mexico (Portes 1995). This means that roughly 95 percent of these men and women had to leave established jobs in Mexico. While most individuals were under-employed at the jobs they left behind, these positions still offered a measure of security and steady income- however paltry. Third, migration means the loss of whatever social status and prestige that an individual possessed back in Mexico (Chavez 1998). For those who enjoyed positions of respect and authority in their home communities, migration to the U.S. strips those titles and replaces them with racism and exclusion. Much of this stems from stereotypes and racist views from the native-born U.S. population.

Another significant obstacle for migrants is legal status. The INS estimates the undocumented migrant population to be as high as 5.4 million, with an annual growth of approximately 270,000.(INS 1998) This means that a sizable portion of the United States' immigrant population is living in an even more marginalized condition. As *legal* residents, migrant men, women, and children face a number of challenges. For those who have no documentation the problems are compounded. Coupled with their own personal fear of deportation by the government, these undocumented immigrants must deal with a society that wields this alien status as a means of exploitation.

The most common way that an undocumented migrant is taken advantage of comes through his or her job. Employers who hire illegal aliens are able to exert a large amount of control over their illegal workers. This is due to the fact that the migrant, by

virtue of his legal status, is powerless and vulnerable. His options for work are limited, he is wary of reporting any abuses for fear that he himself will be apprehended, and he has resigned to the fact that his bargaining power is virtually non-existent (Dávila 1998). Such a situation is fertile soil for the abuse of power. The main way that this abuse manifests itself is through insufficient wages. Employers want to increase their profit margin, so they lower their overhead expenses by paying a lower hourly wage to their employees. The only way they can successfully manage this scheme is to have a labor supply that will accept the unfair wages. The only ones who will accept this pay are those who have no choice. Clearly, those workers who possess the rights conferred to them by their legal status can take action against these schemes. Yet, for those men and women with no workers' rights, no bargaining power, and no other options this scenario is played out far too often[6].

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[6] As an aside: it is interesting to note that the IRCA of 1986, while being relatively ineffective and "toothless", did manage to negatively affect *legal* migrants who appeared undocumented. These "at risk" workers experienced the same forfeiture of rights that their undocumented counterparts endured because employers lumped all immigrant workers into the same category. The result was a tighter attachment to jobs out of fearful expectations of not finding another. This ultimately led to the same abuses that illegal residents suffer and a decreased voice to speak out against employers. The fact that between 1980-1992 there was a steady decline of immigrant worker complaints to the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) provides evidence of this trend.(Dávila 80)

This powerlessness of illegal migrants has other detrimental effects as well. Recall the earlier point that many Mexican migrants were not fleeing the rampant unemployment of their nation's economy, but rather underemployment. Well, for those who lack legitimacy in the United States economy, the situation usually does not improve. For many illegal migrants, the fear of not finding work combined with an understanding of their tenuous legal position translates into a willingness to accept practically any job- regardless of how menial it may be (Portes 1995). This is why you find attorneys working in cafeterias for 4.50$/hr, and why educators end up on landscaping crews. Undocumented aliens are often forced into undesirable employment situations because they have no choice in the matter.

In addition, there are times when the employer's exploitation of a migrant's legal status manifests itself in not a financial or occupational manner, but in a physical manner. The vulnerability and powerlessness of illegal migrants is most evident in instances where they are injured on the job. What's more, given the physically demanding, and sometimes even dangerous nature of the work that many migrants do, the likelihood of this abuse occurring is quite high. For employers who view their employees as "discardable workers" medical attention is often given only to workers who are legal residents (Portes 1996). Because of insurance considerations and productivity factors, some employers actually fire their injured workers rather than pay for treatment. The result is that many Mexican migrants now have the added fear of injury on their already burdened shoulders. Furthermore, when an injury does occur, many simply keep on working with the knowledge that an admission of this type could very well result in the loss of a job (Portes 1996).

Another obstacle encountered by Mexican migrants is racism from native-born people in the United States. As the self-proclaimed "melting pot" of the world, America is a multicultural blend of people from all corners of the globe. Much of our national character is comprised by this diversity. It is woven into the fabric of our country. Still, this does not mean that its citizens are above prejudice and ignorance. While large segments of the U.S. population that do not have extensive contact with immigrant Latinos remain unopposed to their rapid growth in the United States, others feel quite differently. For various reasons, opponents of Mexican immigration feel like the rise of the Latino community will mark the slow destruction of our national identity. Still, Portes believes that the America public at large is quite ambivalent about Mexican migration to the United States. He asserts that this ambivalence flushes itself out as a "nostalgic" remembrance of past immigration (Bracero workers, etc) and bitterness towards the current trend of large and poorly regulated migrant flows (Portes 1996). This bitterness can be caused by simple, old-fashioned racism that is founded on stereotypes and strengthened by ignorance. It can also be reflected in more diplomatic ways.

There are four main arguments against Mexican migration that exist in the literature I have researched. First, this "invasion" of labor will result in the loss of jobs for U.S. citizens. This is a commonly held belief even though the majority of jobs that migrants undertake are the low-paying, manual labor-style of jobs that the average U.S. citizen would not accept anyway (Portes 1996). Second, immigration from Mexico causes wages and profits to fall. Recall the discussion of labor markets and how labor surpluses drive down workers' wages. This wage decrease occurs because employers do not have to offer competitive wages to attract workers. Those who oppose immigration

assert that the wage level would fall on a national level and affect a large segment of the U.S. citizenry (MexicanImm,U.S.investment,etc). Third, Mexican migration undermines the national identity. For anti-immigration crusaders, the influx of Mexicans on this side of the border signals a shift in the composition of the United States. Yet, it seems these xenophobes forget that, "immigration has been and will continue to be a key factor in this distinct national profile" (Portes 1996, 292). This nation's growth during its first two hundred years was due in large part to the toil and sweat of immigrant workers. America is not a mono-ethnic nation consisting of whites from Western European decent. Rather, it is a collection of many to form one with a motto, "E Plubris Unum". The last point that Mexican immigration opponents stress is that the current trend in immigration levels will ultimately threaten the national sovereignty of the United States. It is also interesting to note that these anti-immigration sentiments seem to be strongest during periods of economic downturn in the U.S. economy. This reaction seems plausible given that human beings are naturally wont to find someone or something to blame in moments of crisis. Yet, is it accurate to associate this migratory trend as a major cause of something as complex as a country's economy? I believe that this question is one that merits further study, but it definitely beyond the scope of this paper.

In returning to the discussion of racism and the workplace during times of recession Portes asserts that migrant exploitation is highest at points when anti-immigrant feeling is widespread. He says, "the utility of immigrant workers for their prospective employers is usually at its peak during periods in which public opposition to the newcomer's presence is highest"(Portes 1996, 271). This observation is based on the claim that the vulnerability and powerlessness of migrants (touched upon earlier) is

increased by the hostility of the society that these foreigners have entered into. The rationale is that when the climate turns cold for immigrants, employers have more leverage and can demand more from their workers. This translates into increased labor output for less pay and other forms of injustice.

Therefore, this discussion can be summed up in saying that the Mexican migrant's dream of success in the United States is not easily realized. "Making it" in the U.S. is only partly dependent on motivation, perseverance, and abilities. The historical stereotypes and national economies (two things an individual migrant can do nothing about) that oppose the Mexican migrant are at work against him (Portes 1996).

The focus of this section on obstacles to migrants now turns to a discussion of the U.S. Border Patrol. Founded in 1924 under the Coolidge administration, this agency was designed to help regulate the flow of Mexicans across the porous border and deter unwanted elements from entering the United States. More to the point, the U.S. government sought to impose regulation on the migration of Mexican workers who crossed the border in search of work. The fact that the USBP was initially part of the United States Department of Labor is a revealing indicator into the true motivations behind establishing an organization that tries to reduce the numbers of immigrants coming into the U.S. The government had established the link between work and immigration and took measures to keep track of migration trends along the border (Bean 1997). In so doing, the USDL could call for a cessation of immigrant entry or vice versa, depending on the labor needs of the U.S. economy.

The present-day role of the U.S Border Patrol is much more extensive than at its inception 78 years ago. Although its main objective is still to combat illegal entry into the United States, the Border Patrol is also engaged in halting the trafficking of cocaine, heroin, methanmphetamines and marijuana that pour into our nation (Kitfield 1997). In the past, this agencies extra responsibilities have resulted in less resources and manpower towards the primary goal of stopping illegal migration as evidenced by the decreased number of apprehensions (Singer 1998). The U.S. government placed a newfound emphasis on limiting illegal entry in February of 1994 when Attorney General Janet Reno and INS Commissioner Doris Meissner announced new initiatives aimed at stopping the flow of illegal aliens across the U.S.-Mexico border.(INS 2001) The general premise of "prevention through deterrence" stated that illegal migration would decrease significantly as the newfound strength of the Border Patrol made crossing the border almost impossible.(INS 2001) The strategy behind this premise is that the Border Patrol would use deterrents like increased agents, almost 50 more miles of fencing, miles of high-intensity lighting, infrared scopes, more helicopters, and twice as many vehicles to virtually shut down the traditional crossing points along the 2000 mile border.

The U.S. government launched four different campaigns in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California to enforce this new policy. Operations *Gatekeeper, Hold the Line, Rio Grande, and Safeguard* were all in effect by 1995.(INS 2001) The most publicized of the four, Operation *Gatekeeper* was praised as an immediate success. The period between 1997 and 1998 saw a 55 percent increase in the number of apprehensions (226,580) for the Southern California sector that *Gatekeeper* targeted.(INS 2001) The ultimate goal of these Border Patrol operations is to eventually see a decrease in the

number of illegal border crossers caught, thus indicating a decreased number of attempts. The INS reported that Operation *Hold the Line* in the El Paso sector witnessed a 50 percent decline in apprehensions from its inception in 1993 to the end of 1996. Therefore, in the minds of Washington legislators, the illegal immigration problem is seemingly improving.

Yet, how accurate of a picture do these government statistics paint in regards to what is really happening with illegal immigration into the United States? In June of 1996, the Border Patrol union brought allegations of improper data reporting and "stat-padding" against Border Patrol supervisors. It seems that these high-ranking USBP officials achieved the declining trends in apprehensions for Operation *Gatekeeper* by instructing line agents to let illegal border crossers slip through unhindered. This improper manipulation of the border-crossing data gave the appearance that the Border Patrol was succeeding in its initiatives and Operation Gatekeeper was a "resounding success".(FAS 2002) In addition to the apparent corruption at the higher levels of the USBP, there is also a legal loophole that benefits both illegal immigration and the individual Border Patrol agents. A "Voluntary Departure Order" is form that an apprehended migrant can sign which waives his right to appear before an immigration judge. In so avoiding any unwanted legal hassles, the migrant is assured of more chances to attempt a crossing. In many cases the V.D.O. allows migrants to try crossing again within hours. The fact that roughly 97 percent of apprehended migrants sign this document attests to the popularity of this strategy. This V.D.O. is also favors the Border Patrol agents in the sense that more attempts at crossing the border equate to more apprehensions for the individual agent and opportunity for further advancement within

the agency. Singer notes that it is in the "mutual self interest [for both agent and migrant] that the migrant be deported as soon as possible"(Singer 1998, 565). Therefore, the well-intentioned efforts to stem the tide of illegal border crossing have deteriorated into nothing more than a game of "cat and mouse" where the mouse eventually gets through.

With the deficiencies in the reporting of statistics about the various United States Border Patrol operations, one must wonder what results can be gathered from the 8-10 years of increased Border Patrol efforts. Non-governmental publications have noted several trends. First, for those without migration-specific human capital, the cost of migration is now much higher. With the tighter restrictions and increased Border Patrol presence comes higher prices for the services of "coyotes" and smugglers. Whereas before 1993 the price to make it across the border was around $250 dollars, it is now approximately $1,500 dollars- over a 600 percent increase.(INS 2002) One could argue that this doesn't deter would-be migrants from crossing like the U.S. government intended. Rather, the soaring price of guides has left many migrants who cannot afford such services on their own. The inexperience of first-time crossers coupled with increased resistance along areas with easy border access has tragic consequences when immigrants are forced to seek alternate routes through hostile territory. Since 1994, as many as 405 migrants have succumbed to the elements and criminals in mountainous and desert stretches of the border (Vann 1999). Statistics such as this one cause us to question the wisdom of the Border Patrol initiatives to halt the flow of illegal migrants into the United States.

Part II: Healthcare Issues of the Migrant Population in East Tennessee

I finish w this thesis with a general overview of Latino migrant health issues. With my future career in medicine and the rapid increase of the U.S. Hispanic population in mind, I feel that this is quite a valuable area to focus my attention. Utilizing my connections with migrant healthcare providers in East Tennessee, I opted to conduct a personal interview in lieu of researching the topic in academic literature. This approach is useful for several reasons. First, there is a lack of region-specific data on the health status of Latino migrants. For many of the same reasons that accurate population statistics do not exist for undocumented migrants, large-scale mortality and morbidity figures for this "hidden" segment of society simply are not reported. Second, for me personally, I feel that this section of the project is more valuable in that the proceeding issues are things that I have had exposure to. The interview of Migrant Health coordinator Kelly Melear-Hough was conducted in the Rural Medical Services Migrant Health Clinic in Cocke County, Tennessee on April 2, 2002. Having worked there during my Junior year, I am able to identify with many of the problems and solutions that this final section presents.

The Migrant Health Clinic is located in Parrotsville, TN, just outside of Newport. As the Migrant Health Program Director, Mrs. Kelly Melear-Hough is responsible for the planning of migrant health programs, keeping a detailed database on the patients that the clinic serves, and seeking out funding in the form of grants from organizations like the March of Dimes. Due to the large numbers of migrant women needing healthcare for pregnancy and its related problems, prenatal care is the primary focus of the clinic Approximately 50 percent of the patient encounters fall under the category of "reproductive issues". Yet, the clinic is by no means limited only to this one area of

healthcare. The remaining 50 percent of diagnoses are divided up into 13 different categories (see attached graph). Also, women are not the only ones coming to the clinic. Both men and children make up a substantial portion of the clinic's patient base. Still, the majority of encounters are from female patients. At this point it might also be helpful to note that gender is not the only way that the clinic classifies its patient base. The clinic's staff uses one of three designations when entering patient information into the clinic's database: *Migrant*, *Seasonal,* or *Other*. For reporting purposes (the clinic must provide patient-base statistics in its grant proposals) a *Migrant* is defined as anyone (including their dependents) who works in agriculture and has changed residence in the last 24 months for the purpose of seeking out other employment. This is the category that the majority of the clinic's patients fall into. The second class is *Seasonal*, and is defined as anyone who works in agriculture but has not changed residences in the last 24 months. Finally, the category of *Other* exists for those who are settled in a particular area and not working in agriculture.

The general structure of this section will be as follows: 1) A general overview of the most pressing healthcare needs in the Latino migrant population. 2) A more in-depth analysis of selected diseases. 3) A discussion of the various obstacles to a healthy migrant population, and a look at various remedies to the aforementioned barriers.

II. Healthcare Needs In the Latino Migrant Population:

The Rural Medical Services Migrant Health Clinic services a fairly representative cross section of the United States' migrant population. The majority of the patients coming into the clinic are even defined as migrants and their socioeconomic status further substantiates this point. As such we can view the health problems of this clinic's patient base as representative of the East Tennessee rural migrant population at large. On a whole, migrants all over the country are coming in for the same basic services. I already mentioned the clinic's emphasis on pre-natal care, but there are many other morbidity trends in this group. Dental care, diabetes, hypertension, infections, sexually transmitted diseases, accidents, mental illness and substance abuse are among the problems that plague Hispanic migrants.

Sadly, one of the most common aliments among both genders of this population is one of the most preventable. Many migrants suffer greatly from the absence of any sort of oral hygiene. The problem seems to stem from the fact that dental care is not emphasized in the Mexican sending communities or is simply a luxury that people cannot afford. Essentially, a migrant's fate of Gingivitis and cavity-filled teeth is sealed all the way back to their childhood and home country.

"Most [migrants] have never been to a dentist, so they really don't know proper hygiene... The problem is mostly a lack of education and lack of access in their home countries so that when they get here, [dental problems] are simply perpetuated."

The clinic does not provide dental services and beyond the hygiene education of migrants with dental problems, the staff can do very little to actually treat them. In fact,

Mrs. Melear-Hough identifies the unmet need for dental care as a major issue to migrant health.

"There is a real big problem with the lack of access to affordable dental care- especially in Spanish. You're almost never going to find it in Spanish, and finding it at an affordable rate is another hurdle. It's a big need."

Another major health issue affecting older migrants (both male and female) is diabetes mellitus. This type of diabetes, commonly known as "type II diabetes" or "adult onset diabetes", is generally more prevalent among Latinos and has an incidence rate that is approximately double that of Caucasians.

"Diabetes is a real problem for migrant farm workers for several reasons. Number one, it is a difficult disease to understand, and there are a lot of misconceptions about it in the Hispanic population...It is the kind of disease where they need to be checking their blood everyday and seeing a doctor regularly. If they are constantly moving, then they won't be seeing the same doctor, if they seeing one at all. It is a management issue...we do see a lot of uncontrolled diabetes, and when it's left uncontrolled like that, [accumulating enzyme concentrations] are a poison. It breaks down the kidneys, eyes, causes foot problems, etc."

When asked about the root causes of hypertension (high blood pressure), Mrs. Melear-Hough pointed to many of the same causes. The inability on the part of the migrant to manage his or her condition, for whatever reason, leads to the increasing severity of the problem until it reaches a very serious level.

Unlike diabetes and hypertension, the causes of behavioral disorders (substance abuse, mental illness) in the migrant population are much different. The problems seem

to arise from environmental pressures that a migrant faces in a foreign land. Speaking specifically of drug and alcohol abuse, Mrs. Melear-Hough says:

"It is something that is exacerbated by the migrant lifestyle and the lack of family member support. The rural Mexican population that we deal with [in the clinic] is used to a lot of familial support- they are very family oriented. So, when they come here they are alone and isolated from their family. [For example], when migrants get here they have no mode of transportation other than a crew leader or a friend that they typically have to pay to drive them anywhere. So, here they are, stuck in the middle of nowhere on some farm. They have no family, except for a cousin or uncle, and their usual support system is gone- There is nothing to do...so they drink."

Upon mentioning that suicide was the second leading cause of death for Hispanic males in Tennessee she asserted that the same dynamic that leads so many migrants into alcoholism is also at work with mental health- suicide being just one indicator of psychological problems in populations. Mrs. Melar-Hough identified several factors that she felt contributed to this statistic and elaborated:

"Isolation, substance abuse...maybe a realization of not having many choices in life. I feel like is a difficult life for [migrants]. They are forced to leave home to seek better economic conditions. When they are at home they are in these little towns and everyone fits in. Then, they come here. They can't speak the language, they don't fit in...they are at the bottom of the totem pole- something that is foreign to them...It's hard."

In terms of dealing with these mental health issues as they present themselves, there are some resources at the clinic. Part of the primary care that the clinic's physicians provide is psychological. Although the majority of patients who exhibit some sort of

behavioral disorder are usually referred to one of the area mental health facilities. While this tactic would seem to be a valid solution, often times migrant patients who could benefit from treatment are very hesitant to receive it because of the stigma that seeking out a mental health provider carries.

In the course of the discussion about the various diseases that migrants face, Mrs. Melear-Hough alluded to several obstacles to migrant health care. When I put the question directly to her, the director instantly responded:

"Barriers to [migrant] health care would include language, transportation, and lack of funds (poverty - the average farmworker makes about 10,000$ a year). They are generally uninsured, and there is no insurance coverage from their employers, usually. They are ineligible for medicare or Tenncare the majority of the time unless they are children that were born here or they have achieved a legal status somehow."

Another real barrier that has many migrant health workers wringing their hands is the itinerant lifestyle of their patients. With a patient base that is never in one place for more than a few months, health care providers are constantly faced with the challenge of providing adequate long-term care for a person that is only in the area for a short period.

"For example, people come here during the migrant season. They come up around July from Florida or Mexico, and stay here through August (sometimes September or October).Then they will move on to North Carolina or Virginia to pick apples. Then they go back to Georgia for a while, or Florida (they usually make two trips down there- one to Quincy or Omokalee. So, they might move four or five times in a year."

In regards to insurance I posed a question about expectant mothers. Did they have their babies at home? If pre-natal care was the main emphasis of the clinic, how was it being paid for? After all, the U.S Census Bureau reported that last year Mexican-born foreigners had the lowest percentage of health insurance coverage. (U.S. Census Bureau 51). Mrs. Melear-Hough responded:

"[The mother] can come here and get pre-natal care on a sliding scale (the doctor's fees are based on the migrant's income). Around here we are the cheapest provider. Then she can get emergency TennCare to cover the birth (the actual birth only). They are approved [for health coverage] for thirty days. They don't need a social security number, but do need an address, proof of income, and a birth certificate from their place of origin."

Language can also pose a big problem when trying to deliver care to migrant patients. Since many migrants barely speak any English, most of the communication responsibility falls on the health care worker. Commenting on the current ability of clinics, hospitals, and other health-related organizations to bridge the language gap Mrs. Melear-Hough says:

"I think the hospitals, in particular, are really in a bad state and need more bilingual employees. Mental health workers need [bilingual skills], as well as the Public Health Department. Ideally, we would be getting more Hispanic youth into college programs or nursing programs because language is important, but understanding the culture is equally important. So, the more Hispanic people we have in healthcare, the better.

"An example of the importance of cultural awareness might be an older man who is coming in for diabetes and he may not be taking his medicines correctly. He also might be embarrassed to tell the health care worker that he can't read. So he can't read [the instructions] on his bottle of medicine. I think a person who can read between the lines and pick on the clues (that he is illiterate). Whereas, a person who has just learned Spanish and is struggling with the language might not pick up on all of that. And by the way, that happens all the time..."

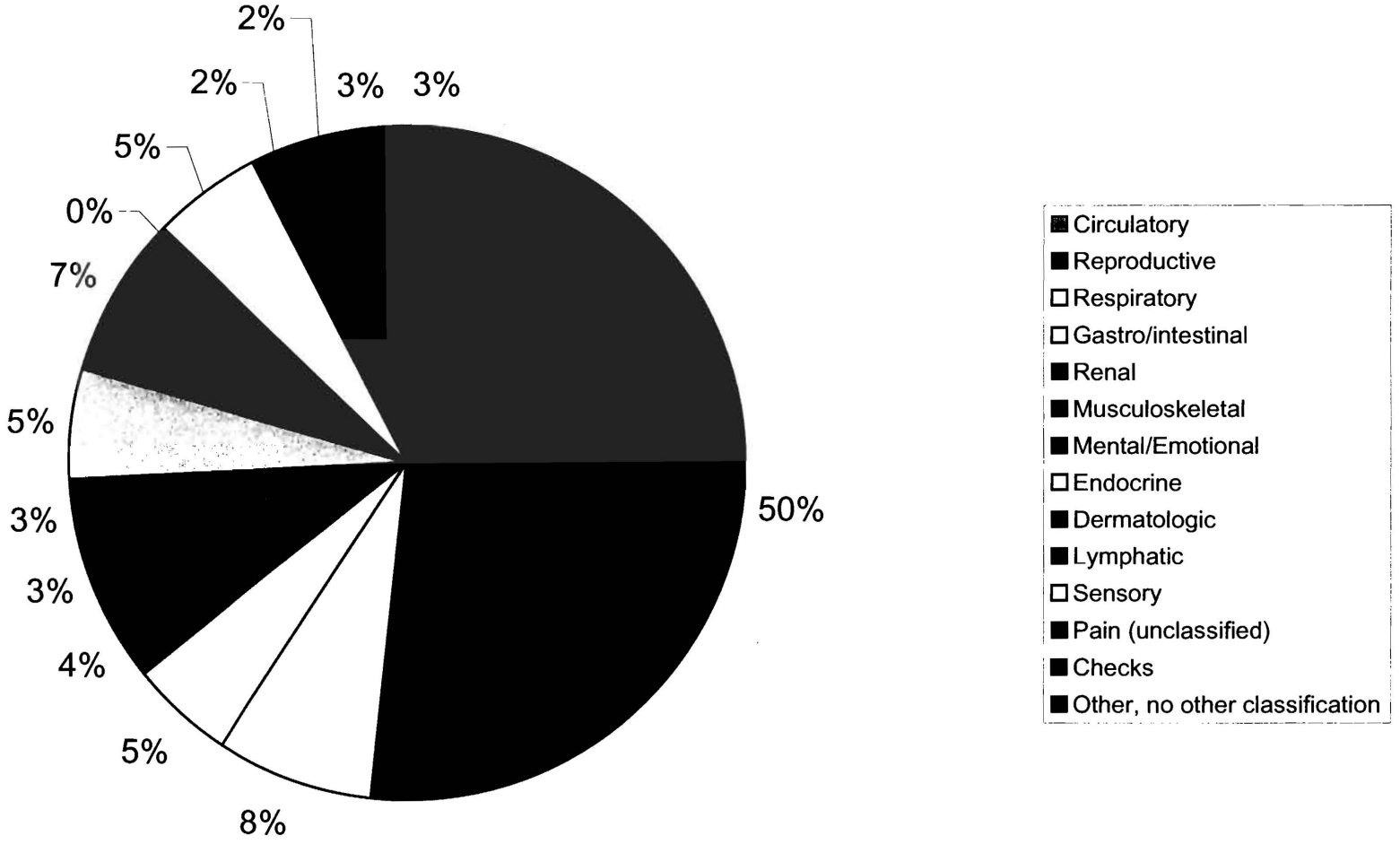
Even among healthcare workers who are not Hispanic, but do speak Spanish, there is a tendency to miss the subtle indicators that are unspoken.

"We have student nurse practitioners who come in and can speak a little bit of Spanish so they want to do it all on their own and they miss a lot. There is a lot of special stuff that you learn over time."

In terms of solutions, I asked Mrs. Melear-Hough to come up with a "wish list" for migrant health. If she had unlimited resources and manpower, how would she go about improving the health of the migrant Hispanic population in East Tennessee. She responded by saying:

"I would probably start with bilingual staff in every health center in East Tennessee. I would also have clinics closer to the bulk of the [migrant] population. Also, some transportation assistance, like a bus route or a shuttle service to the clinic. An after hours clinic with hours that were more accessable. Dental programs and dentists that were closer to the migrant population."

Diagnoses according to system



Conclusions:

This paper sought to present the reasons for Mexican migration to the United States. While only scratching the surface of this far-reaching topic, I feel that this paper is an informative look at who migrants are, how and why they are drawn to the United States, what the U.S. government is doing to control their entry, and what kinds of obstacles migrants face as foreigners.

Today's Latino migrant population is well into the millions and comprises a large portion of the United States service sector. Migrants come to the U.S. for a variety of reasons, but the main stimulus seems to be economic opportunity. Given the stagnant economy that Mexico is still trying to revitalize, many migrants see the immigration to the United States as the only option for self-advancement. What's more, it seems that nobody is shielded from the economic woes of Mexico. This point is evidenced by the large numbers of indigenous migrants that are entering the United States in search of work.

There are many theories that sociologist use to explain the phenomenon of Latino migration. Among the more popular migration theories is the "Neoclassical Theory" which proposes that the migration process is initiated by a series of factors in both the sending and receiving countries that "push" a migrant out and "pull" him to a new country. The paper showed how this is not an entirely accurate picture of the situation and then provided several more theories that pointed to more specific causes of migration. The paper also presented the concept of a "network" and explained how a group of people in the receiving country can facilitate and even initiate an individual's

migration process. The idea of migration-facilitating social structures was expanded to include the farm labor market and how employers' labor demands influenced migrant flows. The paper then shifted its focus to living arrangements and their role in migrant survival strategies.

We then looked at various U.S. immigration policies and discovered that they are not working because their theoretical foundations are flawed. A discussion of NAFTA followed and was concluded with a statement that its true effects cannot yet be known.

The research-based section of this paper concluded with a look at the obstacles that stand in the way of migrants. From the danger and uncertainty of crossing the U.S.-Mexican border to the constant fear of living as an undocumented immigrant, it is clear that there are many psychological ramifications of the migrant expericence. As if that was not enough, the exploitation of migrants in the workplace poses yet another hurdle which must be overcome.

The second part of the paper followed the discussion of migrant obstacles with a specific look at healthcare issues facing migrant workers and their families in East Tennessee. The paper presented an overview of some of the main health problems that migrants face and provided possible solutions to alleviating the problems and facilitating better health care delivery for this segment of the population.

Given the material presented in this paper, what can we predict about the future of Latino migration and, in particular, the future of migrant healthcare? I think it goes without saying that the Latino migrant population will continue to increase in this country. There is simply no easy way to stop it at this point in time. The U.S. government

could completely halt all immigration to the United States and still people would pour in the country, just as they already are doing. Will some new policy work? I think that for immigration policy to be successful it must incorporate an accurate migration theory that accounts for the social processes that are really causing individuals to come across the border. With that said, curbing illegal migration may still be merely a pipe-dream. There are simply too many powerful forces (labor markets, Latino constituents, etc) that will oppose any effort to stop migration from occurring.

Another question that we must ask ourselves is this: Do we really need to curb migration (legal or illegal) at all? What are the true benefits of a migrant working class in our society? What are the true drawbacks? It is hard to answer these two questions because of all the rhetoric firing from both sides of the argument. Still, I think it is a question that has merit and one that needs to be answered in a logical, objective manner.

In regards to migrant healthcare, what are we as a nation to do? As the paper showed, there are many healthcare needs in the migrant population. Should the federal and state governments help meet these needs? It is clear that many people who would argue the immigration policy issue would take the same stance with regard to this issue. Those who oppose migration might see migrant health as no concern of their's or of the government's. On the other hand, migration proponents could see the healthcare of all with in U.S. borders as the responsibility of the host country. What do I think? I believe that the government is responsible for the well being of those who are under its authority. Now, this statement could be taken two different ways: On one hand I consider U.S. citizens to be the ones that the United States government is responsible for because they are under the government's protection and provision. As such, only U.S. citizens should

be able to demand the privileges of healthcare. Yet, I also see the U.S. government's responsibility to be one that I hold myself- seeking mercy and upholding justice for those who cannot act for themselves. Thus, it would also seem clear to me that meeting healthcare needs of migrants (documented and undocumented) is both my personal responsibility and the responsibility of the government. Perhaps this duality in my mind is simply an eloquent way of saying that I have no idea what I truly think. Still, my own personal hope is that in my future career as a physician, my actions and attitudes will be better informed by what I have learned during the course of this project.

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