

THE U.S. - MEXICO BORDER:  
Recent Publications and the State of Current Research

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- THE UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER: A POLITICO-ECONOMIC PROFILE.* By RAUL FERNANDEZ. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977. Pp. 182. \$10.95.)
- BORDER BOOM TOWN: CIUDAD JUÁREZ SINCE 1848.* By OSCAR MARTINEZ. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978. Pp. 230. \$12.95.)
- THE BORDER INDUSTRIALIZATION PROGRAM OF MEXICO.* By DONALD BAERRESEN. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1971. Pp. 133. \$12.50.)
- MEXICAN AMERICANS IN A DALLAS BARRIO.* By SHIRLEY ACHOR. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1978. Pp. 202. \$6.95.)
- PABLO CRUZ AND THE AMERICAN DREAM.* Compiled by EUGENE NELSON. (Layton, Utah: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1975. Pp. 171. \$8.95.)
- VIEWS ACROSS THE BORDER.* Edited by STANLEY ROSS. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978. Pp. 456. \$5.95.)
- MEXICAN WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES.* Edited by GEORGE C. KISER and MARTHA W. KISER. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979. Pp. 295. \$7.50.)
- IMMIGRATION AND THE MEXICAN NATIONAL.* By GUY POITRAS. (San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University, Border Research Institute, 1978. Pp. 134.)

As a boundary dividing an advanced industrial country from an underdeveloped one, the Mexican-American border is unique. It is also an area of considerable cultural diversity, where problems of international dependency, domination, and development may be appreciated with piercing clarity. In many ways, the border has become a microcosm in which the nature of the relationship between the United States and Mexico is revealed almost free of mystification, and where exacerbated economic, political, and ideological tensions acquire full meaning. Therefore, it is not surprising to witness growing interest among scholars and government officials in matters related to border history, culture, and socioeconomic problems.<sup>1</sup>

Three major topics have characterized this field in recent years. First has been the concern over the question of "illegal" or "undocu-

mented" immigration from Mexico to the United States, and the position that the border maintains in relation to this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Second, stimulated by the interest in members and/or students of the Chicano community in things Mexican, there is now available an abundant literature that focuses on the history and culture of border towns in both Mexico and the United States.<sup>3</sup> Third, as a result of developmental efforts of the Mexican government, the border is becoming the focus of studies that attempt to clarify contemporary questions of demographic growth, internal migration, unemployment and underemployment, urbanization, and industrialization.<sup>4</sup>

What follows is a description of the contributions of authors whose writings and research have focused on these three areas. Rather than being an exhaustive review of the literature, this essay centers on some representative works that, either by the recency of their publication or the importance of their content, merit scholarly attention. Each involves a particular area demanding further research, and, perhaps, they are more important for the questions they raise than for the answers they offer. As a whole, they reveal the general *problematique* that characterizes the Mexican-American border, an area whose immediate future may, to a large extent, determine the fate of the relationship between Mexico and the United States.

As Raúl Fernández points out in *The United States-Mexico Border: A Politico-Economic Profile*, the emergence of the border as an area characterized by latent or explicit conflict has been a relatively recent historical occurrence. Well beyond the end of the colonial period and into the nineteenth century, the area that now forms the border was a sparsely populated and distant land only precariously reached by state regulations. However, the seizure by the United States of more than half of Mexico's territory through armed confrontation and the subsequent implementation of the treaties of Guadalupe Hidalgo made a concrete reality of what, until then, had been an almost invisible demarcation.<sup>5</sup>

From the perspective of dialectical materialism, and based on already available historical information, Fernández examines the political and economic factors that have given shape to the contemporary U.S.-Mexico border. He presents a historical account that first centers on the conflict between surviving forms of feudal organization and capitalist penetration, and then examines the consequences of their interaction. According to Fernández, during the period that preceded the 1840s, the feudal hacienda system, aided by the proliferation of religious missions and the paternalistic relationship between laborers and landed proprietors, evolved a relatively self-sufficient economy. However, the onset of extensive trade among various groups (including native Indians) hastened the emergence of commodity circulation and eventually brought about the disruption of more archaic economic modalities. Fur trapping

and the formation of the Santa Fe Trail, in particular, effected important changes in the physiognomy of the area, facilitating its virtual unification as one market.

The process described by Fernandez has considerable theoretical interest. However, despite the intrinsic value of the information he provides, he puts aside the ongoing debate on the nature of feudalism in Latin America and its relationship to capitalism. Various authors contend—Rodolfo Stavenhagen presents one of the most coherent arguments on the subject—that the conquest and colonization of Latin America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was determined structurally by the forces of capitalist accumulation and expansion. Although the hacienda system may be seen as an adaptive strategy with peculiar features, many of which resemble feudalism, it is in no way clear that it reproduced feudal organization as a distinct mode of production. Rather, haciendas were successful insofar as they were able to adjust to the demands of an international market while at the same time making use of extremely cheap labor. The combination resulting from peonage and a function fulfilled in a world capitalist market enabled haciendas to expand or reduce production in response to economic fluctuations and supply/demand cycles.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the hacienda system did not exist independently from capitalism, nor was it a residue of previous modes of socioeconomic organization. Quite the contrary, it was a concrete consequence of the particular position that the newly colonized areas occupied in the international context. Haciendas were a symptom of the peripheralization of Latin America vis-à-vis emerging hegemonic powers. The U.S.-Mexico border was not an exception to this consideration.

The last three chapters in the Fernandez book are a brief examination of contemporary border economy, and, in particular, of the issues of migration, urbanization, and industrialization. The author attempts to show the close connection that has existed between the process of agricultural landholding in the Southwest and Mexican migration even before the latter occurred in massive proportions; however, the treatment is superficial. His main contention is that the development of agriculture in the Southwest brought about the need for the “perfect migrant,” that is, a laborer whose work could be used intensely during certain times of the year and disposed of when not needed. Mexicans, particularly Mexican peasants searching for survival after being dispossessed of their lands either as a result of internecine war or growing monopoly, were destined to fit this image, especially after restrictions on Chinese and Japanese migration were imposed in the United States. While this is true, such “push-pull” factor explanations fail to examine the structural conditions under which various kinds of migration are possible.<sup>7</sup> Though the existence of a dispossessed contingent of “free” laborers—for example, a landless peasantry—may form a necessary condition for migra-

tion vis-à-vis the demands of capital, this alone does not account for changes over time in the characteristics of migrants, the kinds of jobs they perform in host countries, and, perhaps most importantly, variations in the intensity of migration.

Several recent studies have raised questions about the common sense understanding of migration. For instance, it is now clear that it is not the poorest-of-the-poor who migrate but rather those from relatively higher education and economic levels. Even among groups of individuals who fit the image of the prospective migrant, there are many who never leave their home towns. Among those who do migrate, some return to their place of origin after some time, some never do. More significantly in the case of Mexico, as the process of urbanization has intensified in the last twenty years, the origin of migration to the United States has changed from rural to urban.<sup>8</sup> While most migrants arriving in the United States continue to provide cheap labor to be used according to the exigencies of capitalist accumulation, a push-pull framework, even under the guise of dialectical materialism, cannot explain satisfactorily the most intriguing and theoretically meaningful features of migration. Although cursory in some parts, *The United States-Mexico Border* contains an abundance of information and insights; it also makes an effort to present a coherent theoretical approach. These features make it an indispensable source and place it at the forefront of studies on the subject.

A book that is complementary in many ways to the above is Oscar Martinez' *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez Since 1848*. In this excellent work, the author (who now directs the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas, El Paso) unfolds the historical vicissitudes that transformed a small but relatively prosperous Mexican town into a squalid center of institutionalized corruption and dependence. Without rhetoric, Martinez provides ample illustration for Gunder Frank's now classic proposition about the "development of underdevelopment."<sup>9</sup> Based upon meticulous archival research, *Border Boom Town* traces the economic and political heritage of Ciudad Juárez from its foundation, to its later incorporation into an official international boundary, to its inclusion in a free-trade zone, to its shift towards banditry, smuggling and similar activities, and to its present state as a dubious tourist attraction plagued by unemployment, urban decay, and futile official attempts to resolve its chronic problems.

Of special interest is Martinez' description of the debate that surrounded the Mexican government's establishment of a border free-trade zone in the 1880s as a defensive measure to prevent further economic penetration from the United States and to ameliorate the effects of smuggling. The disruption that followed the creation of an official demarcation line after the war of 1848 was to some extent alleviated by

the free zone, which enabled Ciudad Juárez, with its greater access to American and European goods, to compete advantageously with the neighboring city of El Paso. For approximately three decades, Ciudad Juárez experienced economic prosperity as well as considerable political autonomy, while the Pass (now El Paso) languished, remote and with the constant threat from Indians and outlaws. However, the advent of modern transportation (which Raúl Fernández also documents) transformed the relationship between the two cities and set the conditions for the eventual disappearance of the zone, which was abolished in 1905 after Mexican officials yielded to increased political and economic pressure. Some pressure was internal, but as Martínez shows, the decisive influence came from the United States.

Other misfortunes, such as the world-wide depreciation in the value of silver and extreme water shortages, combined with a decline in agriculture fostered commercial stagnation and forever changed the texture of life in Ciudad Juárez. With her economy ruined, the city turned to tourism and entertainment of the worst kind: gambling, bullfights, cockfights, and boxing proliferated; brothels, saloons, and cabarets emerged as a distinctive feature. As Juárez became reliant on the service sector as the base of its economic activity, dependence upon El Paso increased, unemployment rose, and many Mexicans began to regularly cross the border in search of jobs in the neighboring city. Martínez offers the following, highly revealing piece of information: "In 1888, shortly after the creation of the free zone, only 29 Mexicans had employment on the U.S. side. . . . By 1907, two years after the abolition of the *zona*, at a time when the Juárez population had decreased by well over 50 percent, 136 *juarenses* were listed as working in El Paso" (p. 31). And this was to be only the beginning. The turmoil unleashed by the Mexican Revolution, Prohibition, the Great Depression in the thirties, and the effects of war further accentuated the contradictions experienced by Juárez and fixed its notorious public image as a "wicked" border town. The last chapter of *Border Boom Town* is dedicated to a description of Mexican government programs to achieve the integration of the border economy in the national context; among these, PRONAF (National Border Program), the so-called Artículos Gancho Program (Enticement Products Program), and BIP (Border Industrialization Program) have been the most important.<sup>10</sup> Martínez describes their objectives as well as the concrete conditions that precipitated their existence. The three represent a concerted effort on the part of Mexican authorities to attenuate problems of unemployment among the growing juarense population, refurbish the image of the city as a modern urban emporium, and provide channels to diminish the extreme dependence of Ciudad Juárez on El Paso.

Unfortunately, as Martínez accurately points out, these goals

have been fulfilled only partially and then again at a high social cost. In the case of the Border Industrialization Program (*maquiladora* program as it is commonly known in Mexico), numerous restrictions entailing customs transactions, tax responsibilities, and property ownership have been waived to facilitate the operation of multinational corporations under sections 806.30 and 807 of the U.S. customs code.<sup>11</sup> Martinez records the opinion of critics who see this program as yet another symptom of denationalization and Mexican loss of control over her economy and political sovereignty. Indeed, from the point of view of the international division of labor, BIP signals the tendency of capital towards investments that result in the transfer of assembly plants to areas of the world (such as the U.S.-Mexico border) characterized by high rates of unemployment and the availability of unskilled and semiskilled labor. Contrary to the statements of BIP promoters, Martinez questions maquiladoras as an effective means to resolve unemployment on the Mexican side by noting that approximately 85 percent of those employed in them are women who, prior to the existence of the program, were not part of the work force.<sup>12</sup> While thousands of women are now hired to perform poorly paid, repetitive assembly operations—mainly in electronics and apparel manufacturing—men continue to find it difficult to get jobs and often resort to illegal migration to the United States.

Martinez notes that the impressive figures used by promoters of the Border Industrialization Program to demonstrate its job-generating potential and justify its existence mask its major drawbacks. The program has made it more difficult to attract industry to and improve working conditions in the cities north of the border, a cause for concern to the Chicano population. Following economist Vernon Briggs, Jr., in this respect, Martinez observes that the possible attraction for industry of the low wage structure along the American side of the border is nullified by the even lower wages on the Mexican side.<sup>13</sup> At the end of his work, Martinez includes a comprehensive and valuable bibliography and commentaries.

In sharp contrast to the thoughtful and painstaking research in the two previous works is *The Border Industrialization Program of Mexico*. Donald Baerresen provides a brief historical account of a program presumably destined to resolve the high rates of unemployment that affect the Mexican border. No mention is made of the fact that unemployment rates have risen by 83 percent in the period during which the program has been in operation.<sup>14</sup> Nor is there comment on the high mortality rate of maquiladoras and their tendency to move abroad after relatively short periods of time.<sup>15</sup> Some attention is given to the predominance of women as assembly workers, but—aside from a few remarks about the “liberating” influence of work on women—the significance of gender as a crucial factor in the social division of labor is completely disregarded.

On the other hand, the book is an excellent source of information about the logic underlying corporate business mentality. It contains a minute description of the manner in which foreign companies can maximize profits and productivity through the use of intensive Mexican labor and the benevolent circumvention of bureaucratic regulations. Abundant information is provided about the best locations for firms wishing to operate under BIP, average hourly wages and fringe benefits for factory workers, labor costs, availability of public services and facilities, and customs provisos. The general effect of this profuse compilation must be reassuring to promoters of multinational operations along the U.S.-Mexico border. The author expresses confidence that wages will not increase significantly and that labor unions will continue to adopt an amiable attitude towards the interests of foreign companies.

It is especially interesting to reflect on Baerresen's discussion of "Mexicanization," i.e., efforts aimed at the "increased ownership by Mexicans of the productive resources in Mexico" (pp. 111–13). Indeed, Mexican officials have advocated publicly the nationalization of maquiladora operations, calling for investments in capital goods, greater participation of national capital, increased consumption of Mexican components and raw materials, and a movement away from the border, where operations of this kind have been heavily concentrated. None of these goals has been achieved. Thus, maquiladoras continue to enjoy a privileged position in Mexico, giving credence to arguments that view them as yet another symptom of dependency and political subordination.

Despite a tinge of self-celebration—particularly in the introductory sections—*Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio* is an example of a well-written and informative study about a people who form the fastest growing minority in the United States. Starting with the premise that behavior, attitudes, and values constitute adaptive strategies, Achor portrays the experience of barrio dwellers whose contact with mainstream political and economic institutions is often marked by indifference, discrimination, and hostility. The author is careful not to describe the barrio as an isolated, self-bounded, and self-perpetuating entity. Rather, she dwells upon the links that connect a relatively small urban settlement with the city. A sense of balance between the description of daily occurrences and the evaluation of their significance in a broader context permeates the book and is one of its main virtues. Achor's central contention is that diversity, not homogeneity, characterizes the behavior, perceptions, and experiences of Mexican Americans. Seen against the background of earlier works that reached similar conclusions about other ethnic minorities and poverty-stricken groups during the sixties,<sup>16</sup> this may appear obvious. But for those who are acquainted with Mexican Americans only through the mediating influence of stereotypes, Achor offers a thoughtful and necessary corrective.

One major limitation of this otherwise worthwhile contribution is Achor's extreme reliance on a cultural ecological model derived from Julian Steward's important, but now dated, writings. Jonathan Friedman,<sup>17</sup> among others, has severely critiqued this sort of cultural materialism by pointing to the highly elusive and tautological bent of "adaptation" as an analytical concept. If accepted in an uncritical manner—and Achor does—all social reality can be reduced to "adaptive strategies" and arbitrarily defined "eco-systems." The pitfall of this concept is not so much its broadness as its inability to differentiate among levels of meaning and to distinguish between behavior, attitudes, values, etc. and the structural factors that determine their existence under specific conditions. It is a framework in which all observable behavior is assumed to exist because of the adaptive function it fulfills, while the adaptive function is deduced mechanically from the existence of behavior. There are few clearer examples of circular thought in anthropology.

It is not surprising, then, to find that from this all-encompassing paradigm a number of static typologies can be derived. In the weakest chapter ("Adaptation and Change in the Barrio"), Achor outlines barrio dwellers' adaptive strategies under the labels of insulation, accommodation, mobilization, and alienation. In the first subgroup she includes those Mexican Americans who have removed themselves from the mainstream of society by emphasizing, preserving, and even redefining their ethnic identity. Reservation and mistrust mark their intercourse with political and economic institutions. In contrast, those who have chosen accommodation aim at becoming part of a society whose values, norms, and objectives they have fully accepted. Mobilizers, identified by their overt political commitment to Chicano movements, are said to adopt aggressive postures in an effort to achieve greater participation in society and gain concessions from the state on the basis of their minority status. Finally, those who have fallen into alienation closely resemble, in the words of the author, the groups described by Oscar Lewis in his well-known studies about the culture of poverty.

While this classification may have some value insofar as it underscores diversity and complexity among barrio dwellers, it has little theoretical strength. Not only are the distinctions vague and their limits arbitrary, but they are also derived from the observation of a small, geographically bound, and not necessarily representative sample. Moreover, while differences in behavior and attitude do indeed exist, little effort is made by the author to explain them. With the foregone conclusion that idiosyncratic personal choice determines social behavior, Achor runs the risk of replacing an old stereotype of Mexican-Americans with several new ones. This is unfortunate, when one considers the expressed objectives of her work and the intrinsic value of the ethnographic materials she has collected.



*Pablo Cruz and the American Dream*, compiled by Eugene Nelson, and with an introduction by Julian Samora and illustrations by Carlos Cortez, has been compared with Oscar Lewis' anthropological vignettes and with John Steinbeck's semifictional narrations. While it may lack some of the exuberant detail of the former and the literary brilliance of the latter, this is indeed a unique and valuable addition to a growing repertoire of testimonial materials that focus on the U.S.-Mexico border and the experience of undocumented workers in the United States. Written as a personal account of childhood in an impoverished town of rural Jalisco and youth exhausted in the repeated attempt to survive in the Southwest U.S., Nelson has composed a picture that is engaging, informative, and deeply touching. In *Pablo Cruz* we learn about some of the personal motives that lead thousands of young men to leave their birthplaces and search for better living conditions north of the Rio Grande.

As stated by Samora in the introductory pages of this book, success for the illegal migrant is defined in terms alien to the majority of those who enjoy the benefits of citizenship: "keeping warm at night, avoiding the migra (Immigration and Naturalization Service), having something to eat, getting a miserable temporary job, entering the society legally, and maintaining personal integrity and dignity" (p. 3). Paradoxically, it is men like Pablo Cruz who have contributed, by their cheap labor and acceptance of numerous abuses (for fear of apprehension), to the prosperity of the U.S. Southwest, prosperity that has been aided by a network of exploitative mechanisms that includes farm owners, *coyotes* (illegal alien smugglers), corrupt attorneys, and some members of the bureaucracy. As the experience of Pablo Cruz reveals, migrants themselves and low-income Mexican Americans are often caught in a web of hostility directed against those they must compete with for access to jobs in the lowest echelons of the labor market.

*Views Across the Border*, edited by Stanley Ross, is a compilation of works first presented in 1975 at a conference held in San Antonio under the auspices of the Weatherhead Foundation. This is probably the only publication available that attempts to offer a comprehensive picture of U.S.-Mexico border culture and socioeconomic texture. For this alone it ought to be commended. While the scope of the book is ample, the vantage points and quality of the essays vary considerably. Although an important contribution, this book is, however, short on interpretation and an integrated analytical framework.

The book covers the areas of culture, politics, economics, migrants, health, individual and social psychology, and ecology. The background information necessary to understand the other essays in the book is provided by Victor Urquidi and Sofia Méndez Villarreal in "The Economic Importance of Mexico's Northern Border Region." This extensive and well-documented outline profiles a region inhabited by 5 per-

cent of the total population of Mexico and beset by some of the highest growth rates in the country. This is also an area troubled by demographic concentration, due in great part to migration (three municipalities—Juárez, Mexicali, and Tijuana—account for 50 percent of the total border population), high rates of unemployment and underemployment (which combined surpass 30 percent of the economically active population), and insufficiencies in housing, transportation, education, and other public services. Yet, the border is also characterized by a comparatively higher percentage of population that has completed elementary school, and by what is often regarded as a high standard of living, reflected in conspicuous consumption patterns that include purchases of goods and services in the United States. The latter has had a negative effect on the Mexican balance of payments and points up the inadequate integration of the border region with the rest of the country. Some additional information is also offered by these authors with respect to the current economic policies and developmental programs implemented in the region.

Four elegantly written essays are included in the section dedicated to culture. Taken as a whole, these works suggest both the potential and limitations of culturalist definitions when these are applied to the contemporary world. In "The Borderlands: Ideas on a Leafless Landscape," Joe B. Frantz observes that, contrary to common belief, this region has for many centuries been characterized by cultural diversity which, at times, reached peaks of sophistication and complexity. The author is particularly successful in demonstrating that the idea of the frontier as an edge separating civilization on the east from wilderness on the west simply has no basis when applied to the case of the Spanish Borderlands, an area settled and civilized long before the colonies began to think of independence. "Civilization lay on both sides of that cutting edge, except that this thought never seemed to occur to the North Americans pushing westward nor to the chroniclers writing about the experience generations later" (p. 34). Historical accounts are frequently tinged by the biases of the victors; in this case, Indians, Spaniards, and, later, Mexicans were to be portrayed as primitives resisting or yielding to the civilizing influence of the north. Curiously enough, Frantz interprets these struggles as sporadic expressions of *machismo* and patriotic fervor. When placed in the rich background offered by Fernandez and Martinez, such encounters reveal tensions and contradictions derived from economic and political—not cultural—asymmetries, which this author does not consider in his analysis.

In "The Culture of the Frontier: The Mexican Side," Carlos Monsivais offers an analysis of institutionalized corruption and makes the point that "vice" should not be understood only in moral terms, since it also represents an economic reality. He indicates that, while many houses of prostitution, saloons, casinos, and other centers of dubious

reputation along the border have been financed and sponsored by U.S. businessmen as well as by Mexican politicians, the "life-style" they represent has been blamed on Mexican culture alone. This betrays an outlook that "jumps at the chance to point out the cultural defects of other countries" (p. 57). On the other hand, from the point of view of the Mexicans, the tourists that patronize the flashy entertainment centers and buy the cheap, prefabricated art are nothing more than clients to be seduced in a vulgar mercantile transaction.

The latter part of the essay is dedicated to a provocative examination of the archetype of U.S.-Mexico border culture: the *pachuco*, made famous in Mexican movies and accepted by many as the epitome of border paradoxes. It is important to note with Monsivais that the image of the *pachuco* emerged at a time when the Mexican American community was beginning to acquire visibility—if only because of its numerical expansion—but when its members were barred from legitimate economic and political participation. The author suggests that the *pachuco* expressed the search for ethnic identity based on class determination. Ironically, for upwardly mobile and wealthy Mexicans, the *pachuco* represented a comic individual seduced by the American way of life and, therefore, deserving of nationalist contempt rather than sympathy.

Monsivais' excellent work is flawed only by a somewhat uncritical reliance on the concept of the "culture of poverty," as defined by Oscar Lewis, which Monsivais sees as a typical feature of the border. However, various contemporary critics, anthropologists, and sociologists have pointed to the limitations of this concept.<sup>18</sup> To insist on its use can only contribute to the propagation of myths, a proposition inconsistent with Monsivais' extremely insightful analysis.

Americo Paredes, in "The Problem of Identity in a Changing Culture: Popular Expressions of Culture Conflict Along the Lower Rio Grande Border," offers a complementary set of thoughts based primarily on his investigation of folklore and language. His enumeration and interpretation of euphemistic and derogatory terms used by Mexicans and Anglos to describe and insult one another leaves little doubt about a facet of the relationship that has existed between the two peoples. The language of North Americans betrays contempt and fear towards a culture considered profoundly inferior; Mexicans retaliate with a terminology that is often humorous, ambivalent, and expressive of an idiosyncratic sense of pride. Of some consolation may be Paredes' revelation that, by comparison with other ethnic and national groups, Mexicans are labeled with relatively few offensive terms: while there are only fourteen derogatory words applied to Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States, there are 150 for blacks, 50 for Jews and 43 for the Irish. This may seem trivial, but it points to the importance of language

as an instrument to diagnose the ills of society. At the end of his essay, Paredes deplors the unwitting acceptance of racist stereotypes by Mexican intellectuals (Octavio Paz among others), who explain socioeconomic limitations and problems in purely cultural terms.

The articles by Rogelio Díaz Guerrero and Wayne Holtzman share an entrancement with pseudo-scientific discourses, from which arbitrary value judgements and normative prescriptions are derived. Based on a series of psychological tests administered to relatively small samples of Mexican and U.S. students, Díaz Guerrero reaches conclusions that he then generalizes to the two national groups under consideration with no regard to variations of class or region. The ease with which he accomplishes this perilous leap, in "Mexicans and Americans: Two Worlds, One Border . . . and One Observer," is in part the result of his intellectual indebtedness to early studies of national personality that were fashionable during the 1930s and 40s. Although their epistemological pitfalls have been exposed often, Díaz Guerrero seems to be unaware of these critiques.

More disturbing than this is his predilection for static comparisons of U.S. and Mexican people, which tend to reinforce stereotypes under the guise of scholarly research. Thus, Díaz Guerrero reports that North Americans tend to be more active than Mexicans in their style of coping with life's problems and challenges. The former are said to be more complex and differentiated in cognitive structure than the latter. Mexicans tend to be cooperative, family-centered, and pessimistic, while North Americans are more competitive, individualistic, and optimistic. Anti-intellectualism is recorded as a feature of Mexican personality inherited from the Spanish, while a tendency to favor studiousness is said to be typical of the North American heritage. So on and so forth. Díaz Guerrero neatly classifies Mexican cultural personality under the "passive-obedient hierarchical" type, while North Americans fall into a "self-assertive/equality-efficiency" category. From this scheme also follow a number of propositions about the presumed dissemination of Mexican and North American personality features and their fusion along the border.

The main lesson to be derived from this kind of cultural-psychological research lies in the possibility of assimilating "good" and discarding "bad" features from either personality complex in order to integrate them into an optimum culture. As for the impact of economic inequality, political subordination, social injustice, and other material constraints that may have some importance in the definition of psychological variables, they are beyond the scope of his article; an unfortunate but not surprising limitation.

Although working from some of the same premises, and sharing

a common data base, Holtzman's essay, "Personality Development and Mental Health of People in the Border States," is judicious in its speculative thrust and by far more informative. It centers mainly on a review of available information and ongoing research surrounding the cognitive development, motivation, and school adjustment of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Pointing to cross-cultural differences in family lifestyle and home environment, Holtzman places importance on class background as the source of variations in attitudes, values, and cognitive orientations among Mexicans, North Americans, and Mexican Americans. He notes, for example, that the gulf between the wealthy and the dispossessed in Mexico sharply distinguishes working class from professional and upper-class families. Although no conclusive answers are offered in it, this article suggests some intriguing possibilities for the understanding of the interaction between culture, class, and psychology.

Antonio Ugalde ("Regional Political Processes and Mexican Politics on the Border") and Armando Gutierrez ("The Politics of the Texas Border: An Historical Overview and Some Contemporary Directions") approach two questions of growing importance. One is the apparent determination of the Mexican state to use the border as a testing ground for the implementation of developmental policies that, in spite of their often limited success, have yielded considerable surplus in the form of taxes and other less formalized payments. Ugalde argues that such revenues have been put to use in order to maintain political stability and subsidize a growing and pliable bureaucracy. Thus, contrary to official statements justifying programs such as PRONAF and BIP as tools aimed at resolving occupational problems, urban decay, and economic dependence, Ugalde detects political pressures at work both in Mexico and in the United States that give a different explanation for the existence of these programs as well as their limitations. Ugalde's argument, based on careful research, is convincing and disturbing, but not surprising.

The second point of importance, examined at length by Gutierrez, concerns the growing visibility and strength of the Chicano population as a political force in the Southwest. The purpose of this article is to inform as well as to analyze the factors that might contribute to or mitigate against the success of political activity among Chicano people. Of particular interest is Gutierrez' description of the 1970 gubernatorial race in Texas and the impact of Ramsey Muñiz, candidate of the Raza Unida party, upon the outcome of the election. Although the border has long been a stronghold of the Democrats, the astonishing support received by Muñiz from Mexican Americans nearly threw the election to the Republican candidate. This and other observations about the electoral process suggest changes in voting patterns on the border as a consequence of the emergence of the Raza Unida party. Based on this information, the latter part of the article discusses the strategic lessons that

may be put into practice in fruitful political mobilization and consciousness raising among Mexican Americans.

Finally, the articles written by Ray Marshall ("Economic Factors Influencing the International Migration of Workers"), Vernon Briggs ("Labor Market Aspects of Mexican Migration to the United States in the 1970s"), Jorge Bustamante ("Commodity Migrants: Structural Analysis of Mexican Immigration to the United States"), and Tad Szulc ("Foreign Policy Aspects of the Border") focus on what is perhaps the most volatile problem of the region, that of illegal or undocumented migration to the United States. These articles complement and often repeat the questions raised by two other recent publications that merit attention: *Mexican Workers in the United States—Historical and Political Perspectives* edited by George C. Kiser and Martha W. Kiser and *Immigration and the Mexican National* edited by Guy Poitras. The first of these works contains a useful collection of articles and historical materials illustrating the experience of Mexican laborers in the United States. A particular strength of this work lies in its successful attempt to document a little known aspect of migration history, i.e., the voluntary and forcible repatriation of Mexican nationals during the 1930s. The second work contains the final proceedings of a conference held at Trinity University in late 1977 and may be seen as a testimony to the heated debate over interpretation and policy that has surrounded the subject in recent years.

While approaches to and perceptions of the problem of Mexican migration to the United States vary from author to author, these works share the view that international labor migration is fostered by differing economic and political conditions on both sides of the border. Marshall provides a brief but helpful review of these factors in a historical framework and gives attention to some of the reasons that make employers prefer Mexican aliens over U.S. citizens, which lie in the possibility of manipulation of and surplus labor extraction from a highly vulnerable work force with negligible legal rights. Briggs agrees with this proposition, both in *Views Across the Border* and in the remarks edited by Poitras, and discusses at length the impact of the presence of illegal migrants on local labor markets. Migrants are thrown into competition with local Chicano and black groups who, as a result, lose jobs to aliens willing to work for lower wages, under less favorable conditions, and for longer hours. Also, the increase in the supply of labor as a result of this kind of migration has a negative effect on wage raises and reduces the possibilities of negotiation and organization of workers as a whole.

Szulc echoes these complaints and carries them a step further in order to point out that the presence of "some six million illegal Mexicans in the United States is a contributory cause to labor distortions" (p. 230). Perhaps this succinct opinion best expresses the confusion that characterizes the three articles. The authors assume the existence of "nor-

mality" in southwestern local labor markets prior to the entrance of Mexican migrant laborers. Such a notion of normality is closer to illusion than to reality.

Bustamante notes, in this and other works,<sup>19</sup> the jumps and leaps that Mexican migration has undergone in accordance with the fluctuations and needs of the U.S. economy. Bustamante argues that out-migration from the rural sectors in Mexico is an *alternative* to situations of unemployment and underemployment in Mexico, but is by no means the only or natural option. "At the end of the Bracero Program, unemployment in Mexico was high; the previous trend of expansion of arable land had reached a point of no progress. By the end of the sixties immigration to Mexican border cities was at lower rates than in previous decades when the Bracero Program was in operation" (p. 183). These factors, notes Bustamante, seem to indicate that conditions for immigration were drastically reduced in the United States with the termination of the Bracero Program and out-migration in Mexico found other avenues, namely urban centers within the country.

Bustamante's general conclusion is that, under capitalism, migration is the self-transportation of labor as a commodity to where the capital owner demands it. By occupying the lowest echelons of the occupational structure, migrant laborers become a source of capital expansion providing additional sources of surplus value to capital investors. Bustamante does not deny the view expressed by Marshall, Briggs, and Szulc that "commodity migrants" are cast into conflict with the lowest paid native workers (p. 186) by powerful concerns in whose interest it is to prevent class solidarity. But his analysis emphasizes the need for structural economic changes rather than the implementation of reformist measures. Marshall, Briggs, and Szulc, on the other hand, advocate closure of the border to prevent migratory flows, "vigorous enforcement of penalties for entering the country" (p. 178), making it unlawful to hire undocumented workers, increasing resources and personnel to strengthen the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and protection for illegal workers against possible abuses. Interestingly enough, these authors also favor the implementation of a cooperative effort between Mexico and the United States to maintain potential migrants away from U.S. territory.

Under the circumstances outlined by Bustamante, these are highly pragmatic but probably impracticable solutions to problems that are rooted in the structural relationship of subordination between Mexico and the United States. Ultimately, undocumented migration is caused by the exigencies of international capitalism. To take a position, presumably "in favor" of U.S. workers' rights to secondary labor positions at the expense of those in foreign countries, can only stimulate enmity among sectors of the international proletariat and distract attention from

the real source of the problem. These are effects consistent with the political and ideological needs of the most conservative groups on both sides of the border. Capitalist business logic requires an ever increasing supply of laborers competing for poorly paid, monotonous, and frequently unstable occupations. When laborers are divided by gender, ethnic background, nationality, or religion, the possibilities for control over and exploitation of the working class as a whole may also be expanded. As some of the works reviewed above show, attempts to increase border surveillance often have resulted in harassment and repression directed not only against undocumented Mexican workers but also against anyone Mexican. That includes numerous U.S. citizens on whose behalf Marshall, Briggs, and Szulc presumably speak. Rather than divisive strategies that place workers of various nationalities in no-win situations, the problem of undocumented migration demands organizational efforts across international boundaries and an increased awareness about the nature of an unequal world economy.

## NOTES

1. This growing concern is evidenced by the extensive bibliographies offered by the authors and editors of the works discussed in these pages. There are also numerous current research projects focused on this subject. Ellwyn R. Stoddard, Oscar Martinez, and Miguel Angel Martinez Lasso have recently completed *El Paso-Ciudad Juárez Relations and the 'Tortilla Curtain': A Study of Local Adaptation to Federal Border Policies* (El Paso: University of Texas Council on the Arts and Humanities, 1979). Martin Pronk, University of Texas at El Paso, is currently studying economic linkages between the U.S. and Mexico as part of a master's research project in geography. Patrick Horton, department of anthropology, University of California at Santa Barbara, is researching squatter settlements in Ciudad Juárez. Stephanie Foster, University of Texas at El Paso, is studying urban planning on the border. Susan Christopherson, department of geography, University of California at Berkeley, has initiated research on the industrialization of the U.S.-Mexico border and population movements between twin border cities. Devon G. Peña is researching "Maquiladoras: Mexican Women in the U.S.-Mexico Border Industry Program" as part of the Migration Studies Project at the University at Austin. Rosalía Solorzano, University of Texas at El Paso, is completing a master's thesis on "Attitudes and Migration Patterns: A Comparative Study of 'Marias' from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua and Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico." Marion Houstoun, Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, is surveying the literature on the impact of illegal Mexican aliens on job opportunities along the border. Richard Craig, Kent State University, has done extensive research on drug problems and eradication efforts along the border. Marshall Carter, Ohio University, has studied legal and human rights in the borderlands. Three papers on environmental problems along the border have been published in the Border-State University Consortium for Latin America, Occasional Paper No. 7 (Summer 1979): "Ecology and the Border, the Case of the Tijuana Flood Control Channel," by Will Kennedy; "A 3-D Perspective of Water Gate Rip-Offs along the Rio Grande," by E. R. Stoddard; "A Survey of Environmental Problems along the Border," by Howard Applegate. Norris Clement, director of the California Border Area Resource Center, San Diego State University, is conducting a major effort to compile and make available information on the U.S.-Mexico border. Thomas Weaver and Theodore Downing, Bureau of Ethnic Research, University of Arizona, have undertaken an anthropological research project on the town of Douglas, Arizona. Michael



Miller, department of sociology, Texas A&M University, and Robert Maril, department of sociology, Texas Southmost College, are studying poverty-stricken communities. Robert C. Trotter, department of anthropology, Pan American University, has surveyed problems of health and pathology among Mexican Americans in the Lower Valley, Texas. Michael Van Waas, department of political science, Stanford University, has conducted extensive research on multinational corporations and labor unions along the border. Arthur Young, Organization of U.S. Border Cities, has finished "An Economic and Demographic Study of U.S. Border Cities." Ed Williams and William Seligson, University of Arizona, Tucson, have done research on immigration and the Border Industrialization Program. E. R. Stoddard, department of sociology, University of Texas at El Paso, has coordinated a compendium of borderland studies in history, geography, political science, sociology, anthropology, and economics (see "The Status of U.S.-Mexico Borderlands Studies: A Multi-Disciplinary Symposium" *Social Science Journal* 12/13 [Oct. 1975–Jan. 1976]:1–112). Monica Claire Gambrell, Centro de Estudios Económicos y Sociales del Tercer Mundo, has concluded a research project on women and labor unions in Tijuana maquiladoras. Jorge Carrillo and Alberto Hernández, sociology, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, are engaged in a study of the characteristics of the female labor force in border assembly plants. M. P. Fernández Kelly, department of sociology, University of California, Berkeley, conducted an anthropological research project on the composition of the female labor force in Ciudad Juárez maquiladoras between 1978 and 1979.

2. Representative of this concern, for example, is the current nationwide survey on migration to the U.S. being directed by Jorge Bustamante, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México. See also Wayne Cornelius, ed., *Immigration and U.S.-Mexican Relations. Working Paper No. 1* (Center for United States-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1979). For a comprehensive bibliography on the subject of Mexican migration to the U.S., see Cornelius, *Mexican Migration to the United States (With Comparative Reference to Caribbean-Basin Migration): The State of Current Knowledge and Recommendations for Future Research. Working Paper No. 2* (Center for United States-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1979).
3. See C. Cumberland, "The United States-Mexico Border: A Selective Guide to the Literature of the Region," *Rural Sociology* 25, no. 2 (June 1960). See also N. Glenn, "Some Reflections on a Landmark Publication and the Literature on Mexican Americans," *Social Science Quarterly* 52 (1971):8–10.
4. See J. Bustamante, "Maquiladoras: A New Face of International Capitalism on Mexico's Northern Frontier." Revised version of a paper presented at the VI National Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia.
5. See also Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, chap. 2.
6. R. Stavenhagen, *Social Classes in Agrarian Societies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 97–115.
7. For clarification of this point see A. Portes, "Dual Labor Markets and Immigration, A Test of Competing Theories of Income Inequality," Paper prepared for the Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Houston, Texas, 1979.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See A. G. Frank, "Economic Dependence, Class Structure and Underdevelopment Policy," in J. D. Cockroft, A. G. Frank, and D. L. Johnson, eds., *Dependence and Underdevelopment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday).
10. See E. Sodi Alvarez, *Frontera* (México, D.F.: PRONAF, 1970) and J. Evans, "Mexican Border Development and Its Impact upon the United States," *South Eastern Latin Americanist* 16 (June) 1972: 4–10.
11. See "U.S. Runaway Shops on the Mexican Border," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 9, no. 7 (July 1975).
12. See M. P. Fernández Kelly, "Women in Mexican Border Industries: The Search for 'Cheap Labor'" Paper prepared for the 78th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1979.
13. A similar argument has been advanced by Briggs and others with respect to the effect

of undocumented aliens vis-à-vis black and Chicano workers in the highly competitive U.S. labor market. There is an element of common sense in these assessments. However, the manner in which they have been manipulated by some U.S. labor unions, mass media, and some scholars reveals an unfortunate theoretical and political confusion. Working women in the case of BIP and illegal aliens in general are held responsible for the plights of some of the most vulnerable sectors of the U.S. working class with total disregard for any global determinants that account for international class structure and fragmentation.

14. Bustamante, "Maquiladoras," p. 11.
15. NACLA, "U.S. Runaway Shops."
16. See H. Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston). See also C. Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Harper and Row).
17. J. Friedman, "Marxism, Structuralism, and Vulgar Materialism," *Man* 9:444–69.
18. See for example the articles contained in E. B. Leacock, ed., *The Culture of Poverty—A Critique* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).
19. See J. Bustamante, "Espaldas mojadas: materia prima para la expansión del capital norteamericano" (Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México, 1975) and "Structural and Ideological Conditions of Undocumented Mexican Immigration to the United States," in *Current Issues in Social Policy*.