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'The Fear of Amexica'

A Discourse Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security's
Construction of an American National Identity



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Abstract

The United States is having an identity crisis concerning its borders. The terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, raised concerns about the nation's borders. Year 2002, The Department of Homeland Security was created with the purpose to secure the nation from potential threats related to the borders.

This study examines which different American identities have been constructed during the 20th century and, what constitutes the American national identity, today. The study also examines if, how, and why immigration, more specifically Mexican immigration challenges the American national identity. Scholars such as, S.P Huntington, A. Smith, C. Joppke, and E. Lee, provides the study with theories about the nation-state and national identity. The main research question is, *What kind of national American identity is portrayed/constructed at the Department of Homeland Security website and how is this related to a perceived "Mexican threat"?* The study examines the DHS website. Relevant parts of the website forms the empirical material, which will be analyzed with the help of discourse analysis.

The study finds that the American national identity has since the 20th century been shaped around the American Creed, the myth of the U.S. as a nation of immigration, and the conception of the U.S. as a frontier society. The analysis of the empirical material shows that the growing concerns about the borders has resulted in the U.S., not including the frontier as a part of the identity. The study shows that for the U.S. to create a national identity, there has always been a need for an 'other'. This 'other' has taken different shapes during different times. The study finds that immigrants, from Mexico constitutes a new 'others'.

Keywords: The U.S, Mexico, border fence, nation-state, American national identity, American Creed, illegal immigration, 'other'. The Department of Homeland Security, Discourse analysis.

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1 Introduction

The United States, as many other states, is having an identity problem. The identity crisis varies in form, substance and intensity.¹ Modernization, economical development, urbanization and globalization have led to an increase in transnational migration.² This migration has led to questions about the homogeneity of the United States, which have started a debate about immigration and the connection between the nation-state and national identity.

The current immigration debate in the U.S. has mainly focused on immigration from South America, specifically Mexico. According to the Pew Hispanic Center 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants were living in the U.S. in March 2008. Mexicans account for about 50-58 percent of the total illegal population in the U.S.³ Immigration from Mexico is not a new phenomenon for the U.S., the current immigration wave began with Mexico's economic crisis in 1982, and in the 1990s it accelerated sharply with the U.S. economic boom, and today immigration levels have reached record levels.⁴ The border between Mexico and the U.S. is the busiest land crossing in the world, and most of the illegal immigrants residing in the U.S. have entered the country by crossing this border. The issues related to illegal immigration and the nations borders have always been a source of frustration for the U.S. In the shadow of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, this concern has been more visible than ever. September 11th drastically made the U.S. more aware of its vulnerability. The concern of the growing numbers of immigrants, often portrayed as an 'immigration invasion',⁵ the security of the nation, and the potential loss of sovereignty, all have led to more strict border control and immigration policies.

¹ Huntington (2004) *Who are we – Americans Great Debate*. Pg 12.

² Brysk A (edi) (2002) *Globalization and Human Rights*. Pg 19.

³ The Pew Hispanic Center, Publications. Trends in Unauthorized Immigration. <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/> (04/12/2008)

⁴ Huntington (2004) pg 259.

⁵ Andreas, Peter (2000) *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* pg 10

In 2002, as a consequence of these concerns, Congress passed the *Homeland Security Act of 2002*⁶, and the Department of Homeland Security was created. The main purpose of the agency is to protect the American people and their homeland.⁷ In October 2006, as an attempt to regain control, George W. Bush signed the *H.R. 6061 Secure Fence Act of 2006*. This bill authorized the building of a 670 miles fence along the US–Mexican border. Bush’s motivation for signing H.R. 6061 was that the U.S. has not been in complete control over its borders for decades, and therefore the illegal immigration has been on the rise. He also pointed out that he has a responsibility to address these challenges, to enforce the laws and most important to secure the nations borders from potential threats.⁸

Immigration is not new for the U.S, neither is the ambivalence towards it. The ongoing debate today shows that the topic is as important as ever, since we’re living in a globalized world where transnational migration and immigration have dramatically increased across the world in the late 20th and early 21th centuries.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine what constitutes the American national identity, today, and how this identity is constructed. The study also aims to examine if, how, and why immigration, more specifically Mexican immigration challenges the American national identity. To answer these questions, I examine the different American national identities during the 20th century and how some immigration has been viewed as a potential threat to the American national identity. To find out what constitutes the American national identity today, I aim to analyze the Department of Homeland Security’s website⁹ and the main research question is:

⁶ http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/law_regulation_rule_0011.shtm (28/12/2008)

⁷ The DHS Homepage: [http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/structure/\(30/12/2008\)](http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/structure/(30/12/2008))

⁸ Don’t Fence us Out; Immigration (A Debate Begins). *The Economist* (US) April 2006.

⁹ Why I have chosen the DHS to do my research and analysis on will be explained in chapter four.

What kind of national American identity is portrayed/constructed at the Department of Homeland Security website and how is this related to a perceived "Mexican threat"?

I have chosen to focus on the U.S. for my study because the U.S. is one of the largest immigrant receiving countries in the world. The U.S. is also the classic settler nation, where the experience of immigration has been a nation founding myth.¹⁰ As mentioned before, the border between the U.S. and Mexico is the busiest land border in the world¹¹ and it is also one of the few borders where radical measures are being taken to stop unauthorized traffic.

1.2 Theory, Method and Material

This study aims to examine what constitutes an American national identity, what might challenge it and how immigration is related to this subject. Based on three scholars, who I believe represent comprehensive views, I construct definitions on national-identity. In *Who are We- America's Great Debate* Samuel P. Huntington, an American Political Scientist, describes what he understands American National Identity to be. He also explains the term identity and the crisis of national identity. Professor of Political and Social Science Christian Joppke's different studies focus on immigration and the nation–state and how immigration can be viewed in a way that challenges the national identity and the nation–state. Anthony S. Smith, Professor in Ethnicity and Nationalism at the London School of Economics, focuses on the nature, causes and consequences of national identity as a collective phenomenon.

To examine how different American identities have been constructed during the 20th century and why some immigration has been viewed as a potential threat, I mainly use scholars like Huntington, Joppke and Erika Lee, American Associate Professor of History

¹⁰ Joppke C (1999) *Immigration and the Nation – State- The United States, Germany and Great Britain* pg 8-9

¹¹ Andreas, Peter (2000) pg 10

and Asian-American Studies. The nation-state, national identity and American national identity will be further explained in Chapter two.

The motivation of my research is to see what constitutes the American national identity today, and how this identity is constructed. As primary literature for my empirical research I examine The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) website. I focus on the sections of the website that pertain to immigration, illegal immigration, the U.S. – Mexican border, and the border fence. The content that I analyze will be introduced and explained in Chapter four.

I will use a discourse perspective to analyze the empirical content. The analytic variables are mostly taken from a book called *Diskursanalys som Teori och Metod*,¹² written by Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillip. This book introduces three different approaches on discourse analysis. Discourse analysis and the analytical variables will be introduced in Chapter two. The analytical variables that I have picked are intended to clarify the material, and to help me examine, interpret and discuss the material on the DHS's website. The discourse analysis, therefore, is used mainly as an analytical tool.

1.3 Disposition

The essay will start out by introducing the theoretical and methodological framework for the study and define the terminology relevant for analyzing national identity. Chapter three gives a brief introduction on immigration to the U.S. focusing on the recent immigration flow from Mexico and issues related to the border fence. In Chapter four, I introduce my empirical research, which is based on the Department of Homeland Security' website. In Chapter four, I also present an analysis of the literature that I used and my conclusions on the literature. I will end the survey with some closing reflections in Chapter five.

¹² Original title: *Diskursanalyse som teori och metode*. English Title: *Discourse Analysis – as theory and method*.

2 Theory and Method

This chapter will introduce the theoretical and methodological framework for my study. I have decided to put them under the same headline, since the purpose of the study makes it hard to separate them.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 National Identity

The term national identity can mean many different things. The concept of *national identity* has often been seen as something unclear and hard to identify, different scholars provide different answers. There are a few key elements that are often used to describe national identity and the nation-state.

According to Samuel P. Huntington, identity is an individual's or a group's sense of self. It is a product of self-consciousness, that we possess distinct qualities as an individual or a group that differentiate 'me' from 'you' and 'us' from 'them'.¹³ Identities may be narrow or broad, and the most prominent identities change with whatever situation people are in. 'You' and 'I' become 'we' and 'they'.¹⁴

Anthony S. Smith views national identity as a collective phenomenon. Both Smith and Huntington mention that a national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional and that it can not be reduced to a single element. The nation signifies a cultural and political bond uniting in a single political community, where everyone shares a common historical culture and homeland. This is not to deny some overlap between the two concepts.

¹³ Huntington S.P (2004) *who are we? – Americas Great Debate* pg 21.

¹⁴ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 24

Both Huntington and Smith list a few fundamental features that describe the standard Western nation-state and national identity. Their lists basically contain the same things. Those are *territory*, *political* (ideology, leader), *economical*, *cultural* (language, ethnicity, religion), *ascriptive* (age, ancestry, gender, kin and ethnicity), *legal*¹⁵ and Huntington adds *a social* (friends, club, team) dimension.

Joppke believes that there is one aspect of the nation-state that is especially entangled with immigration, and that is state sovereignty. Joppke means that sovereignty is the legacy of absolutism, and that it is the state's final control over bounded territory and populace. This implies control over access to and permission to stay within a certain territory, which is the domain of immigration policy. Every state divides the world into "nationals" who have the right to decide and control over its borders and the right to decide who can enter and stay or be denied.¹⁶

Smith uses the term *collective identity*, he points out the importance of some sense of a political community. This in itself also implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. This also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and therefore feel they belong to.¹⁷ Smith points out the importance of the concept of a nation as a rational state, with well-defined territories. The territory is defined by history. A historic land is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual and beneficial influences over several generations. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where our sages, saints and heroes lived, worked, prayed and fought. This is what makes the homeland unique. The land's resources also become exclusive to the people.¹⁸ Another important part that Smith brings up for national identity is a community of laws and institutions with a single political view. The legal equality of members of a political community is built on the fact that the people share the same values and traditions. This is what binds the population

¹⁵ Smith A.D (1991) *National Identity* pg 14, Huntington S.P (2004) pg 27.

¹⁶ Joppke C (1999) *Immigration and the Nation – State- The United States, Germany and Great Britain* pg 5.

¹⁷ Smith A.D (1991) *National Identity* pg 9

¹⁸ Smith A.D (1991) pg 10

together in their homeland. Joppke mentions a national common collective, he means that the institution of sovereignty has pre-democratic roots, and that the insistence on sovereign entry and residence control is on behalf of the national collective from which the state derives its legitimacy.¹⁹

Huntington adds an analysis on how the individual defines itself as part of the collective. Individuals find and redefine their identities in groups and if the basis for the defining characteristic of a group disappears, the existence of the group is threatened, unless it can find another cause to motivate the members. According to Huntington, identities are overwhelmingly constructed, apart from ancestry, gender and age (Smith agree²⁰). Huntington adds that people are relatively free to redefine their identities as they wish, although they may not be able to implement those identities in practice. These identities are defined by the self, but they are the product of interaction with others. If one enters a new social institution and is perceived as an outsider who does not belong, one is likely to think of oneself that way. If a large majority of the population in a country thinks that members of a minority group are inherently backward and inferior, the minority group members may internalize that concept of themselves, at which point it becomes their identity. According to Huntington, people can aspire to an identity, but not be able to achieve it unless they are welcomed by those who already have that identity. Another aspect Huntington brings up is that the alternative identities for many individuals or groups are situational. In some situations, people stress the aspect of their identity that links them to the people with whom they are interacting, or vice versa.²¹

To define themselves people need an '*other*', this is one of the key elements in theories about national identity. Huntington applies that recognition of differences is something that must exist when you try to define an identity. Differentiation necessitates comparison, the identification of the ways in which 'our' group differs from 'their' group. Comparison, in turn, generates evaluation. Huntington adds that group egotism leads to justification. Since the other group are involved in a similar process, conflicting

¹⁹ Joppke C (1999) pg 5

²⁰ Smith A.D (1991) pg 12, 21, 22

²¹ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 22 – 24.

justification leads to competition. Competition leads to antagonism and the broadening of what may have started as the perception of narrow differences into more intense and fundamental ones. In this way stereotypes are created, the opponent is demonized, the others become the enemy²². Having a common enemy has proven through history to strengthen the national identity, this becomes most apparent in times of war.

2.1.2 American National Identity

In this part of the essay I will look at different components that help us understand what American national identity may mean. Erika Lee, Huntington and Joppke have theories about what American identity is, and they look at the history of the U.S. to find out what has shaped its national identity.

According to Huntington, thinking about American identity has involved wide acceptance of two propositions that are true, but only partially true and yet often accepted as the whole truth. The first claim is that U.S. is a *nation of immigrants*, and the second is that American identity is defined solely by a set of political principles, *the American Creed*. This common creed is said to unify the diverse ethnicities brought together by immigration. According to Huntington there is much truth in these claims. Immigration and the Creed are key elements of American national identity, but he thinks that these are only partial identities. Neither of them is the whole truth concerning the U.S., since they do not tell us anything about the society that attracted the immigrants or the culture that produced the Creed.²³

According to Huntington and Joppke, the American Creed was founded by British settlers who brought with them a distinct culture. The key elements of that culture include the English language, Christianity, religious commitment, English concepts of the rule of law, including the responsibility of rulers and the rights of individuals, and Protestant

²² Huntington S.P (2004) pg 26

²³ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 37 – 38.

values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth.²⁴ Historically, Huntington argues that millions of immigrants were attracted to the U.S. because of this culture and the economic opportunities and political liberties it made possible. Another thing that has been central for over 250 years in American national identity, is the assumption or myth of the U.S. as *a frontier society*. Huntington means that the U.S.'s frontier, unlike other frontiers in Canada, Australia and Russia, lacked a significant governmental presence. It was first populated by individual hunters, trappers, prospectors, adventurers, and traders, who were then followed by settlers who founded communities along the waterways and railways. The peopling of the American frontier involved a combination of settlement and migration.²⁵

According to Huntington, identifying the U.S. with the ideology of the Creed enables Americans to claim that they have a 'civic' national identity as contrasted with the ethnic and ethno-cultural identities of other countries. America is said to be more liberal, more principled, more civilized than tribally defined societies. The creedal definition allows Americans to hold that theirs is an exceptional country because, unlike other nations, its identity is defined by principle rather than ascription, and at the same time to claim that America is a universal nation because its principles are applicable to all human societies. The Creed makes it possible to speak of 'Americanism',²⁶ as a political ideology or set of beliefs. Another component Huntington mentions, that I believe is important, is the fact that Americans have regularly perceived their enemies and friends in creedal terms. Americans have identified their enemies with terms such as tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, Nazism, communism and suppression of liberty and individual rights. During the 19th century they enthusiastically endorsed the efforts of Latin Americans, Hungarians and others to free themselves from monarchical rules.²⁷

²⁴ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 69, Joppke

²⁵ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 44, 52.

²⁶ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 48, Joppke C (1999) pg 23.

²⁷ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 48 – 49.

The frontier society and the Creed has been two elements of American identity since the Revolution, but so has the enslavement and segregation of Afro-Americans, the massacre and marginalisation of Native Americans and, as Lee and Joppke points out, the exclusion of Asians,²⁸ discrimination against Catholics, and the obstruction of immigrants from outside Northwestern Europe.²⁹ This is also an underlying factor in the way American identity has been shaped, but this story generates little enthusiasm compared to the Creed.

Defining the ‘American’ within the context of the ‘American national identity’ is difficult. As described before, it is often said that Americans are a people that are defined and united by their commitment to the American Creed. This suggests that people included in this commitment are the ones that represent the ‘Americans’ in the context of American national identity. However, a lot of people identify themselves with this, yet, that does not necessarily include them in the American national identity—and it does not make them a U.S. citizen. Citizenship is the basis for rights.³⁰ The U.S. government’s treatment of citizens differs from its treatment of ‘aliens’ (i.e., non U.S. citizens). Both ‘alien’ and ‘illegal immigrant’ are two different words often used to describe a noncitizen. A noncitizen is a migrant who resides as a noncitizen in a foreign state.³¹ According to, Kirsten Hill Maher, an assistant Professor of Political Science, and Kevin R. Johnson, a Professor of Law, citizenship in the U.S. is defined largely in terms of those it excludes, more than just by legal status in relation to the state, it marks belonging and entitlement to rights, qualities defined as much as cultural norms and practices as by legal statutes.³² Political theorist, Judith Shklar, states that exclusion of the ‘others’ in public life helps to produce the substance and status of ‘us’, the citizens, the included.³³ Therefore the ‘Americans’ in the context of American national identity can be seen as an American citizen, and because of the citizenship he or she has not only legal, economical, social and

²⁸ Reed Ueda (edi) (2005) *A Companion to American Immigration*. pg 5, Joppke C (1999) pg 24.

²⁹ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 49, Joppke C (1999) pg 24.

³⁰ Brysk A (edi) (2002) pg 21.

³¹ Brysk A (edi) (2002) pg 19.

³² Johnson K.R (2004) *The ‘Huddled Masses’ Myth – Immigration and Civil Rights*.pg 152 – 153, Brysk A (edi) (2002) pg 26 – 27.

³³ Brysk A (edi) (2002) pg 27.

civil rights within the U.S., but also the ‘right’ cultural norms and practices, opposed to the ‘alien’.

I previously mentioned that national identity often gets strengthened in the presence of a common enemy and in particular during times of war. Both Joppke and Huntington agree that American national identity reached a high point during and after World War I and II. WWI stimulated patriotism and increased the national identity over other identities. WWII showed the significance of the ideological component of American identity and paved the way for the end of the ethnic legal definitions of that identity. WWII was a common experience that shaped Americans’ understanding of their nation’s identity. They had one dominating purpose that almost everyone shared, which was to win a war against a country that had carried racism to a murderous extreme, Nazi Germany. According to Joppke, this also raised the awareness of the international obligations of a superpower.³⁴

Both Huntington and Joppke underline the fact that, after the World Wars, multiculturalism became popular and still is today. WWII created a cultural vacuum that was easily filled by multicultural claims.³⁵ They both agree that the U.S. today is facing difficulties. With globalization, new threats have appeared. The U.S has experienced this through the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which has lead to the currently ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These states among others are seen as threats to America, and this has made militant Islam one of the primary enemies of the U.S. in the 21st century.³⁶ The measures that were taken in the U.S. after the attacks, in the form of immigration laws and policies, have affected the role of the U.S. as an immigrant-receiving nation. For the U.S., the contradictory impulses to both welcome and exclude immigrants have reflected and reinforced the longstanding ambivalence of Americans towards immigration. Huntington points out a cultural and political fragmentation and an ethnic and religious awareness that at the moment pose a threat to the American national

³⁴ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 137 – 138, Joppke C (1999) pg 24.

³⁵ Joppke C (1999) pg 7.

³⁶ Huntington (2004) pg 268 – 269 Reed Ueda (edi) (2005) pg 6.

myth.³⁷ Joppke underlines the tension between multiculturalism, national identity and nationalism.³⁸

2.2 Discourse Analysis

The term *discourse* could be explained by saying that language is structured in different patterns, visible in our statements in a specific social domain. The way we speak about the world does not portray a neutral version of how our surroundings, identities and social relations act out. Instead it plays an active roll in how we create and change it.³⁹

Discourse analysis lies on a social constructionist base. Social constructionism is sociological and psychological theories of knowledge that consider how social phenomena develop in particular social contexts. There are four key premises within social constructionism. The first one tells you to have a critical approach towards natural or obvious facts. Our knowledge about the world is not an objective truth. The reality is only available to us through the categories, knowledge and conception, that we have about the world. It does not reflect the truth, it is a product of the way we categorize the world. The second premises is that our knowledge is always characterized by history and culture, and therefor the way we understand the world is specific and contingent. Our conception of the world and our identities could have been different, and they can change with time. Our actions contribute to the construction of the social world (including knowledge, identities and social relations) and thereby preserves some social patterns. This means that the world is socially constructed, and it's nature is not decided in advance by external conditions. The third premise is that there is a connection between knowledge and social processes. The way we understand the world is created and maintained in different kinds of social processes. Knowledge is produced through social interaction, where they both build and battle common truths. The fourth premise is that there is a connection between knowledge and social action. In a fixed conception of the

³⁷ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 139.

³⁸ Joppke C (1999) pg 11.

³⁹ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) *Diskursanalys som teori och metod* pg 7.

world some actions becomes natural and other unthinkable. Different social conceptions of the world leads to different social actions, and from there the social construction of knowledge and truth will have social consequences.⁴⁰

2.3 Analytical Variables

Collective identity or *group formation* is essential for this study. A collective identity or a group identity can be seen from different perspectives. In a national discourse the group identity can be based on a homogenous culture, a linguistic and historic unit, and at the same time the principal of the nation is that the political and cultural units will match.⁴¹ The group formation in discourse theory can be seen as a reduction of possibilities. People are constituted as a group when some of the identities they posses are relevant, while other identites may be ignored. If you look at a group that might be seen as 'hispanic', this is one identity that Mexicans may have in the U.S. However this may not be an identity that Mexicans feel they posses. Instead this can be seen as an identity that has been constructed by Americans, while they themselves constructed their American national identity. This is how 'others' are created and excluded. To make this possible it is also necessary to ignore the differences within the own group.⁴²

National discourse can work as a mechanism of exclusion, that decides who is included and excluded from the society. In this context the term *Semantic density* becomes relevant. Semantic density is the main points that exists within our categories. As an example we can look at Mexicans as the category. The semantic density here would most likely be focused on 'a hispanic look' and a Spanish sounding name, and so on. The attributes, 'hispanic' look and, a Spanish sounding name, are applied on the category, Mexicans, which from the beginning has been constructed by a discourse.⁴³

⁴⁰ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 11 - 12

⁴¹ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 163.

⁴² Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 52, 172.

⁴³ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 171-172.

An important element in a group formation is the term *representation*. A group will not exist before it has been ‘announced by words’. This requires that someone, a representative, speaks for the group itself. The representative and the group must in some sense have the same understanding, and the representative will manifest the groups will. Since one group is created in contrast to another group, the whole society follows. This way group formation is included in the struggle on how the myth about society should be given a content, and at the same time imply how people should be divided into different groups. To describe representation you could look at the traditional struggle between classes, within this struggle there is an assumption that society is divided in different classes whom fight against eachother.⁴⁴

Antagonism in discourse analysis is a term for conflict. Antagonism occurs when social agents are unable to attain their identities. Different identities can hinder eachother. The identities are not necessarily in conflict but one discourse can block the other, and that happens when two identities requier conflicting demands at the same terrain. From one discourse perspective, with everything that is has excluded, this threathens its existence and uniqueness.⁴⁵ As described earlier Huntington pointed out that for people to define themselves they need an ‘other’.⁴⁶ By finding the antagonisms, you might be able to find the boundaries of American national identity and how it is constituted in relation to ‘the other’.

2.4 Summary

A lot of my focus has been placed on identity and group formation in relation to the nation-state. The terms *antagonism*, *representation*, *group formation* and *semantic density*, are all essential for creating a collective identity. Group identity is especially relevant for this study in order to look at what creates and shapes American national

⁴⁴ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 51 - 52

⁴⁵ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 53 - 54

⁴⁶ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 26

identity, who and what challenges it, and who it excludes. As described by Huntington, Joppke and Lee, the American National identity tends to focus on the Creed, the frontier and immigrants. These three categories often overshadows other elements that has been part of creating the identity, for example the enslavement and segregation of Afro-Americans. The 'American' within the context of American national identity can be defined by citizenship. The citizenship itself assure legal, political. economical and social rights. The opposite of the citizen can be defined as an 'illegal alien'.

3 The United States and Immigration

In this part of my thesis I will start by giving a brief historic overview of immigration to the United States, after that I will focus on the recent immigration flow from Mexico to the U.S. and finish with a discussion about the U.S–Mexican border and the border fence.

An essential part for this study is the U.S.-Mexican border and border fence. Five authors, in particular, have discussed issues regarding the border and immigration from Mexico. In the book *A Companion to American Immigration*, Erika Lee shows different examples of when immigration has been in focus, who has been immigrating and how the different immigration policies have changed throughout the history of the U.S. She concludes that there has always been an ambivalence about immigration, and that this can be seen in the public discourse and in the immigration laws and policies.⁴⁷ In Christian Joppke's book *Immigration and the Nation–State*, he shows how immigration challenges the nation–state. Huntington focuses on how he believes Mexican immigration is having an effect on the U.S. American associate professor in international studies, Peter Andreas, and Peter Skerry, American Professor of political science, focus more on the U.S–Mexican border and the border fence.

3.1 Immigration to the United States

The United States has experienced different kinds of immigration flows and different kinds of immigrants. Lee describes how, in 1882, Congressman Edward K. Valentine rose before his colleagues in the House of Representative and offered his opinion on the Chinese immigration restriction bill under consideration. He believed that the Chinese immigrants were a threat to the American labour, society and even civilization, and urged for the gates to be closed. When the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in May the same year, the U.S. took on a role as a gatekeeping nation, one which used immigration laws to

⁴⁷ Reed Ueda (edi) (2005) *A Companion to American Immigration*. pg 6.

exclude, restrict and control foreigners, often on the base of ethnicity, class and sexuality. After 1920, most Asian immigrants were refused entry to the country, and people from South and East Europe found themselves more restricted when applying for admission to enter the country. Immigrants were viewed more as a hindrance, rather than as a benefit, to the United States.⁴⁸

Another example Lee brings up in her book is the years around the 1960s. At that time the national mood towards immigration had slowly started to change. Senator John F. Kennedy announced that the U.S. was a nation of immigrants. Kennedy pointed out the U.S.'s traditions and principles that the qualification of an immigrant does not depend on his country of birth, and that all men are created equal as it says in the Declaration of Independence. Kennedy also claimed that immigrants were not a hindrance, but the bedrock that the nation was built on.⁴⁹ According to Joppke, Kennedy's book became more than just a book, it was a programme for the reopening of the U.S. to a large number of immigrants.⁵⁰

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson reformed the immigration act which abolished the discriminatory system of regulation that had governed immigration for 40 years. Both Lee, Huntington and Joppke agree that since 1965, the doors to the U.S. have been opened wider than at any other time since the late 19th century.⁵¹ According to Lee, this has transformed American society, economy, culture, and politics.⁵²

Joppke claims that the legal immigration streams have swelled both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the overall population, and the most important part is, that the newcomers have dramatically changed the 'look' and 'feel' of the society of the U.S., all in a relatively short period of time. Joppke believes that it is the illegal immigration that today primarily drives the political dimensions of the immigration debate. The volume of

⁴⁸ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 5

⁴⁹ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 5, Joppke C (1999) *Immigration and the Nation – State- The United States, Germany and Great Britain*. pg 23.

⁵⁰ Joppke C (1999) pg 23.

⁵¹ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 5, Huntington (2004) pg 226, Joppke C (1999) pg 25.

⁵² Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 5.

illegal immigrants has grown fairly steadily during the last three decades,⁵³ and, according to Huntington, illegal entry into the U.S. is a post-1965 and a Mexican phenomenon. He adds that in 1993, President Clinton declared the organized smuggling of people into the U.S. a threat to national security. Huntington believes that illegal immigration is also a threat to America's societal security.⁵⁴

Since the 1990s, an increase in illegal immigration, especially from Mexico, has fueled fears of an 'invasion' from the South⁵⁵ and inspired what Andreas describe as the 'militarization' of the US-Mexico border.⁵⁶ Followed by the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001, new immigration control measures targeting suspected terrorists or those with links to terrorism were instituted, mostly by the U.S. Justice Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). To increase the national security, the immigration regulation was placed under the jurisdiction of the newly created Department of Homeland Security.⁵⁷

3.1.1 Immigration from Mexico to the United States

Mass immigration from Mexico to the U.S began more than a decade ago. It is deeply embedded in the history, culture and economies of both nations. The current immigration wave began with Mexico's economic crisis in 1982, in the 1990s it accelerated sharply with the U.S. economic boom, and today immigration levels have reached record dimensions. According to Huntington, the contemporary immigration is unprecedented in the history of the U.S., and nothing comparable has occurred previously in the American experience, especially regarding illegal immigration.⁵⁸

⁵³ Joppke C(edi) (1998) *Challenge To The Nation – State – Immigration in Western Europe and the United States*. pg 197.

⁵⁴ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 228 - 229

⁵⁵ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 6.

⁵⁶ Andreas P & Snyder T (eds) (2000) *The Wall Around the West – State Borders and Immigration Control in North America and Europe*. Pg 105 – 106.

⁵⁷ Reed U (edi) (2005) *A Companion to American Immigration*. pg 6

⁵⁸ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 225, 229.

According to Andreas, the border between Mexico and the U.S. has one of the highest numbers of legal and illegal crossings in the world.⁵⁹ In March 2008 the Pew Hispanic Center estimated 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants living and working in the U.S. This number indicates that unauthorized immigrants make up four percent of the U.S. population.⁶⁰ Huntington and Skerry state that Mexicans accounts for about 50-58 percent of the total illegal population residing in the U.S.⁶¹ Huntington argue that the single most immediate and serious challenge to the U.S.'s traditional national identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico.⁶²

3.1.2 A Hispanic Threat?

The concern about illegal immigrants started already in the 1960s. Back then, Alarmists talked about loss of control over the nation's borders, and their rhetoric reflected a larger anxiety and fear about the demographic racial and ethnic changes. Metaphors of war such as *invasion* and *conquest* were words commonly used to describe illegal immigration from Mexico, while illegal immigration from other countries was ignored.⁶³

Lee acknowledges one big problem with the U.S. government's efforts to crack down on illegal Mexican immigrants, which is that it has placed the entire Mexican-American community under suspicion, making illegal immigrants, legal residents and even American citizens of Mexican descent born in the U.S. vulnerable to scrutiny and government actions. According to her, the way in which the U.S. government has attempted to control illegal immigration has been more administrative, rather than legislative initiatives.⁶⁴ At least until *2006 and the H.R. 6061 Secure Fence Act*. The fact that recent efforts have been affecting all Mexican-American residents, and not only the

⁵⁹ Andreas, Peter (2000). *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* pg 10.

⁶⁰ The Pew Hispanic Center, Publications. Trends in Unauthorized Immigration .
<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/> (28/12/2008)

⁶¹ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 228, Skerry P How to Build a Fence, *Foreign Policy* Sep/Oct 2006 pg 64.

⁶² United States: Don't Fence us Out; Immigration *The Economist*. Oct the 2 2008.

⁶³ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 25.

⁶⁴ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 25 – 26.

illegal ones, shows how thin the line between legal and illegal immigrants can be in the public debate. This can also be seen in Huntington's theories about Mexican immigration.⁶⁵

According to Huntington, immigration from Mexico differs from past immigration in more than one way. He argues that the hispanic immigration threatens to divide the U.S. population into two peoples, two cultures and two languages. The U.S. is now confronted by a massive influx of people from a poor, adjacent country with more than one third the population of the U.S.⁶⁶ Another aspect that makes immigration from Mexico different, according to Huntington, is that Mexicans already constitute the largest numbers of legal immigrants in the U.S., and if you add the numbers of illegal immigrants on top of that plus the difference in the fertility rates of these immigrants compared to the rest of the Americans, you get what Huntington call a Hispanization of the parts in the U.S. where immigrants tend to reside. Huntington also argues that Mexican-Americans have asserted or could assert a historical claim to U.S. territory. He claims that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans do make that claim, that they feel that they have special rights in these territories, and that no other immigrant group in U.S. history has done this.⁶⁷

Peter H. Schuck, Professor of law at Yale, explains that the early ineffectiveness of the border control has been a source of enormous frustration to Americans and their politicians for a long time, especially in relatively small communities with high concentrations of illegal immigrants. He adds that at the same time, Americans have become both more dependent on illegal workers and more aware of this dependence. Because of this, Schuck believes that a lot of Americans feel beset and victimized by illegal immigration, which in turn is affecting their political identity.⁶⁸

Earlier in my thesis, I identified key elements that are relevant to describe national identity. Within the description, I showed how Huntington described that, for groups to

⁶⁵ Huntington (2004) pg 225.

⁶⁶ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 225.

⁶⁷ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 225, 233.

⁶⁸ Joppke C (edi) (1998) pg 197.

define themselves, they need an ‘other’. If you take earlier arguments into account, it is possible that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have transformed into the ‘others’ for a big part of the U.S. population.

3.2 The US–Mexican Border and the South West Border Fence

Every time illegal immigration is on the rise, the U.S. responds with different measures. This can often be seen in the rise of enforcement with border patrol agents and an increase in the linewatch hours. The next step, according to *the H.R. 6061 Secure Fence Act*, is to build a border fence, which is intended to prevent illegal immigrants, drug smugglers and potential terrorists from hiking across the Southern border into the U. S.⁶⁹

According to Andreas, wall–building is something that humans have been doing throughout history, the Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall are two examples of this. The nature of these walls and the threats they are built to repel have changed. The new walls are designed not to keep people in or to keep militaries out, but to prevent what Andreas calls the ‘undesirables’ from entering the state.⁷⁰ Andreas explains that cross-border activities are not new, and that border law evasion is as old as border law enforcement. What is new, is that policing these border crossings has been elevated from the status of what he calls ‘low politics’ to ‘high politics’, involving a shift in the definition of security threats and in the practice of security policy. This transformation has been most visible along the geographic fault lines that divide rich and poor countries.⁷¹

All states claim the sovereign right to control their borders. Control over who enters and exits one’s territory has long been associated with the modern nation–state. This way of viewing national borders and the sovereign state has been challenged by multiculturalism

⁶⁹ The Department of National Security . CBP – Securing America’s Borders.
[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/bs/ \(04/11/2008\)](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/bs/ (04/11/2008))

⁷⁰ Andreas P & Snyder T (eds) (2000) pg 1

⁷¹ Andreas P & Snyder T (eds) (2000) pg3

and globalization theories.⁷² Rapid changes in transportation and communication technologies have transformed a world of nations into a global web of multinational enterprises and interdependent societies and lead to an increase in transnational immigration.

The border between Mexico and the U.S. is not only the busiest land crossing in the world, it is also the worlds most heavily patrolled. According to Andreas, this is because of the U.S.'s anxieties about the influx of illegal immigrants and drugs.⁷³ While drug trafficking and illegal immigration have long been U.S. policy concerns, it is only in recent years that they have become the defining source of tension for U.S.–Latin-American relations.

Until fairly recently, the Western half of the U.S.–Mexican border has not been clearly drawn. The border was first marked by piles of stones, then by concrete obelisks and over time, the occasional barbed–wire fence went up. In year 2006 some kind of fencing already existed along 106 miles of the border, mostly near cities, including San Diego, El Paso and Nogales, Arizona. By the end of 2008, the U.S. government is supposed to have built 670 miles (1078 km) of fencing along the 2,000-mile (3218 km) border with Mexico. It would run along five segments of the 1,952-mile (3141 km) border that now experience the most illegal crossings. The fence is behind schedule and well over budget.⁷⁴ *The H.R. 6061 Secure Fence Act of 2006* not only authorized the building of the fence along the U.S.–Mexican border, but also more vehicle barriers, checkpoints and lighting, and more advanced technology like cameras, satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to reinforce the infrastructure at the border.⁷⁵

The fence is undoubtedly changing the patterns of illegal immigration, but if it is reducing the numbers of immigrants is a hard question to answer. The way the fence

⁷² Huntington S.P (2004) pg 13.

⁷³ Andreas P & Snyder T (eds) (2000) pg 4.

⁷⁴ Good Neighbours Make Fences. *The Economist*. Oct the 2 2008. There is not many updated reliable information sources about the border fence. The Economist offers one of the better available options.

⁷⁵ The Department of Homeland Security homepage: <http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/border-fence-southwest.shtm> (28/11/200), Andreas P (2000) pg 3.

changes the patterns of illegal immigration is not necessarily in the numbers of immigrants entering the U.S., but rather the areas where the illegal immigrants pass the border. This itself has increased the number of deaths related to the border, not because of a fence that maims and kills, but because of the heat and exposure.⁷⁶

The Border Patrol points to the fact that they are catching fewer people, but this does not really say anything, because the figures do not include those who make it across the border, and they double-count people who keep trying.⁷⁷ The Pew Hispanic Center's last study shows that the size of the unauthorized population appears to have declined since 2007, but it did not explain why. One possible explanation could be the slowdown in U.S. economic growth that has had a disproportionate impact on foreign-born Latin-American workers, while economic growth in Mexico and other Latin-American countries has been stable. Another fact could be a heightened focus on enforcement of immigration laws that was implemented after the terrorist attacks of September 11.⁷⁸ This, according to Erika Lee, has pushed the core components of the U.S.'s gatekeeping and immigration laws to the very forefront of their international policies. One of the first changes in immigration regulation was the discussion of transnational immigration control and cooperative efforts among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada to enforce the Northern and Southern borders of the U.S. and to regularize immigration policies among the three countries. Another change was a section in the '*Patriot Act*' that passed in the House of Representatives in October of 2001, this allowed the long-term detention of noncitizens whom the attorney general 'certified' as a terrorist threat.⁷⁹

Most signs point to the fact that it is not the fence itself that has reduced the falling numbers of illegal entries, but instead it is other factors that have played the crucial role.

⁷⁶ Skerry P (2006) How to Build a Fence, *Foreign Policy* Sep/Oct 2006 pg 66, Brysk A(ed) (2002) pg 20.

⁷⁷ Good Neighbours Make Fences. *The Economist*. Oct the 2 2008.

⁷⁸ The Pew Hispanic Center, Publications. Trends in Unauthorized Immigration .
<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/ /04/12/2008>

⁷⁹ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 27.

3.3 Summary

There is much more to say about the fence, how it is built and how it is not built, how it has an impact on the environment, if it in fact stops illegal immigrants from entering, and so on. However, the aim for my study is not to figure this out, but what I have just introduced gives a good picture of how the United States is in the middle of an intense debate over its borders. It also shows that immigration into the U.S is reaching historic levels, and the numbers of illegal immigrants is higher than ever. Most of them have entered across the 1.950-mile U.S.–Mexican border. The high number of Mexicans residing in the United States has, according to some scholars like Huntington, started to have a huge impact on American Society.

4 Analysis - The Department of Homeland Security

Earlier in my thesis, I introduced a theoretical and methodological framework as a base for my analysis. With the help of this framework I aim to identify the discursive construction of an American national identity. I am going to analyze different kind of material on the Department of Homeland Security's website. I will examine specific parts of the website that are relevant for the overall purpose of this study. Therefore my focus will be limited to illegal immigration, the U.S.-Mexican border, and the border fence. The reason why I have chosen to look at the DHS's website is because the department was created with the purpose to secure the U.S. from different kinds of threats and the department is responsible for the Southwest border security and the building of the border fence.⁸⁰

The website itself is designed to be used as a source of information for the population of the U.S. and those who aim to become a resident of the nation. The site shows how the department works and what agencies are a part of it. It deals with the nations security issues, not only related to terrorism, but also to natural disasters or other large-scale emergencies. Since the DHS was created by the U.S. Congress, as an initiative by the Bush administration, after the terrorist attacks on the September 11th 2001. This indicates that there is a certain political angle to the department and the website, which means that the result of my analysis will present one official version of a particular American national identity.

4.1 The Department of Homeland Security

The Department of Homeland Security was created by the U.S.'s Congress through the *Homeland Security Act of 2002*. After the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001, political pundits and lawmakers argue that the U.S. gatekeeping efforts did not work

⁸⁰ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 26, DHS: <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/book.pdf>

well enough. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) failed to act upon internal reports of suspicious individuals who were later found to be among the hijackers who attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon. At least one of the hijackers entered the country on a student visa, while others studied at flight schools in the U.S. despite their lack of student visas. According to Lee several of the suspects spent time in Canada, where the immigration laws are less strict compared to the U.S.⁸¹

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 abolished, invented and included some already existing agencies. The invented and included agencies became a part of the DHS after 2003. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, transformed into two new divisions, The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) and the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security (DBTS). BCIS deals primarily with naturalization, visa and work permits and other services for new residents and citizens. DBTS deals with border and immigration law enforcement. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which is responsible for the U.S.'s borders is another department that lies under the DHS.⁸²

The entire text of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 is over 187 pages long. In general the primary mission of the Department is to A, prevent terrorist attacks within the U.S., B, reduce the vulnerability of the U.S. to terrorism, and C, minimize the damage, and assist in recovery, from terrorist attacks that do occur within the U.S.⁸³

In July 2005 the DHS introduced a six point agenda, this agenda was created to guide the department in how to deal with potential threats. The agenda included strengthening the border security, interior enforcement and to reform immigration processes. It also realigns the DHS organization to maximize its performance.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Reed U (edi) (2005) pg 26.

⁸² DHS Homepage: <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/mission/guardians.xml> (04/01/2009)

⁸³ DHS Homepage: <http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm> (29/12/2008)

⁸⁴ DHS: http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0646.shtm. (05/01/2009)

Secure Border Initiative (SBI) was introduced in November 2005. The SBI is a comprehensive multi-year plan established by the DHS, to secure America's borders and reduce illegal cross-border activity. The SBI's tactical infrastructure program is responsible for the development and construction of the fence between the U.S. and Mexico.⁸⁵

4.2 Analysis

In order to examine the American national identity I have lined up five questions that I will use as guidance for my analysis. The individual analyses interact with each other, therefore the terms I use might be mentioned and explained under two different questions. The contents that I have examined, are official documents, pamphlets and articles. The overall amount of text sums up to about twenty various sources of print. The texts will be introduced when they are being referred to in the analysis. Most of these texts lack an official author, and instead provided as a public service. Two of the texts that I analyze are provided by *the Leadership Journal*. The Leadership Journal is sponsored by the U.S. DHS, to provide a forum to talk about the departments work protecting the American people.⁸⁶

4.2.1 How is the United States portrayed as a nation?

The terms freedom and liberty is often used when referring to the U.S.⁸⁷ Freedom is a central theme both in the explanation why the U.S. has enemies, and why people want to immigrate to the U.S. The American Creed is something that is seen as a privilege and should be enjoyed by everyone, including immigrants. It is clear that these political ideals

⁸⁵ DHS, CPB Homepage:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/sbi/about_sbi/hist_mission_office.xml (29/12/2008)

⁸⁶ DHS – about the Leadership Journal: <http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/2007/10/american-story.html> (07/01/2009) .

⁸⁷ http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/DHS_StratPlan_FINAL_spread.pdf

are important for the national identity according to the DHS. The U.S. is also described as ‘a nation of immigrants,’ by the DHS and that ‘throughout our history, immigrants have come here seeking a better way of life,’ and last it claims that immigration has been an important part in shaping the nation.⁸⁸ This implies that a part of the national identity is also shaped around the concept of immigration. These are the two propositions that Huntington and Joppke pointed out as important parts of what has created American national identity. The DHS’s website tells us no different. Terms like *freedom*, *liberty*, *immigration*, and *privilege*, are words that are used frequently in documents and statements on the website. The national discourse that is represented by the DHS is based on the American Creed and the idea of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants. The term *American Creed* is not used by the DHS, but the words they use to describe the U.S. are components that are included in Huntingtons description of the Creed. The American identity is shaped around these two propositions. The Creed may serve as a political bond that unites the U.S., while the idea of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants may serve as a common historical element. Smith used the term ‘collective identity’ when he pointed out the importance of a common political community, with common institutions, that has a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community.⁸⁹

One interesting part is that the DHS ignores the less attractive sides of what has shaped American national identity, as mentioned before, the enslavement and segregation of Afro-Americans, the massacre and marginalization of Native Americans and the exclusion of Asians. Another part the DHS do not speak about, is the ideas of the U.S as a frontier society. Smith pointed out the importance of the concept of a nation as a rational state, with well-defined territories. He stated that territory is defined by history and that the historical land is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations.⁹⁰ The DHS was created to secure the borders that formerly lacked well-defined boundaries under the frontier-society concept. With clear border demarcations, the U.S. is no longer a frontier-society.

⁸⁸ <http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/M-476.pdf>

⁸⁹ Smith S.D (1991) pg 9

⁹⁰ Smith S.D (1991) pg 10.

Patriotism is another word that often is used when the DHS speak about the nation and its citizens.⁹¹ The term nationalism is not used and Americans do not see themselves as nationalists. This could be that nationalism might be considered a bad word and is often associated with intolerance and supremacy.⁹² The DHS calls the U.S. their *homeland*, not *motherland*. *Homeland* is more associated to *Patriotism*, while *motherland* or *fatherland* is associated with nationalism. This could serve as an explanation to why the DHS call the U.S. its *homeland*. Huntington explains that the government's focus on 'homeland security' after September 11th generated uneasiness among some Americans who suggested that the concept of 'homeland' was un-American.⁹³ The term *homeland* will be further discussed later on in the analysis.

4.2.2 Who is the 'American' in the U.S.?

It's not really clear anywhere on the DHS's website who the 'Americans' are in the U.S., despite the fact that a lot of focus is being put on how hard the department is working to protect the 'people of America', and, secure the country 'against those who seek to disrupt the American way of life'.⁹⁴ You have to dig deeper to identify the 'American' in the context of the American national identity, and when you do, you do not find a clear definition.

The DHS's website largely focuses on explaining how to become a citizen of the U.S. According to the DHS website, citizenship is required to be considered an 'American'. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service describes citizenship as 'one of the most coveted gifts that the U.S. government can bestow'.⁹⁵ It is described as:

⁹¹ <http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/2007/10/american-story.html> (27/12/2008)

⁹² Pei M (2003) The Paradoxes of American Nationalism. *Foreign Policy*. June 2003.

⁹³ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 51.

⁹⁴ http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/DHS_StratPlan_FINAL_spread.pdf (27/12/2008)

⁹⁵ <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship> (28/12/2008)

Citizenship Is an Identity: Citizenship is an identity and not simply a benefit. Feeling and being perceived as part of the political community is an important indicator of a person's integration into a society.⁹⁶

The DHS makes it clear that citizenship is an identity. As counterpart, a noncitizen is classified as an 'alien'.⁹⁷ The classification as either citizen or alien serves as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion from society. I will talk more about exclusion later in my analysis.

The DHS describes Americans as 'resilient people'⁹⁸ (i.e., people who have and are recovering from hardships). The DHS was created after September 11th and in the motivations for its origin, the attacks are mentioned.⁹⁹ Huntington wrote that the Americans are convinced that their values and principles are universal.¹⁰⁰ Because of this, whenever the U.S. is threatened, they attribute the assault as attacks on their values. The attacks on September 11th, for example, have been interpreted as an attack on the democratic freedoms and institutions.¹⁰¹

4.2.3 How is the Southwest border described?

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001, attention was brought to the new security issues that the U.S. is facing. A lot of the DHS's focus is put on the nation's land borders. This is something that can be seen in the strategic plan for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. This agency was brought together with one primary responsibility, and that was to protect the nation's borders. In the, 2007 – 2011 pamphlet called *Securing America's Borders at Ports of Entry*, it states that U.S.'s neighbors, Canada and Mexico provide opportunities to terrorist and transnational criminal groups. Despite ongoing

⁹⁶ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (05/01/2009)

⁹⁷ <http://www.uscis.gov/propub/ProPubVAP.jsp?dockkey=c9fef57852dc066cfe16a4cb816838a4> (27/12/2008)

⁹⁸ U.S. DHS Strategic Plan Fiscal years 2008 – 2013. *One Team, One Mission, Securing Our Homeland* pg 2. Read at : http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/DHS_StratPlan_FINAL_spread.pdf. (29/12/2008)

⁹⁹ DHS: <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/book.pdf> (05/01/2009)

¹⁰⁰ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 48.

¹⁰¹ Secure Borders and Open Doors – Preserving Our Welcome to the World in an Age of Terrorism. *Report of the Secure Borders and Open Doors Advisory Committee*. January 09. http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_SBODACreport508-compliant_version2.pdf. (01/01/2009)

bilateral and multilateral initiatives, the CBP claims that this is possible because of 'cultural, legal, and political differences' between the U.S., Mexico and Canada. The pamphlet also claim that this will continue to allow Canada and Mexico to be used as 'a potential haven or gateway for terrorist and criminal activity directed against the United States'.¹⁰² The text also states that 'long-established, criminal smuggling networks, particularly in Mexico, increasingly attractive for exploitation by terrorist groups attempting to cross U.S. land borders'.¹⁰³ Interestingly, Erika Lee described that several of the suspected terrorists of the attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon spent time in Canada before the attacks, not Mexico. Still Mexico is singled out in the description. In a historical overview on immigration to the U.S. it is said that:

New dangers confront our nation's borders. As part of Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol is taking on the additional challenge of protecting our borders against terrorism. History has shown that it matters little whether the drug is alcohol or marijuana; the illegal migrants, Chinese or Mexican; or the terrorists, hijackers, or suicide bombers.¹⁰⁴

There are two notable things with the two examples that I just introduced: a) Canada and Mexico are increasingly seen as potential havens for terrorists (with a greater emphasis on Mexico), and b) the historical overview points out Mexicans as today's illegal immigrants.

The statement also focus on the nations borders. Huntington claims that territorial identity has always been weak or missing in the U.S. This is reflected in a high level of geographical mobility among Americans. Americans have not linked themselves as people with any particular national site as the unique embodiment of their identity, nor have they to the same extent as other people identified themselves with the overall territory they inhabit. Huntington explains that the land that was America, was ever changing. Throughout the history of the U.S. it expanded and it was impossible to ascribe what might be included within its borders at any particular time. The stars in the flag were always increasing and being rearranged. Huntington adds that for over 250 years the

¹⁰² *U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Securing America's Borders at Ports of Entry* (2006) pg 14

¹⁰³ *U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Securing America's Borders at Ports of Entry* (2006) pg 11, 14.
http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/border_security/port_activities/securing_ports/entry_points.ctt/entry_points.pdf. (29/12/2008)

¹⁰⁴ DHS Homepage: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/history/bp_historcut.xml (29/12/2008)

frontier was a central element in American identity, but the frontier was always moving. It was not permanently identified.¹⁰⁵ I argue, that after 2001, issues regarding U.S. borders have become prominent. This is visible when the DHS speaks about the Southwest border. Words like ‘loss of control’ and ‘regain control’ are used, and the border needs to be ‘secured’, ‘guarded’ and ‘protected’.¹⁰⁶ According to Andreas the ‘loss of control’ theme provides a powerful narrative. Not only can it be used to justify further escalation of border security, but also for critics, it can be used to demonstrate the severe limits and even futility of such escalation. He adds that border control is not simply a policy instrument for deterring illegal crossings but a symbolic representation of state authority.¹⁰⁷

4.2.4 How is immigration described?

The DHS acknowledges immigration as an important part of the nation and the department states that the U.S. has been a nation of immigrants since its founding. The DHS describe immigration as ‘enriching our national character’.¹⁰⁸ In a report called “*Building an Americanization Movement for the Twenty-first Century*,” immigration in relation to the U.S. is described as:

We as a nation have embraced the opportunities and met the challenges associated with each successive wave of immigration. The present wave is no exception. With immigrants increasingly coming from different countries of origin and settling in communities that lack a long history of receiving immigrants, citizens and immigrants alike should reengage the principles and values that bind us as Americans.¹⁰⁹

This statement points out the importance of the principles and values that bind Americans together. These principles and values are also stated in the American Creed. The DHS also claim that it is important to “help legal immigrants embrace the common core of

¹⁰⁵ Huntington S.P (2005) pg 50 – 52.

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/mission/guardians.xml>. 29/ (12/2008). Bush G.W (2002) *The Department of Homeland Security* pg 1, 4, 9. <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/book.pdf> (29/12/2008)

¹⁰⁷ Andreas P (2000) pg 7.

¹⁰⁸ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/natedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

¹⁰⁹ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/natedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

American civic culture, learn our common language, and fully become Americans'.¹¹⁰ The DHS website uses the term '*Americanization*', which is defined as 'to make or become American in character, and assimilate to the customs and institutions of the U.S.'¹¹¹ To become a true American, the DHS implies that you have to embrace the American Creed. The DHS also points out the importance of integration. The report shows that between 1966 and 2008, the U.S. population grew from 200 million to 300 million people. Immigrants and their U.S. born children account for 55 percent of that growth. And in 2050, the foreign-born population is projected to reach 19 percent.¹¹²

Immigrants are described as 'Immigrants bring vitality and optimism to both economy and society'.¹¹³ The DHS also state that 'Immigrants from all over the world have been drawn for centuries to the United States'. The report also tell us that immigration levels are higher than ever before in the U.S., this calls for an 'reengaging' of the fundamental principles and values. The DHS describes this more clearly:

The result of such efforts builds universal attachment to America's core civic values, strengthens social and political cohesion, and will help the United States continue to prosper as a nation of immigrants bound by an enduring promise of freedom grounded in democracy, liberty, equal opportunity, and respect for the rule of law.¹¹⁴

The statement puts forth one notion worthy of comment. First, Huntington described that the U.S. unlike other nations defines itself by principles, and claim that America is a universal nation because its principles are applicable to all human societies.¹¹⁵ This is visible in the statement, 'universal attachment to America's core civic values'. The text also demonstrate the 'ideal immigrant'. The perfect immigrant would choose to integrate, or 'Americanize', and by that fully commit to the American Creed, with all that it holds.

¹¹⁰ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009). This is also how the term Americanization is described.

¹¹¹ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

¹¹² DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

¹¹³ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

¹¹⁴ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

¹¹⁵ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 48.

4.2.5 How are Mexicans portrayed?

In a historical overview on immigration there is a definition on who and what poses new threats to the U.S.:

New dangers confront our nation's borders. As part of Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol is taking on the additional challenge of protecting our borders against terrorism. History has shown that it matters little whether the drug is alcohol or marijuana; the illegal migrants, Chinese or Mexican; or the terrorists, hijackers, or suicide bombers.¹¹⁶

Here, illegal immigrants from Mexico is pointed out as one of them. Terrorists and illegal aliens are put in the same category, 'the illegal migrants, Chinese or Mexican; or the terrorists, hijackers, or suicide bombers.'¹¹⁷ In the annual report of 2007, the Office of Immigration Statistics points out Mexican natives as the largest immigration group.

Nationality of apprehended aliens. Mexican nationals accounted for nearly 89 percent of the 960,756 aliens apprehended in 2007.¹¹⁸

The DHS defines the term "alien" as any person not a citizen or national of the United States'.¹¹⁹ In *The 'Huddled Masses' Myth* Kevin R. Johnson show what the consequences of the artful word 'alien' can have. By definition, 'aliens', are outsiders of the national community. Even if they have lived in the U.S. for many years, have native born U.S. citizen children, and have worked and developed deep community ties in the U.S. The classification of persons as 'aliens', as opposed to citizens has legal, social and political significance.¹²⁰ Johnson adds that the concept of the 'alien' helps to strengthen nativist sentiment towards members of new immigrant groups, in turn of influencing U.S. responses to immigration. Earlier I mentioned that the 'American' in the context of American national identity is defined as a citizen of the U.S., which in this case would make the 'alien' the opposite.¹²¹ The term 'alien' is socially constructed, with the

¹¹⁶ DHS: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/history/bp_historcut.xml (04/01/2009)

¹¹⁷ DHS: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/history/bp_historcut.xml (04/01/2009)

¹¹⁸ DHS: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/enforcement_ar_07.pdf

Office Of Immigration Statistics Annual Report 2007 (05/01/2009)

¹¹⁹ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/propub/ProPubVAP.jsp?dockey=c9fef57852dc066cfe16a4cb816838a4> (04/01/2009)

¹²⁰ Johnson K.R (2004) pg 152 – 153.

¹²¹ Johnson K.R (2004) pg 152 – 153.

assistance of the law, the law defines who is an 'alien', in comparison to the citizens, this creates and institutionalize an 'other', which society maintains. The U.S. immigration laws, the INS and the DHS use the word alien regularly. The 'illegal alien' is in itself faceless, but you do not have to look for a long time before the term is linked to illegal immigrants from Mexico. Johnson points out the fact that the term 'alien' alone brings forth rich imagery. The word evokes the image of space invaders as depicted on television and in film. He adds that synonyms for alien include, stranger, intruder, interloper, outsider and barbarian. All terms that justify severe measures in the name of self-protection. In effect, the term 'alien' serves to dehumanize.¹²²

In an article by the Leadership Journal called *Securing the Border While Protecting the Environment*, illegal immigrants are linked to problems related to the environment. The article claims that "Illegal entrants leave trash and high concentrations of human waste, which impact wildlife, vegetation and water quality in the habitat."¹²³ The DHS states that there is an environmental reason to stop illegal crossings, and at the same time, illegal immigrants are associated with garbage and human waste. The impact on the environment that the illegal immigrants bring is described as 'damaging to the soil, vegetation, and cultural sites'.¹²⁴

Similar to 'Americanization', Huntington talks about a 'Hispanization' of parts of the U.S.¹²⁵ The DHS points out Mexican nationals as the largest group of illegal immigrants.¹²⁶ And with the ongoing massive migration from Latin America, mostly Mexico, both temporary and permanent has raised concerns about integration and assimilation. Huntington explains, that the Hispanics has increasingly intermingled peoples of various 'races' and cultures. As a result of modern communication and transportation, these migrants have been able to remain part of their original culture and

¹²² Johnson K.R (2004) pg 155.

¹²³ Leadership Journal. *Securing the Border While Protecting the Environment* Oct 22, 2007. See art at: <http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/2007/10/securing-border-while-protecting.html> (05/01/2009)

¹²⁴ Leadership Journal. *Securing the Border While Protecting the Environment* Oct 22, 2007. See art at: <http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/2007/10/securing-border-while-protecting.html> (05/01/2009)

¹²⁵ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 216, 233 - 225.

¹²⁶ DHS Homepage: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/enforcement_ar_07.pdf
Office Of Immigration Statistics Annuual Report 2007 (05/01/2009)

community. According to Huntington, this means that immigrants from Mexico and Latin America could have quite different consequences for assimilation, compared to previous waves of immigration. If immigrants do not commit themselves to the American Creed as they used to, according to Huntington, we no longer can talk about ‘Americanization’.¹²⁷

The DHS highlights the importance of ‘Americanization’. This is visible in the report *Americanization Movement for the Twenty-first Century*.¹²⁸ The Americanization movement is supposed to help immigrants to understand and commit to the American Creed, and by reaching this goal immigrants will assimilate into the American way of life. By not integrating, it is understood as a rejection of the American way of life, and therefore rejection of freedom, democracy, the English language, liberty and justice. Rejecting these values makes the immigrant become the ‘other’, the ‘dangerous’, foreign speaking, freedom-hating alien, who destroys the environment as he is on his way to invade your nation.

4.3 Summary

The way the DHS describes *American national identity, immigration, the ‘American’, the ‘Mexican’ and the Southwestern border*, is according to discourse analysis, not a neutral version on how identities and the social relations act out. Instead it plays an active roll in how this particular reality is created. The American national identity discourse that is being produced by the DHS is shaped around metaphors such as, *homeland, Patriotism, Americanism, freedom, liberty, immigration, and privilege*. These metaphors are creating an American national identity that lies on the conception of common political values, the English language, and the idea of the U.S. as a nation of immigration. By creating this identity, the identity of ‘others’ is constructed as well. *Antagonism* in discourse analysis is a term for conflict. Antagonism occur when a social agent can not identify itself. By reducing the U.S. to one single agent, it is possible to state that after the Cold War and

¹²⁷ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 202 , 208.

¹²⁸ DHS: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-708.pdf> (06/01/2009)

the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was left with not only, no enemy, but also for the first time in its history, the U.S. was without any clear ‘other’.¹²⁹ The absence of an ‘other’ has helped generate the American national identity crisis, this crisis has called for an immense need and search for a new ‘other’.

Group formation in a national discourse can be seen as reduction of possibilities and a mechanism of exclusion¹³⁰ Recognition of differences is something that must exist when one tries to define an identity. This necessitates comparison and competition. Competition leads to antagonism, and the broadening of what may have started as the perception of narrow differences turns into more intense and fundamental ones. According to Huntington this is how stereotypes are created.¹³¹ The DHS has created stereotypes when creating an American national identity, by turning the Mexican illegal immigrant into an ‘other’. The term *Semantic density*, is relevant here. Semantic density is the main points that exists within our categories.¹³² The semantic density of Mexicans (as a category), focuses on attributes like ‘*illegal*’, ‘*noncitizen*’, ‘*unclean*’, ‘*alien*’, and ‘*hispanic*’. At the same time the semantic density of Americans, (as a category) focuses on attributes such as ‘*citizen*’ and ‘*resilient*’. Mexicans and Americans are constituted as two different groups because of these assumptions. ‘Hispanization’ opposed to ‘Americanization’ shows a distinction between the U.S. citizen as an American ‘us’ versus ‘them’, a noncitizen, a Mexican, an illegal alien, a hispanic, an ‘other’. When terms like ‘Americanization’ and ‘Hispanization’ has been created and institutionalized it is accepted as the subjective truth, not as something created through a social process. This means that the discourses that created these identities has ‘succeeded’ and dominates. Because of this, the one who created the discourse is also the one who controls what can and what can not be said, and therefore controls the power balance in the society. It is no longer relevant if Mexicans identify themselves as described. The DHS has constructed two different groups, that holds different qualities. This process is necessary for the construction and the maintenance of a national identity.

¹²⁹ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 261.

¹³⁰ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 171-172.

¹³¹ Huntington S.P (2004) pg 26

¹³² Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 171-172.

A security discourse is distinct on the DHS website. The security issues are dressed in terms of ‘terrorism’, ‘illegal immigration’ and ‘transnational criminal groups’. The enemy is faceless until Canada and Mexico is pointed out as potential havens for these groups.¹³³ By identifying potential threats and common enemies the DHS strengthens the American national identity.

An important element for group formation is the term *representation*. A group will not exist before it has been ‘announced by words’. This requires that someone, a representative, speaks on the behalf of the group. The representative and the group must in some sense have the same understanding, before the representative can manifest the groups will.¹³⁴ The DHS backed up by the U.S. Government are the representatives for the U.S. citizens and their will. The DHS, the U.S. Government and the people of the U.S., all becomes part of the struggle on how the myth about society should be given a content.¹³⁵ The reality is no longer objective. The DHS have created an American national identity based on their presumption. However it does not reflect the truth, it is a product of the way they categorize the world.

¹³³ DHS Homepage: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/history/bp_historcut.xml (29/12/2008)

¹³⁴ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 171-172.

¹³⁵ Jørgensen M.W & Phillips L (2000) pg 171-172.

5 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine what constitutes the American national identity, today, and how this identity is constructed. The study also examined if, how, and why immigration, more specifically Mexican immigration challenges the American national identity. The main research question was: *What kind of national American identity is portrayed/constructed at the Department of Homeland Security website and how is this related to a perceived "Mexican threat"?*

By looking at the Department of Homeland Security I found that the American national identity that is being represented, is one based on The American Creed and the myth of the U.S. as a nation of immigration. I am not surprised over the fact that the DHS has chosen to exclude some of the less attractive sides of what has created the American national identity, for example the enslavement and segregation of Afro-Americans and the massacre and marginalization of Native Americans. I did not expect the DHS to pay so little attention to the U.S. as a frontier society, but then again it makes sense when you look at the purpose of the border fence and the DHS. The focus on the Southwest border and the border fence could be interpreted as the retreat for multiculturalism, while the nation-state, with closed and visible borders regains its importance. This study has also shown that the U.S. has created a national identity against the creation of an 'other'. Since the beginning of the 19th century the U.S. has been able to identify an enemy, which has helped them to create an American national identity. The 'other' has not always posed an immediate threat to the nation, still, this has not been necessary for the creation of the 'other'.

I would like to argue that illegal immigration from Mexico, among others, (militant Islam), is seen as a threat and a big problem to the U.S. The DHS has spoken loud and clear on who and what poses a threat to the American people and the identity of the U.S. The DHS has provided resolutions to these problems, with stricter immigration policies and barricade building. The message so far has been received and understood in different ways. To many Americans border barriers and reforming policies promote national

security while at the same time to others, border barriers are seen as fortification and militarization by empire-building.¹³⁶

By only looking at the DHS website, you will find one specific version of the American national identity. This version has been created during a certain period of the U.S.'s history. The Bush administration has been widely criticized for the nation's foreign policy, not only within the U.S., but also by other states around the world. A way to broaden the perspective, would have been to include the public commentaries that are available on the website of the DHS. I think that the commentaries could have presented an interesting angle to the study, to see, if the American public opinion agree or disagree with the DHS.

At the moment we are facing a rather interesting future, with a new leader, and a switch of government in the U.S. Today, the fence is behind schedule and well over budget, but still enough has been built, strengthened and staffed to make it clear what kind of border the next president will inherit. Barack Obama, voted yes on the *H.R. 6061 Secure Fence Act of 2006*. But has since, criticized the Bush administration for being too aggressive in pushing to build the border fence. Obama says that the key is to consult with local communities and that he is planning to take it slower than the former administration has. He adds that the border is a problem that can not be ignored, that several thousands of people entering the country on a daily basis is an issue that has to be dealt with. He states that the almost 12 million undocumented workers already living in the U.S., should be provided opportunities. Obama says that the idea of deporting 12 million people is ridiculous and that he will not devote all the nation's law enforcements to this task. Obama adds that he believes in comprehensive reforms and the first thing he will do, is to pass the Dream Act, (The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act), which will allow children of illegal immigrants to get an higher education in the U.S.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Skerry P (2006) How to Build a Fence, *Foreign Policy* Sep/Oct 2006 pg 65

¹³⁷ CNN – Democratic Debate. Obama on the Border Fence. April 28th 2008.

In this study I have shown that an ambivalence toward immigration in the U.S. has existed since the 19th century, and still exists today. Every new immigration flow has led to a debate on how the nation should answer. The U.S. have been through this process many times. The history of the U.S. has shown, that the population of the U.S. question, interpret and reinterpret their national identity, to include the people that once were considered foreign and 'alien'. The question whether immigrants from Mexico will be included in the American national identity still yet remains to be answered.

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