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Lines of Nation, Lines of Flight: Retroping Immigration Policy

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Rhetoric and Communication Studies

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Abstract

This thesis studies the rhetoric of U.S. immigration policy, specifically as related to Mexican immigration to the United States. Using Kent Ono and John Sloop's theory of discourse, it examines the rhetoric employed in the Secure Fence Act (SFA) of 2006 and its turns towards wartime rhetoric, immigrant dehumanization, and immigrant deviance. It then contradicts these turns to those seen in the rhetoric of Hometown Associations (HTAs), "outlaw" discourses that operate by systems of logic different from the dominant logic of the SFA. HTAs emphasize family/cultural connections, unique financial considerations, and the liminal existence of the immigrant. More importantly, they directly counter the dominant logic that the border needs to be solidified to curb immigration, suggesting instead that the answer is to make the border more fluid and encourage investment in hometowns to alleviate the need for immigration.

In this discussion, this thesis employs the theory of alloiostrophe as examined by Mari Lee Mifsud and Jane Sutton, the theory of parataxis as studied by Paul Feyerabend, and the theory of lines as explored by Giles Deleuze. Ultimately, it advocates for direct confrontation between the two types of discourse to facilitate what Deleuze calls a "line of flight" out of the current system.

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Introduction

Mapping Discourses on the Immigrant: State, Media, and Academic

As a subject of state discourse, U.S. border control is perceived as an issue of national security, economy, and even cultural integrity. As Senator Craig stated during a Senate Committee hearing:

A nation that fails to manage its borders cannot be secure at home. It begins to lose control over the safety of its people, the order and legality of its commerce, and even its very identity. On the other hand, with approximately 7,500 miles of land borders and 95,000 miles of shoreline and navigable rivers, we cannot seal our country off. Our only alternative is to manage our borders and ports of entry effectively..." (*United States and Mexico: Immigration Policy and the Bilateral Relationship.*). Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) March 23, 2004; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Especially in a post-9/11 condition, state discourse such as Senator Craig's associates a weak border with danger to national safety. This often turns the pro-immigration status such that it appears synonymous with a stance of anti-U.S. sovereignty or even pro-enemy. Conversely, state discourses like President George W. Bush's position in 2001 hold that immigrants willing to fill "undesirable" employment positions should be permitted and even encouraged to supplement the U.S. economy (*The Sixth Section*). In emphasizing the perspective of those in power, rather than turning towards the immigrant voice, dominant discourses ranging from media to political statements on both the border and the immigrant fail to acknowledge the liminal nature of immigrant life. Liminality, according to anthropologist Victor Turner, is a transitive state in which an individual is neither wholly in one state nor in another, existing quite literally in the borderlands (Turner 93)¹. The liminal nature of immigrant life is a reality which is neither country nor lifestyle specific, neither wholly dangerous to nor wholly supportive of U.S. society. Indeed, the complexity of "immigrant life" is often ignored in the creation of policy designed to regulate it.

¹ On liminality, see also: Charles E. Morris III, and Jane Sutton and Mari Lee Mifsud ← double check order of names

In much of dominant discourse, immigration “regulation” is directly connected to border control. Because the border is perceived as a space in which nations are both physically and culturally determined, dominant logic dictates that this area be strictly monitored to ensure its safety; this, in turn, leads to the creation of policies whose call to reinforce the border by any means necessary seems logical. Media coverage perpetuates the perceived need for stricter border control to regulate the immigrant Other through the selection of radical immigration scenarios, such as drug trafficking or gang violence. For example, the Associated Press article on April 4, 2009 covered the discovery of bodies in rural Mexico bearing the marks of torture with an emphasis on the 9,000 deaths that drug violence in the area has stimulated since 2006 (“6 bodies found in gang-plagued western Mexico”). Similarly, a *New York Times* article on February 2, 2009 described how “the Mexican marijuana trade is more robust — and brazen — than ever” (Moore A1). Moreover, a key factor in the construction of the immigrant as dangerous is the perception that difference is undesirable. In August 2008, an op-ed in the *Christian Science Monitor* suggests that current immigration standards are inadequate because they fail to fully assimilate new immigrants to U.S. American culture (Schneider Opinion 9).

Articles emphasizing the violent or otherwise undesirable events happening in Mexico serve to reinforce the perspective that Mexican immigration to the United States would bring with it myriad social ills. In fact, immigration as it relates to national security and the economy comprises almost all of the articles on immigration, making national security the virtually uncontested perspective within the dominant voice. In a search for “Mexico” and “immigrant” in *New York Times* headlines from March 2, 2008, to March 2, 2009, results either focused on the violent incidences, economic impact (sending money to country of origin/illegal employment/etc.), immigration as a political issue (specifically in the 2008 presidential elections), or analysis of current border enforcement. Of the 72 pertaining to immigration issues, roughly ten addressed the immigrant voice as something other than radical. Within these, most portrayed Mexican immigrants as helpless victims of an oppressive system, rather than

acknowledging the individual agency that these individuals simultaneously possess. Virtually none acknowledged the complexity of their lived experiences.

Media coverage that dramatically emphasizes the economic or moral harm that immigrants have the potential to bring to U.S. society simultaneously identifies the Mexican immigrant as a threatening Other whose entrance to the country should be prevented. The resulting image of immigration as a pipeline that either funnels in violence or channels economic resources out of the country leaves little doubt over whether or not immigration is desirable. Such a construction promotes dramatic responses to "control" immigration, as both pro- and anti-voices heard in mainstream media suggest that it needs to be physically regulated by government officials or an actual wall along the border (Stout). Just as the mantra "We the People" constantly reinforces the need for active maintenance of the United States ideals via the civilian population, political scientist Cheryl Shanks notes that such emphasis on border regulation likely stems from social connections of sovereignty with the people. Such a perspective necessitates strict regulation of "entry into and exit from that voting, resource-and rights- claiming population," and that "[b]ecause manipulating a population's fertility and mortality horrifies many publics, immigration policy becomes the only legitimate means to regulate the quantity and characteristics of a citizen population" (268).² Because the primary colonizers and lawmakers in the United States are of an Anglo/Western European background, immigration control becomes essential to ensure a homogeneous (and therefore "united") public.

The challenge to hear the immigrant voice in state and media discourses continues into academic discourses on immigration as well. Although academics have already addressed the ability of

² For additional research on the racial division between citizens and immigrants, see: Vanessa Beasley, "Contemporary Voices of White Nationalism in America," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7.1 (1 Mar 2004): 103-105; Beth Frankel Merkenstein, *Immigrants and Modern Racism* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2008); David Spener and Kathleen Staudt, eds., *The U.S.-Mexico Border: Transcending Divisions, Contesting Identities* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998).

immigrant groups to comply with new standards and the ways in which dominant discourse creates an oppressive environment for immigrants, studies of the immigration phenomenon have yet to turn towards the immigrant voice itself. Rather than further highlighting the already-existing rhetorical violence present in dominant immigration rhetoric, it is essential to forge a space in which the immigrant population can speak for itself.

“The Hispanic Challenge,” an infamous article by political scientist Samuel Huntington, suggests that the influx of Mexican immigration is inherently incompatible with the United States and therefore threatens to create a fierce dichotomy of nationhood between Latinos and non-Latinos within the United States. As demonstrated by Huntington’s argument, immigrant populations are often critiqued for their ability to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Huntington points to the newest Latino immigrants’ tendencies to settle in clustered areas, the emphasis on hometown language and culture, and the relatively short trek between the two nations as ways in which Mexican immigrants retain their own culture (33-36). The distinctions, he argues, provide little incentive for these groups of immigrants to adapt their lifestyles to the traditional U.S. identity (Huntington 44). In fact, the “ferocious differences” that exist between the two countries make it so that “Mexican Americans no longer think of themselves as members of a small minority who must accommodate the dominant group and adopt its culture” (Huntington 44). Moreover, it is argued, ignoring these patterns essentially sanctions the creation of two distinct “United States,” one Anglo and the other Latino (Huntington 44-45).

In response to the exclusion and fear of difference that is perceived in the descriptions of immigration as voiced by Huntington’s article, other critics have turned to focus on exposing flaws in dominant discourses. These academic discourses attend predominantly to the exposure and critique of the dehumanization and oppression of immigrants found in the rhetoric of policies and official statements. Among rhetorical theorists like Kent A. Ono, John M. Sloop, and Anne Demo, “turns” in US policy and discourse are exposed for delegitimizing and dehumanizing the immigrant (Ono and Sloop 28,

Demo, "Sovereignty Discourse and Contemporary Immigration Politics" 299). Ono and Sloop argue that public discourse reduces immigrant workers to "economic commodities... underpaid laborers whose work strengthens the economy or welfare recipients who drain the state's social welfare system;" "criminals;" "or "a general health threat to the greater population... suggesting that undocumented immigrants and their children will spread disease" (28). Similarly, Demo says that videos made by the Immigration and Naturalization Services in the 1990s employ "metaphors of natural destruction" such as "'freeways teeming with illegals,' the onslaught of aliens,'" etc. ("Sovereignty Discourse and Contemporary Immigration Politics" 299). The Latino immigrants' distinct physical characteristics, suggest Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, make it easy to demarcate them as the "enemy," thus placating the anxiety that arose at the end of the Cold War with the absence of a direct or obvious enemy. "Since 1965 in particular," say Ono and Sloop, "the migrant is a person of color and the terms of the discourses about migration display the racial ambivalence; thus, all racial migrant subjects potentially become the enemy" (27-28). As demonstrated by these influential theorists and critics, academia is moving towards critiquing the immigrant-oppressive systems of both media and immigration policy. Noting the dominant classification of immigrants as less than human, economic units, or direct enemies of the civilian population, these theorists and critics point to innate flaws in current approaches to immigration policy.

Additionally, many academics respond to claims like the "ideal" construction that immigrants should "assimilate and advance in our society" ("President Bush Signs the Secure Fence Act"). For example, rhetorician Ronald Walter Greene addresses the active manufacturing of national identity through individuals and how it then becomes a "guiding force" in their everyday lives (194). A nation's citizens are indoctrinated with national ideals such that they move toward becoming "ideal" citizens, although the illusion of autonomy is maintained; in other words, individuals assist in constructing the very narratives that ultimately end up constraining their lives. He says that this national narrative is employed in anti-immigration rhetoric by arguing that migration not only distorts but could destroy the

so-called American way of life (Greene 101). Greene describes current arguments for restricting immigration as “culturalist.” This approach eclipses more racist anti-immigration discourses of yesteryear, arguing instead that those of different backgrounds will be unable to completely assimilate in order to comply with our narrative of the “melting pot” (Greene 192). Similarly, Lingxin Hao posits that race is actually a more influential factor in the stratification and separation of U.S. American society than nativity (3). The “difference” which these individuals bring with them is often seen as a threat to the sovereignty of a nation, which appears to justify the association of Mexican immigrants with an invading force (Shanks 18).

As these academic discourses in the field of rhetoric studies have tried to identify the mechanism by which immigrant experience is eclipsed, they have succeeded primarily in highlighting current hegemonic interpretations of immigration, rather than emphasizing the immigrant voice itself as a means for challenging the system. Moreover, highlighting such dehumanization ensures its permanency in the public spotlight such that other voices remain silenced. If in the end dominant discourses of the immigrant come from state and media voices of dehumanization and academic voices critiquing these public discourses, what chance does the immigrant have to speak?

As a voice separate from the government-centric power structure of politics, academia is in a unique position of power that can be used to highlight the immigrant lived experience and expose the already-existing opportunities for change within the immigration debates. Although significant progress has been made by academics who have turned away from embracing the dominant perspective, the potential generated by this turn must be embraced and utilized to spearhead increasingly complex ways to perceive immigration. Efforts must be made to avoid academic reification of hegemonic discourse, while simultaneously preventing the creation of a new kind of hegemony in which even the newer interpretations of immigration are seen as the only means to understand immigration.

Turning to the Complexity of the Lived Experience of Immigrants: Warrant and Theory

As such, discourse in the field of rhetoric studies must turn from critiquing hegemonic rhetoric to a more proactive search for inclusion. Opportunities to highlight the complexity of the immigrant lived experience must be utilized to create a viable alternative that can be contrasted with official discourse. To achieve this framework, this essay will rely heavily on three theories: Jane Sutton and Marilee Mifsud's theory of alloiostrophe, Paul Feyerabend's theory of parataxis, and what Giles Deleuze refers to as a "line of flight." These techniques will be supported by Kent Ono and John Sloop's theories of discourse, which explain the current spaces for dominant and outlaw voices to be heard³. The word "theory" comes from the ancient Greek work "theorezein," which means "to see." As such, these theories will enable us to better see the marginalized position of the immigrant. Collectively, these three theories will help to create spaces for both a multiplicity of perspectives on immigration to be articulated, subsequently allowing for direct confrontation between them in such a way that immigration discourse will be catapulted into a new framework.

Drawing from the rhetorical theory of tropes by Sutton/Mifsud, the rhetorical construction of nations and borders, citizens and others can be seen as a series of turns towards dominant systems of power. Their theory of alloiostrophe, however, suggests that this is not only hierarchical but is an inadequate location for scholars to focus their attention. They propose the metonymic inclusion of difference as a means for disrupting the antistrophic exclusion currently employed in rhetoric. Antistrophic systems promote hegemonic unity over the individual by placing emphasis on the demos. In their essay "Alloiostrophic Rhetoric," Sutton and Mifsud introduce the "alloiostrophe" of "'difference,' diversity,' alteration,' and strangeness'" as an alternative to traditional rhetorical

³For additional background information, see Hayden White's theory of tropes and Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacrum.

antistrophe, which strives to assimilate difference to achieve a unified whole (3, 4). In turning (strophe) to the other (alloios), alloiostrophic rhetoric seeks to juxtapose difference in a way that does not privilege one perspective over another, yet allows the clash between the two in a way that hierarchy would not (3, 4). Because alloiostrophe permits the simultaneous acknowledgement of multiple voices, it also provides a convenient outlet for rupturing current discursive patterns by proposing an egalitarian environment in which assimilation is essential for neither current dominant nor alternative discourses. This is a logical place to begin to emphasize a multiplicity of voices, since alloiostrophe advocates emphasis on the experience of the individual rather than the *demos* as a means for ensuring that unique experiences are not denied but, rather, recognized. Such recognition will promote simultaneous emphasis on multiple perspectives without hierarchy, what Paul Feyerabend refers to as a “paratactic aggregate” (173). More than just restructuring hierarchy into horizontal plurality, alloiostrophe works to create collision of these multiple perspectives to discover the creative spark of something new. A paratactic aggregate seeks to create a unified whole out of a multiplicity of difference by providing space for this difference to exist (Feyerabend 173).

To foster the paratactic aggregate of communication, which would present a more accurate depiction of reality in its turn toward plurality, Sutton and Mifsud emphasize a union of *aposition*, unity through contrast (12). Alloiostrophe, theorized as such, is an ideal tool for doing this, since it specifically departs from the *telos*, or origin, in search of the Other voice. This ensures that inclusive systems of speech are created such that direct confrontation between multiple voices can take place (6). In the case of Mexican immigration to the United States, emphasizing relations of this sort will highlight the perspective of the immigrant as Other while enabling those who fear loss of U.S. traditions or culture to retain that which is important to them as well. Although described as an “irregular turn,”

such a move is by no means impossible. Indeed, Sutton and Mifsud propose that this is the way to foster interaction between multiple perspectives without creating catastrophe (8).

To illuminate the alloioiostrophic turn, I will inquire first into dominant discourses. Dominant discourses appeal to thought processes that are widely accepted in a given society, including policy, media, and statements by public figures (Ono and Sloop 14). The construction of the border as key to national sovereignty places border control at a high priority level for U.S. citizenry. Therefore, Section 1 of this thesis will analyze the Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA), which provided for the implementation of a wall along the U.S./Mexico border, as an example of the dominant voice.

To execute the alloioiostrophic turn, I will then move from recognition of the dominant discourse to the recognition of the Othered immigrant voice. This turn will require a turn towards what Ono and Sloop call outlaw discourses, which operate in systems of logic completely distinct from those found in the dominant voice. These include minority discourses, like those articulated by immigrant communities, that may not always be accepted or even recognized within dominant speech structures (Ono and Sloop 15).

Outlaw discourse disrupts the hegemonic impressions created by the dominant voice. For example, the outlaw voice articulated by immigrant communities contrasts the SFA's literal construction of a rigid border to the porous and symbolic nature which many of these immigrants encounter in the same space. As such, Section 2 will turn to Mexican Hometown Associations (HTAs). HTAs are local communities of immigrants that provide a network of culture-specific support for their members. Additionally, these organizations provide economic resources for their towns of origin to prevent the need for further immigration.. Members of Grupo Unión, an HTA based in Newburgh, NY, pool small contributions from members and community members at informal meetings and by going door-to-door. They note that a majority of their small town has moved to Newburgh because of extreme poverty; as

such, the economic support that they provide their hometown enables their peers to remain in Mexico. (*The Sixth Section*). For many of these groups, including Grupo Unión, immigration is often an undesirable solution for those on both sides of the border, driven by conditions of poverty in Mexico . This, in turn, suggests that the successful means for stopping immigration is not a less but more porous border (*The Sixth Section*).

Specifically, this thesis will focus on the outlaw discourse voiced by Grupo Unión, particularly as articulated in the documentary *The Sixth Section*. The film, produced in 2003, is comprised of a series of interviews with group members. Because it provides a space in which Grupo Unión members can speak, the documentary is an ideal primary text through which the HTA can be studied. Although the popularity of *The Sixth Section* poses certain problems for its validity as a representation of outlaw discourse, it is also a stable text through which rhetorical analysis of this outlaw discourse can begin. Grupo Unión provides a small, population-specific experience of immigration through which the complexity can begin to be explored. Once the immigrant voice is examined more thoroughly, its confrontation with dominant discourse can be better used to create new ways of turning to immigration discourse.

Therefore, this thesis will explore the means for moving from a rigid immigration discourse dictated by governmental officials to a more fluid, inclusive interaction that includes the productive combination of multiple voices. In doing so, this thesis will advocate for a “paratactic aggregate” of voices in the immigration debate, which would promote the articulation of multiple viewpoints like those listed above (Feyerabend 175). Such a theory debunks the need for an exclusively “expert” knowledge to create policy or culture, advocating instead for the voice of the “nonexpert” to be embraced as well (Feyerabend xiii). The most successful forms of creation, Feyerabend argues, stem from “anarchic” approaches that jump from one source to another; as such, it is necessary to consult the voices of immigrants and citizens alike in order to successfully reform immigration policy (5). Such a phenomenon is described by Giles Deleuze as a “line of flight,” an opportunity found by facilitating the

direct confrontation of dominant and locally organized rhetorics to create an entirely new way to discuss immigration. A line of flight carries existing structures of being – in this case, the SFA and the HTA—into a new plane of existence that compliments these existing structures even as it ruptures their current reality (131).

Therefore, Section 3 will call for a more complex articulation of the immigrant experience by bringing the SFA and HTA discourses into metonymical juxtaposition. Metonymy, rather than metaphor, is the dominant trope of alloiostrophic rhetoric. It places multiple perspectives in juxtaposition. Metonymical interaction will allow for the discourses to simultaneously articulate their respective positions without using the assimilative goals of metaphor to force them into a nondescript homogeneity, thus letting the confrontation between the two facilitate new and better responses to immigration. If discourse currently “turns” towards either accepting or critiquing dominant discourse, it should be possible to turn to more creative options as well. Such an option becomes possible through the study of alloiostrophe.⁴

As such, a large component of Section 3 will address the need to move away from current tropological structures (White 14). In present-day immigration discourse, for example, immigrants are seen as beneficial and hardworking to the Anglicized system or as immoral threats to the same system, as noted in Ono and Sloop’s division of the immigrant identity (28). These perspectives rely heavily on synecdoche, using parts of the immigrant community to represent the whole and therefore simplifying the population. Both of these narratives, however, are told from the dominant perspective; as such,

⁴ Sutton and Mifsud’s theory of alloiostrophe is influenced by Hayden White’s studies of tropes. “Tropics,” according to White, “is the process by which all discourse *constitutes* the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyze objectively” (2). White describes these turns as being “deviations from literal, conventional, or ‘proper’ language use, swerves in locution sanctioned neither by custom nor logic” (2). Therefore, exposing the “turns” taken in current immigration discourse can make the constructed nature of this reality visible and therefore highlight the possibility for alternatives.

both the “positive” and “negative” perspectives on Mexican immigrants assimilate the individual lived experience of the immigrant. To disrupt this hegemonic voice, perspectives that oppose these constructions must be illuminated to expose stories of immigrants that contradict them.

In addition to providing the opportunity for a new “line of flight,” the metonymical juxtaposition of the HTA voices with the SFA voice could achieve Feyerabend’s alternative to the current hegemony of hypotactic systems, a paratactic aggregate. In such a formation, many parts are joined to make a whole but retain their own identities (175). He says that “[t]his world is an open world. Its elements are not formed or held together by an ‘underlying substance,’ they are not appearances from which this substance may be inferred with difficulty... The relation of a single element to the assemblage to which it belongs is like the relation of a part to an aggregate of parts and not like the relation of a part to an overpowering whole” (186).

The hegemonic denial of the immigrant voice in policies like the SFA fails to address the root of the very problem that it is trying to solve. In the process, the voices of HTAs and other immigrant organizations are prevented from contributing valuable information regarding the lived experience of the immigrant. Therefore, the two voices need to be brought into direct confrontation with one another to foster a line of flight out of the cluelessly homogenized rhetoric centered around the border.

Section 1: Mapping Dominant Discourse through the Secure Fence Act

The Secure Fence Act of 2006 (SFA), which provides for the implementation of a wall along the U.S./Mexico border, serves as a model of dominant discourse on immigration. In addition to its weight as a national policy, its popularity among the nation’s powerholders at the time of its passage becomes evident when one examines the ratio by which it was passed in Congress. Its call for “700 miles of double-layered fencing on the U.S.-Mexico border” was passed with a 283-138 vote in the House and an 80-19 vote in the Senate (“Secure Fence Act of 2006,” THOMAS: Library of Congress). It can therefore

be considered a particularly representative perspective of the dominant voice on ideal responses to illegal immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border, since it was supported by a majority of those elected to represent the citizenry. Because this is not a policy analysis paper, however, the focus of the critique will turn away from the numerical conditions surrounding the SFA and towards the rhetorical components of the policy. In particular, I will focus on the policy's ethos, its attention to constructions of the immigrant as dangerous or less than human, and its emphasis on constructing a border division of military proportions to ensure the continued separation between the U.S. "self" and the immigrant "other."

The SFA makes the rhetorical division between the United States and Mexico into a very material reality by creating a high-security fence along the border. As a policy that explicitly seeks to seal the border as a means for preventing immigration, it exemplifies the dominant argument that immigrants must be physically prevented from entering the country unless strictly regulated. Signed into law on October 26, 2006, the law was designed to "mak[e] wise use of physical barriers and deploying 21st century technology... [to] help our border patrol agents do their job and make our border more secure" ("Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006").

The SFA's high ethos is reinforced by media portrayals that either directly support such policies or foster the impression that measures proposed by the SFA and related policies are essential to regulate a threatening epidemic. As a policy, the SFA falls into what Ono and Sloop describe as "dominant" discourse, "understandings, meanings, logics, and judgments that work within the most commonly accepted (and institutionally supported) understandings of what is just or unjust, good or bad" (14). Its standing automatically legitimates it within the public realm, while its opponents, "outlaw" discourses, are disregarded for their use of "different logic" that does not directly oppose but, rather, stands apart from the official discourse (15). In Ono and Sloop's categorization of discourse, they

identify media as "civic discourse... meant to provide information... for a large population of people... or that a broad-based consumer group purchases or consumes" (Ono and Sloop 12). Media's verbalized intent to cover the "facts" in a purely neutral manner provides it with expert status in what it relays, since the perception becomes that any information generated by the media cannot be perceived any other way. Community-specific forms of communication that might oppose the messages discussed in civic discourse, which Ono and Sloop deem "vernacular" discourses, are largely overshadowed by a cultural emphasis on the "expert" voice (Ono and Sloop 14, Feyerabend xxi).

The messages transmitted in media are presumed to reach a large portion of the national population, thus disseminating the ideals portrayed in the SFA and its supporting documents. In addition to coverage of border transgressions, drug violence, and specifically SFA-oriented stories, media supplies the public with dominant discourse in its coverage of speeches like President George W. Bush's on the day that he signed the SFA. For example, although a *Washington Post* article from October 27, 2006 points out that Bush's authorization of the SFA directly contradicts his stated goals of immigration policy reform, it simultaneously provides the promise from Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL) that the SFA "marks another step forward in making America safer and in stemming the tide of illegal immigration" (Fletcher and Weisman). Turns like these and others seen in Bush's discourse on the SFA, which emphasize national icons like the flag, the "melting pot," and American unity as a whole, invoke a sense of obligation to follow the mentality of the SFA ("President Bush Signs the Secure Fence Act"). In essence, the validity of the SFA is legitimated by several layers: as dominant discourse, it is granted a certain level of ethos in society, reinforced by the civic coverage of the policy and related dominant discourses that, in turn, reference foundational aspects of national identity.

The rhetoric of the SFA itself is troped to carry a considerable amount of influence through the

constructed affiliation between national identity and immigration control (Shanks 268). Therefore, any “turns” taken in the wording of the document as national policy will weigh heavily on civic constructs of the immigrant. Its perceived neutrality as an official government document, however, makes certain troping within the policy particularly problematic. The expert status granted public officials and the policy they create implies that policy choices are made from well-reasoned evaluation of the facts, thus alleviating any potential to question tropes employed in the wording of policy.

The persistent assimilation that identifies immigrants as either benefits to the economic system or potential security threats, as seen in the SFA, denies the complexity of the immigrant lived experience. Although this assimilative troping does not intend to be violent but, rather, provide help in “rendering the unfamiliar... familiar,” the license which it grants government officials in their interactions with the immigrant provides the opportunity for drastic responses to the immigrant population (White 5). Section 2(a) of the policy begins by stating that “...the Secretary of Homeland Security shall take all actions the Secretary determines necessary and appropriate to achieve and maintain operational control over the entire international land and maritime borders of the United States...” (“Secure Fence Act of 2006”). The delegation of border control to the Secretary of Homeland Security tropes the immigrant to align with terrorists and other threats to security, while the ethos that national policy carries subsequently implies that this is a “natural” connection. Additionally, granting this Secretary of Homeland Defense the ability to take actions that he or she deems “necessary and appropriate” follows Paul Feyerabend’s theory in which the “expert” voice – in this case, the government official—is privileged over the “non-expert” voice (xxi).

Wartime Rhetoric

In fact, the tropes employed in the SFA turn to promote the construction of the wall by emphasizing a confrontation of military proportions between the U.S. and the immigrant. Wartime

rhetoric in the act such as “systematic surveillance” using “unmanned aerial vehicles, ground-based sensors, satellites, radar coverage, and cameras,” as exhibited in Section 2(a) 1-2 of the policy, convey a similar sense of urgency by suggesting that protective measures are necessary to prevent a surge of enemy forces over the southern border (“Secure Fence Act of 2006”). The fence that the act calls for is a fortress of extreme measures, featuring “2 layers of reinforced fencing, the installation of additional physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors” (“Secure Fence Act of 2006”: Section 3, Amendments to Section 102(b) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996). The White House press release on the SFA notes that, in addition to the policy changes made in the SFA, the U.S. administration added \$5.8 billion in border security funding from 2001 to 2006. Again, control of immigrant entry is linked to the national pursuit of a security in a post-9/11 world (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”).

Troping the Immigrant as Alien/Less than Human

In addition to promoting wartime images, the SFA simultaneously emphasizes the separation between the U.S. citizen and the “alien” immigrant (“Secure Fence Act of 2006”: 2(a)(2)). The term may be technically correct, but is more likely to evoke images of green, scaly extraterrestrials than someone of a different culture. Years of science fiction exposure in U.S. American culture makes such a turn into reinforcement for the connection between difference and danger. Moreover, the act strives to prevent “all unlawful entries into the United States, including entries by terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband” (“Secure Fence Act of 2006:” 2(b)). Again, the tropological connections between the immigrant and danger are received with special authority as an “official” form of U.S. discourse, making these suggestions of wartime strategy and therefore physical violence all the more potent.

A more striking rhetorical turn taken by the White House in describing the SFA is its advocacy “to end ‘catch and release’ at our Southern border” by “adding thousands of new beds in our detention facilities” (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”). Such a statement not only fosters a connection between immigration control and game hunting but implies that illegal immigrants are dangerous enough to warrant a large investment of tax dollars to prevent them from walking free.

Immigrant Deviance

The Fact Sheet also turns illegal employment into deviance rather than an institutional problem, thus simplifying identity by assimilating individual differences in a way that benefits the citizenry (Feyerabend 175). The Administration suggests that “Many businesses want to obey the law, but cannot verify the legal status of their employees because of the widespread problem of document fraud” (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”). This statement tropes employers as good citizens unwilling to break the law in hiring employees and immigrants as deviant creators of the illegal employment problem. This stringent division makes it easy to separate “us” from “them;” “they” are terrorists, drug dealers, and deliberate lawbreakers, while “we” follow the patriotic ideals of the nation. Even a comparatively open proposal that would permit temporary employment is promoted as a measure that would “add to our security” (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”). The covert implications of this statement, that U.S. citizens are inevitably law-abiding and deviance must thus originate with the Other, masquerade as undeniable truths. The turn towards the innocence of the dominant group, rather than the deviance of the “outlaw” group, make the expert voice both pervasive and invisible; as such, it is perceived as the “neutral” or “natural” position and makes opposition seem ludicrous (Feyerabend 164).

The Administration’s statements also reinforce the emphasis on assimilation as a necessary component of “acceptable” immigrant lives, by suggesting that immigrants should have “roots in our

country,” “pay their taxes,” “learn English” and “work in a job for a number of years” to redeem their illicit entry to the United States (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”). In other words, immigrants make themselves acceptable by literally assimilating their voices to contribute to the dominant voice and by facilitating economic benefits for the majority. In fact, the document openly pays homage to the “Great American Tradition of the Melting Pot,” in which individual differences are blended into a largely homogeneous majority that still appears oddly Anglo-specific in spite of its supposedly diverse ethnic background (“Fact Sheet: The Secure Fence Act of 2006”). Moreover, it suggests, the melting pot is not a conglomeration of distinctive characteristics but, rather, a homogenous mixture of formerly unique characteristics that has fallen in line with the hegemonic framework of dominant U.S. culture.

Mapping the rhetoric employed by the SFA and related dominant discourse shows how the immigrant is troped as something that needs to be regulated for the security of the United States. The SFA declares war on the alien, animal, and deviant immigrant, forcing them in the process to choose between assimilation and annihilation.

Section 2: Mapping Outlaw Discourse Through Hometown Associations (HTAs)

To disrupt the dominant discourse of a policy like the Secure Fence Act, which not only dehumanizes but perpetually turns away from the complex lived experience of the immigrant, it is necessary to turn towards immigrant-initiated discourse that articulates this very complexity. The communal, democratic nature of Hometown Associations (HTAs), networks of varying formality formed by immigrants from similar points of origin, makes them an ideal site for such a turn, since they provide space for both the individual and the collective to speak (Orozco and Lapointe 33). This section will specifically discuss Grupo Unión, a Mexican Hometown Association from Boquerón, Mexico, as featured in the documentary *The Sixth Section*. Because the film provides a space in which the immigrants can

speaking it is the format closest to directly interacting with members of these organizations, thus making it an appropriate source.

Sutton and Mifsud's theory turns to the *alloios* (strangeness, weirdness, difference, diversity) of the HTA (3). Ono and Sloop would identify this voice as "outlaw." If one applies Ono and Sloop's theory of discourse, the *alloiostrophic* voices of HTAs like Grupo Unión would be considered a form of outlaw discourse, operating on a system of logic distinct from that of the dominant discourse (12). Additionally, they can largely be considered vernacular, rather than civic, discourse; the messages disseminated by HTAs are generally population-specific, designed to provide new immigrants and their home communities with social capital (Ono and Sloop 10, Zabin and Rabadan 3).

In a survey of *New York Times* headlines from March 2, 2008, to March 2, 2009, the same time frame in which 72 articles about the border fence were published, there were no results when "Hometown Associations" were searched. This suggests, in turn, that the HTA vernacular discourse is rarely, if ever, acknowledged by civic discourse.

Their "outlaw" systems of logic, however, make them appropriately equipped to deal with the problem of immigration, since it is their own experience lived outside of the dominant that policies like the SFA want so desperately to regulate. Their ability to turn to the lived experience of the immigrant means that they know the roots of immigration, both legal and illegal, and therefore the best means for preventing and managing it. Indeed, HTA leaders have repeatedly articulated their desire to improve conditions in their hometown, suggesting that basic economic assistance could go a long way towards solving the discord created around the topic of immigration by alleviating the need for it (Orozco 4).

HTAs' general outlaw status provides them with unique opportunities to identify weak spots in the current hegemony of immigration policy, since they have little to gain from the current power

structure. By countering the traditional conceptualization of community as a “supplement” for “principles of social order such as the market and the state,” the community that develops among state-independent organizations like hometown associations often creates a powerful force for change in both sending and receiving communities (Faist 22). Because the members of these organizations often have distinct life patterns apart from their communities of origin, they are able to make connections in various fields within their new communities as well (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 1215). Their array of connections in non-governmental structures make them ideal partners for everything from business to political organizations, thus providing the opportunity for Paul Feyerabend’s ideal of a paratactic aggregate in which voices from multiple dimensions are heard and acknowledged (Smith 1113, Feyerabend 175). Grupo Unión is a New York-area association that has used the “outlaw logic” of turning towards the immigrant experience to decide that their home community is plagued by poverty that drives its residents to (often unwillingly) immigrate. After a drought left their hometown poverty-stricken, employment at home became difficult or impossible to find. As a result, many members immigrated illegally to the United States, some desperate enough to consent to transportation in the trunk of a car. In fact, roughly half of their town has now migrated to Newburgh, NY. Out of this group, many say they would go back if economic opportunities existed.

With the knowledge that their immigration can benefit not only themselves but Boquerón, members of the Hometown Association that has become Grupo Unión collect remittances to support their town with the hopes of alleviating the poverty that has driven so many of their community members to leave (*The Sixth Section*). Grupo Unión, according to film producer Alex Rivera, powerfully counters *both* ends of the Mexican immigrant stereotype—from the immigrant who steals jobs, to the honest, working immigrant who is exploited by the system—by organizing a “mirror image” of globalization. He states that Grupo Unión is “behaving like a transnational corporation—reversed.

Instead of exporting jobs to the third world in order to pay low wages, the town of Boquerón has exported workers to Newburgh, in order to earn higher wages" ("The Sixth Section").

The perspective articulated by Grupo Unión provides new insight into current perceptions of immigration by emphasizing the economic desperation that drives many immigrants to relocate to the United States, but it is simultaneously excluded from the mainstream conversations about it in the United States. Through their outlaw discourse, HTAs like Grupo Unión emphasize the need for a fluid, rather than rigid, border to address the influx of immigration. In particular, they highlight the importance of family and cultural values, basic needs of their home communities, and the liminal nature of their lived experiences as immigrants.

Family/Culture

One of the key tropes around which HTAs organize is the desire to maintain familial and cultural stability as immigrants in a new place. Because so many of those who emigrate to the United States do so out of economic necessity, a cultural-specific network of support is necessary to both provide comfort and ease their transition into a new society (Zabin and Rabadan 11). In fact, this desire to maintain roots with their towns of origin and communal support among the immigrant community provided the impetus for the original social networks created around the turn of the twentieth century, which were designed to "provide sickness care and death benefits at a time when such services were unavailable for many immigrant groups" (Bada). In the 1970s, the social networks re-emerged in the revamped form of "Asociaciones de Pueblos," formed in response to shifts in the immigrant population from being primarily young, single men to more family units (Rivera-Salgado 29). These groups provided a sense of community and stability while retaining many of the important traditions from their towns of origin (Rivera-Salgado 29).

The present-day versions of these organizations are often initiated by groups of families seeking a cohesive means to support their home communities. As such, they seek to provide resources to group members and hometowns alike that range “from social exchange to political influence to pursuit of low-scale development” (Orozco and Lapointe 33). The support found in these organizations often provides “the opportunity to stay connected with one another and their home communities, to reaffirm their roots, and to continue their tradition of contributing” (Rose and Shaw 81). HTAs enable members to continue doing just that while accruing “social capital... the accumulation of knowledge, experience, and contacts by some members of the network that create a potential stream of returns over time for subsequent entrants belonging to the same networks” (Zabin and Rabadan 3).

The logic that HTAs employ to support continued connections to their home culture and communal support directly counter the dominant “melting pot” ideal of immigration, in which ties with the home culture are essentially severed to enable the immigrants to blend into the “melting pot” ideal. Moreover, the emphasis on family and community directly counters the autonomy advocated by so much of U.S. American society, in which individualism is heavily privileged over dependence on others. In a traditionally marginalized group of people, first as inhabitants of rural Mexico and then as Mexican immigrants to the United States, the social power found in the collective trumps the assimilation of the individual (Ulises Decena and Gray),

Needs of Community/Financial Considerations

In their non-expert knowledge, HTAs do not turn only to the experience but to the needs of the immigrant community. Grupo Unión’s first official project for their hometown was the construction of a baseball stadium, an investment that could seem frivolous but was seen by the group members as something that would inspire “más lucha” (more fight) in the community, while providing a project large

enough to catch the eye of the Mexican government. They have since sent an ambulance to the community as well, although the donation was not put to the use that they were hoping because of the cost of gas and an ambulance driver. Other contributions from Grupo Unión include the beginning of a well that they could not afford to finish, instruments for the local band, a kitchen for the kindergarten, and various other investments that they hope will inspire morale while making Boquerón more visible to the authorities.

The strategy that the group has for addressing the needs of its hometown operates by a distinctly outlaw system of logic. Although dominant U.S. discourse often promotes the need to satisfy basic physical needs above all else, members of this HTA and others like it are choosing to support projects that address their social and communal needs as well (Ulises Decena and Gray). The construction of the stadium, for example, could be criticized as a faulty investment, since subsequent projects like the well that were “more important” proved too costly. For members of Grupo Unión, however, it was a way to provide a symbolic space of recreation and pleasure for their town members. Producer Alex Rivera compares their decision to construct a stadium to Walt Disney World’s location in Orlando, Florida, arguing that “[t]hrough a cultural project, you find power and visibility. Starting with the cultural, the cosmetic, these groups raise the image of their town and find power. Power brings the well and the paved road and development” (Ulises Decena and Gray 135). Moreover, a project of such magnitude necessitated outreach to other communities for baseball players, since so many of Boquerón’s young men had immigrated; this, in turn, facilitated communication among similarly placed communities in the sociopolitical hierarchy,

In fact, it could be argued that this outlaw logic successfully confronted dominant discourse enough to call attention to the Boquerón community. At the time of the documentary, the Mexican government was beginning to take notice in the rural community. Government representatives had

begun to travel to the United States to meet with members of this HTA and others, and were beginning to financially supplement the projects initiated by Grupo Unión (*The Sixth Section*).

Liminal Existence

In an interview, producer Alex Rivera noted that towns like Boquerón exist in the balance that they do because the town would not survive in one location. The town needs the personal power found in Boquerón, but is just as dependent on the money that Grupo Unión earns in New York (Ulises Decena and Gray). While HTAs like Grupo Unión may not have all of the answers to alleviate undesirable immigration, the valuable perspective that they provide for the individual lived experience of immigration make them a noteworthy resource whose voice should be considered in the construction of immigration policy.

Ironically, many immigrants involved in these organizations actually gain social capital in their country of origin by moving to the United States, using their financial support to acquire “remote” political influence in Mexico in ways that would not have been possible had they remained in their towns of origin (Ulises Decena and Gray 132). The Mexican government, for example, now travels to the United States to meet with group members, and some groups like Grupo Unión have caught their government’s attention enough to promote projects like road construction to their towns of origin (*The Sixth Section*). In fact, HTAs from Mexican states in Los Angeles, California have actually acquired enough financial stability to hold congressional meetings among their organization leaders, meeting regularly with Mexican and Los Angeles officials (Decena Ulises and Gray 133). Acknowledging the power of the ideologies maintained by HTAs and other non-experts prevents the potentially dangerous development of an expert voice that silences the non-expert, as seen in the rhetoric employed by current immigration policy; in fact, Feyerabend says that “non-experts often know more than experts *and should therefore*

be consulted ... prophets of truth... more often than not are carried along by a vision that clashes with the very events the vision is supposed to be exploring "(xiii).

A key way in which Mexican HTAs emphasize the lived experience of the immigrant over dominant policy discourse is their self-location in the "in-between;" they are physically located in the United States, culturally stem from Mexican communities, and balance their personal needs with those of community in both physicalities. The communal sense that they develop produces a "new felt sense of locality un-moored from the pull of the nation-state in which real enclaves are located" (Smith 1100). Turning away from not only the state structure of power but the structure of the state itself liberates them from their marginalizing constraints while providing a valuable alternative to the flawed and unsuccessful immigrant policies that currently exist.

As we turn to HTAs, we disrupt the stereotypes that associate the immigrant with self-interested motives that detrimentally affect U.S. society. The "forum for discussion of political participation in their adopted country" that many HTA members find at their events "enhance[s] immigrants' insertion in American society, providing a main source of civic education even while they reinforce a strong bond with their towns in Mexico" (Zabin and Rabadan 11). In studying a transnational community from El Timbinal, Guanajuato, Mexico, one author noted that the involvement of these groups in the well-being and political affairs of their community of origin actually fosters their sociopolitical involvement in their receiving community as well (Smith 1101). Although past studies have suggested that such involvement is largely limited to Mexico-related policy, new work proposes that "Federation activists increasingly engage in practices and form coalitions designed to institutionalize migrant engagement in US political life" (Smith 1113). HTAs that partake in such activities reportedly acknowledge the value in not only turning towards the voice of the immigrant but "equip[ping] them with legal, technical, and political

knowledge to become effective voices for Mexican-Americans at the grassroots level in the United States” (Smith 1113).

Additionally, HTAs also display a high level of self-sufficiency that counters the dominating stereotype of the immigrant as an agentless victim of the system. “Far from being passive victims of such conditions of exploitation,” suggests sociologist Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, “indigenous migrants have responded very creatively to the multiple challenges they face” in their creation and utilization of HTAs (Rivera-Salgado). Similarly, Mexican immigrants “have enormous potential to shape the development of transnational mechanisms aimed at meeting the challenges of economic integration in more equitable and democratic ways” than “accepting a role as ‘victims’ of globalization” (Bada). The voluntary nature of membership in HTAs, coupled with their financial support for their towns of origin at a minimum, demonstrates high levels of self sufficiency in addition to cultural values that not only comply with but add to the net value of modern U.S. American society. Traditionally, volunteering has helped to steer towards and retain democracy, and is a value that is viewed as a core component of U.S. democracy (Zabin and Rabadan 2). Thus, HTAs provide new and creative ways of contributing to core values of U.S. society, and turning to acknowledge the validity of these approaches could move towards a paratactic structure that encompasses their complex reality as a legitimate form of expression.

At the time of the documentary, only one of the group’s members was a legal citizen; by default, he had become the shuttle between the two communities. He traveled the 3,154 miles between the two communities at least five times a year, including a significant portion of dirt roads in the area around his home community. His trips delivered financial support to those still in Boquerón, news to those in New York, and a liaison between both for the types of projects that Boquerón most needs supported.

The prevalence of HTAs and the multiplicity of voices that they promote provides strong testimony for the complex reality of the immigrant experience. According to one statistic, there are over 2,000 of these Mexican associations across the country, with hometowns ranging from Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Puebla, and Michoacán, Mexico (Orozco and Lapointe 31). Although some of the more prominent HTAs have joined to form complex networks, it has not resulted in a single, hegemonic expression of the immigrant experience; rather, a strong local presence is retained even within these unions (Zabin and Rabadan 7-8). The coexistence of large and small scale organization structures in these associations turns towards a more anarchic approach to the immigrant experience, allowing for a multiplicity of voices- some turning towards issues of finance, others towards culture, all from unique origins but sharing the common experience of living as immigrants in U.S. society (Feyerabend 9, Bada). The complexity of these interactions can be seen in the gatherings held by many of these associations that are designed to fundraise for their communities of origin but simultaneously promote “the construction and reinforcement of collective ties that create community in the United States” (Zabin and Rabadan 11).

The variations in dialogue facilitated by HTAs, however, still retain unity in spite of difference. These associations are said to have a “relatively cohesive” organization, in which members “follow basic rules of group discussion and decision making, and adapt to changing circumstances either by joining other groups to form federations or by electing new authorities” (Orozco and Lapointe 33). There are generally multiple levels of organization within these associations: the involved families interact at parties, gatherings, etc., forming informal structure; officials are elected formally in elections arranged by “a few civic-minded migrants;” and older, larger organizations often network with other clubs of similar origins to form federations (Zabin and Rabadan 7-8).

From the discourse modeled by HTAs, it is possible to envision a new, more inclusive rhetoric of immigration that addresses the validity of community, of personal expertise, and of liminal existence. All of these tropes found in HTA outlaw discourse promote a fluid border that will facilitate movement and exchange between the cultures rather than sealing them off.

Section 3: Reform Through Discord in Figurations of Immigration

Creative turns that empower the immigrant voice, acknowledge the economic circumstances that drive much of immigration, and recognize the potential in immigrant agency supply a valuable alternative to harsh barriers proposed by policy like the SFA. The voluntary projects executed by HTAs have the potential to turn their communities of origin from desperately impoverished locales that are rapidly losing inhabitants to self-sustaining communities, thereby eliminating much of what is currently perceived as undesirable immigration (Bada). Reminders that “there are thousands of stories telling the pain of separated husbands and wives, the fear of a mother for her child crossing the border, the pride of returning from the U.S. in a new Ford pickup, wasted years in a foreign place... many are making the choice to leave for the U.S. because of the lack of alternatives at home” provide helpful insight into the motives behind immigration and the desperation that often makes it an undesirable necessity (Rose and Shaw 102-103). As such, there is a need for turning to the immigrant voice rather than barriers as a means for regulating immigration, since these immigrants are the true experts of the complexity of situations that can not be solved by border walls. As Homeland Security Secretary (then Arizona governor) Janet Napolitano famously stated, “show me a 12-foot fence and I’ll show you a 13-foot ladder” (Thompson A12). If conditions remain as desperate as they currently are, the dominant attempt to reduce the rate of immigration will have little to no effect.

Therefore, rather than remaining content with what Paul Feyerabend describes as assimilation to create “hypotactic systems,” a supposedly “advanced” way of fitting together separate parts through the elimination of distinctive characteristics, it is essential to foster a new environment in which the construction of drug-supplying “aliens” that warrant the construction of a border fence comes into direct contact with the lived experience of the immigrant as voiced by HTAs and their members (Feyerabend 175). Attention must turn towards the inconsistencies in current dominant discourse that alleviate U.S. citizens of responsibility and, simultaneously, promote a paratactic aggregate of independent voices to “concretize innovative proposals to organize and mobilize people around solutions to the marginalization and impoverishment of migrant communities in the U.S. and rural communities in Mexico with high levels of out-migration” (Rivera-Salgado).

Rupturing Dominant Discourse

For such a collaborative effort to take place, rupturing some of the power currently situated in the dominant discourse on the border is necessary. The hegemonic influence that U.S. policy currently holds over society must be altered to make space for other voices to be heard. For example, it needs to be acknowledged that the United States is both a regulator and cause of the immigration situation. By supporting the policies of the Mexican government, the U.S. is effectively promoting these persistent inequalities in its neighboring country (Rivera). Moreover, the United States plays a much higher role in the “immigrant-induced” violence and drug trade than generally believed. In fact, acknowledgement of this involvement is becoming more prevalent, even in high levels of the government administration. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano has recently noted that U.S. citizens often traffic weapons across the border into Mexico, a phenomenon that serves to enable the same drug wars that warrant rigid regulation of Mexican entrance to the United States, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pointed to an “insatiable” appetite for drugs in the United States that provides desperate farmers with

motivation to enter the drug supply market (Thompson A12, “U.S. to blame for much of Mexican drug violence”).

Once these inconsistencies are addressed, the joint responsibility of the United States and Mexico for problems identified in reference to Mexican immigration becomes clear.. Therefore, the divide of “us” versus “them” that the construction of a wall implies is an incorrect and inappropriate conceptualization. In fact, the currently dichotomous interpretation of the U.S./Mexico divide is so prevalent that it ignores the liminality between the two, whether this refers to codependent societies, transnationalism, or the physically shared border space.

Accordingly, the tropes employed in U.S. discourse provide the immigrant with two options, either to be assimilated into the “melting pot” at the expense of cultural distinctions or to be forced into the mold of the excluded Other whose entire identity is difference. This binary reinforces the rhetorical nature of troping, as traditional rhetorical theory urges the speaker to pursue unification of intent or explicitly reject that which resists (Aristotle 49). Perhaps most seriously, Paul Feyerabend posits that this culture of strict divisions between the hypotactic system and that which remains outside “forces the dissenter into a no-man’s-land of no rules at all and thus robs him of his reason and his humanity” (162). Therefore, in not only refusing entry to the “deviants” but refusing to acknowledge those who are not “American,” “victim,” or “terrorist,” the United States is depriving these individuals of their very existence. In dehumanizing these individuals, the United States is contradicting its own principles of “life, liberty, and justice for all.” Indeed, Feyerabend argues that this is not only violent but a denial of liberty, for “[t]he attempt to increase liberty, to lead a full and rewarding life, and the corresponding attempt to discover the secrets of nature and of man, entails, therefore, the rejection of all universal standards and of all rigid traditions” (12).

Divisive tropes are inevitably reflected in political expression of what can and cannot “belong” in

the United States through the persistent “Otherization” of the Mexican immigrant. While the exclusiveness of U.S. society may appear natural to those who accept George W. Bush’s doctrine that “you are either with us or against us,” the unseen power of the metaphor plays quite heavily in the construction of what appears to be merely a representation of reality (“Bush Says it is Time for Action”).

Indeed, “[e]very mimetic text can be shown to have left something out of the description of its object or to have put something into it that is inessential to what *some* reader, with more or less authority, will regard as an adequate description” (White 3). As such, this essentializing of the immigrant as completely assimilable or, alternately, completely dangerous, occurs because the dominant tropes do not view complexities as essential for an “adequate description.” Bush’s ultimatum reflects the perspective that it is not possible to challenge U.S. federal authority without becoming the enemy; thus, there is no need to acknowledge the liminal life in what is quite literally the borderlands of U.S. culture⁵.

The tropological constructions of immigration and the border in U.S. policy, media, and other forms of dominant discourse noted above cover an array of conflicting ideologies: the immigrant is at once an economic benefit and a security threat, the United States is both a melting pot and an English-only territory, and a border is both a division of culture and necessary for national security. The accumulated effect of these confusing turns in policy like the SFA and related statements has created a state of that fails to acknowledge the full reality in which it operates, thereby inevitably placing itself in danger. Therefore, policy rhetoric like that found in the SFA is particularly hazardous because its troping of immigration seems to be the only possible reality. Border policy hovers in a cusp as the perceived nature of the immigrant and a nation have been constructed through years of accumulated official

⁵ For additional work on borderlands, see: Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: the new mestiza = la frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute) 1987.

discourse, leaving the complex reality of the immigrant ignored and, in the process, creating ineffective policy.

Linear Influence

This literal “line” that is drawn between the United States and Mexico in the form of a border coincides with what Giles Deleuze describes as a “linear” regulatory system that impacts our lives. Within this categorization, he identifies three types of “lines.” The first group, lines of “rigid segmentarity,” consists of traditional components of identity such as class and race (124). Deleuze says that these lines are *dichotomic*, not simultaneous choices but successive options in the form of “if you are neither *a* nor *b*, then you are *c*” (128). In the debates on Mexican immigration, then, lines of rigid segmentarity would include Caucasian vs. Latino ethnicity, location of birth, economic standing, etc. Because the border division between the countries is currently perceived as a segmentary line, dominant logic would dictate that if someone of Mexican origin is neither a legal citizen of the United States nor currently residing in Mexico, that individual must be an immigrant and, thus, lacks a nationality. Deleuze says that segmentation is an expression of power, as it establishes a *territory*; thus, expression of the border, whether it be in the form of a wall or a division of cultures, is a form of strict segmentation (129). All linear influences are contained within a *plane of organization*, which encompasses the State (129). The ethos behind lines of this sort give them the power to determine what can be legitimate within a State setting.

The second type of line is of a “supple” nature, which makes it more “molecular” than “molar” (Deleuze and Parnet 124). Essentially, these lines are not rigid or as easily discernable, but provide influence as concrete as their segmentary counterparts. Deleuze is careful, however, to clarify that these lines are neither more person-specific nor “intimate;” although they constitute what he calls *becomings*,

they are becomings or *thresholds* that influence all participants in a society (124). They are a form of assimilation that simultaneously morphs the collective to accommodate the outliers, such as practices that promote English-only interactions but must offer English courses for this to be possible (127).

All lines invariably intersect and collectively shape the lived reality of everyone in a society (Deleuze and Parnet 125). Indeed, Deleuze notes that lines literally cut through the subject to put “forms in order and subjects in their place,” forcefully assimilating immigrants or other outliers into the mechanism of the state (130). These linear divisions have been established by *devices of power*, entities that have been given particular ethos to shape or categorize the culture (129). For example, policy like the SFA can be considered a device of power, an influential component of national culture that explicitly states who can legitimately enter the country and how.

These devices of power are maintained by the *apparatus of the state*, specifically the U.S. government. For example, official government statements and speeches, like the White House “Fact Sheets” and President Bush’s remarks, legitimate stances taken by devices of power like immigration policy. The resulting lines are reinforced by an *abstract machine* that is separate from the State but guides dominant discourse towards a homogeneous whole (129). National narratives like the Melting Pot and media coverage of specific types of discourse can be considered abstract machines; although neither one is actively promoting an agenda of who can and cannot “belong” in the United States, selected material and audiences serve to influence cultural thought in a way that reinforces dominant voices.

Deleuze ultimately says that such a problematic regulatory system can be disrupted by what he describes as “lines of flight,” which “constitute the social field, trace out its gradation and its boundaries, the whole of its becoming” (135). Because these deterritorializations are soon reterritorialized in the

plane-specific nature of society, however, there will inevitably be tension between the lines of flight and the apparatus of the State (136). “Ruptures” in the lines of life are neither solely personal nor solely collective, and signal an “absolute threshold” in current conditions. These ruptures assimilate the individual to the collective just as the collective is morphed to accommodate the individual (127). Deleuze gives the example of someone walking down the street, who will inevitably personalize his/her walk even as he/she is performing the traditional form of movement from place to place (128). Breaks in the segmentarity of a plane are caused by “lines of flight,” which inherently move from plane to plane and adjust components of segments in their paths (131).

Deleuze says that this is not the same as adding a “new” option in opposition to the old (ex: offering the opportunity for “legal immigrant workers” in addition to the legal/illegal dichotomy), but, rather, offering a new line which compliments the existing segmentation even as it disrupts (131). He argues that “[y]ou only escape dualisms effectively by shifting them like a load, and when you find between the terms, whether they are two or more, a narrow gorge like a *border or frontier* [my emphasis] which will turn the set into a multiplicity, independently of the number of parts” (132). Thus, the immigration debate needs to focus on the liminality of immigration rather than the competing nation-states, a “multiplicity of dimensions” rather than a “dualism” (133). Denying the need for a fence without acknowledging the need for a multiplicity of existence will only offer the opportunity for “re-territorialization” via relocated border powers (134). Indeed, the “reterritorialization” of the border offers the opportunity for the “line” to, quite literally, be “draw[n] anywhere” (137).

Facilitating Confrontation to Achieve a Line of Flight

It is this type of opportunity that must be explored for discourse on immigration to successfully address the reality of the phenomenon that it seeks to monitor. The lines upon which the SFA and HTAs currently exist not only fail to interact, but leave several gaps in the lived experience of immigration

unattended. The perceived “truths” upon which they operate, ranging from the constructed border to the appropriate means for communication, place them in the alienating realm of simulacrum that promotes falsehoods while depriving the overall system of concrete support.

Just as federal policy like the SFA should not be considered the ultimate authority in the lived experience of the immigrant, however, it is unsafe to promote the HTA as an absolute authority as well. While the SFA caters to specific groups of U.S. citizenry, HTAs are designed to address the needs of their particular communities and may fail to benefit not only the United States but groups of immigrants from other places of origin. Allowing either one to achieve sole “expert” status would create Feyerabend’s condition of hypotaxis by ignoring the inherent ruptures in the lines that comprise both types of structures and creating an additional level of simulacrum by presenting the state as a unified whole (xxi, 175).

Specifically, the SFA is an inadequate solution to the problem of immigration because it fails to address the complexity of the immigrant situation and considers only the perspective of those that it considers “legitimate” members of the United States. Although the country of the United States was originally founded in a “line of flight” from Europe, the escape, like many, has been “reterritorialized” by the plane of the state (Deleuze and Parnet 136). The line of flight is of an unstable nature and often becomes merged with the other two types of lines, thus accumulating and producing “a ‘class’... which benefits particularly from it, capable of homogenizing it and overcoding all its segments” (Deleuze and Parnet 136). Therefore, the SFA is created and maintained by a former line of flight that now forcefully shapes those around it to conform to its idea of stability.

Additionally, it is an impractical policy that is essentially impossible to enforce, as demonstrated by the frequency with which groups like HTAs traverse the border and maintain connections with their

places of origin. In spite of this evidence, adamant solidification of the border via additions like concrete barriers and surveillance equipment continues to segment society in a way that is cruelly inefficient. Moreover, the SFA fails to benefit both migrant groups and those that it attempts to “protect,” the homogenized whole that is both placed in constant terror of the Other’s presence and charged ridiculous amounts of money to enforce this constructed division.

Although it can be argued that HTAs provide a viable alternative to the SFA’s failed border segmentation, the line of flight will serve to not only disrupt but improve them as well. It is essential that those on the margins embrace their potential for agency, as have the HTAs, and that dominant discourse turn to attend to those on the margins (Deleuze and Parnet 139). The organizational structure, social hierarchies, and communication strategies that one finds in many HTAs make them incapable of solving the problem of immigration on their own. As such, it is essential for the dominant discourse to come in direct contact with the position articulated by HTAs, utilizing the trajectory that it is able to reach to disseminate the perspectives articulated by marginalized voices while supporting this new outlet with its access to resources as well.

HTAs themselves have structural weaknesses that impede their ability to solve the issue of immigration on their own. They retain a sort of “expert/nonexpert” division in their own organizational structure. Emphasis in some of the groups on the voices of some members over others place them in the precarious position of combining dominant management techniques with outlaw logics, placing them at the margins of the plane of organization without completely extracting themselves. The hierarchical division that marginalizes even within the group of the marginalized severely limits the potential of the organizations. In fact, these associations “often significantly exclude women, reinforce existing power relations within a community, sometimes promote projects that are not the most needed but which generate the most symbolic power, and may be open to cooptation and exploitation by government”

(Vertovec 988-989). The fact that remittances by individual families still drastically outweigh the economic support provided by HTAs demonstrates the need for ruptures even within this supposedly radical system (Vertovec 989).

Leaders are primarily male and of solid economic status in the United States (Zabin and Rabadan 10). This not only excludes significant portions of HTA membership from leadership, but embraces the standards for success already present in the dominant system of U.S. society. Thus, certain aspects of HTA power structure gives voice to marginalized only insofar as they are able to conform to dominant standards. In many cases, the Mexican government has constructed outreach programs that, although financially beneficial for the groups, may also permeate the group structure with traditional ideals of machismo and the idea of the male as the primary citizen-subject (Pessar and Mahler 819-820). The role that migrant women often play in fundraising for these organizations supports the primarily male decision-making process, although studies suggest that the opportunity for any sort of political agency actually motivates women to remain in the United States, while their male counterparts often wish to return to Mexico and make use of their accrued political capital (Pessar and Mahler 819-820).

Additionally, leaders of certain groups are appointed rather than elected, further depriving the masses of their potential to disrupt the hypotactic discussion on immigrant reality, and leaders are occasionally distrusted because of suspected corruption or abuse of power (Vertovec 989). A notable exception, the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos, has elected officers that not only oversee the development of new clubs but openly facilitate discussion among members. As the oldest and largest Mexican HTA Federation in Los Angeles, this organization's success points to significant weak spots in the strategies of its cohorts (Zabin and Rabadan 16-17).

Similarly, the selected projects themselves often cater to this hierarchical structure and, although geared towards the receiving community, may fail to take important components into account if the individual in power desires to achieve personal goals (Orozco and Lapointe 45). In fact, the economic potential that large-scale donors might bring could also disrupt the currently broad spectrum of projects that HTAs complete, since donors might be interested only in specific projects (Orozco and Lapointe 47). Conversely, the scope of influence that HTAs currently possess often makes them incapable of completing the large scale projects that their places of origin so desperately need (Orozco and Lapointe 47).

Therefore, the dominant voice needs to turn towards that of the outlaw, using its material resources and social ethos to propagate the lived experience of the immigrant in a way that will positively influence immigration policy and social acceptance. The potential for HTAs to be recognized by the U.S. system would provide diversity of thought in the perception of immigration, while ensuring the permanency of these currently marginalized voices. For example, many HTAs would benefit from registering as non-profit institutions, which would promote the distribution of their messages or even awareness of their existence to a wider audience (Orozco and Lapointe 45). Additionally, although there is value in the HTA emphasis on local communities of origin, expanding their communication to other immigrants in the form of immigrant federations would increase their sociopolitical power while retaining the specialization that values the experience of the individual (Zabin and Rabadan 17).

Perhaps the most important way in which the line of flight could benefit both dominant and outlaw discourse on immigration is the focus on the borderlands themselves, a transnational approach that “holds these sites [of location] equally and simultaneously in conversation with each other and tries to grapple with the tension between them” (Smith 1102). Even margins are shaped by these lines of influence; as such, the important thing is not to seek out a space entirely lacking structure, but to

acknowledge the complex and variable way in which immigrants deal with their “multi-positionality” (Smith 1105). Similarly, Deleuze warns that the planes of organization which currently define us are not meant to be obliterated, for such a move would destroy us in the process (138). Therefore, the solution is to pay particular attention to the ways in which reality is shaped and, from there, discover points of rupture that can be emphasized for the better (Deleuze and Parnet 127). We should rupture the current search for the *telos*, or origin, of a phenomenon and focus instead on the elements that comprise it (Feyerabend 172). In doing so, the ways in which such a framework affects perceptions and how it might simultaneously be limiting them can be evaluated (Feyerabend 172). Thus, rather than focusing on problems with official immigration rhetoric, emphasis should be redirected towards examining the cultural constraints which prevent us as a nation from achieving the inclusivity which has been articulated as a national ideal, and the cultural opportunities of turning towards the complexity of the lived experience of the Other.

The idea of alternating between the sets of linear influences found at the border of two societies coincides with the concept of “alloiostrophe,” an approach to the topological nature of human interaction that emphasizes “‘difference,’ ‘diversity,’ ‘alteration,’ and ‘strangeness’” (Sutton and Mifsud 3). Essentially, then, the solution is in finding the points in which these lines fail to intersect or come into direct conflict with one another, using these ruptures to create “a multiplicity in unity” (Sutton and Mifsud 6). Both the SFA and the HTAs have been designed to benefit certain communities, but both equally fail to take the other faction into consideration, thus fostering a sense of discord that prevents the beneficial ideas found on both sides from interacting with one another.

Deleuze says that the line of flight is not the same as adding a “new” option in opposition to the old, but, rather, offering a new line which compliments the existing segmentation even as it disrupts (131). For example, proposals for temporary worker permits may add a third option to the dichotomy

between legal and illegal, but they do not successfully disrupt the regulatory lines of legality status in the process. He argues that “[y]ou only escape dualisms effectively by shifting them like a load, and when you find between the terms, whether they are two or more, a narrow gorge like a *border or frontier* [my emphasis] which will turn the set into a multiplicity, independently of the number of parts” (132).

Thus, the immigration debate needs to focus on the liminality of immigration rather than the competing nation-states, a “multiplicity of dimensions” rather than a “dualism” (Deleuze and Parnet 133). Denying the need for a fence without acknowledging the need for a multiplicity of existence will only offer the opportunity for “re-territorialization” via relocated border powers (Deleuze and Parnet 134). Indeed, the “reterritorialization” of the border offers the opportunity for the “line” to, quite literally, be “draw[n] anywhere” (Deleuze and Parnet 137).

The line of flight is inherently chaotic, “born from the explosion of the two others” (Deleuze and Parnet 137). As such, it is impossible to identify a specific destination at which the current system could potentially arrive if it were to embrace the direction of the flight. In fact, it is perhaps even undesirable, for active cooptation of the line of flight simultaneously deprives it of its creative potential, its ability to move “towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent” (Deleuze and Parnet 125).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hegemonic emphasis on the Secure Fence Act and related dominant discourse in regulating the existence of the immigrant is dangerously ineffective for both the United States and the immigrant population. To rupture the binaristic lines that currently exist in society between citizen and immigrant, United States and Mexico, dominant and outlaw, it is necessary to turn away from a

hegemonic dominant discourse and towards the inclusion of Other (alloios) voice of Hometown Associations like Grupo Unión through the use of alloiostrophe and parataxis. In generating a space for a multiplicity of perspectives on immigration to be articulated, facilitating confrontation will be possible between these perspectives and generate a line of flight to escape from the currently restrictive interpretation of the border.

This line of flight will not be instantaneous, for modern reality is one of hierarchy; as such, the first step will be for dominant discourse to turn towards the complexity of the immigrant lived experience as articulated by organizations like Grupo Unión. The nature of the line of flight makes it impossible to predict its ultimate destination, but certain steps should be taken to facilitate its emergence. First, a plethora of voices must be consulted on the topic of immigration. Just as the SFA cannot speak for the lived reality of the immigrant, Grupo Unión cannot be used as its sole representative without alleviating some of this very complexity. Moreover, academia needs to turn towards the complex world of policymaking to provide an alternative perspective to current systems of thought. The issue of border control and immigration is one of vital importance in modern U.S. society, and recognizing the power of academic theories like alloiostrophe in discussion will forge new opportunities for an inclusive reality that affirms difference.

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