

INTRODUCTION

ON MARCH 24, 2009, Pat Buchanan stated on MSNBC: “Mexico is the greatest foreign policy crisis I think America faces in the next 20, 30 years. Who is going to care, 30 years from now whether a Sunni or a Shia is in Baghdad or who’s ruling in Kabul? We’re going to have 135 million Hispanics in the United States by 2050, heavily concentrated in the southwest. The question is whether we’re going to survive as a country.”¹ Buchanan’s apocalyptic pronouncement went beyond immigrants from Latin America to warn about the threat posed by their children and subsequent generations.

A report from the Southern Poverty Law Center in August 2009 warned of the rapid growth in militia groups across the United States.² There were various reasons for this rise, with the stress of the recession and a liberal administration led by a black president being the most important. But the center also cited “conspiracy theories about a secret Mexican plan to reclaim the Southwest” that are part of the public debate about immigration.

On April 23, 2010, Arizona’s governor Jan Brewer signed the United States’ toughest immigration law. What soon followed were similar laws in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah, as various states seemed to compete to pass the most draconian anti-immigration legislation. Although in June 2012 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down most of Arizona’s immigration law, it did allow police to continue asking anyone suspected of being in the country illegally for their immigration papers.³ In Arizona, passage of the immigration law was followed by attacks on teaching Chicano studies in high school. Arizona’s banning of Chicano studies and textbooks was based on



Figure I.1. Sharron Angle political ad, using a photograph of Mexicans taken in Mexico.
SOURCE: Andrew Price for www.good.org.

the argument that such classes fomented anti-Anglo (non-Latino white) hatred and promoted the idea of a Latino takeover of the U.S. Southwest.⁴

In the 2010 U.S. Senate race in Nevada, Republican Sharron Angle ran against Democrat Harry Reid. Angle's campaign aired an advertisement that featured three Latino-looking male youth (Figure I.1). Each was standing looking directly at the camera, wearing casual clothing, sweatshirts and jackets. One wore a baseball hat backwards. Across the image were the words, in bold, "ILLEGAL ALIENS." One would think that these three Latino males were the hardest-working models in political ads that year, as they turned up in other advertisements as well. What's important here is that the ad did not provide identifying information on the young men, such as where they were born or even if they really were "illegal aliens." For all we knew, they could have been well-paid actors, college students, or immigrant workers. The reality is that these three Mexican men were photographed in Mexico. There is no evidence they were ever in the United States as undocumented immigrants.⁵ However, being "Mexican looking" was enough to create the message that Latino immigrants represented a problem and that a vote for the political candidate would help fix the problem.

Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain was in Tennessee on October 15, 2011, where he responded to a question about his views on erecting a fence between the United States and Mexico. Cain replied that if elected president, he would build a border fence: “It’s going to be 20 feet high. It’s going to have barbed wire on the top. It’s going to be electrified. And there’s going to be a sign on the other side saying, ‘It will kill you—Warning.’”⁶ Mr. Cain said later that he was joking but then quickly added, “. . . but not really.” How could a presidential candidate joke about electrifying human beings?

This book grew out of my attempt to unpack the meanings of these views about Latinos. Rather than considering them in isolation, I began to see them as connected, as part of a larger set of concerns over immigration, particularly from Mexico and other parts of Latin America; the meaning of citizenship; and the power of media spectacles in contemporary life. The Latino Threat Narrative provides the raw material that weaves these concerns together.

The Latino Threat Narrative posits that Latinos are not like previous immigrant groups, who ultimately became part of the nation. According to the assumptions and taken-for-granted “truths” inherent in this narrative, Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating, of becoming part of the national community. Rather, they are part of an invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquering land that was formerly theirs (the U.S. Southwest) and destroying the American way of life. Although Mexicans are often the focus of the Latino Threat Narrative, public discourse, as I elaborate in Chapter 1, often includes immigration from Latin America in general, as well as U.S.-born Americans of Latin American descent. Thus, the broader and more inclusive term *Latino* is used throughout this book, while recognizing that Latinos actually vary greatly in terms of their historical backgrounds and success in integrating into U.S. social and economic life.

The contemporary Latino Threat Narrative has its antecedents in U.S. history: the German language threat, the Catholic threat, the Chinese and Japanese immigration threats, and the southern and eastern European threat. In their day, each discourse of threat targeted particular immigrant groups and their children. Each was pervasive and defined “truths” about the threats posed by immigrants that, in hindsight, were unjustified or never materialized in the long run of history. And each of these discourses generated actions, such as alarmist newspaper stories (the media of the day), anti-immigrant riots, restrictive immigration laws, forced internments, and acrimonious public debates over government policies. In this sense, the Latino Threat Narrative is

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part of a grand tradition of alarmist discourse about immigrants and their perceived negative impacts on society.⁷

However, the Latino Threat Narrative recognizes that Latinos are different from past immigrants and other ethnic groups in America today. Latinos have been in what is now the United States since the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, actually predating the English colonies. Since the Mexican-American War, immigration from Mexico and other Latin countries has waxed and waned, building in the early twentieth century, diminishing in the 1930s, and building again the post-1965 years. These migrations paralleled those of other immigrant groups. But Mexicans in particular have been represented as the quintessential “illegal aliens,” which distinguishes them from other immigrant groups. Their social identity has been plagued by the mark of illegality, which in much public discourse means that they are criminals and thus illegitimate members of society undeserving of social benefits, including citizenship. Latinos are an alleged threat because of this history and social identity, which supposedly make their integration difficult and imbue them, particularly Mexicans, with a desire to remain socially apart as they prepare for a reconquest of the U.S. Southwest.

The Latino Threat Narrative is pervasive even when not explicitly mentioned. It is the cultural dark matter filling space with taken-for-granted “truths” in debates over immigration on radio and TV talk shows, in newspaper editorials, and on Internet blogs. Unquestioned motives and behavior attributed to Latino immigrants and their children permeate discussions over amnesty for undocumented immigrants, employer sanctions, driver’s licenses, prenatal care, education for the children of immigrants, citizenship for “anchor babies” (U.S.-born children with undocumented-immigrant parents), and even organ transplants for immigrants. Although some aspect of the Latino Threat Narrative can be found in almost any discussion of immigration in contemporary public discourse, what I attempt here is a more systematic elaboration of this narrative. I will also contest the basic tenets of this narrative, an ambitious aspiration for a cultural critic admittedly not unlike Don Quixote’s attacking windmills.⁸

In addition, I want to connect the Latino Threat Narrative to what I see as the contemporary crisis in the meaning of citizenship. The Minuteman Project’s activities in Arizona in 2005 (see Chapter 6) were about more than drawing attention to the perils of an uncontrolled border and unauthorized immigration. The Minutemen were also decrying what they perceived as the

dilution of the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship because of massive immigration. The Latino threat is profoundly implicated in the second theme of this book, the contested terrain of citizenship in a world where national borders are increasingly permeable. What citizenship means in this changing landscape is not clear. But what is certain is that a legalistic definition of citizenship is not enough. Other meanings of citizenship—economic, social, cultural, and even emotional—are being presented in debates, marches, and public discourse focused on immigrants, their children, and the nation.

“Citizen” and “noncitizen” are concepts used to imagine and define community membership. According to Benedict Anderson, members of modern nations cannot possibly know all their fellow members, and yet “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. . . . It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”⁹ Anderson eloquently argues for the importance of print media in the construction of “imagined communities” and subjectivities that lay the foundation for nationalism and modernity.¹⁰ In a similar vein, Jürgen Habermas has argued that the public sphere relies on the circulation of print commodities.¹¹ I extend this thinking to the image-producing industries in order to explore how the media help construct the imagined community through representations of both inclusion and exclusion.¹²

Both the Latino Threat Narrative and struggles over the meaning of citizenship pervade media-infused spectacles where immigration or immigrants are the topic. Broadly speaking, events or public performances that receive an inordinate volume of media attention and public opinion become media spectacles.¹³ It is difficult to escape media coverage and the incessant “talk” about immigration.¹⁴ Border surveillance, reproduction, fertility levels, fears of immigrant invasions and reconquests, amnesty programs, economic impacts, organ transplants, and the alleged inability to assimilate Latino immigrants and their offspring are all fodder for media attention.

Immigration-related media spectacles force us to reconsider what we mean by the word *spectacle*. *Spectacle* comes to us from Middle English and is an Anglo-French term with roots in the Latin *spectaculum*, derived from *spec-tare*, to watch, and *specere*, to look at. In other words, a spectacle is something watched or looked at. It is the object of the viewer’s gaze. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* includes this sense of the word in its definition but adds more connotations: a spectacle is “something exhibited to view as unusual,

notable, or entertaining; especially an eye-catching or dramatic public display” or “an object of curiosity or contempt.”¹⁵ These definitions of *spectacle* may capture, to a certain extent, what occurred in the immigration marches and other immigration-related events considered here. However, these events push us to think about the meaning of spectacles in society and how they help construct subjective understandings of “citizens” and “noncitizens.”

When immigration-related events or issues receive extensive media focus and become media shows, there is more going on than merely relating the news. As Guy Debord has observed, in modern technological societies, life has become “an immense accumulation of *spectacles*” and “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation.”¹⁶ The images we constantly consume not only inform us of life around us but also help construct our understanding of events, people, and places in our world.¹⁷ In short, media spectacles are productive acts that construct knowledge about subjects in our world. This is particularly the case for how we internalize who we are as a people. How we, as a nation of diverse people, derive our understanding of who to include in our imagined community of fellow citizens is a product of many things, not the least of which is what we glean from the media.¹⁸ Debates over immigration, citizenship, and national belonging are informed by the events we witness through the media’s representation of immigrant spectacles, whether they are promoting concern for the plight of immigrants or anti-immigration events.

How newcomers imagine themselves and are imagined by the larger society in relation to the nation is mediated through the representations of immigrants’ lives in media coverage. Media spectacles transform immigrants’ lives into virtual lives, which are typically devoid of the nuances and subtleties of real lived lives (see Chapter 1).¹⁹ It is in this sense that the media spectacle transforms a “worldview”—that is, a taken-for-granted understanding of the world—into an objective force, one that is taken as “truth.”²⁰ In their coverage of immigration events, the media give voice to commentators, pundits, informed sources, and man-on-the-street observers who often invoke one or more of the myriad truths in the Latino Threat Narrative to support arguments and justify actions. In this way, media spectacles objectify Latinos. Through objectification (the process of turning a person into a thing) people are dehumanized, and once that is accomplished, it is easier to lack empathy for those objects and to pass policies and laws to govern their behavior, limit their social integration, and obstruct their economic mobility. Portraying Latinos as objects or things makes it easier to see immigrant marchers as a chaotic mass rather than as

people struggling to be recognized as contributing members of U.S. society (Chapter 7), or Latinas represented in advertisements as beer bottles—literally things—rather than human beings (Chapter 3).

Through its coverage of events, the media produce knowledge about, and help construct, those considered legitimate members of society as well as those viewed as less legitimate, marginalized, and stigmatized Others.²¹ Thus media spectacles—such as those that occurred around organ transplants for noncitizens, Minuteman Project activities, and immigrant marches examined in the chapters that follow—help define what it means to be a “citizen,” a task that can be undertaken only by also defining its contrasting concepts: “alien,” “illegal alien,” “foreigner,” and “immigrant.” Where do Latinos stand in relation to these concepts? Are Latino immigrants worthy of the rights and benefits of citizenship if they are supposedly unwilling to integrate into U.S. society? Are Latinos who were born in the United States suspect as citizens because of the disloyalty to the nation implied by the Latino Threat Narrative? The very act of asking such a question casts U.S.-born Latinos as “alien-citizens,” perpetual foreigners despite their birthright.²²

Before proceeding, we need to clarify the context within which the Latino Threat Narrative gains tremendous currency and which has provoked a crisis over the meaning of citizenship. Adding to this necessary contextualization is a brief overview of recent legislation to control immigration. Debates over immigration reform provide ample opportunities for the Latino Threat Narrative to be invoked. In addition, immigration reform legislation is an exercise in inclusion and exclusion when it comes to defining who is legitimately able to join the community of citizens.

IMMIGRATION AND THE NATION

The number of immigrants to the United States has been growing steadily since 1960 (Figure I.2). The proportion of foreign-born in the U.S. in 2005 was 12.4 percent, which is approaching the historic high of 14.7 percent foreign-born in 1910, during the peak years of immigration during the early twentieth century.²³ Estimates of undocumented immigrants currently living in the country range from 10 to 12 million, with most coming from Mexico (57 percent) and other Latin American countries (23 percent).²⁴ These trends have led to public concerns over immigration and legislative proposals to reform the nation’s immigration laws.²⁵

The U.S. Congress seems to be on a ten-year cycle for taking up major immigration reform legislation. After passage of the monumental 1965 immigration

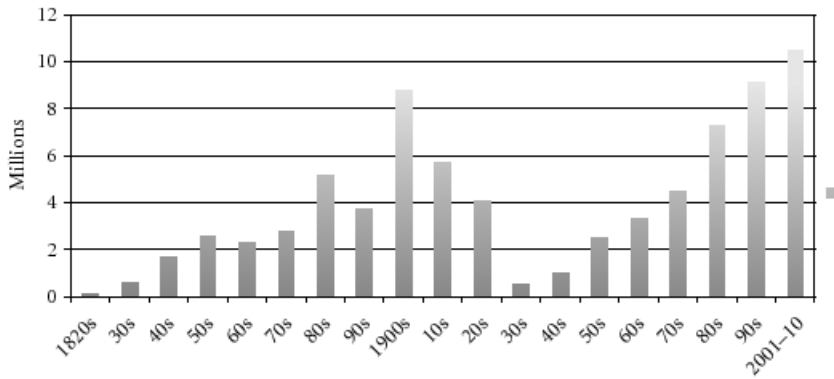


Figure 1.2. Immigration to the United States by decade, 1820–2010.

SOURCE: 2011 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Department of Homeland Security, 2012).

law, President Jimmy Carter, in the 1970s, floated the possibility of an amnesty for undocumented immigrants and sanctions for employers who hired undocumented workers, neither of which gained much political ground at the time.²⁶ Almost a decade later, Congress passed, and President Ronald Reagan signed into law, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). The major provisions were sanctions for employers who hired undocumented immigrants and an amnesty program for over a million undocumented immigrants. Although touted as legislation to end undocumented immigration, IRCA was relatively ineffective.

The Immigration Act of 1990 made some adjustments to immigration law, such as increasing from 500,000 to 700,000 the number of legal immigrants allowed into the United States each year. It also created a lottery program for visas to help lure immigrants from countries that had not been part of recent immigration flows, especially countries in Europe. But major immigration reform came six years later.

In 1996 the U.S. Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. This law toughened the requirements for undocumented immigrants to adjust their status to that of a legal immigrant and streamlined the judicial process by turning deportation decisions over to an immigration court, thus reducing the levels of judicial review open to immigrants. It also streamlined the deportation of criminals and widened the range of deportable offenses. Among the changes to the nation's immigration law included in this act was a provision making immigrants' sponsors responsible

for public benefits used by immigrants. This provision, according to Sarita Mohanty et al., “created confusion about eligibility and appeared to lead even eligible immigrants to believe that they should avoid public programs.”²⁷

It should be noted that Congress also passed welfare reform in 1996 that targeted immigrants. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 ended the federal government’s sixty-one-year commitment to provide cash assistance to every eligible poor family with children.²⁸ This law was expected to save the government \$54 billion over the following six years, with nearly half of those savings, or \$24 billion, to come from restricting legal immigrants’ use of food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, and aid for low-income elderly, the blind, and the disabled. Legal immigrants were barred from using Medicaid for five years after their entry.²⁹ Undocumented immigrants, who already were denied virtually all federal assistance, continued to be barred from assistance except for short-term disaster relief and emergency medical care. Benefits, however, were soon restored to some at-risk populations, especially the elderly.³⁰

On December 15, 2005, the House of Representatives passed HR 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act.³¹ The bill represented yet another expression of the “get tough” attitude toward undocumented immigration.³² Among its many provisions were more border fences and surveillance technology, increased detention provisions, employer verification of employees’ work eligibility, and increases in the penalties for knowingly hiring undocumented immigrants. Moreover, it would have made living in the country as an undocumented immigrant a felony, thus removing any hope of becoming a legal immigrant. The bill also broadened the nation’s immigrant-smuggling law so that people who assisted or shielded illegal immigrants living in the country would be subject to prosecution. Offenders, who might include priests, nurses, social workers, or doctors, could face up to five years in prison, and authorities would be allowed to seize some of their assets. The House’s bill was clearly an exercise of exclusion, whereas the immigrant marches it generated were public displays of a desire for inclusion.

The U.S. Senate, in May 2006, passed its own version of immigration reform that included a guest worker program for immigrants and a legalization program, a “path to citizenship,” for some undocumented immigrants. Importantly, many of the draconian measures in the House bill did not become part of a final version of immigration reform promulgated under the George W. Bush administration, but the willingness of the House of Representatives to

pass such measures sent a clear message to undocumented immigrants about their stigmatized status in the United States.³³

Through the media, politicians desiring to restrict immigration have been able to represent undocumented immigrants as undeserving criminals and possible terrorists. Sometimes it seems that the spectacle surrounding immigration reform is more important than enacting new laws. For example, rather than arriving at a compromise bill on immigration, the House of Representatives sponsored more than twenty public meetings throughout the nation to discuss immigration reform, in what one newspaper editorial called the “endless summer” of 2006.³⁴ After that round of immigration reform failed to result in a new law, Congress, with President Bush’s support, again took up immigration in May 2007, where it met a similar fate.³⁵

Immigration reform laws and the politics surrounding reform proposals frame the public discourse over immigration. If the decibel levels in the debate are sometimes high, it is because the stakes are too. Who we let in to the nation as immigrants and allow to become citizens defines who we are as a people. Conversely, looking at who we ban from entry, or for whom we create obstacles to integration into society and to membership in the community of citizens, also reveals how we imagine ourselves as a nation—that is, as a group of people with intertwined destinies despite our differences.

CONCEPTUALIZING CITIZENS AND NONCITIZENS

The Latino Threat Narrative, immigration patterns, and the contemporary crisis over the meaning of citizenship are a triple helix of mutual influences.³⁶ However, what is meant by “citizen”—who is eligible for citizenship and who qualifies for the rights and benefits of citizenship—has always been a matter of contention, at least in U.S. history.³⁷ Consider the types of questions surrounding citizenship that were debated early in this nation’s history: All *men* may be created equal, but are they equally eligible for citizenship?³⁸ Should only white males with property have the privileges of citizenship? What about women, slaves (three-fifths of a person for enumeration purposes), and Native Americans? Not all immigrants were deemed eligible for citizenship. Asians were ineligible during much of the twentieth century.³⁹ Historically, poor, unmarried single women, whose morality was thus questionable, and the sick and infirm were deniable as immigrants and thus also ineligible for citizenship.⁴⁰ The legacies of these issues continue to be found in contemporary immigration policies.

The intertwined logics of race and national hierarchies based on theories of social evolution framed struggles over definitions of citizenship and immigrant desirability during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴¹ Although race continues in importance, the crisis over citizenship in today's world has moved to a different register, one complicated by globalization—a term that refers to how the world and its people are increasingly becoming integrated into one giant capitalist system. The spread of world capitalism also carries with it a spread of Western—often American—culture. Anyone who travels notices how common American fast-food restaurants have become in the world, a process sometimes referred to as the McDonaldization of society.⁴² But globalization is more than the movement of capital and the search for cheap labor. It is also about the movement of people, ideas, material culture, and commodities (e.g., movies, music, “traditional” Chinese medicine), as well as a whole host of flows unmoored from fixed nation-states.⁴³

Globalization has led to questions about the rights and privileges of citizenship and whether citizenship extends beyond the limits of the nation-state.⁴⁴ Indeed, the proliferation of types of citizenships now under consideration is an indication of the current crisis surrounding the meaning of citizenship. Some argue that there are “economic citizens,” who through their labor contribute to the well-being of society.⁴⁵ Others argue for transnational citizenship, postnational citizenship, transmigrant citizenship, transborder citizenship, or flexible citizenship, each of which recognizes that migrants often maintain lives that extend across the borders of nation-states.⁴⁶ Then there are “denizens,” legal residents of a country who are not naturalized citizens but enjoy some economic and political rights.⁴⁷ Victoria Bernal observes that an “emotional citizenship” emerges through the use of the Internet by the widely dispersed Eritrean refugees.⁴⁸ Others point to social inequalities that create a segmented citizenship, as some members of society are more valued than others, who often become stigmatized.⁴⁹ Some also argue that immigrants and minorities are engaged in a struggle for cultural citizenship, reflecting their claims for inclusion in society.⁵⁰

What, then, do we mean by citizenship? As a key concept in American culture, citizenship can, and does, have many meanings.⁵¹ It can range from the notion of being a “good citizen,” implying responsible membership in a social group, to strict legal definitions of rights and privileges. Incorporating immigrants into society entails a transformation from “other” to “us.” However, becoming part of the “us,” or to be included as part of the “we,” as in “we the

people,” is a contested process partly because it is not clear what this process entails.⁵² Meanings of such seemingly concrete and objective terms as “citizen” and “citizenship” fluctuate over time and place. And immigration always complicates the notion of citizenship.⁵³ Should immigrants and their children be included as citizens? Under what conditions should they be included in the national body? How we answer these questions depends on the way we perceive immigrants, which in turn is often based on what we know of them through their “virtual” lives, which are constructed through media representations.⁵⁴ The problem is that real lives of immigrants and their children may not correspond to their media-constructed virtual lives, as Chapter 2 suggests.

In a thorough review of the literature, Linda Bosniak found that there are four distinct understandings of citizenship: as legal status, as rights, as political activity, and as a form of collective identity and sentiment.⁵⁵ It is from the last of these definitions of citizenship that issues of cultural citizenship emerge. These four elements of citizenship find their analogues in the public debates and events focused on immigration, whether the actors are immigrants themselves or those posturing for restrictive immigration policies and greater surveillance of borders. Through the interplay of these four elements in daily discourse, the media, and government policies, we construct and define “citizens” in contrast to “noncitizen” subjects, as well as put pressure on society to broaden the definition of citizenship (the immigrants and their supporters’ agenda).

Citizenship as Legal Status

Simply put, for many, citizenship is about legal recognition. In this sense, citizenship refers to formal membership in an organized political community.⁵⁶ But, as Bosniak observes, problems arise over defining who is entitled to acquire citizenship and deciding where to draw the line between citizens and “aliens” when it comes to allocating rights and privileges (voting, education, health care, driver’s licenses, etc.).⁵⁷ For the millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States, as well as other countries, the lack of a formal legal status becomes a salient factor in this framing of citizenship.⁵⁸ Moreover, collapsing a lack of legal status with criminality adds another justification for denying undocumented immigrants legal recognition or amnesty, which would, the argument goes, be tantamount to rewarding criminals with a path to citizenship.

Citizenship as Rights

For many, especially anti-immigration groups such as the Minuteman Project, citizenship is also about rights, privileges, and responsibilities. What

distinguishes citizens from aliens are precisely the rights and privileges reserved for citizens. However, immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, also have rights in many nations, including the United States, where the Constitution speaks of “persons,” not citizens, when describing inalienable rights.⁵⁹ Consequently, immigrants have enjoyed rights to juridical due process, fair labor standards and practices, education, emergency medical care, and more.⁶⁰ Complicating this issue further are claims to basic human rights or rights based on universal or extranational agreements, such as the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶¹

Rights accorded to immigrants put pressure on the concept of citizenship, extending it beyond a narrow legal definition to include economic and cultural rights as part of the conceptualization of citizenship.⁶² However, since rights are part of a process of defining citizens and aliens, affording rights to immigrants can reflect, for some, a dilution of citizenship, reducing its value in a calculus of privileges.⁶³ Not surprisingly, anti-immigrant discourse and actions are often framed around rights and privileges—that is, reducing the rights and privileges afforded to immigrants, an idea that has found its place in immigration policy. For example, the 1996 immigration law made it more difficult to become a legal resident, broadened the criteria for deportation even for permanent legal residents,⁶⁴ and lessened opportunities for due process in deportation cases. The 1996 welfare law removed immigrants from eligibility for many social services. In addition, there are persistent calls to deny undocumented children access to public education, to deny citizenship to the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants, and to deny public housing and medical care to undocumented immigrants. Undocumented immigrants are refused driver’s licenses in many states. In effect, these policies redefine the value of citizenship by reducing the rights and privileges accorded to immigrants. The controversy over organ transplants for immigrants, especially those illegally in the country, is particularly revealing of the battle over citizenship rights and privileges and is examined in Chapter 5.

Citizenship as Political Activity

Regarding citizenship as political activity is common among political theorists going back to Aristotle, and its meaning in this sense refers to “active engagement in the life of the political community.”⁶⁵ But what is the meaning of “community?” Is the political activity of citizens possible only within the confines of the nation-state? Or has globalization produced new forms of citi-

zanship to include political organizations and activities that traverse national boundaries? It is here that pressures to expand notions of citizenship come into play, with new forms of global citizenship and transnational citizenship becoming part of political discourse.⁶⁶ As the sites of citizenship expand, there has been a rejection of the state as the only site of citizen participation and a move toward a more pluralistic view of citizenship located in the groups and communities where people live.⁶⁷ As Bosniak has noted, these alternative sites of citizenship practices have increasingly been considered as part of “civil society.”⁶⁸ This new conception of citizenship provides an opening for immigrant practices of citizenship. Immigrants, even the undocumented, engage in political coalitions, movements, mobilizations, and other practices that would constitute political citizenship in their communities.⁶⁹

Nina Glick Schiller has argued that this opening up of citizenship has led scholars to distinguish between political citizenship and social citizenship.⁷⁰ Claims of social citizenship occur through social practice rather than law, “when people make claims to belong to a state through collectively organizing to protect themselves against discrimination, or receive rights and benefits from a state, or make contributions to the development of a state and the life of people within it.”⁷¹ Citizenship as social practice is different from a more cultural or identity-based approach to citizenship.

Citizenship as Identity/Solidarity

Understanding citizenship as based in identity and solidarity recognizes that subjective experiences color how people understand the concept of citizenship. The practices of natives and immigrants alike produce citizen-subjects who have affective ties of identification and solidarity with social groups maintained through direct contact or merely imagined as communities.⁷² Feelings of citizenship, belonging, and social integration can extend from the very local to the transnational. Such sentiments are not entirely determined by legal definitions of citizenship or by the borders of nation-states.⁷³ As Susan Coutin has noted, feelings of belonging arise despite the “legal nonexistence” of undocumented immigrants.⁷⁴ In other words, to feel part of a community is determined not solely by immigration status but also by sentiments influenced by social relationships and cultural beliefs and practices.⁷⁵

It is within this sense of citizenship that claims for cultural citizenship become grounded in experiences and subject-making.⁷⁶ Flores and Benmayor define cultural citizenship as the result of a broad range of activities that

disadvantaged groups use to claim space and rights in society.⁷⁷ More specifically, Rosaldo and Flores define cultural citizenship as “the right to be different with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong.”⁷⁸ The immigrant marches during the spring of 2006 were instances of claims for cultural citizenship. Immigrants, if only for a brief time, claimed the “town square” as a place for their public performances of civic participation and cultural citizenship.⁷⁹

However, Rosaldo and Flores’s definition of cultural citizenship, as claiming the right to be different, may not be enough.⁸⁰ Feelings of belonging and desire for inclusion in the social body exist in a dialectical relationship with the larger society and the state, which may or may not find such claims for cultural citizenship convincing. In this sense, cultural citizenship as subject-making is not a unilateral act, as Ong argues when she refers to it “as a dual process of self-making and being made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society.” She adds, “Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations.”⁸¹

Ong’s emphasis on the nation-state’s role in defining cultural citizens builds on Michel Foucault’s observations on governmentality.⁸² Foucault argues that subjects are created through the modern regimes and practices of governance, such as inscription, inspection, registration, statistics, and in this case, restrictions on immigration and citizenship.⁸³ For Ong, the nation-state, through a process of individuation, constructs people in specific ways as citizens, so that one can speak of citizen-taxpayers, consumers, and welfare dependents.⁸⁴ The practices of governance also define the noncitizen.⁸⁵

In addition to the state, civil society also plays a role in disciplining immigrants with proper normative behavior and constructing their identity.⁸⁶ For example, the many groups organized around the politics of restricting immigration are constantly engaged in individuating different types of immigrants from citizens, defining citizenship, and limiting immigrants’ claims to cultural citizenship.⁸⁷ A way to challenge citizenship claims is through discourse that calls into question a group’s loyalty to the nation, danger to the nation, and legitimate claims to membership in the nation. The Latino Threat Narrative is such a discourse.

As this discussion suggests, *citizen* and *citizenship* have various meanings that move us away from overreliance on legalistic definitions. Citizenship as social participation and as subjective understandings of cultural identity also must be taken into account when trying to understand notions of belonging in today’s world. The objective here is to explore these questions in various

sites where issues of immigration and citizenship have become contested terrain. Of interest are such seemingly disparate subjects as the Minutemen in Arizona, immigrant marches, Latina reproduction, and organ transplants. All of these subjects raise serious debate over who is a legitimate member of society and deserving of the rights and privileges of citizenship. Importantly, the Latino Threat Narrative pervades these sites of contestation over belonging to the nation.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Part 1 examines the development, over the last forty years or so, of a set of taken-for-granted assumptions or “truths” about Latin American, mainly Mexican, immigrants and their offspring. This first part takes an admittedly empirical approach because sometimes critiquing discourse is not enough; at times counterevidence must be brought to bear on the truth claims being put forward in the Latino Threat Narrative. However, I pursue this cultural criticism, knowing that it is difficult to destroy myths that have developed over a long time and in some respects go back to the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ Such myths have organic-like lives of their own.⁸⁹ Once given birth, they grow and take on ever more elaborate and refined characteristics until they are able to stand on their own as taken-for-granted “truths.”

Chapter 1 focuses on how popular discourse and the media represent Latinos as an invading force that is conspiring, in Quebec-like fashion, to reconquer the U.S. Southwest. Moreover, Latinos, according to this discourse, are unable, or unwilling, to learn English and generally integrate into U.S. society. These representations constitute the “virtual” lives of immigrants and their imagined threats to the nation. The Latino Threat Narrative underlies much of the public debate over immigration and immigration policy, as well as the struggle over citizenship examined in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 moves to a different register, one that interrogates the veracity of various premises of the Latino Threat Narrative. According to the narrative, Mexicans (and other Latin American immigrants are often lumped with Mexicans here) are unable or unwilling to integrate into U.S. society, preferring to remain linguistically and socially isolated, and, in the narrative’s more sinister renditions, they and their offspring are part of a conspiracy to take over the southwestern United States. I examine these issues, using data on immigrants and the children of immigrants in Orange County, California.

Chapter 3 looks at reproduction and fertility as sites of political debate over the nation and citizenship. In the Latino Threat Narrative, Latina fertility is represented as a threat to the nation, and Latinas and their children are a key component of the reconquest hypothesis. Issues range from population explosions to birthright citizenship, but at the core of the politics of reproduction are representations of the “hot” Latina and her “out-of-control” fertility. Latinas are represented as locked into a cultural tradition and Catholic religious doctrine that renders them slaves to childbearing. Through such representations, Latinas are integrated into a stratified system in which their reproduction is feared rather than valued. Their very bodies symbolize key aspects of the Latino Threat Narrative. Not surprisingly, the politics of reproduction does not stop at Latinas’ bodies but also focuses on their children.

Chapter 4 reconsiders Latina fertility and reproduction through the lens of empirical findings from two research projects in Orange County, California. Although it may be impossible to refute deeply held beliefs, Latina reproductive behavior and fertility levels do in fact change in response to new historical contexts and life circumstances and across generations in the United States. Latina sexuality and reproduction are not out of control. Latinas have, on average, fewer children over time in the United States within the first generation, and the trend continues across generations.

Part 2 focuses on media-infused spectacles surrounding organ transplants for undocumented immigrants, Minutemen along the Arizona-Mexico border, and immigrant marches. These cases became spectacles because of the public performances of the actors involved and because of the large volume of media attention and public opinion they generated.⁹⁰ Each case was the topic of myriad news stories on radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. Pundits in each of these media explored the politics of these events, sometimes in reasoned debate but more often pandering to anti-immigrant sentiment. Evident in these cases is the way in which the Latino Threat Narrative informs struggles over the meaning of citizenship—that is, who is a legitimate member of society and thus deserving of the privileges of citizenship.

Foucault’s ideas about biopolitics, surveillance, discipline, and governmentality—that is, the techniques for control of the conduct of populations—frame the analysis of events in these chapters.⁹¹ Immigrants internalize a subject status as a result of the pervasive Latino Threat Narrative, media representations of their lives, debates over their inclusion or exclusion from the community of

citizens, and government policies targeted at them. Immigrants and their families also resist the pervasive negative representations of their lives. At the same time, the targeting of immigrants allows citizens to reaffirm their own subject status vis-à-vis the immigrant Other.

Chapter 5 examines organ transplants as a site of biopolitics over citizenship and its privileges. The body of the nation and the body of the citizen merge metaphorically and literally when considering organ transplantation. The particular case of Jesica Santillan, the unfortunate recipient of a “bungled transplant,” reveals the way in which undocumented immigrants, in particular, raise intense debate over who constitute legitimate recipients of “citizen organs.”⁹² Characterizing “illegal alien bodies” as undeserving of citizen organs actually increases the biovalue of immigrant bodies, in that this disciplinary discourse ensures a net flow of organs from immigrants to citizen bodies.

Chapter 6 takes a critical look at the Minuteman Project’s surveillance in the Arizona desert in the spring of 2005. Emerging out of nowhere, the Minuteman Project quickly captured the imagination of those who believed that immigration was a problem and that illegal Mexican immigration in particular had to be stopped. The Minutemen created a media spectacle on the Arizona-Mexico border as a way to both reaffirm the privileges of citizenship and influence policy makers to enhance border surveillance and promote anti-immigration reform. The taken-for-granted “truths” of the Latino Threat Narrative developed in Chapter 1 form the backdrop for the Minuteman Project’s activities.

Chapter 7 explores the cultural and political significance of the large marches and demonstrations by immigrants and their supporters in the spring of 2006. The marches were a response to the proposed bill HR 4437, especially the provisions that would have made felons of all undocumented immigrants in the country. In addition, however, the marches were also about something much grander, the immigrants’ laying claim to social and cultural citizenship and to respect, even for those lacking authorization to be in the country. Marginal groups in a society can use spectacles as a way of defining citizenship from the bottom up because it is through such public events that citizenship is performed and constructed.⁹³ What we find is that organized public events are not restricted to the strong and powerful; though perhaps more difficult for those without resources, the weak also can perform citizenship through public spectacles.⁹⁴ Through acts such as the immigrant marches, citizenship is performed and becomes part of an identity represented to the larger society.⁹⁵ When immigrants marched en masse, they performed the role of citizen-subjects, but

citizens of a particular sensibility: the economically contributing, entrepreneurial, government services—avoiding neoliberal citizen-subject.

Finally, Chapter 8 moves from Latina reproduction to the media spectacles surrounding the children of immigrants. Of increasing political interest are undocumented immigrants brought as children by their parents. Referred to as the 1.5 generation, they have been raised and educated in the United States. A social movement has emerged around immigration reform known as the DREAM Act, which would allow some of the 1.5 generation to gain legal residency and thus a path to citizenship. Called DREAMers, these young undocumented immigrants have come out of the shadows to advocate for their cause, amid a vitriolic debate framed by the Latino Threat Narrative. The U.S.-born children of immigrants, who are U.S. citizens, have also witnessed the legitimacy of their citizenship being questioned. They have become the targets of media discourse that labels them “anchor babies,” and are said to be part of a nefarious plot to get their parents legal status. Such rhetoric has spurred attempts to change the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by removing birthright citizenship. As unlikely as such drastic changes might be, the media spectacle focusing on anchor babies and citizenship underscores the pervasiveness and inherent stigma-producing power of the Latino Threat Narrative.