

Anti- and Pro-immigrant Entrepreneurs

Labeling Theory Revisited

Tamar Diana Wilson

ABSTRACT: *Almost forty years ago, noted immigration scholar Jorge A. Bustamante published an article in the American Journal of Sociology applying Howard Becker's labeling theory to the phenomenon of deviantizing and stigmatizing the undocumented. While immigration laws and some of the players involved have changed since his article was published, labeling theory remains an ideal tool for analyzing anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant postulates, arguments, and policies. This essay revisits labeling theory, as seen through Bustamante's lens, in order to understand the debates around the undocumented over the past two decades. Three types of "moral entrepreneurs" advocating for and against the undocumented worker are examined: the nativist, the economic, and the humanitarian. An expanded moral entrepreneurship model can illuminate social processes affecting a vulnerable population through the insertion of a moral argument component and in this way may act as a catalyst for positive social change.*

Almost four decades ago, Jorge A. Bustamante (1972) applied Howard S. Becker's (1963) labeling theory to understand the process of deviantizing and stigmatization of Mexican undocumented workers, then widely disparaged as "wetbacks." Becker's theory is based on his notion of "moral entrepreneurship": he defined moral entrepreneurs as individuals or entities seeking to influence the adoption or maintenance of social norms. According to Becker, rule makers make rules and define those who break them as deviants or "outsiders" (1–2). The rule breakers may, however, themselves define the rule makers as outsiders who have no legitimacy to judge them. Deviance is thus socially and politically created: "*social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders*" (9, italics in original). Rule enforcers, usually operating through institutionalized

bodies, carry out in a practical way the content of the rules that moral entrepreneurs manage to establish.

The Moral Entrepreneurship Model and the Issue of Undocumented Immigration

In a narrow sense, moral entrepreneurs are those who initiate a moral crusade in order to establish new rules or laws that will create a new group of people considered deviants or outsiders. Applying this idea to the issue of undocumented immigration, Bustamante (1972) wrote, “The outcome of a successful moral crusade is the establishment of a new set of rules (i.e. the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924) and corresponding enforcement agencies (i.e. the U.S. Border Patrol)” (713).¹ The Mexican worker who crossed the border without official inspection was thus labeled as deviant.

Bustamante, concentrating on the agricultural workforce, recognized a number of interest groups that cast the undocumented worker as a negative agent (714). These groups included, in the 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican American farmworkers, who viewed with alarm the competition for jobs and resultant downward pressures on wages; growers who sought to maximize profits by using cheap undocumented laborers that they could exploit; lawmakers wishing to gain political support by protecting the growers’ interests; law enforcers selectively enforcing immigration laws; and moral entrepreneurs, who envisioned themselves as protecting citizen-workers from competition and who defined unsanctioned entrants as immoral. The contradictions between these diverse interests shaped treatment of the undocumented. At the time Bustamante wrote about these issues, in the early 1970s, these contradictions gave rise to a mixed set of policies that included defining “wetbacks” as deviants while maintaining a demand for their labor, imposing penalties on undocumented workers but none on their employers, and maintaining a Border Patrol but providing it with inadequate funding and mixed signals about how to treat the undocumented border crosser (715).

These contradictions continue to color the immigration debate today. Nonetheless, there have been changes in policy over the past few decades.

TAMAR DIANA WILSON is a research affiliate with the Department of Anthropology, University of Missouri, St. Louis. Her writings on immigration, the informal sector, and gender have appeared in a number of journals. She has most recently published *Subsidizing Capitalism: Brickmakers on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (SUNY Press, 2005) and *Women’s Migration Networks in Mexico and Beyond* (University of New Mexico Press, forthcoming). She can be contacted at tamardiana@yahoo.com.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 legislated employer sanctions, though employers in agriculture, industry, and services continue to employ the undocumented. Under President Bill Clinton, appropriations for the Border Patrol increased, and the military also came to play a role along the border (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003, 96–97). After 9/11, the U.S. government launched an all-out war on people crossing the border without inspection (Akers Chacón and Davis 2006, chap. 25; Anderson and Gerber 2008, 210, 215). The present policy is to wall out newcomers and get rid of established workers through worksite raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, created in 2002 to replace the Immigration and Naturalization Service (ICE 2008).

The main contradiction that remains has to do with the continuing demand for workers and the existence of virulently anti-immigrant and anti-undocumented worker groups. Bustamante (1972, 716), following Becker (1963, 148–49), reserves the term *moral entrepreneur* for those individuals or groups who act out of what they believe is a moral imperative (though others, motivated by different agendas, may jump on the same bandwagon). Bustamante defines the employers who evade immigration laws when they need cheap labor, but invoke the law when they wish to dispose of disabled or militant workers, as *antilaw entrepreneurs*.

According to George Lakoff (1995, 187, 195), conservatives (who most often take a nativist position) endorse the metaphor of “moral strength” and give highest priority to the “nation-as-family” metaphor. Liberals (usually more pro-immigrant) tend to endorse a moral metaphor of empathy for the underdog and give a high priority to fairness (198–200). Thus it can be expected that conservatives would be extremely concerned about the boundaries of the nation, while liberals would tend to empathize with those whom conservatives label as “outsiders,” in this case undocumented immigrants.

Employers who hire undocumented workers because of their cheapness and flexibility may not fit into this antagonistic schema, as they may embody elements of both camps. These employers may view themselves as providing work to people who need it and who work hard at the job. At the same time they may conceive of immigrants, especially the undocumented, as “material” or “objects” (O’Brien 2003, 39–40) or as “commodities” (Vélez-Ibáñez 1996) to be consumed by the labor process. As Otto Santa Ana and colleagues (2007, 207–16) point out, labels applied to those who cross the border without inspection may be negative (“illegal aliens,” suggesting that crossing the border constitutes criminal behavior), neutral

(“unauthorized immigrants”), or partisan (“undocumented immigrants,” suggesting that only paperwork is the issue) (see also Castañeda 2007, 38). Interestingly, as the same authors show, the metaphors used in the print media may shift over time, even—giving precipitating events—in the course of one year (Santa Ana et al. 2007). Although the metaphors applied to the undocumented will not be addressed in this paper, it is obvious that the array of moral entrepreneurs focusing on undocumented border crossers will use different ones. The social construction of the undocumented through metaphors of good and evil may be either positive or negative (Newton 2005) and, as will be explored briefly below, often follows economic trends.

Moral Entrepreneurship Spectrum

A sociological landscape always features multiple and often divergent interests regarding any one issue. With respect to undocumented immigrants, some people wish to legislate against them or maintain and strengthen existing legislation and enforcement activities. Others lobby for the highly charged “illegal” designation to disappear and call for policies ranging from a blanket amnesty for those who have committed no crimes to an open border between Mexico and the United States. Some may be “pro-immigrant” for economic reasons, calling for the repeal of employer sanctions so that they can continue to have a cheap and vulnerable workforce at their disposal. Others are pro-immigrant for idealistic and humanitarian reasons. Among the latter, some simply endorse universal human rights while others lean toward internationalism—that is, the erosion of national boundaries.

In the current climate we can distinguish a new typology of moral entrepreneurs concerned with the undocumented. Departing in several ways from Bustamante’s typology, it includes three broad categories of groups with divergent interests. The nativists include nationalist, ethnocentric, and/or racist anti-immigrant groups. The economically interested are pro-immigrant but treat immigrants as a commodity; they correspond to Bustamante’s antilaw entrepreneurs. Finally, there is an array of pro-immigrant groups motivated by humanitarian, religious, and legal concerns. This schema differs from Becker’s labeling theory and from Bustamante’s typology by including not only moral entrepreneurs who crusade against “deviants” and “outsiders” but also, oppositionally, those who defend the rights of those so labeled. Furthermore, those labeled as outsiders increasingly are organizing to defend their own rights.

The category of nativist moral entrepreneurs comprises individuals or groups that wish to exclude the religious, racial, ethnic/cultural “Others” from the imagined national community. Nativist groups often carry nationalism to an extreme (Chavez 1997). For example, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) lobbies for legislation to reduce all immigration. The Minuteman Project, the most prominent of the so-called vigilante groups, has attempted to stop aid by organizations such as Humane Borders to the undocumented (FAIR 2009; see also Stefancic 1997).

Economic moral entrepreneurs include employers who benefit from a low-wage immigrant labor force, with or without papers, and thus want immigration to continue. This perspective is especially salient during times of economic expansion. This essay will not consider two other economic groups that may have an interest in legislative treatment of the undocumented. First are the unionized workers who have recently decided that economic competition from the undocumented can best be neutralized by unionizing them (Gimpel and Edwards 1999, 243–44; Unity Blueprint for Immigration Reform 2007). These workers often form coalitions with humanitarian moral entrepreneurs. Second are nonunionized workers, often minorities, who compete with the undocumented for jobs in industries such as manufacturing and construction (Akers Chacón and Davis 2006, 285–86; Ngai 2004, 249–50). Although some nativist individuals or groups pretend to speak for them, these minority workers may or may not feel that such individuals or groups represent their interests (see, for example, Akers Chacón and Davis 2006, 265–66; Castañeda 2007, 10; Navarro 2009, 203–4; Rockwell 2006).

Humanitarian moral entrepreneurs are those individuals or groups that fight for the rights of all immigrants, documented or not, from a humanitarian point of view. Such groups may lobby for pro-immigrant legislation, submit amicus curie briefs in cases involving immigrants, organize marches and demonstrations to press for immigrant rights, and provide material aid to the undocumented—for example, by putting fresh water supplies along desert crossings.

NATIVIST MORAL ENTREPRENEURS

“Aggressive nativism” or “negative ethnocentrism” appeared with the conquest of the Americas and was at first directed against indigenous peoples. It took a more modern form in the early nineteenth century, when immigrants viewed as undesirable—due to religious, culture, and narrowly

defined “racial” differences—began to enter the United States (Feagin 1997, 15–17). In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Laws were passed, and in 1908 a Gentlemen’s Agreement was signed with Japan to halt further Japanese immigration (González 2000, 123; Gutiérrez 1995, 43–44; Navarro 2009, 26–28). Nativism led eventually to a quota system weighted against Southern and Eastern European immigrants as embodied in the 1917, 1921, and 1924 immigration acts (Balderrama and Rodríguez 1995, 15–16; González 2000, 123; Johnson 2004; Navarro 2009, 30–31; Ngai 2004, 48–49; see also O’Brien 2003). The 1924 “racist immigration law” (Feagin 1997, 24) remained in effect until the national origins quotas were repealed by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Large flows of Asian and Latino immigrants began soon thereafter. Mexican immigration had occurred since 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe ended the U.S.-Mexican War, and Mexicans had never been subject to the quota system because of the demand for their labor (Balderrama and Rodríguez 1995, 16; Martínez 2001, 29; Ngai 2004, 50; Zamora 1993, 51).

The new nativism, however, is largely a post–Cold War phenomenon. After 1989, nationalist and nativist sentiments were displaced from the Soviet Union to the new immigrants. “Immigration became the new threat to national security and identity, filling the void left by the loss of old enemies after the collapse of the Soviet Union” (Chavez 1997, 67).

Discussing different aspects of nationalism, Boyd C. Shafer (1972, 18–19) deals with two that are of particular interest in contextualizing anti-immigrant sentiment: first, “preference and esteem for fellow nationals . . . that is, for those who share the common culture, institutions, interests and heritage—or at least greater esteem for them than for members of other similar groups (‘the foreigners’) who do not share these”; and second, “a shared indifference or hostility to other (not all) peoples similarly organized in nations.” This hostility toward “foreigners” (and ethnic groups linked to foreigners) has also been identified as nativism (e.g., Perea 1997b); it is nationalism carried to its logical extreme.

The anti-immigrant camp stigmatizes the undocumented as deviants, and therefore threatening, on a number of axes:

- They are criminals because they cross the border illegally.²
- They use medical services for themselves and for their offspring.
- They use educational services for themselves and for their offspring.
- They do not pay state or federal taxes.
- They are involved in gangs and criminal activity.
- They speak another language.

- They come from somewhere else with a different culture or religion.
- They are culturally unassimilable.

Reviewing American attitudes toward Mexican immigration from 1918 to 1931, Lawrence A. Cardoso (1980, chap. 7) points out that those who opposed this immigration did so on economic, cultural, or racial grounds. Organized labor, including the American Federation of Labor and the United Mine Workers, claimed that cheap labor from Mexican immigrants lowered wages. According to the racial rhetoric of the time, Mexicans were of a lower order due to miscegenation and were culturally unassimilable (Cardoso 1980, chap. 7; Griswold de Castillo and de León 1996, 30, 111; Gutiérrez 1995, 51; Zamora 1993, 31).³ Although overtly racist ideas have come under attack since the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, anti-immigrant groups still use racist, economic, and/or cultural arguments in their demand for the exclusion of Mexican immigrants, whether legal or undocumented. As can be seen from an Internet search using key words such as “immigration,” “Mexican immigration,” “undocumented immigration,” or “illegal aliens,” the anti-immigrant camp includes an array of spokespersons and adherents, from conservative educators and think tanks to extreme militant groups.

Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington (2004, chap. 9) was a well-known exponent of nativist moral entrepreneurship until his death at the end of 2008. His writings argue that Mexican immigrants bear a distinct culture that threatens the traditional Anglo-Protestant culture around which the American nation has historically coalesced. Significantly, Huntington’s distress actually centers on *legal* immigration. Among the problems presented by Mexican immigrants, according to Huntington, are their high numbers, their regional concentration (leading to low rates of intermarriage), and their continuous migration over time. He worries about the geographic contiguity of their nation and the Mexicans’ sense of being on their own turf inside the United States, as settlement tends to occur on lands that Mexico lost in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe. All this, Huntington contends, discourages Mexican immigrants from assimilating into the Anglo-Protestant mainstream. As evidence, he cites their persistent use of Spanish, disproportionate high-school dropout rates, low rates of self-employment, low incomes, and high poverty rates, as well as a lack of propensity to naturalize as U.S. citizens.⁴

Peter Brimelow’s best-selling *Alien Nation* (1995) is one of the leading examples of the anti-immigrant (including anti-legal immigrant) position. Widely read, it has also been widely criticized for its racist slant (e.g.,

Kanstrom 1997). Brimelow critiques the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act for its family unification provisions, which he claims opened the door to culturally unassimilable immigrants from the “Third World” and to unskilled, welfare-prone people who compete with the native working class for jobs. His policy suggestions include a “drastic cutback” in legal immigration, if not its temporary suspension; giving preference to skilled laborers over family members; revoking the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution so that children of undocumented immigrants born in the United States would not automatically obtain citizenship; and reviving the 1950s Operation Wetback to deport the undocumented; *but* creating a guest worker program similar to that of the bracero period (Brimelow 1995, 261–66). He is especially concerned about the political, cultural, and environmental impacts (all seen to be negative) of immigration to the United States. His message supports the deviantizing of immigrants from Latin America, especially Mexico, and from Asia, all of whom he sees as threatening, with their difference, “American values.”

The anti-immigrant stance at the organizational level is alive and well. The Federation for American Immigration Reform advocates drastic measures to stop undocumented immigration and would limit legal immigration as well. FAIR (2003a) wants to deny U.S. citizenship to children born in the United States to undocumented parents or to visitors on temporary visas. The organization claims that immigrants lower wages for poor Americans, that they use welfare in greater numbers than previous waves of immigrants, and that their consumption of resources has a negative impact on the environment. It also invokes national security, claiming that the events of 9/11 show that some legal immigrants, given inadequate screening, may pose a threat (FAIR 2003b). FAIR has documented links with right-wing racist and white supremacist groups (SPLC 2007b; Stefancic 1997).

Nativist moral crusades attempt to create a “moral panic” in order to gain adherents to their cause (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). In general, according to Stanley Cohen (2002, xi), three elements are needed to create a moral panic. They are “a suitable enemy: a soft target, easily denounced, with little power”; “a suitable victim: someone with whom you can identify”; and “a consensus that the beliefs or action being denounced” are not isolated but rather are “integral parts of the society” or could become so if not stopped. For the past two decades, as earlier in the twentieth century, there has been a moral panic about undocumented workers from Mexico (see, e.g., Perea 1997a). This population meets all criteria for a suitable

enemy (a “folk devil,” in Cohen’s words): it is powerless and cannot vote. The victims are likewise suitable, being identified as American workers whose jobs have ostensibly been taken away, U.S. taxpayers who support the welfare services that Mexicans purportedly cross the border to access, and citizens victimized by crimes attributed to undocumented immigrants.

The Minutemen are adept at creating moral panic. As can be seen on their website (<http://www.minutemanproject.com>), this vigilante group monitors state and federal legislation, applauding anti-immigrant laws and decrying pro-immigrant proposals; endorses anti-immigration laws and amendments; provides links to anti-immigrant articles published in newspapers; opposes any form of amnesty for the undocumented; and collects information on crimes purportedly committed by the undocumented (see also Navarro 2009, chap. 7; SPLC 2007a). They also call for a stronger border fence or wall than the one the government is actually building. Like FAIR, the Minutemen invoke national security as part of their argument. Tom DeWeese (2007), whose article on the illegal immigrant threat is linked to the Minuteman website, claims that Korans have been dropped in the desert between the United States and Mexico by “obvious Muslims who have made their way across the border.”

The Minutemen’s main argument, however, is economic. This begins with exaggerating the numbers of the undocumented in the United States: a news article linked to the site reports that “Californians for Population Stabilization released a study claiming there are 20 million to 38 million illegal immigrants in America, not the 12 million the government says” (Mason 2007).⁵ The website also provides links to articles on the alleged social and economic costs of undocumented immigration, especially for education and health care:

The annual cost for uncompensated emergency care to Mexican Border States (California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas) is \$200 million. California taxpayers paid \$79 million for illegal alien healthcare. Four major Los Angeles hospitals were bankrupted and shut down in 2004. Texas paid \$74 million. Georgia ran a \$63 million deficit for 64,000 unpaid doctor bills in 2002. (DeWeese 2007)

The “uncompensated emergency care” is completely blamed on undocumented workers, even though millions of uninsured Americans also use emergency rooms. DeWeese even complains that immigrants take away summer employment from high school students in yard care, landscape, fast food, and service jobs. While the Minutemen and their sympathizers

deplore the costs to taxpayers of providing services to immigrants, they do not mention that many of the undocumented also pay income taxes, and all pay sales and property taxes (through their rental payments if not as property owners). Such articles as these, following nativist postulates and arguments, are meant to create a moral economic panic among readers, reinforce the fears of those who already espouse anti-immigrant values, and convert others to their stance.

THE ECONOMIC MORAL ENTREPRENEURS

The economic moral entrepreneurs do not endorse stringent controls on the undocumented because they see immigrants as valuable labor commodities. Their moral claims rest on the fact that as capitalists playing a central role in the U.S. economic system they are supplying products or services that consumers want or need at the lowest price possible, while making a profit. To do this, they contend, they need a cheap and readily available workforce at their disposal.

There are a number of reasons why employers might prefer to hire the undocumented. Some are stated openly, while others operate as a hidden imperative. First, and most obviously, undocumented people are often willing to work for lower wages than native or legal resident workers will accept. Second, they are often more docile and accepting of poor work conditions because of their vulnerability. Third, because of their desperate economic need, and because their families are often—at least initially—left behind, the undocumented are a *flexible* labor force, accepting temporary and seasonal work, night shifts, and excessive overtime hours. And fourth, historically, when undocumented workers become disabled, unemployed, or too old to work, most return to Mexico, thus lessening pressure on local, state, federal, or employer resources (Chavez 1992, 152, 155; Gómez-Quiñones 1981, 14; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003, 15–17; Piore 1979; Portes 1977, 35; Sassen-Koob 1981, 72).

Although many of the Mexican undocumented are “target earners” who come to the United States on a temporary basis to earn money in order to capitalize a farming enterprise, a business, or home construction in their place of origin, there is also settling out as daughter communities are formed and as adaptation networks expand (Massey et al. 1987; see also Castañeda 2007; Chavez 1992; Wilson 1998). Furthermore, as the Border Patrol force is augmented and the border increasingly militarized, as programs like Operation-Hold-the-Line in El Paso (initiated in 1993) and

Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego (initiated in 1994) and their clones are put into effect, and as deaths in the Arizona desert—where the stream of undocumented crossers was redirected—increase, the undocumented stay in the United States for longer periods of time in order to avoid having to repeat the dangerous border crossing (Cornelius 2001, 2007; Inda 2006; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003).

Recently, growers and other employers of undocumented labor have been unable to halt workplace raids and the occasional application of employer sanctions. There are signs that penalties targeting employers may be increasing. In Arizona, for example, a harsh employer sanctions law at the state level was passed in 2007 (Scarpinato 2007; Wilson 2008, 715). Employers reacted with dismay. Mac Magruder, owner of seven McDonald's franchises that employed the undocumented, predicted that the law would have, for businesses, "devastating unintended consequences" (Fischer 2007, 1).

Despite their need for undocumented workers, businesses may backpedal on their support for a pro-immigrant stance in times of economic recession. Historically, it is particularly during these times that immigrants, especially the undocumented, are used as scapegoats by politicians and the mass media, with strident calls for restrictions on their entry or for their deportation (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Bustamante 1976; Castañeda 2007, 61–65; Fernández 1979; Mazón 1975). Although some authors believe that negative reactions to immigrants stem from personal economic insecurity on the part of people who feel at a competitive disadvantage (e.g., Gimpel and Edwards 1999, 37–38), others hold that it is the general economic situation, filtered through political leaders and the media, that gives rise to this negativity (Alvarez and Butterfield 2000, 176; Burns and Gimpel 2000, 212).

Nonetheless, in spite of the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment, proposals for the establishment of temporary guest worker programs abounded in the years that preceded the economic freefall of 2008. In 2004 President Bush called for a three-year, renewable program, dependent on employer offers and open to undocumented and documented foreign workers alike (Bush 2004). The work permits would be temporary, with no opportunity for workers or their dependents to access social services, and would include a requirement that workers eventually return to their countries of origin. Thus the processes of production (in the United States) would be separated from the processes of social and family reproduction (in Mexico or elsewhere); this would be to the benefit of the destination country, which pays no social benefits (Wilson 2000, 2006). Because the guest-worker legislation also included amnesty provisions for the undocumented, it was

never passed. Colorado and Arizona, however, have proposed state-based temporary worker programs (Billeaud 2008). This is especially ironic since in 2004 and 2005 the Arizona state legislature sponsored at least twenty anti-immigrant bills (Veranes and Navarro 2005; Wilson 2008).

The economic moral entrepreneurs are thus not necessarily antilaw; indeed, they often work in close collaboration with lawmakers representing their interests. They form an interest group that supports laws permitting employer access to cheap labor within the capitalist system. In the absence of such laws, they may break existing laws and hire the undocumented. The profit motive is morally clothed in arguments that emphasize the benefits to consumers of access to cheaper services and commodities.

HUMANITARIAN MORAL ENTREPRENEURS

Humanitarian moral entrepreneurs may have a religious base (e.g., the Sanctuary movement in the 1980s, Catholic Relief Services, Humane Borders), a legal base (e.g., American Immigration Lawyers Association, American Civil Liberties Union), or an ethnic base (e.g., Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Mexicanos Sin Fronteras, National Alliance for Human Rights), though these often overlap and do not represent all relevant categories. Solidarity with the undocumented is the common thread that links them. These groups monitor anti-immigrant legislation, propose pro-immigrant and pro-undocumented policies, and organize the undocumented or their ethnic community to protest or advocate laws under consideration at the state or federal levels. They also work to publicize the positive contributions of undocumented and legal immigrants to U.S. society and the nation's economy.

Humanitarian entrepreneurs see themselves as protecting the basic human rights that all people, including the undocumented, deserve. They point out that the undocumented are driven by economic need (or political chaos, as in the case of Central Americans) and that many are poverty-stricken peasants pushed across the border in search of survival. Some organizations concerned with human rights, such as the American Friends Service Committee and Human Rights Watch, monitor and publicize abuses of the undocumented along the border. A few humanitarian and political groups, notably MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), provoke the wrath of nativist groups with their argument that the Mexican undocumented are merely returning to lands that belong by birthright to indigenous peoples, including Mexicans (MEChA 2008).

Unity Blueprint for Immigration Reform (<http://www.unityblueprint.org>) presents a package of humane legislation proposals running twenty-one pages and endorsed by eighty-nine organizations, including the AFL-CIO, the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Political Association, and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Their proposals call for, among other things, repealing employer sanctions laws because of their discriminatory effect; ensuring bargaining and unionizing rights for all workers, undocumented or not; promoting a single-tier legalization program (amnesty) under which the undocumented would pay penalties for their illegal status by doing community service work rather than paying exorbitant fees; making vigilantism illegal; and eliminating guest worker programs unless certain conditions promoting workers' rights are met (Unity Blueprint for Immigration Reform 2007).

A number of locally based groups such as Humane Borders, No More Deaths, and Border Angels place drinking water, food, and clothing in the deserts and mountains along the border to help the undocumented on their dangerous crossing. Humane Borders (<http://www.humaneborders.org>), founded in June 2004 by the pastor of First Christian Church in Tucson, is supported by other churches, corporate sponsors such as Univision, and individual contributors. Humane Borders supplies more than eighty water stations in the Arizona desert, some of which also provide emergency rations and first aid kits and, in the winter months, warm clothing. Sixty-five-gallon water barrels equipped with spigots are marked by blue flags on thirty-foot high flagpoles. Hundreds of volunteers, including sixty-five trained drivers, check the water stations daily and recover trash and personal items abandoned by migrants.

No More Deaths (<http://www.nomoredeaths.org>), also founded in 2004, is an umbrella organization for Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups based in Tucson and Phoenix. Its members drive on patrols through the Sonoran Desert of Arizona in an attempt to find migrants who may need water, food, or medical care. The group also runs Ark of the Covenant camps during the hottest months of the summer, when desert temperatures can reach or exceed 120 degrees. These camps form the base for driving and foot patrols aimed at aiding border crossers. Volunteers also document human rights violations by the Border Patrol and other immigration officials.

Border Angels (<http://www.borderangels.org>) was founded in San Diego by Enrique Morones in 1986 and is a secular nonprofit organization.

Volunteers work in the Imperial Valley desert areas and in the mountainous regions of San Diego County with the aim of halting immigrant deaths. In the spring and summer they maintain water stations in both desert and mountain areas. In the fall and winter, warm clothing, food, and water are placed in storage bins in the San Diego County mountains.

Some think tanks and research centers, such as the PEW Hispanic Center and the Immigration Policy Center, publicize findings that contradict the messages put forth by anti-immigrant sources. The Southern Poverty Law Center, for instance, cites a National Academy of Sciences report stating that the average immigrant pays approximately \$1,800 more each year in taxes than he or she receives in local, state, and federal benefits (SPLC 2001). Articles providing a positive perspective on the undocumented issue appear in a variety of newspapers and are often picked up by pro-immigrant websites. The site run by Mexicanos Sin Fronteras (Mexicans Without Borders) links to a *New York Times* article that reports:

Using data from the Census Bureau's current population survey, Steven Camarota, director of research at the Center for Immigration Studies, an advocacy group in Washington that favors more limits on immigration, estimated that 3.8 million households headed by illegal immigrants generated \$6.4 billion in Social Security taxes in 2002. (Porter 2005)

The article underscores the benefits to the Social Security system of the undocumented, who "tend to be of working age and contribute more than they take from the [economic] system."⁶ The Immigration Policy Center (2007), citing testimony before the U.S. Senate on March 14, 2006, reported that \$520 billion had been paid into the Social Security system by people whose names or Social Security numbers do not match records, and who are thus assumed to be undocumented. Although they pay into the system, they cannot access Social Security benefits. They are essentially supporting an aging U.S. society.

Reports by several states—Iowa, Oregon, and Texas—underscore the value of tax contributions by the undocumented. According to the Immigration Policy Center,

a 2006 study of the Texas State Comptroller found that "the absence of the estimated 1.4 million undocumented immigrants in Texas would have been a loss to our gross state product of \$17.7 billion. Undocumented immigrants produced \$1.58 billion in state revenues, which exceeded the \$1.16 billion in state services they received. (2007, 3)

The reports by the humanitarian moral entrepreneurs, as would be expected, are diametrically opposed to those of the nativist moral entrepreneurs. As seen above, the latter often exaggerate their claims in order to create moral panic so that “something will be done.” Not surprisingly, there are often hostilities between groups standing at different ends of the moral entrepreneurship spectrum.

Conclusions

Moral entrepreneurs of various stripes are attempting to advance their different visions of the “good” and the “bad” concerning immigration in general and undocumented immigration in particular. Three principal positions along the moral entrepreneurship spectrum can be labeled as the “nativist,” the “economic,” and the “humanitarian.” Going beyond Becker (1963) and Bustamante (1972), this essay argues that moral crusaders do not necessarily only create “deviants” and “outsiders” but also may take up the defense of these stigmatized outsiders as their objective.

The moral entrepreneurship model attempts to illuminate social processes affecting vulnerable populations through the insertion of a moral argument. As such, it may be of positive value for those endorsing social change in favor of the undocumented. Casting the battle as one over definitions of “good” and “evil” may strengthen the hand of humanitarian and pro-immigrant organizations. Such consciousness raising is especially important in the current period of economic crisis. For those who wish to show solidarity with the undocumented and fight for their human rights and for pro-immigrant legislation, there is an array of organizations that need contributions or volunteer services. A few of them have been mentioned here.

Further research is needed on the phenomenon of undocumented immigration following postulates associated with the moral entrepreneurship model as advanced by labeling theory. Enhanced public understanding of how these often conflicting moral entrepreneurship positions shape the immigration debate, and its impact on undocumented immigrants, may act as a catalyst for action among those concerned about the welfare of this most vulnerable population.

Notes

I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for his or her extraordinarily helpful suggestions for revisions and additions.

1. The 1924 immigration legislation that established the Border Patrol also imposed an \$8.00 head tax and a \$10.00 visa fee on Mexicans entering the United States. These fees were exorbitant for those seeking work across the border.

2. This identification of a person as “criminal” for having crossed the border without documents becomes a master status, according to Jacobson (2008), who considers the background of California’s Proposition 187, which denied the undocumented access to basic public services. In her words, “What had been a discrete act of violating immigration law became, in the eyes of the measure’s supporters, a criminal tendency in Mexicans” (47).

3. For the types of discrimination based on racism that Mexicans have faced since the beginning of the twentieth century, see Betten and Mohl (1973), García (1996, chap. 3), McWilliams (1968, chap. 7), Menchaca (1995), Navarro (2009), Oppenheimer (1985), Richardson (1999, chaps. 4–5), Sepúlveda (1987), and Valdés (2000).

4. For a review of nativist literature, including Huntington’s work, and nativism in the media see Navarro (2009, 226–29).

5. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that 11.8 million undocumented people were in the United States as of January 2007 (Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2008).

6. The argument that young Latinos, including immigrants, documented or not, are subsidizing an aging U.S. society through their payments into Social Security was presented almost two decades ago by Hayes-Bautista, Schink, and Chapa (1990).

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