

***The Theoretical Construction of a Latino
Oppositional Culture in Samuel Huntington's
"The Hispanic Challenge"***

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INTERPRETATIONS OF CULTURE: SAID AND HUNTINGTON

Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* sparked a debate over the "belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, and a national identity"¹ that is still very much with us today.

Said's work challenged a significant sector of the academic community in the United States and elsewhere to revise and expunge interpretations of culture based on immutable and unique essences. Instead he argued that cultures are involved in one another, that human reality is constantly being reconstructed, and that anything resembling a stable or essential culture is constantly under threat.

His work has sparked patriotic, chauvinistic and even xenophobic reactions from different quarters. One of these reactions was Samuel Huntington's essay (that shortly after became a book with the same title) "A Clash of Civilizations?" published in 1993 in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. There he argues that the process of globalization would in fact be greatly slowed or even interrupted as large-scale cultural units or civilizations began to collide. Islamic and Chinese civilizations are pictured as the West's most likely emerging enemies, and Huntington asserted that future competition among the world's sociopolitical entities would no longer be among nations but rather among such pan-national civilizations as the Western, Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and "possibly" the African. The article's most provocative assertion is advanced, however, when Huntington speaks of a so-called "Confucian-Islamic connection":

Those countries that for reason of culture and power do not wish to, or cannot, join the West, compete with the West by developing their own economic, military, and political power. They do this by promoting their internal development and by cooperating with other non-Western countries. The most prominent form of this cooperation is the Confucian-Islamic connection that has emerged to challenge Western interests, values, and power.²

1.Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, p. 332.

2.Huntington, S. "A Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 45.

Although Huntington does not end his essay on an apocalyptic note, he nonetheless insists that European, North American, Eastern European, Latin American, and Russian civilizations, along with some special “Confucian” cases such as Japan and South Korea, must cooperate and must maintain their military superiority. Indeed, they must go further by exploiting the differences and conflicts among the Confucian and Islamic states, and by impeding any increase in their military strengths.¹

Shortly after the publication of “A Clash of Civilizations?” Said criticized Huntington's premise that civilizations were like watertight compartments “whose adherents were at bottom mainly interested in fending off all others.”² While he understood that theorists and apologists of an exultant Western tradition, like Huntington, Francis Fukuyama, and Paul Johnson still retained a good deal of their hold on the public consciousness, he denounced Huntington's piece, particularly because “one of the advances in modern cultural theory is the realization, almost universally acknowledged, that cultures are hybrids and heterogeneous, and... that cultures and civilizations are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simply delineated description of their individuality.”³

I mention “A Clash of Civilizations?” because recently Huntington published another influential essay that draws again sharp boundaries between two cultural traditions, Anglo-Protestant and Latino, as a key methodological element, but this time the cultural antagonists exist side by side within one country: the United States. Entitled “The Hispanic Challenge,” the essay appeared in the March/April 2004 issue of *Foreign Policy* magazine, shortly after Said's death. Thus, my objective in this paper is to look closely, inspired by Said's work, at the theoretical tradition that Huntington's latest work both stands on and furthers, the one that has made possible his vision of an “abnormal” or “unnatural” Latino culture. Doing so will help us to understand how Huntington is able to so passionately depict a Latino oppositional will or culture, and to adopt such a deeply pessimistic view of Latino non-assimilation as a trend which, if left unchecked, will prove itself uniquely capable of undermining the unity of a United States that has stood proudly on the solid bedrock of Anglo-Protestant values and the English language.

SITUATING HUNTINGTON'S THEORETICAL APPROACH IN “THE HISPANIC CHALLENGE”

Huntington's main argument in “The Hispanic Challenge” is that the persistent inflow of Hispanic (and especially Mexican) immigrants into the United States threatens to divide this country into “two peoples, two cultures and two languages.” Huntington asserts that, unlike past immigrant groups, “Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo Protestant values that built the American dream.”⁴

For Huntington, contemporary immigration from Latin America is without precedent in U.S. history: “The experience and lessons of past immigration have little relevance to understanding its dynamics and consequences.”⁵ This unique situation has been brought about by six factors: (1) *Contiguity*: Mexico is geographically contiguous to the United States and Mexicans don't have to make, as previous waves of immigrants did, any great cultural or psychological leap to assimilate; (2) *scale*: never before has so large a proportion of immigrants spoken a single non-English language within the United States; (3) *illegality*: never before have so many immigrants entered the United States illegally; (4) *regional concentration*: Mexicans, and Latinos in general, are strongly concentrated in particular regions of the U.S., a factor greatly impeding assimilation; (5) *persistence*: in contrast to European migration, Mexican/Latino

1. While some academics and policy-makers, such as Robert Kaplan (“The Coming of Anarchy.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1994) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (*Out of Control*, New York: Scribners, 1993) tended to agree with Huntington's thesis as to the existence of civilizational fault lines, others (see responses by Fouad Ajami, Majid Khadduri, Kishore Mahbubani, Robert Bartley, Lin Bynan, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4 Sept./Oct. 1993, pp. 2-21) voiced their disagreement by making such points as that civilizations are not watertight, states are more powerful than civilizations, and traditions tend to break down under the vast pressure of modernity. Yet others questioned Huntington's classification of civilizations, characterized Islamic “hegemony” as a myth, noted the powerfully globalizing force of democracy, and pointed to the inevitability of a mixing and melding rather than a separation of civilizations. His theory was projected again to the forefront of foreign-policy discussions—particularly within the vision of conservative policy-makers and think-tanks—by the tragic events of September 11, 2001, that marked the emergence of al Qaeda as the central enemy of the West, and with North Korea also more clearly appearing on the scene as a nuclear threat to such U.S. allies as Japan and South Korea.

2. Said, E. (1979), op. cit., p. 347.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Huntington, S. “The Hispanic Challenge.” *Foreign Policy*. March/April 2004, p. 30.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

immigration is likely to persist at high levels for the foreseeable future; and (6) *historical presence*: Mexican Americans feel that some areas of this country, such as California and the Southwest, which once were Mexican, are still their territory, and the strength of that feeling of ownership is sure to prevent them from fully assimilating into American culture.

By rejecting what Huntington calls the “Anglo-Protestant creed,” Latinos are slowly but surely forcing upon other Americans a biculturalism not unlike that of Canada or Belgium. But Huntington suggests that in the case of the United States this will be less successful, because the “differences in culture within these countries ... do not approximate to those between the United States and Mexico.” Such a transformation, Huntington concludes, “would not only revolutionize the United States, but it would also have serious consequences for Hispanics, who will be in the United States but not of it ... There is only the dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English.”¹

It is important to note that in “A Clash of Civilizations?” Huntington is focusing on the international scene, where over-generalizations about particular nations and/or civilizations are not uncommon. As for his view of Islam and China as enemies to the West, it was formulated at a time when the world was felt to be gradually globalizing, with the West leading this “benign” trend. Thus, the clash between the West and the Islamic/Confucian civilizations was felt by Huntington to be particularly painful, in that it would lead to the derailment of a trend that was building up such key structural factors as privatized economies, foreign investment, joint ventures, military alliances, and so on. These “oppositional” civilizations had in their power, or so it seemed, not only to degrade globalization’s positive and rapid economic, political, and social impacts on traditional cultures, but also to undermine the burgeoning causes of modernization and of greater inter-civilizational collaboration in the future.

In “The Hispanic Challenge,” Huntington applies the same logic of civilizational fault-lines and ensuing conflicts to the national scene in the United States. Here, though, as opposed to focusing on the failure of specific civilizations to “get with the Western program,” and the subsequent derailing of the globalization process, he focuses on one ethnic group, Latinos, and on one subgroup in particular: Latinos of Mexican heritage. Huntington sees the latter as constituting an “oppositional” culture that is blocking a process that would be beneficial to the nation as a whole: their assimilation to Anglo-Protestant culture.

Thus, we can clearly trace in Huntington’s recent work a trajectory that has moved him from a “civilizationist” stance, solidly situated within the field of international relations, to a “culturalist” approach that tries to weave together such disparate strands as ethnic studies, identity politics, nationalism, and migration theory. And yet what binds that trajectory itself together is Huntington’s invariable emphasis on a supposedly persistent and even willful-seeming factor that can perhaps be dubbed “the autonomy of culture.”

In “The Hispanic Challenge” Huntington depicts a Latino/Mexican culture that is a sharply delineated, homogeneous, and overbearing entity. Ironically, though, given the strong sense of self-assertion or even aggression that Huntington seems to be asking us to feel emanating from that culture, Latinos, and particularly Latinos of Mexican heritage, are implicitly seen by him as being merely the passive bearers of culture, rather than its active agents. This paradoxical emphasis on the autonomy and yet also the almost sluggish sullenness of a culture, not only vastly under-rates the free agency of its members, but also fails to take into account the way cultural trends are continually shifting under the weight of socio-political-economic pressures—with such pressures of course making themselves felt especially keenly in the spheres of acculturation and assimilation. And yet Huntington’s “autonomy-of-culture” approach has the advantage of packaging cultures into neat boxes that can be easily (and some would say, convincingly and effectively) compared and contrasted to one another. This brings to mind, of course, Said’s message in *Orientalism*: that forcing cultures and peoples into separate and distinct breeds or essences produces such misrepresentations and falsifications as the concepts of the “Orient” and the “West.”

Said would have placed Huntington’s latest theoretical essay along with the work of Fukuyama and Johnson within what he calls “retrograde” socio-political analysis, in large measure “an ideological fiction implying a sort of detached superiority for a handful of values and ideas.”² Indeed, it can rightly be linked to conservative ideologies based on cultural essentialism, for it assigns to a specific ethnic group an essential character based solely on cultural characteristics, which is then used to assign blame for all kinds of overall negative effects on a nation. Liberal explanations, by contrast, tend to emphasize structural and systemic factors. Human difficulties and differences are traced back not so much to cultural causes as to unequal degrees of access to political, economic, and social resources.

1. Ibid, p. 45

2. Said, E. (1979), op. cit., p. 347.

Huntington's latest article can therefore be seen as falling within the culturalist, conservative, ethnocentric reaction to what is perceived as the "unnatural" growth of a particular minority, and within the growing genre of anti-Latino writings. Were we left there, however, we would have arrived at only a superficial and not very useful classification. We must begin to delve deeper by noting that, as one result of the ethnic revival seen in the United States of the 1960s and 1970s, most American liberals also came, even if only gradually, to a belief that the granting of certain minority rights has a socially divisive effect. In other words, as ethnic groups have become more conscious of their strength, and have moved on to such group-based demands as for quotas in education and employment, and for overt acknowledgements of their heritage in school curricula and governmental symbols, the support of them on the part of liberals has waned, and for what seems to be precisely the reason presented by Huntington: that such ethnic-group politicization was beginning to undercut one basic assumption of American political culture—that immigrants need to integrate into an Anglophone society, as opposed to forming de facto nations of their own within the United States.

We can trace this change in attitude as it occurred in the writings of such liberal intellectuals as Nathan Glazer, Michael Walzer, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.¹ Initially a clear distinction was made between the tasks of integrating voluntary immigrants and of assimilating conquered or colonized national minorities. Glazer, for example, recognized that the latter groups are much more deeply imbued with national characteristics, and that they are demanding national rights on just grounds that are inapplicable to immigrant groups:

Both blacks and the Spanish-speaking point to a distinctive political situation: the blacks were brought as slaves, and the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were conquered. The American Indians were also conquered. The white ethnic groups, however, came as free immigrants. Thus, the blacks, the Spanish-speaking groups, the American Indians, and perhaps some other group can make stronger claims for public support of their distinctive cultures than can European groups.²

Gradually, however, Glazer and other liberal thinkers came to acknowledge that granting a distinctive status to some groups but not to others was problematic, both because it could lead to such unwanted reactions as the demand for special rights by other groups that already were assimilating, and because the larger goal of American fraternity would inevitably have to be de-emphasized.

While on the surface the preceding pronouncement by Glazer seems to be very similar to Huntington's theoretical approach, in fact two vital factors set these two thinkers widely apart. First, Glazer never suggests in his writings that there is anything unfair or illiberal about the self-government of national minorities. To the contrary, he offers convincing arguments that national minorities should indeed acquire, in principle, special political status. Second, Glazer, Walzer, and other liberal thinkers admit that "the national consensus which rejects such rights was defined by settler groups to suit their own distinctive circumstances, and the national minorities do not share its aims."³ Bringing these men a tad closer to Huntington, however, is the fact that they also feel that rights for national minorities, and political unity, are mutually incompatible goals, and that the latter must take precedence over the former.

And yet what starkly distinguishes Huntington from the liberals is his complete lack of interest in debating, in the context of rights-claims made by minority groups, differences in historical circumstances or systemic inequalities. Indeed, he at no point acknowledges the long history of the formal and informal, educational and labor segregation of Latinos, and especially of Mexican Americans, in the Southwest and elsewhere. And of course he who takes no note of oppression will be even more blind to the resistance mounted to it—hence the Huntingtonian paradox of essentially passive and sullen, but politically unresisting, Latinos still posing somehow, as if through their mere existence, an aggressive challenge to the dominant "Anglo-Protestant" culture. Such an apocalyptic vision of masses of Latinos—who "don't have any initiative, self-reliance and no ambition, little use for education, and acceptance of poverty as a virtue"⁴—devouring "Anglo-Protestant" culture is reminiscent of the work of such early mass culture theorists as Oswald Spengler and Jose Ortega y Gasset. Spengler's "barbarians" and Ortega's "mass-men" were both depicted by those thinkers as being full of a blind uncomprehending animus directed against all the traditions representative of "real" civilization. That sort of characteristically early-twentieth-century paradigm-making was however the product of an

1. See Glazer's *Affirmative Action: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy*, and *Ethnic Dilemmas: 1964-1982*; Walzer's *The Politics of Ethnicity*, and *Spheres of Justice*; and Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*.

2. Glazer, N. (1983). *Ethnic Dilemmas: 1964-1982*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 118.

3. Kymlicka, W. "Ethnicity in the USA." Guibernau, M. and Rex, J. (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader*. Oxford and Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 244.

4. Huntington, S. (2004), op. cit., p. 44.

overtly classist or aristocratic mindset, whereas Huntington thinks in terms not of economic classes or even of status rankings, but strictly of cultural hierarchies.

It seems therefore that we must look elsewhere than within the liberal or mass-culture regions of the vast literature on ethnicity and nationalism to find a theoretical model capable of accounting for “The Hispanic Challenge.” Two theories in particular come to mind as good candidates in this regard: the conflict model of cultural pluralism, and the theory of internal colonialism.

J.S. Furnivall first proposed the conflict model of the plural society, as a form based on colonial domination. For him, the social basis is “a medley of peoples living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways.”¹ Furnivall’s plural society is characterized by economic symbiosis and mutual avoidance, cultural diversity and social cleavage. Integration is not voluntary, but rather imposed by the colonial power and by the force of economic circumstances. As Leo Kuper points out, M.G. Smith modified Furnivall’s theory so as to bring it more in line with the circumstances of the 1960s. For Smith, the political form of the plural society itself dictates the need for domination by a cultural group:

Where culturally divergent groups together form a common society, the structural imperative for maintenance of this inclusive unit involves a type of political order in which one of these cultural sections is subordinated to the other. Such a condition derives from the structural requisites of society on the one hand, and the conditions of wide cultural differences within some population on the other.²

Thus Smith, like Huntington, sees the predominance of one cultural group as the essential precondition for the maintenance of the total society in its current form. This means a discarding of the elements of cultural similarity as a basis for wider association, and a dismissing of the possibilities of consensus, of institutional integration, and of a structural balance being struck by the various cultural groups. Thus, this theoretical approach to plural societies is implicitly saying that cultural homogeneity and the non-democratic regulation of group relationships go hand in hand.

Much as it might seem that “The Hispanic Challenge” can trace its intellectual lineage directly back to the conflict model of cultural pluralism developed by Furnivall and Smith, we should keep in mind the vast differences separating the societies Furnivall and Smith had in mind from Huntington’s present-day United States. Furnivall, writing in the 1930s, applied his theory to societies shaped by colonial rule; Smith, writing in the 1960s, included in his analysis societies other than colonial pluralities, stressing cultural differences to argue that cultural domination, even by a minority group, might be necessary for attaining a measure of national cultural uniformity.

Huntington, for his part, applies his conflict model of cultural pluralism to a nation experiencing very different circumstances. And because an analysis of the present-day United States cannot simply be inserted into the colonial or post-colonial experience, we are lucky to have Robert Blauner’s theory of internal colonialism on hand, to help us in the task of finally situating Huntington’s essay. Unlike Furnivall and Smith, who see the need for ethnically-based hierarchies as a way of achieving cultural homogeneity over time, Blauner joins Glazer in making a distinction between those ethnic groups that are assimilating and those indigenous groups that have been conquered or colonized—good examples of the latter being Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Native Americans. Indeed, Blauner clearly has in mind precisely those groups that Glazer categorized as possessing “much more in the way of national characteristics,” and who thus may demand national rights on just grounds that are inapplicable to immigrant groups. Blauner’s theory suggests that an inegalitarian pluralism—or as he calls it, an “internal colonialism”—often is characteristic of societies whose ethnic relations otherwise follow the assimilation model, such as the United States.

Certain of the aspects of Huntington’s “The Hispanic Challenge” quite clearly make it an excellent case study of internal colonialist ideology. One of this is Huntington’s implicit belief that the conquering group, the colonizing power whose members go on to make up the dominant majority, has a great impact on culture “beyond such ‘natural’ processes as contact and acculturation.”³ The dominant group simply “carries out a policy that constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life.”⁴ Huntington would of course never overtly commit himself to such an imperialistic notion but it is nonetheless implicit within his view that Mexican-American culture is a culture

1. In Kuper, L. “Plural Societies.” Guibernau, M. and Rex, J. (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader*. Oxford and Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 222.

2. Smith, M. G. (1965). *The Plural Society in British West Indies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 86.

3. Blauner, R. (1972). *Racial Oppression in America*. New York: Harper and Row, p. 84.

4. *Ibid.*

of poverty that can be transformed only via its complete assimilation to the dominant group's language and culture. As we have noted, the Huntington doctrine tells us that Mexican Americans will share in the dream of the Anglo-Protestant society "only if they dream in English."¹

Let us listen yet again to Blauner: "The lives of the subordinate group are administered by representatives of the dominant power. The colonized have the experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders who look down on them."² Those clearly were "the good old days" for conservatives such as Huntington. So one can only infer, at least, given Huntington's present obsession with the emergence of Latinos into positions of political and economic power. This is indeed Huntington's nightmare scenario, as when he sees how the sociopolitical dominance of Cuban Americans and other Latinos in the city of Miami has "pushed" Anglos and African Americans alike out to the social margins. Unable to communicate with government bureaucrats and discriminated against by store clerks,

[T]he Anglos came to realize, as one of them put it, "My God, this is what it's like to be a minority." The Anglo had three choices. They could accept their subordinate and outsider position. They could attempt to adopt the manners, customs and language of the Hispanics and assimilate into the Hispanic community "acculturation in reverse," as the scholars Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick labeled it. Or they could leave Miami, and between 1983 and 1993, about 140,000 did just that, their exodus reflected in a popular bumper sticker: "Will the last American to leave Miami please bring the flag."³

What Samuel Huntington sees happening in Miami, and he thinks may well be just around the corner in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the southwest, is not an economic boom and the creation of an international city (wrought largely through the efforts of Cuban Americans and other Latino groups), a city that has become a financial, cultural, and entertainment center for Latin Americans and members of other nationalities as well. To the contrary, he sees at work an abnormal or unnatural cultural process that threatens to undermine the unity of a United States not to be conceived as resting on any other basis than "Anglo-Protestant" values and the English language. This view brings us to the last component of Blauner's internal colonization theory. For Blauner, internal colonization is linked to racism, because in both we see "the tendency of ruling powers to view their subjects as inherently alien and culturally degenerate."⁴

HUNTINGTON'S STRATEGIC CONSTRUCTION OF AN "OPPOSITIONAL" LATINO CULTURE

The preceding section concluded with our discovery that the Huntington of "The Hispanic Challenge" is working from within the conflict model of cultural pluralism, and especially its internal-colonialist type. We are now in a position to broaden our inquiry by linking his essay's arguments and metaphors to a theory that its author himself makes no explicit connections to.

Huntington's analysis of Latinos living in today's United States stands in radical contrast to Said's conception of cultures as hybrid and heterogeneous entities, so interrelated in fact that it is virtually impossible to simply delineate them, or, even less, to speak of them as individual units. As mentioned above, Huntington's theoretical approach is notably akin to Furnivall and Smith's studies of other societies, in that he looks at Latinos as a social group living side by side with the mainstream culture and yet holding to its own language, ideas, and ways.

As Huntington himself has made clear, however, it is the sheer number of Latinos and particularly Mexican Americans that in his eyes has produced the present threat. As those people increasingly feel comfortable within the confines of their own culture, they will, Huntington thinks, increasingly refuse to follow the course of "natural" gradual assimilation like that followed by European immigrant groups. Without examining the causes for the phenomenon to exist, Huntington simply notes that Latinos tend to remain in overwhelmingly Latino neighborhoods and regions and not to disperse, as other groups have. In this way he shows his strict allegiance to the conflict model of cultural pluralism, in that he implicitly dismisses the possibility of a certain degree of consensus, institutional integration, or structural balance being achieved between the Latinos and the Anglo Protestants. All Huntington can see is an enemy increasingly gaining strength within our borders.

1. Huntington, S. (2004), op. cit., p. 45

2. Blauner (1972), op. cit., p. 84.

3. Huntington, S. (2004), op. cit., p. 43.

4. Blauner, R. (1972), op. cit., p. 85.

In order to substantiate his almost apocalyptic predictions, Huntington implicitly draws upon a body of evidence that can be divided into (1) sources and (2) an assortment of polls, surveys, and print media pieces. Many critical analyses have focused on Huntington's polemical use of polls, surveys and print-media pieces, largely in order to argue that he is empirically incorrect.¹ Here however I choose to focus on the scholarly sources, because (1) Huntington leans on these more heavily than he does on the polls, surveys, and media pieces, and (2) it is by examining his selection of sources that this paper's thesis that Huntington is working directly out of the colonialist type of the conflict model of cultural pluralism can best be vindicated.

The pillars of Huntington's argument arise almost entirely from bases constructed by renowned white scholars. Stanford University's David Kennedy is quoted, for instance, to assure us that the income gap between Mexico and the United States is the widest between any two contiguous countries in the world. Political scientists Katrina Burgess and Abraham Lowenthal are brought on board to say that no school system in a major U.S. city has ever experienced such a large influx of students from a single foreign country—Mexico—as that of Los Angeles. Political scientist Peter Skerry, of Boston College, is quoted to help bolster one of Huntington's most central points: that Mexicans arrive from a neighboring country that once suffered a major and territory-ceding military defeat at the hands of the United States. Thus they settle predominantly in a region that was once part of their own homeland, and have a sense of being on their own turf that is not shared by any other immigrant group. Also cited is political scientist Robert Kaplan's study of third generation Mexican Americans, one of whom is quoted by Kaplan as saying that he knows "almost no one in his Mexican community of Tucson who believes in education and hard work."

Latino sources have of course also been included in "The Hispanic Challenge," so as to bring it added credibility, but they can hardly be said to bring it greater balance, given how one-sided is their cumulative effect. Osvaldo Sosa, author of *The Americano Dream* and president of the Spanish American League against Discrimination, assures us that "Latinos are held back due to mistrust of people outside family, lack of initiative, self-reliance, and ambition, little use for education, and acceptance of poverty as a virtue to go to heaven."² Jorge Castañeda, former foreign minister of Mexico, is brought in not only to speak of the "ferocious differences" that divide the United States from Mexico with respect to cultural values and attitudes toward history, but to stress yet again the endlessly belabored "*manana* syndrome." Latino scholar Chris Garcia asserts that Spanish-language competence is the one thing every Hispanic takes pride in, and wants to protect and promote; and the Chilean intellectual Ariel Dorfman shares with us his conviction that learning two languages instead of one is a boon.

Needless to say, all of this Latino-manufactured articles are of use to Huntington only because they help him to build his case that Latino culture in general, and a passionate adherence to the Spanish language in particular, constitute a kind of fifth column, destroying the United States from within. One is at first happy to hear Huntington's colleague at Harvard, Jorge Domínguez, point out that "Mexican Americans are more favorably disposed toward democracy than are Mexicans,"³ but then one realizes that Huntington has allowed that point to be made only because it strongly implies that the beneficial transformation Mexicans are already undergoing in the United States is implicitly calling out for further positive "reinforcement," i.e. further assimilation into Huntington's "Anglo-Protestant" culture.

What can be said, then, about the use Huntington makes of his sources? First, and more simply, he gives more weight to the non-Latino scholars, who of course represent the dominant power, implying, following Said, a "detached

1. Typical of Huntington's "empirical" data: the fact that José has replaced Michael as the most common name in California, and that in a 1998 U.S.-vs.-Mexico soccer match, Mexican Americans booed the U.S. national anthem and team. Perhaps the most relevant "empirical evidence" Huntington offers us, in support of the view that a *reconquista* of the Southwest and of Florida is underway, is a 1992 study of the children of Latino immigrants in those regions. When asked "How do you identify; that is, what do you call yourself?" none of the children born in Mexico answered "American," as compared to from 1.9 to 9.3 percent of those born elsewhere in Latin America or the Caribbean. The largest percentage of Mexican-born children (41.2%) identified themselves as "Hispanic" while the second largest (36.2%) chose "Mexican." Huntington also presents an assortment of polls, and his own interpretations of various studies, to prove that Latino/Mexican families have low rates of educational progress and English-language acquisition. And yet, to counter Huntington in this regard, all one has to do is enter the Pew Hispanic Center's website (<http://www.pewhispanic.org>.) What one then discovers is that according to the results of the 2002 National Survey of Latinos (based on the 2000 U.S. Census), 78 percent of third-generation Latinos are English-language dominant and 22 percent are bilingual; this, in contrast to the first, foreign-born generation's 4 and 24 percent respectively. This study also found that U.S.-born Latinos express an overwhelming preference, 71 percent, for the English language, with another 20 percent choosing both English and Spanish equally. Other studies whose results one can peruse in this website tell us that over 70 percent of U.S.-born Hispanics prefer English-language television programming to Spanish, that more than one in three of them have intermarried by the third generation (Huntington himself cites that finding at the end of his essay.) Surely this is assimilation, or at least acculturation, even if it is moving at a different pace—in some cases faster, in others slower—than that at which Asian Americans, African Americans, and other minority groups are traveling.

2. Huntington, S. (2004), op. cit., p. 44.

3. *Ibid.*

superiority for a handful of values and ideas.” In contrast, Huntington only very sparingly quotes Latinos and Latin Americans, these of course representing the subordinate, colonized group. Second, and far more importantly, Huntington shows no serious interest in balancing the opinions of scholars around the Latino issue, as is attested to by the way his Latino sources are allowed entry into his argument only if their explicit positions jibe with his or with those of his selected representatives of the dominant power—renowned intellectuals and scholars within his “Anglo-Protestant” culture sphere—and if at least implicit to their stance is the central Huntington premise: that national cultural uniformity is the essential precondition of a healthy American society.

The third point here springs naturally from the second one, it being that in the absence of any genuinely dissenting voices or even any balancing viewpoints, Huntington’s selected scholars, whether Latino or Anglo, are essentially free to “prove” anything and everything they wish to: that Latinos are not assimilating; that their educational level, “even into the fourth generation,” is far below that of other groups; and that they are less likely to start companies or to work their way up into managerial and professional jobs. Nor can any of that come as a surprise, given that we have already been assured that Latinos belong to an inferior culture characterized by little use for education and a lack of initiative, self-reliance, and ambition.

The strategic—one might almost say “crafty” or even “propagandistic”—way in which Huntington utilizes his sources clearly reveals his adherence to the conflict model of cultural pluralism, based on cultural essences rather than cultural relations embedded in constantly-shifting networks of power and knowledge. This too was to be expected, given that an essentially dichotomy-making mind such as his almost can’t help but create two monolithic and supposedly autonomous cultural units—the Latino and the Anglo Protestant—and set them at each other’s throats, in a world utterly lacking in discussion of cultural similarities, and in any possibility of institutional integration or of structural balancing-out between the two groups.

Given the fact of the primacy of cultural homogeneity for Huntington (which means the assimilation of all to the dominant culture), and the centrality of language to the human enterprise, the Huntingtonian equation in this respect is clear: one nation equals one language. Indeed this is an area that preoccupies Huntington deeply. He directly links the lack of Latino assimilation to bilingual education, which he almost seems to think is part a conspiracy mounted by Latino leaders to turn the United States into a bilingual country. And yet, as opposed to analyzing in a serious manner the extensive research that has been done as to the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of bilingual education, Huntington limits his “evidence” to a few charts at the end of the essay, and revealingly falls back on the pronouncements of two prominent Americans of the past. One of these is the late S.I. Hayakawa, renowned scholar and later U.S. senator from California, who asked, “[W]hy is it that no Filipinos, no Koreans, object to making English the official language? No Japanese have done so. And certainly not the Vietnamese, who are so damn happy to be here. But Hispanics alone have maintained that there is a problem” (Huntington, 2004). The other is Theodore Roosevelt, who said, “We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language”¹

CONCLUSION: A RIGID ANGLO-PROTESTANT CULTURE, OR A FLEXIBLE AMERICAN CREED?

The “jewel of the crown” of Huntington’s theoretical approach in “The Hispanic Challenge” is, of course, his all-embracing concept of an “Anglo Protestant culture” that needs to be defended by “mainstream” Americans if any substantial measure of national cultural uniformity is to be achieved. And yet one is confronted, right at the outset, with a problem here, for Huntington never actually tells us what he means by “Anglo-Protestant.” Is this a religious category? A new form of Manifest Destiny? The earliest Americans certainly were Anglo-Protestants, but now that various waves of immigration in the past two centuries have washed over the face of the country, today’s U.S. population at large bears little or no resemblance to the Puritans. Is Boston, with its dominant Catholic Irish and Italian populations, an Anglo-Protestant city? And what about the Jews, Chinese, and African Americans of New York City? Why don’t they constitute the same threat that Huntington seems to feel is boiling its way upward down in Miami and over in Los Angeles?

Now that we have unearthed the theoretical tradition that “The Hispanic Challenge” stands in the direct line of, we are in a good position to zero in on that seemingly elusive concept, “Anglo-Protestant.” Let us begin by looking at two seemingly basic terms that Huntington never troubles himself to define properly: “culture” and “creed.” As Wolfe

1. Ibid., p. 42.

points out, when we speak of a “core culture” we are referring to “a way of life defined by one ethnic group or race, which demands that everyone else adapt to it.” A creed, by contrast, “is simply a set of ideas about what the United States should be—and thus is open to all, regardless of faith, ethnicity or race.”¹ “Anglo-Protestant” thus seems to fall within Wolfe’s definition of “culture,” since Huntington is demanding that Latinos adopt and adapt themselves to the Anglo-Protestant way of life, including its language, habits, and beliefs. There is another way of viewing this matter, however. If we begin to think of the Anglo-Protestant “creed” as a thing no longer open to new interpretations and thus as not an open but a closed system, then there is nothing to stop us from situating Huntington’s conception of an Anglo-Protestant culture within Wolfe’s definition of “creed.”

However one may choose to tinker with Huntington’s problematic concept of “Anglo-Protestant” culture on the level of theory, out in the real world one thing is certain: Whenever cultural homogeneity is insisted upon as a sine qua non of healthy and democratic government, the result is a non-democratic regulation of group relationships. Thus what makes “The Hispanic Challenge” so challenging to liberal thinkers at its best, and so genuinely threatening to Latinos and others at its worst, is the way it weaves together anti-minority, anti-immigrant, and especially anti-Latino views into what seems on the surface a coherent theoretical argument that can be effectively used by those theorists and policy-makers interested in social management and enforcement to counter what they perceive as negative demographic trends. In fact, in a sidebar to “The Hispanic Challenge” entitled “The Threat of White Nativism,” Huntington points to a possible reaction arising against immigrants, Latinos, and other minorities in the shape of a white nativist movement composed of white, working- and middle-class males, “protesting their job losses to immigrants and foreign countries, the perversion of their culture, and the displacement of their language.”² The very presence of this sidebar tells us how seriously Huntington takes this issue. He elaborates on it thus:

Cultured, intelligent, and often possessing impressive degrees from some of America’s premier colleges and universities, this new breed of white racial advocates is a far cry from the populist politicians and hooded Klansmen of the Old South,” writes Carol Swain in her 2002 book, *The New White nationalism in America*. These new white nationalists do not advocate white racial supremacy but believe in racial self-preservation and affirm that culture is a product of race. They contend that shifting U.S. demographics foretell the replacement of white culture by black or brown cultures that are intellectually and morally inferior.³

Here we have the old Huntington of his “civilizationist” epoch, but now predicting an internal “clash of cultures” in the near future. And despite his obvious attempt to make us believe that he is just as aghast about this new style of racism as any liberal could be, it is hard not to draw the inference that these white nationalists form, at the very least, a significant part of the “Anglo-Protestant” culture. One could go even further and suggest that the mere fact that Huntington gives a voice and a face to (supposed) white anger, but neither of those things to Latinos’ preoccupation and even fear at being the objects of such anger, tells us that in his eyes the “grievances” of whites can safely be given more weight than the hopes and fears of African Americans, Latinos, and so on.

When one goes on to consider how many of today’s leading citizens, who happen to be white in the majority, from global-oriented businesspeople to multiculturalist scholars, are right at the forefront of the anti-Huntington faction, one begins to see Huntington’s “Anglo-Protestant” culture disintegrating before one’s eyes. It becomes an empty signifier, a concept capable of being filled with any content whatever. In “The Hispanic Challenge” it is simply an ideological fiction that Huntington can hold up in contrast to Latinos, to be an example of success for the areas in which Latinos may have difficulties. But it neglects to take into account the fact that the very difficulties Latinos have experienced may have been the result of their relations with the very dominant culture that Huntington wants them to emulate, that is, of internal colonialism. In short, his polarization of culture into “us versus them,” Anglo Protestants versus Latinos, is not only a gross oversimplification of the complexity of situations in the area of race and ethnic relations in the United States, it is also of very little analytical value.

It is arguable that the sort of veiled, “politically correct” racism that emerges from between the lines of “The Hispanic Challenge” is more invidious than the old overt, Klan-style cross-burning and so on. Be that as it may or may not be, Huntington’s essay does clearly comprise the final component of Blauner’s internal colonization theory: that internal colonization is intrinsically linked to racism. For try as Huntington may to draw a hard-and-fast distinction between his theory of cultural domination and racist ideology by distancing himself from the nativist movement, the

1. Wolfe, A. “Native Son.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, num. 3 (May/June 2004), p. 124

2. Huntington (2004), op. cit. p. 41

3. *Ibid.*

fact remains that his theoretical approach of viewing cultural groupings as monolithic and as entirely distinct from one another has led directly, in “The Hispanic Challenge,” to a really quite explicit suggestion that Latinos, and especially Latinos of Mexican heritage, are inherently alien and culturally degenerate, and thus ideal subjects for internal colonialism.

In contrast to Huntington's urgent call for “normalizing” Latinos through cultural domination and colonization, Edward Said thinks that despite its extraordinary cultural diversity, the United States is and will surely remain, a coherent nation. For Said it is better to explore history rather to repress or deny it. As he points out in *Culture and Imperialism*, a work where he expands his arguments in *Orientalism*:

[T]he fact that the United States contains so many histories, many of them clamoring now for attention, is by no means to be suddenly feared since many of them were always there, and out of them an American society and politics (and even a style of historical writing) were in fact created. In other words, the result over present debates over multiculturalism is hardly likely to be “Lebanonization,” and if these debates point a way for political changes in the way women, minorities, and recent immigrants see themselves, then that is not to be feared or defended against. What does need to be remembered is that narratives of emancipation and enlightenment in their strongest form were also narratives of integration not separation, the stories of people who were now fighting for a place in it. And if the old and habitual ideas of the main group were not flexible or generous enough to admit new groups, then these ideas need changing, a far better thing to do than reject the emerging groups.¹

I believe that Wolfe's concept of creed has the flexibility that Said sees as necessary for the successful integration of new groups into mainstream American society, and it can help us to understand what is happening in this country today with respect to Latinos in general and Mexican Americans in particular. Latinos are acculturating and assimilating to mainstream U.S. society, to the American creed, even if in their own ways and at their own pace. Nonetheless they are intellectually flexible enough to understand that the set of ideas and beliefs known as “creed” is always subject to change, and emotionally adopt many of the core elements of the American creed and yet still proudly retain their own cultural heritage and make others aware that they are doing so. Being loyal to America, for Latinos, doesn't necessarily mean discarding their own cultural heritage. They feel certain that they can plunge right into the American mainstream without any fear of watching their ancestral identity get swept away in the process. But it seems that Huntington cannot understand this. He cannot understand that Latinos who are also proud citizens of the United States cherish that dual identity, both cultural and national, that allows them to dream in English and Spanish too, to be Latino and American at the same time. Unfortunately, Huntington fails to see the difference between loyalty and heritage. National identity, for him, is necessarily essential rather than relational, and all Americans must be loyal to his rigid vision of an “Anglo-Protestant” United States.

1.Said, E. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, p. xxvi.