

THE RIVER GOD AS A NECESSARY HORIZON:
MYTHS OF ORIGIN AS HEGEMONIC INFLUENCES
IN FEATURE NEWS JOURNALISM

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the presence of America's foundational myths, especially mythicized American capitalism, as sources of base narrative structure for mainstream American news media. A reliance on these myths suggests a hegemonic role for the news media. Identifying hegemonic activity in the public rhetoric of the mainstream news media can help us understand how an institution claiming neutrality in fact specifically influences social dynamics. This dissertation employs mythic criticism, a form of rhetorical criticism, to examine leading American mainstream print news organizations' feature story coverage of immigration and immigrants, legal and illegal. The primary texts examined were news stories. These texts were stories that had won, or had been finalists for, the Pulitzer Prize for print news journalism. Stories with a similar focus, style, and structure from well-regarded print news sources were selected for examination as secondary texts. It was found that America's mainstream news media in newspaper and news magazine feature stories rely on America's foundational myths for narrative structure. Mythicized American capitalism, which misleadingly presents modern capitalism as much the same as the family- and community-based endeavor of the Puritan era, is commonly a narrative defaulted to by those media in the description of immigrants. Such a reliance on America's foundational myths narrows the range of interpretations of events available to news consumers and decreases cultural diversity by relying on an assumption of, and imposition of, a widely-held, common bond as a narrative base.

DEDICATION

For My Parents

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the presence of America's foundational myths, especially mythicized American capitalism, as sources of base narrative structure for mainstream American news media and the hegemonic role of such stories. In this work, mythic criticism will be applied to case studies of newspaper stories.

Hegemony theory provides a way to observe and understand how ruling or dominant classes remain in power using social and cultural pressures and persuasions rather than relying on physical and discursively coercive forces alone. A study that can assist in the examination of such dominance, that can reveal and deconstruct any of its sources, applications, retention, adaptations and maintenance, benefits us by adding to our understanding of the functioning of our society and our culture, and can help shape our attitude towards them and ourselves within them, and eventually our willingness and ability to accept them or attempt to change them.

Antonio Gramsci, the originator of hegemony theory, argued that ruling classes would, if necessary, rely on state enforcement for their authority but were aware of the influence of private society's cultural agencies, such as schools, churches, and media, in shaping popular attitudes to, and consent for, authority and sought to co-opt those agencies to create support for their continued dominance in a stable, civil society. The ruling classes' goal was to minimize the role of blatant force to persuade and allow cultural persuasion to become the primary basis for the ruling class's continued domination. Gramsci did not see hegemony as a single, predictable event

with a beginning and an end. He defined it as an ongoing process, an endless interaction between the dominant classes and the lesser classes, a constant state of negotiating. The lesser classes were persuaded to consider themselves as playing an integral part in the ruling ideology, even though that ideology was primarily developed to maintain the dominant class in power.

A hegemonic ideology, said Gramsci, was elastic, designed to prevent the formation of effective opposition but also able to accommodate the demands of lesser classes when they threatened to upset the hegemonic balance by confronting the ruling class. Such a challenge could be absorbed and defused. Potential challenges that might have led the development of a viable opposition could be recognized before they became threatening and subsumed. The hegemonic process adapts to circumstance; it is not a predictable or mechanical process but rather an organic one. Gramsci's work allows us to identify and observe negotiations between various social groups and classes, which is why it is still a relevant and effective instrument today. Hegemony is not simply the imposition or dominance of a cultural position. Nor is it a static phenomenon. It is the process of maintaining the superiority of that position and its value to the dominant classes. It also functions by placing the onus on the lesser classes. They consent, after all, which provides more warrant for the ruling class to oppress.

Hegemonic negotiations can be as blatant as a dictator's parade but are commonly buried within the routines, rituals, assumptions, and expectations that make up the social reality of everyday life. Hegemonic balance is thus achieved within a matrix of social interactivity and institutional pressures. It is a process disguised by its apparent normalcy.

It is my contention that myth can be used as a hegemonic tool and that American mainstream media use it in such a manner.

It is not argued here that myth is used as a structural foundation for narrative in its simplest form, as a basic story. Myth can be employed in a variety of ways; for example, recognized pieces of it can be used to resonate the whole and allegorical or metaphorical constructions can be used to deliver it or secondary images or references can create agency for it.

Tokenism and counter-myth presentation will also be found in the use of myth. In both cases, apparent contradiction or potential opposition to the mythic storyline will be presented as evidence of the tolerance within the narrative and also as exceptions which reaffirm the values of the mythic narrative. They are the villains that, despite themselves, lift up the reputation of the heroine in melodrama. It is as if challenges mounted against the mythic story perform the function of drawing a response which in turn demonstrates the wide-ranging and adaptable power of the mythic narrative, allowing it to demonstrate superiority over those apparent aberrations. When this occurs within news stories, it is reasonable to argue that the journalism involved could be examined to see whether it is abetting the process.

Human beings are storytellers and myths are our base stories. Myths, especially the primordial and foundational myths of a society, are still significantly influential in the modern stages of those societies, and this is certainly the case in America. Myths are everywhere in our culture; we are saturated by them.

The foundational myths I refer to are recognized and succinctly defined by Richard Hughes in *Myths America Lives By*. Hughes outlines five basic myths: The Myth of the Chosen Nation; The Myth of Nature's Nation; The Myth of the Christian Nation; The Myth of the Millennial Nation; and The Myth of the Innocent Nation. He also describes The Mythic Dimensions of American Capitalism, which is, he says, a distinct myth but also to some degree a product of the other, antecedent myths which it often incorporates or subsumes. Observing the

capitalist myth will, on occasion, require recognizing and evaluating the presence of those antecedent myths.

It is also possible to consider the Hughes collection of myths as a single, but multi-faceted, entity. The capitalism myth is the most eclectic and pragmatic, the most flexible and pervasive. Whereas the others address abstract qualities, the capitalist myth delineates a process so it fits easily into narrative form, the primary format of newspaper articles. Of all of Hughes' myths, it is the one most recognized as a story with a beginning a middle and an end.

Hughes, and before him Robert Bellah, trace America's foundational myths not only to the physical development of the American colonies both domestically and internationally, but to the prevailing Anglo-Puritan ethics that were dominant in the everyday lives of people in the formative years of the future United States.

Anglo-Puritan ethics and ways of life supported a thriving society in the early years of America. The Puritan ethic, as described by Max Weber in *The Puritan Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, was essentially a product of Calvinism and called for citizens to work hard to thrive, to create a flourishing community, but to do so only insofar as individual success benefitted the community and the success was solely the result of religiously sanctioned activity. One's material success, and the success of one's family and community, could then be considered as potential evidence, or at least an indicator, of that person's or that community's favored status with God. Personal profit beyond immediate need, a hallmark of modern capitalism, was not part of the Puritan-based way of life; in fact, it was frowned upon. It was these Puritan characteristics, said Weber, which became what he called the spirit of capitalism. It was, he said, these characteristics that allowed modern capitalism to develop. But once it did, things changed,

according to Weber. Work, success, and profit in America became ends in themselves and lost their original religious and cultural qualities.

After this metamorphosis, the myth of the Puritan ethic as it pertained to capitalism remained intact in Hughes view. It was not modernized, it was not desacralized, it did not evolve to match changing capitalist practice, and it is that myth, alienated from the reality of modern American capitalism, which Hughes identifies as the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

If foundational myths provide a dominant narrative in news stories, then news media must somehow have resolved the disconnect between the unstructured and random nature of the event or subject that was covered and the needs of finally published stories. Researchers have argued that the socialization of journalists into their profession, news routines and the demands of format, production and distribution practices, and ownership by companies which must make money contribute to the way news is done, are core reasons for similarities in story narratives. But I argue that the myth can be the primary interpreter, or translator, at the scene of the reporting. While the aforementioned constraints and influences contribute to the final presentation of news stories, myth is an assumption with far deeper roots in the journalist than those characteristics learned on the job. Michael Schudson has said that why journalists make many choices is a mystery but that somehow the answer lies in the event. I agree and argue that the latent foundational myth narrative within an event is a primary influence on journalists, modified to a degree by the event's adaptability to the myth.

The mythic story is the most basic narrative that members of any given society recognize and react to because of its inherent values. That is, it is a story that "everybody knows," a story with a socially shared understanding. It is possible that certain events "fit" this understanding better than others. There may be cultural or social, political or economic bases for the existence

and content of the mythic stories as different people of different backgrounds and classes within the community understand them specifically. People who employ or deploy myths may abuse the power of those myths and disguise their own motives in doing so. It is also possible that myth can be employed by those in power without the deliberate attempt to manipulate an audience, a process that may be a path dependency where the past use of myth has created a learned assumption that it is the accepted explanation of how modern culture and society works. In other words, myth may be employed as a hegemonic device simply through its role as a default narrative that is employed without an overt intent to misuse it. “Maintenance of political power depends less on the continual need to persuade popular opinion (which of course can be unpredictable) but on the repetition of already well established general discourses, celebrating American democracy, that are entrenched” (Lewis, p. 264).

Any default to foundational myth could then be considered evidence that the news media are influencing the hegemonic balance among social, cultural and class groups within the United States by assuming and presenting the values and standards of the myth which are unquestioningly pro-capitalism and laudatory of a vanished Puritan ideal that with hard work anyone can succeed and help support their family and community and be pleasing to God. If this Puritan capitalism identification is constantly referenced as a normative situation by mainstream news media, it blurs the differences between classes by holding that class is irrelevant since all are encompassed by the myth and able to thrive, in their own way, within it if they play by the rules. Classes are defined in this work as constantly changing modern entities, not as strict economic groups. It is also possible that the American capitalist myth, at its base the simple Puritan-era capitalism story and a single coherent narrative, can mean different things to different classes of people. The American capitalism that the dirt-poor immigrant sees as a vehicle to use

to rise out of poverty and bring his family with him is the same American capitalism that the rich and influential see as a vehicle to get richer and more influential.

Gramsci left us a model. He describes the Catholic Church in Italy as an example of a hegemonic entity within the state, and I argue that modern American news media act in a similar role when employing the American capitalism myth. The church, according to Gramsci, offered within its narrative something for the rich, something for the poor, and something for those in between. What was offered shared a common base – the Catholic faith – but was not the same in material or functionality terms for its beneficiaries. The rich Catholics were involved in power brokering and administration within the church at the highest levels and were able to profit from their relationship with the church. The poor Catholics were involved in church activities in a passive manner and were allowed to hope for a life beyond what in a world beyond the grave. The Puritan-American capitalist myth offers sizeable profits, political influence and power-brokering, social and cultural status, and a degree of insulation from the down cycles in the economy for the American rich. For the lower classes, it offers a chance to be one of the upper classes. There is something of both for those in-between because, unlike the church, the potential for rising, and falling, is far more inclusive. In all three cases, people function within the faith of the Puritan-American capitalist myth. By allowing some of those below to reach the highest class and be exemplars to be followed, the ruling class prevents a threatening oppositional bloc forming to challenge their dominance.

I do not propose that this reliance on foundational myth is present in each and every news story or even most of them. But I do propose it is present in many stories in which normative social order is presumed.

This dissertation employed mythic criticism, a form of rhetorical criticism to examine news stories. The sample stories have won, or been finalists for, the Pulitzer Prize for journalism. The samples also included secondary texts, stories in a similar news narrative format on a similar topic with a similar focus, from other prominent mainstream news sources for comparative examination. The subject of each of the texts was immigrants, legal and illegal, to America. Immigrants live at America's boundaries, physically and culturally, and their lives can reveal values and assumptions Americans accept or do not accept. News stories about them can help in identifying and examining American values within those stories. The stories selected could be called 'people' stories because their primary subject, their dominant focus, are lives being lived, not discussions of legal or technical issues surrounding immigration, although those issues, for example legislation, are important in these stories. Stories with only passing or incidental or gratuitous references to immigration were not considered.

The title of this dissertation is based on two observations. First, Kenneth Burke (1955) wrote that if a tribe living by a river has adapted their entire way of life to the condition of that river, it would be understandable to sum up the tribe's motives in what Burke calls a "River God." Worshipping that god, says Burke, gives realistic and materialistic justification to the tribe's traditions and recognizes the material conditions responsible for its way of life (Burke, 1989). I argue that America's foundational myths, especially the mythic dimension of capitalism, are our river god. Second, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue that when a political system seeks to blend all of its diverse groups in to a single, homogenous society and culture, it must present to everyone a unifying goal or icon, a 'necessary horizon' (Laclau & Mouffe). Modern American capitalism, disguised as the capitalism of the Puritans is, I propose, a significant part of such a horizon.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Myth

Human beings know themselves and their world through the stories they hear and by being able to compare any story to others. Stories convey not only information and narrative but also present an audience with images and signs, relationships and values. Foremost among the stories we rely on are myths. They are our biggest, broadest and most basic stories. The storyline in myths is commonly painted with a very broad brush featuring grand or epic events and characters engaged in simple struggles for good to dominate evil. Uncertainties and nuances are hard to find in mythic stories. Myth is the dominant, big-picture social narrative. It is where we find recognizable stories filled with archetypal figures involved in actions and making choices that reflect our society's ideals, beliefs, values, and ideologies.

Myth helps society recognize and make sense of itself. It is a base reference point that human beings can turn to in the search for the meaning of events or emotions; it can be used to help explain that which we find difficult to understand about our society; and it can be employed to reaffirm our society's core assumptions. It can be used as an instrument to assess people and concepts around us and their relationship to us and to predict or explain reactions. These processes are essential to our understanding of the world in which we live, and to our ability to accept or change it (Barthes, 1972, 1982; Bird; Burke, 1955, 1969, 1989; Eliade, 1958, 1992; Jung, 1959; Leach; Lule, 2001; Williams, 1977).

Myth is variously defined. It may be a fantastic story that defies literal definition, a sensible version of a story derived from an ideology, or it may fall somewhere between as an archetypal story tailored to play an everyday social role. Myth is taken seriously by a community because it embodies and endorses shared assumptions and activities and confirms the appropriateness of the order within one's society. For the critic, finding it often requires argument as well as observation (Brockriede, 1974, 1985; Eliade, 1992, 1998; Frye, 1951, 1957; Hughes; Leach; Lule, 2001, 2002; Ruthven). Attacking myth may be one essential of sparking consideration of change within a society (Campbell; Hallin, 1980).

Myth is a broad enough concept to be definable in a number of ways, each of them arguably only partially complete and challengeable. It is worth citing two definitions to provide working parameters. Coupe defines myth as:

A narrative that effects identification within the community that takes it seriously, endorsing shared interests and confirming the given notion of order, while at the same time gesturing towards a more comprehensive identification – that among humanity, the earth, and the universe. (Coupe, p. 6)

A more abrupt definition, one born from political observation and one which far more sharply recognizes media use of myth, calls it:

A credible, dramatic, socially constructed re-presentation of perceived realities that people accept as permanent, fixed knowledge of reality, while forgetting (if they ever were aware of it) its tentative, imaginative, created and perhaps fictional qualities. (Nimmo and Combs, p. 8)

Myth is drawn on broadly throughout society, by all storytellers, by all media and by diverse sources such as professional sports, advertisers, salesmen, public speakers, and people talking over the backyard fence. Media employ myth so commonly that the public, aware of the myth even if not always recognizing it as the basis of a narrative, finds myth engaged in modern

life. For example, the news media cite the ‘land of the free’ myth as the basis for our democracy; advertisers cite the same myth to sell shaving gel or Chevrolets.

Burke argued that mythic patterns are not simply unchanged ancient ones that have survived intact but are active (in Coupe). That is, myths are organic, they maintain their original storyline but adapt to the passage of time and social change so that they can be delivered in a recognizable and relevant way to changing audiences. In this process, the news media both lead and follow.

While myths around the world share similarities because they extol social and personal virtues and values to such a strong degree, myths about America and Americans are distinct. Myths are the most complete and intense narrative models of what we believe and who we are as Americans. America is commonly considered an ideology itself, a rarity in that it defines itself based on its ideology, and American myths reside much more in the ideal of America than simply in her past. Americans began a ‘new world,’ built democracy, but “we remained possessed by that which we no longer quite possessed: rituals and narratives that are in the strict sense anthropological” (Carey, 1989, p. 2). Some myths remain virtually unchanged over centuries of telling. But they are adaptable if need be. For example, from England came the mythic figure of Robin Hood, encapsulating the idea that the truly noble people of the land are fair and even-handed, brave enough to risk everything for their country, for fairness and justice and for what they believe in. British and American movies today still reproduce this myth because they know virtually everyone in the audience will recognize it, even if it disguised behind car crashes, comedic suburban bliss, or partial nudity.

Myths can be hard to spot in news because of their enormous efficiency in making meaning. They convey intense meaning with a minimum of words and images; so deeply

ingrained are they in the media audience that they simply need to be glimpsed to be recognized and to cause a reaction. French philosopher Roland Barthes thought of myth as political speech that makes the attributes of a particular ideology seem natural and eternal by assuming the properties of those values unquestionably and routinely repeating them in frameworks and classifications with acceptance, nonchalance and routine (Barthes, 1972, 1982). This can be true of old myths or contemporary or modernized myths which support the status quo by making what has been socially and culturally constructed by the ruling classes for their own benefit appear as a natural, universally accepted occurrence. He argued that the construction of popular myths in mass culture disguises the social construction of a class-based society (Barthes, 1977). Through repeated and pervasive use, manufactured popular culture infiltrates common sense and social practices and relations become ‘naturalized’ (Artz & Murphy, p. 217). Myth is hard to isolate in news precisely because of this apparent ordinariness in its use (Artz & Murphy; Barthes, 1982; Burke, 1955; Hertog & Fan; Williams, 1977).

When an America made up of immigrants and the first few generations of native-born citizens created a new form of society in the shape of the world’s first large-scale democracy, the ways of the old world, Europe, were largely left behind. The new country was essentially without a history. That meant it also had no home-grown myths. The myths of the old European birthplaces of the immigrants were regional and distinct to the old countries, and were jettisoned with old ways that gave way to the new American way of life. A society needs myths. As America grew, citizens essentially discovered and crafted their own myths, just as anthropologists say all societies have done (Carey, 1988, 1989; Crehan; Hughes; Leach).

Myth can be hard to isolate in any media because it can be woven into apparent quotidian ordinariness. It is often a nondescript, unrecognized part of the accepted common sense

dispersed into everyday stories. As such, its assumptions about the qualities of values and models often go unchallenged. This apparent ordinariness makes it easy to overlook in studies of media.

Some of the most dramatic exemplars of the dominance of, and the role of, myth occurred in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001. After the attacks, consumers of the *New York Times*, a major national news source but in this case also a local paper, read editorials firmly rooted in society-supporting myth, stories about tragic victims, brave heroes, and sinister evil. The editorials addressed the attacks, their aftermath, and the response by America and Americans. In attempting to provide a bewildered audience with referential frameworks that they could use to try and understand what had happened and what might happen in the future, *Times'* editorial writers did not simply present reason and argument but drew on four significant myths: The End of Innocence; The Victims; The Heroes; and The Foreboding Future. This allowed the writers to deliver their specific reasoning and arguments within a storyline readers recognized and could use to make comparisons and begin to understand the bigger picture using their own reactions and not simply the *Times'* words (Lule, 2002).

Myths do not necessarily appear as – or function as – complete stories with beginnings, middles, and ends and are not always presented in a recognizable way. Typologies have been advanced delineating the different ways in which myth can be delivered, some presented as a way to determine whether a story is a myth or not. Robert Rowland argues that there are three basic story forms at work so that the term myth is often misused. He argues that there is myth, and then there is folklore and then there is a recurring social narrative (Rowland, 1990_a, 1990_b). Rowland's typology was deconstructed and represented in another typology with similar goals, an attempt to simplify Rowland's work that is similarly inadequate to the original (Sutton). Both

typologies suffer the same flaw of trying to place boundaries on a concept that works on so many levels that boundaries will always be artificial limits and therefore hinder examination of the full scope of myth at work. While all phenomena must have boundaries to be examined, otherwise there is no 'beyond' or 'other' to define them against, I would argue that myth, because of its extreme reach, possesses a moving boundary, one that may be identified in specific cases for the purpose of comparison, that is, that the boundary is an artificial instrument used and its artificiality must then be part of the analysis it allows.

It is worth noting here that Gramsci also categorized some stories common to the lower or middle classes as folklore or folk tales, stories the Italian said were self-imposed restrictions helping the ruled classes remain unaware of their subaltern position and therefore uninspired to fight against it. Gramsci argued that these folk tales were deeply ingrained tales about social groups that helped them decide who they were and accept their relationship to other classes and groups. Gramsci would arguably then have allowed these stories also to have some of the power of myth. When part of a myth or an allusion or allegorical reference to a myth is discovered in folk tales or ongoing social narratives, or for that matter other formats, it is an unreasonable leap to suggest that it is distinct from the myth itself, especially when there is evidence and argument that even a passing reference to a myth can evoke a response to the entire myth (Barthes, 1972, 1982; Burke, 1955, 1989; Leach; Williams, 1977). Myths are so widely understood that Raymond Williams says we are 'saturated' by them, so recognizing the whole from a part or partial reference, or for that matter recognizing a myth in a folk tale in which that myth is diluted, adapted, or edited, is a reasonable position. While a glimpse of a part of the flag of the United States may not evoke precisely the same reaction as seeing the entire flag or seeing different images of it, the reaction is to the same, entire myth.

There is a common sense description I prefer: "...the more implicit the claimed mythic pattern, the less manifest evidence of the pattern within the text itself, the greater the burden of proof upon the critic to show its presence, either in subtle form in the material text, or as evident in the response of auditors" (Brummett, 1990, p. 127). Myths do not have to be presented intact in a text, they can work enthymematically, with some parts of them being recognized and evoking a reaction similar to expected reaction to the entire myth because the consumer knows the entire mythic narrative so very well (Brummett, 1990; Lule, 2001, 2002; Osborn; Rowland, 1990_a; Rushing; Solomon). The public's awareness of the mythic storylines allow media to make assumptions and leave out parts, perhaps deliberately so for fear their work may sound trite and overwritten, knowing the audience will fill them in: "Thus the invocation of one mythic characteristic may call into mind the entire myth. In this view the evidence that the work is treated as a true story is not in the text but rather in the way that the audience completes the enthymemes that are embedded in a variety of texts" (Rowland, 1990_b, p. 154). This is why news media are able to employ myth without having to slavishly reproduce a recognizable storyline.

In much the same manner, a text may resonate a myth even if the debate about the extent to which the myth is physically, identifiably present remains unsettled (Rowland, Rushing, Solomon, Brummett & Osborn). It may evoke it in a manner that does not use a specific image or storyline. There may be nothing overt in the text, but the text might, through various subtle triggers, bring to mind a myth and thus play a role similar to a text in which overt traces of myth do exist. This may be especially true in feature newspaper writing where building a narrative requires the writer to call on the skills of the fiction writer or essayist and where conveying complex images and meaning in a straightforward, descriptively engaging manner is a paramount skill. On occasions such as these it may be what is left out of the image or story that

delivers the power of the myth. On such occasions it is the critic's job to not only identify what has been left out but to assess the omission's rhetorical value.

Myths have a vanishing point, a position where the language of the mythic narrative dissolves into a general narrative, in the case of this work a news narrative, and is no longer distinct (Barthes, 1972, 1977; Burke, 1955). This is an inevitable situation given the quotidian ubiquity of myth. However, it is unlikely that a mythic narrative will be completely unrecognizable to a critic given that what vanishes are clear references and what remains are passages that it is reasonable to argue are places where the news consumers will make their own jump to mythic reference.

It is also possible for critics to assemble a mythic narrative from fragments within a text, to allow it to emerge by piecing together superficially unrelated passages of text, for example images, words or phrases: "The fragmentation of our American culture has resulted in a role reversal, making interpretation the primary task of speakers and writers and text construction the primary task of audiences readers and critics" (McGee, 1990). A fragmented presentation of foundational myths would arguably be a way for the myth to be received by a variety of audiences in a similar macro-manner, a hegemonic goal of those seeking to maintain fragmentation.

Since mythic stories are so well known, it is possible that myth can be invoked unintentionally or coincidentally. This is perhaps so because it can be inferred from the position of anthropologists and scholars such as Barthes and Williams that people reading material of social significance or material that suggests a normative social order will look to myth for reference points.

It is possible then that Hughes' base foundational myths can be presented as ideographs as that quality is described by Michael Calvin McGee. Liberty. Property. Rule of Law. Freedom of Speech. These words and phrases are, to most Americans, more pregnant than a detailed presentation of the concept could be, according to McGee (McGee, 1980). They are, he says, terms set apart from the general use of words and when used have a power of their own which must be recognized: "Thus they may be thought of as 'ideographs' for, like Chinese symbols, they 'signify and 'contain' a unique ideological commitment" (McGee, 1908, p. 7). I would argue that a big, powerful mythic story, even if presented in pieces or otherwise disguised, is known and understood as completely as the words and phrases McGee used as examples. What's more, McGee identifies the ideograph as a rhetorical and not a technical term. He argues that "... awareness of the way an ideograph can be meaningful now is controlled in large part by what it meant then." Their significance, he says, "is in their concrete history as usages, not in their alleged idea-content." (McGee, 1980, p. 10) This is, I propose, how Hughes' myths are perceived and processed by American audiences. Myth then, can emerge to the rhetorical critic from a text without ever being underlineable or isolatable in sentences or phrases because its ideographic quality creates a situation where readers react not to the receipt of information but to their instinctive understanding of the meaning beyond the construction.

The answer to the question of whether a reliance on foundational mythic rhetoric by news media would be influential benefits from another reference to McGee. In this case, he suggests a hegemonic process:

Social control in its essence is control over consciousness, the *a priori* influence that learned predispositions hold over human agents who play the roles of power and people in given transactions. The end product of the state's insistence on some degree of conformity in behavior and belief, I suggest, is a rhetoric of control, a system of persuasion presumed to be effective on the whole community. (McGee, 1980, p. 5)

Perhaps the most useful description of McGee ideographs for this dissertation comes not from McGee but from Celeste Michelle Condit:

An ideograph like liberty is *not* [italics in original] an idea (a content disembodied from any form); it is precisely a particular constellation of usages, identifiable solely by the specific forms it takes in past history and the present historical moment. The apparent simplicity of ideographs disguises a complex “dispositional” structure. ... It is simply that the disposition of an ideograph is to be found by reaching out to other parts of a text and to other texts, rather than by treating a phrase or text as self contained. (Condit, 1990, p. 332)

America's Foundational Myths

In America, the most broadly accepted myths, the most encompassing of all citizens and thus the most potentially influential, are the ones based on the foundation of the country. Both Bellah and Hughes have addressed America's foundational myths. Bellah argues that because of the divisions and diversity of early American culture, something that arose when citizens with a wide variety of backgrounds arrived to find no class structure into which they would fit themselves but with a wide choice of religions, the new country had to find a way to maintain religious freedom and belief but somehow live together a peaceful, cohesive society. Early and pre-revolutionary America evolved beyond the religious antagonisms brought from Europe and based the modern state on a civil religion, a set of beliefs that bound people together, and, in much the same way as a religion provided a social and cultural structure according to Bellah. The virtues and values of the emerging society became its nondenominational, organic God (Bellah; Bellah & Hammond; Hughes). Civil religion was built, assembled as Bellah suggests, as a social process:

The original conception [basically of America] which has never ceased to be operative, was based on an imaginative religious and moral conception of life that took account of a much broader range of social, ethical, aesthetic and religious needs than the utilitarian model can deal with. (Bellah, p. xxi)

It is interesting here to note that Gramsci observed that in Europe with relatively few religious denominations there was a great variety of political parties, while in America with a great variety of religious denominations there were few political parties (Gramsci).

Religious centrality gave way to a social centrality, but core social values were still based on the religious values they had sprung from (Habermas; Weber). There was a disconnect, but not a rupture, between a purely religious-based society and a secular society relying on general protestant Christian religious principles as they became prominent in America. The development of widespread modern capitalism eventually did create a rupture but, perhaps because Americans needed to stay closely attached to the foundational myths that they felt embodied who they were and to the religious base from which they had developed, continued to praise the old-fashioned Puritan-Capitalism as their River God. There is of course an argument that there is a psychological as well as social and cultural effect at work here.

Wealth was not only a danger to one's chances of salvation; it was, the Puritan leaders feared, a danger to the community, a force that could break down social cohesion. It was personal morality rather than any financial consideration or economic system that acted as a brake on wealth accumulation. The moral thing to do was put community above wealth accumulation. As capitalism expanded the brakes were released as moral pressures became far less convincing, but in the myth that has endured morality remained the leading barometer of the right and wrong of wealth accumulation (Bellah; Hughes). The myth copes with the dissonance created when,

...the economics system of late industrial America cannot be reconciled with the fundamental American ideology of economic independence as the basis of political order. That ideology we have never abandoned though it has described our social reality less accurately with every passing decade. (Bellah, p. 121)

Gramsci suggests that for original beliefs, and here he was referring to religious beliefs, to remain valued over time within a society, even if their formal presentation is changed, there needs to be some organic connection, that is, some core values that remain intact over time even if their public presentation, and thus their recognized symbols, changes. The foundational myths of America fulfill such a function (Gramsci).

Hughes outlines these foundational myths, which may also be called the country's myths of origin. The myth of the chosen nation, he says, was the first of the myths to gain currency and prominence in early Puritan-America. The new Americans believed that they had been chosen by God to bring a new form of society into being, one where each person worked for the good of the entire community, where there was equality among citizens and the restrictions, barriers, injustices and historical class separations and privileges of old European nations would not appear. The myth of nature's nation holds that the America the Puritans came to was a place where God's natural design could still flourish, uncompromised and unadulterated by centuries of man-made changes to that plan which established how people were governed, as was the case in Europe. In America, according to the myth, man could still identify God's blueprint as a natural phenomenon.

The myth of the Christian nation presents the idea that America alone manifests Christian principles in governance, that only here is government built on those principles rather than any man or groups' preferences. The myth of the millennial nation posits that America will free the people of the rest of the world from the oppression of flawed rules and rulers, bringing liberty, justice and truth to mankind and ushering in a new age where all men live in peace as God intended. Absolutized, said Hughes, this myth would lead to the assumption of America's

manifest destiny, where you got freedom whether you wanted it or not (e.g. Cuba and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War), and with it came American business.

The myth of the innocent nation refers to the idea that America is a natural phenomenon and as such beyond the reproach of the European nations whose authority is derived from hereditary power or naked force. In its innocence, America is not tainted by the selfish, venal, and corrupt faults of the old world, and acts solely to pursue God's plan.

Capitalism was not one of the foundational myths, said Hughes, but "the relevance is that, as capitalism entrenched itself in American life, it drew its legitimacy from all the myths I have considered in this book" (p. 126). It is this myth I have called the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

I do not claim these myths as accurate historically or politically, nor do I need to. They took hold of the American consciousness as mythic stories. Myth does not work by telling unchallengeable tales supported by data; it is not a quantitative exercise, but rather reflects and supports, and even creates, ideological positions. A basis in historical fact is a necessary, but not sufficient, cause for myth to be influential.

Myth must remain anchored to its origins while being flexible enough to adapt to the reality of changing conditions. It must be broad enough to adapt to different eras but in that adaptation must not abandon its original premises, it must not betray its origins. Hughes argues that when absolutized, America's foundational myths led to excesses, for example the treatment of African Americans and Native Americans, that bastardized the principals of the myths. Yet the original myths endure. Emile Durkheim suggests how this evolution may take place. He helps explain how a modern perception can be rooted in old ideas yet have little true connection with them except in a perception that the original ideas are still central to the concept at issue:

Between a systematized hallucination and the first impression which gave it birth, the distance is often considerable. It is the same thing with a religious thought. In proportion as it progresses in history, the causes which called it into existence, though remaining active, are no longer perceived, except across a vast scheme of interpretations which quite transform them. Popular mythologies and subtle theologies have done their work: they have superimposed upon the primitive sentiments others which are quite different, and which, though holding to the first, of which they are an elaborate form, only allow their true nature to appear very imperfectly (Durkheim, p. 22).

Commerce became basic to Puritan life in the New England colonies. Even in Puritan times, the leaders saw commerce beginning to be more influential than faith, the beginning of a shift from Puritan America to Yankee America. Herein lay the basics of the mythologization of American capitalism. As capitalism emerged in the colonies, Americans, under the leadership of Christian churches, supposed that competition was a good thing and it was natural, that it fit comfortably into a new country defining itself as 'chosen,' 'natural;' 'innocent' and 'Christian' (Bellah; Hughes; Weber).

My argument is that the myth of Puritan-American capitalism developed not only out of the church-backed early years but out of a need to reconcile a force that was, as it modernized, both potentially destructive and constructive with a view of America based in the five major myths Hughes delineates. American commercial freedom, based on self-interest with a Calvinist credo, had built early America and propelled it towards a revolution (Bellah; Hughes; Weber). But capitalism in America expanded and eventually developed to a point where personal gain was more important than community gain, and personal gain became its main driving force, and the Puritan-American capitalism myth developed to enshrine its original nobility.

Early Americans had recognized the potential of an independent capitalism and warned against profit beyond need, an indication that Church leaders at the time already saw America as an ideal, a unique, shining city on a hill (Bellah; Hughes).

Such public warning also raises the question of whether the early years were as solidly behind the community-first spirit as we might think, or whether or not church and community leaders, who were one and the same, were misreading, deliberately or not, the economic force the New World has released. The capitalism of the young colonies was perhaps simply gathering steam under the guise of community building while in fact it was cycling through a developmental step between examples of localized capitalism and widespread capitalism. Weber sees it as such, arguing that the American colonies adoption of capitalism as a community builder was inevitably followed by capitalism's next stage, although he stops short of Marx in claiming the process to be an historical and economic inevitability. Weber credits the colonists with unleashing modern capitalism in America for same reasons the myth claims; community, family, and Christian church-building created conditions ripe for expanding capitalism (Weber).

The Puritan-American capitalism myth then does not develop organically from early capitalism but from the need to reconcile runaway capitalism with the American role as the chosen, natural, innocent, and Christian nation.

Alexis De Tocqueville saw the struggle between a capitalism that pushed against restraint and sought what we might call today to be governed only by the free market, and the Puritans ethicists and dogmatists who sought to constrain capitalism so that it worked primarily as a force for God, community, and family that linked the worth of capitalist endeavors to public-spirited, self-sacrificing public good. But as capitalism moved into the modern era and a civil religion fell into place, religious restraint, De Tocqueville's mitigating variable in the pursuit of economic wealth and power, was no longer the responsibility of religion (Tocqueville):

De Tocqueville saw that naked self interest is the surest solvent of a republican regime, and he saw the commercial tendencies of the American people as unleashing the possibility of the unrestrained pursuit of self-interest. But he saw religion as the great restraining element that could turn naked self-interest into what he called 'self-interest

rightly understood,' that is, self-interest that was public spirited and capable of self-sacrifice (Bellah, p. 180).

It is interesting to consider that in founding myths, religion and sectarian ideals intertwine. Religion was not abandoned in the process of myth development. Where the varied protestant sects lived together under a sort of general Christianity, the myths were used as a transitional umbrella when secularity began to dominate social life in America and were firmly incorporated into the modern myth. It is a process of myth-building that may well be uniquely American:

Because the American people have never been characterized by a level of ethnic or religious homogeneity that has historically marked the inhabitants of most other nations, Americans have always had to imagine their national political community in alternative yet compelling ways. (Beasley, p. 5)

A National Fantasy

I will argue that this process of imagination on a national scale was, and is, based in myth. Individuals recognizing America's myths of origin do not only take passive comfort from them and use them for private assessments of the America and Americans around them. They also, I would posit, employ them as a basis for discourses about America and Americans. In doing so they are, I think, part of a process best described by Ernest Bormann.

According to Bormann, there are shared fantasies embedded in public discourse. Themes found within group discussion can become messages that function in a dramatic way to connect audiences, and this creates situations where they can be studied rhetorically. Bormann's theory is known as symbolic convergence theory, which assumes that communication creates or at least contributes to reality, and that symbolic worlds can overlap and create not only individual meaning but a shared reality or community consciousness. His method for studying the

phenomenon is known as fantasy theme criticism or fantasy theme analysis. Bormann based his description of fantasy themes and fantasy theme analysis on the work of psychologist Robert Bales, who looked at ways “a small group collectively participates in creating a drama that constructs social reality for that group” (Bormann, 1972, p. 247). Bormann argued that large groups do the same thing, creating at a macro, mass media, level what he terms a rhetorical vision, a sort of mass daydream. These mass fantasies, according to Bormann, are a vehicle that helps explain social and cultural movements and practices, and may be studied as they are broken down from their individual beginning until they are taken up by more and more people. Essentially, a rhetorical vision is a publicly shared drama, its storyline amended to fit circumstance and to provide comfort, optimism, and a shared social identity and reality. It is a coping mechanism, a tool for individuals looking for their place within “the panorama of large events and seemingly unchangeable forces of society a large” (Bormann, 1972, p. 251).

Myth does not arise at individual levels, it is a story already held in common by a society and thus known to its members. But I would argue that the process Bormann identifies addresses myth. The original impetus within a group toward “creating a drama that constructs social reality for that group” relies on a common urge, what Bormann called individuals looking for their place in a society. In such strivings myth will have its influence since, as Williams says, we are saturated by it, and as Barthes says, it is everywhere in everyday life (Bormann, 1972, 1982).

Surely news media might be complicit in the spread or maintenance of a broadly shared rhetorical vision. In smaller groups, the fantasy theme is easily manageable as an interpersonal exchange, but on a national scale there needs to be an enabler, a way of sharing the discourse and being able to participate in it. News media fulfill that function when they rely on our foundational myths for narrative scaffolding. They constantly disseminate recognizable messages

into the America community. In this case, of course, the rhetorical vision is already established and is simply being reinforced.

In a very early America without myths of its own, there would have to be a process for their development. Looking back at Bales' work, Bormann claims "the most important discovery for the integration of communication and rhetorical theory...was the process by which a zero-history group used fantasy chains to develop a common culture" (p. 249). The group ignored comments which did not relate to their problems or did not resonate with their individual psychodynamics: "Those that did get the members of the group to empathize, to improvise on the same theme, or to respond emotionally not only reflected the members' common preoccupations but served to make those commonalities public" (p 249). It is surely possible that early Americans followed something of this process in developing the myths that their society needed but did not have.

The mythic stories that developed and were accepted were considered to be reflections of reality by the early settlers. Walter Fisher says that, 'from the narrative view, each of these concepts [Bormann's rhetorical visions] translates into dramatic stories constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them. They are thus 'rhetorical fictions,' constructions of fact and faith having persuasive force, rather than fantasies" (Fisher, 1987).

Importantly, for this dissertation, Bormann argues rhetorical visions contain the motives that compell people to be a part of them, and examining the rhetoric of the group to find member's motivation is more efficient than searching for clues for embedded motives in any psycho-social makeup of members: "Certainly the discovery and appreciation of rhetorical visions should be one possible function of criticism" (Bormann, 1972, p. 258). It is possible that these American foundational myths remain powerful because they are delivered from a credible

message source, news media, which is essential if the theme is to be picked up and spread (or ‘chained’ as Bormann called it). I would note too that fantasy themes can function as quasi-ideographs: “Evidence of the sharing of fantasies includes cryptic allusions to symbolic common ground. When people have shared a fantasy theme, they have charged that theme with meanings and emotions that can be set off by an agreed-upon cryptic symbolic clue” (Foss, p. 110).

The exchanges Bormann refers to are not idle conversations; they are anchored in a desire to find common ground and references. Fantasy themes “help people transcend the everyday and provide meaning for an audience” (Bormann, 1972, p. 253), something I would argue myth also does, but myth is buried far deeper in culture. As a graphic example of this process in action, Bormann ironically cites the rhetorical vision embedded in preaching by Puritan ministers during the harsh early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Daily life was extremely hard with few niceties or luxuries, nor for that matter any certainty that their physical existence would get much better, “But the Puritans of Colonial New England led an internal fantasy life of mighty grandeur and complexity. They participated in a rhetorical vision that saw the migration to the new world as a holy exodus of God’s chosen people. The Biblical drama that supported their vision was that of the journey of the Jews from Egypt into Canaan” (Bormann, 1972, p. 253). That journey motif will reappear in all of the texts under examination in this dissertation. Bormann also succinctly notes the process Weber elaborated: “...since, in their view nothing happened by chance, the prospering of worldly affairs was evidence of their ability to please God (Without this dramatic line one might well expect that a vision that emphasized the afterlife would result in contemplative inaction in this life)” [parentheses in original] (Bormann, 1972, p. 255).

So in what Hughes identifies as myth, Bormann finds an originating group fantasy. The myths cited by Hughes could be considered rhetorical visions, part of a communal fantastic

discourse, and in this view they would be seen as becoming entrenched to the point of becoming the basis of future flights of common fantasizing. Bormann also conceded that reality intrudes on group fantasies and both discursive material and fantasy themes (Bormann, 1972), something the critic must be mindful of.

The American Spirit of Capitalism

German sociologist Max Weber described a system of public belief that Bormann, I think, would concede is a description of the public of citizenry, albeit here citizens in a new country with little history to guide them finding themes and commonalities on which to build new ideas, not just recognize their affinity with the old. What they recognized in themselves, and about themselves, became who they were and did not need reconciliation to the way of old regimes, even if it did to the ways of the new religious freedom they shared.

Weber examined the system the Puritans brought to the new American colonies, most notably in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In 1904 and 1905, Weber outlined, in a two-part essay, an explanation that I would argue is in some ways similar to the hegemony concept the Italian Gramsci describes.

Weber's essays, later published as a book, suggested that religious, cultural, and social psychologies, independent of overtly political or state forces, could be determinants of social and commercial organization. Unlike Gramsci, Weber does not suggest hegemonic motives in the development and delivery of those psychologies. The prime motivation for Weber's investigation, as even most of his critics concede, was to continue his work as an historical sociologist. The work is in fact best seen as part of his overall research and not as a single event. Weber set out to look for sources of the psychological structures he saw in modern capitalism

that he said held that “life should be organized around systematic world and material success, and to argue that this manner of organizing life played a significant part in calling forth the spirit of capitalism” (Kalberg, p. xiii). Weber basically “wished to demonstrate that one important source of the modern work ethic and orientation to material success, which he calls the ‘spirit of capitalism,’ is located outside the realm of ‘this-worldly’ utilitarian concerns and business astuteness”(Kalberg, p. xiv). Weber is not strictly the scientist, he is as observational as he is scientific. He was being critically inventive, which to some extent I hope I am being, experimenting and looking for evidence that would fill blanks in his own understanding, not devoted to proving something to the statistical satisfaction of social science. I argue that Weber’s description is a plausible and persuasive social and cultural map, and what he described is what Bellah and Hughes would later recognize and build upon. In other words Weber does not identify history in Marxist structural economic materialist terms but rather as, initially, a product of primarily social rather than economic pressures, and primarily in psychological terms.

Weber did not set out to, nor did he ever claim to, find a single source for modern capitalism. It is via confusion on this point that Weber is perhaps most maligned by critics who fault him for daring to claim to explain the origins of and the rise of modern industrial western capitalism. He accepted that capitalism itself had already existed for centuries, successful to different degrees in different situations. But, he said, it was a limited phenomenon, not a continent-spanning, everyday, modern, widespread capitalism. Weber compared capitalism in Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (where profit for its own sake was ethically unjustifiable) to economically backward eighteenth-century Pennsylvania (where a spirit of capitalism was ‘understood as the essence of a morally acceptable, even praiseworthy way of organizing and directing life’). Capitalism itself, either during its founding or afterward, he

concluded, did not produce the ‘spirit of capitalism,’ the psychological circumstances that allowed American capitalism to evolve (Weber).

Weber looked at spreading capitalism in the new America and wondered about its origins. After all, it had not been a predominant way of life in the Europe the Puritans left behind. He went looking and he found John Calvin. It was Calvin’s powerful revelations of the way Christians should live their lives that provided Weber with the key to his understanding of basic modern American capitalism.

John Calvin and ascetic Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries taught that the world existed solely to serve God’s glory. One’s life should be dedicated to contributing to the creation of God’s kingdom here on earth, he said. But the strict teaching of Calvin and the ascetic Protestants which taught that God favored some but not all lead to a serious problem among adherents: were they among the saved or the lost? They could never know for sure, only God did, but since they were taught that God desired, and would be pleased by, a thriving community of hard-working, successful people, they could assume that if they were one of the people building such a community, they might be among the saved. In predestination theology, humans have no control over salvation. They cannot earn God’s grace; their fate is entirely in God’s hands. But in early America, prosperity became understood as a possible sign of this grace, a sign that one might be among the saved. So now, when working towards a thriving community was a way for believers to labor towards finding a possible sign of God’s favoring them, personal wealth became, in effect, actual evidence that they had a shot at redemption:

An omnipotent and omniscient God would never allow one of the condemned to praise His glory. Surely, ‘the acquisition of wealth, when it was the *fruit* [italics in original] of work in a vocational calling, [was a sign] God’s blessing. (Weber, p. 116)

Similarly, the opportunity to compete with others to make a profit did not appear by chance; rather, it constituted to believers an opportunity given by God to acquire wealth:

If God show you a way in which you *may*, in accord with his laws, acquire *more profit* than in another way, without wrong to your soul or to any other and if you refuse this, choosing the less profitable course, *you then cross one of the purposes of your calling. You are refusing to be God's steward*, and to accept his gifts, in order to be able to use them for Him when He requireth it. *You may labor, for God, to become rich*, [italics in original] though not for the flesh and sin. (Weber, p. 116)

Here is the foundation of the Puritan work ethic. It is important to my work because that ethic is at the base of the modern Puritan-American capitalism myth described by Hughes.

Weber emphasizes repeatedly that, for the Puritans, the need for some tangible sign of salvation was crucial to the way they made choices about how to live their lives. The exercise of astute business skills, for example in operating a successful farm, or the acquisition of money, perhaps in the form of acquiring land, were not ends in themselves. On the contrary, to strive for riches just to live well, especially better than others who were in need, could only be considered sinful. Working then was working for God; it was a calling. Enough commercial success and wealth to be able to raise and care for a family and to contribute to community needs was a sign of salvation. A thriving community with its buildings and commerce was also a sign that the community was favored by God. Excessive wealth by itself was not a salvational sign.

These values lay the foundations for Hughes' American capitalist myth, though by the standards of modern capitalism they are obsolete. While outdated, they are romanticized and firmly tied to America's assumed heritage; they are widely recognized, and thus attractive to the modern press. They are myth. They present modern capitalism with its human face, the face we prefer to see it wearing. The American capitalist myth essentially allows us to accept that modern American capitalism echoes and is a natural heir to the haloed founding values of the country as we imagine them. Doing so disguises modern social differences, including class differences, by

insisting that beneath those differences we all share a common understanding of our past and future and a common attachment to it. It suggests unity is the norm and divisions are aberrations. While there is a need for a convention, a communication protocol to accomplish social cohesion, that convention can and is also subject to manipulation by those in power.

For Weber, Ben Franklin was both a poster boy for the Puritan ethic at work in the new America and, eventually, an exemplar of some of the significant changes to the ethic that occurred as America grew. While he was not perhaps personally a classic all-around Puritan, Franklin was seen by Weber as the epitome of man succeeding in creating wealth primarily for God and for the benefit on his community. But Weber also had to concede that Franklin, and other Americans like him, eventually became animated to be successful far more by secular and far less by religious motives than had the Puritans. Franklin's story is something of a milestone in Weber's analysis. He had found that Franklin and others like him came to be no longer looked upon as favored by God because of their success, but had rather become primarily recognized as simply good citizens of good character. The work and success that had been seen as religious qualities were beginning to be seen as secular qualities (Weber).

Weber continued to hold that ascetic Protestantism was the base on which Franklin had built his character. So, according to Stephen Kalberg, "a conundrum appears. How had the ethical dimension in the Protestant ethic, now shorn of its legitimating certainty-of-salvation component and lacking a sustainable *religious* [italics in original] community, survived into the eighteenth century?" (p. xv). Weber's answer was that the values had spread from the churches into families, schools, and communities, and from those new bases proceeded to instill the old values, including the wealth-acquiring protocol, into a new generation. But in this process profit was freed from its chain links to religion, and as De Tocqueville feared, profit was eventually

able to become an end in itself and the religious foundation of the ethic remained in name, and in myth, only.

Capitalism as a system of routines and conventions had taken over from capitalism as a way of life chosen by both Puritan and God, as Weber saw it. But part of its power came from the use of the Puritan-American myth being used to convince people that it was in fact not at all new but an extension, an organic expansion, of the same old foundational system that America's first generations had venerated and used to build and define community and country. The news media, I argue, were the pre-eminent banner carriers in this convincing.

My argument is that this transition of the Puritan-American capitalist ideology from a religious to a secular base is what eventually allowed the myth Hughes identified to develop. Without this transition, it is entirely possible the break between the era of true Puritan capitalism and the era of modern American capitalism would have been too wide to jump. Bormann's fantasy themes do not survive such fractures in time. The theme must develop constantly, a process well identified by both Durkheim and Gramsci. Of course my argument is also, coinciding with Hughes, that the fantasy did mature into a national daydream, one which is dynamically negotiated as it is told and retold.

Looking at the modern America of his day, Weber found what he called victorious capitalism firmly entrenched, sustaining itself on the basis of a means-end rational action alone. Work no longer had its old Puritan meaning. Activity originally motivated by values and ideas had 'collapsed' and become 'routinized,' he said. The means-end rational action characteristic of sheer utilitarian calculations "surreptitiously shoved itself under the original constellation of ideas and value-rationalization, and now alone carried methodological work. Today, an inescapable network of pragmatic necessities overwhelms the individual" (Weber). Weber saw

modern American capitalism and its news media as contributors to the increasing rationalization of society, a process whereby stricter and stricter social and economic rules, supported by an increasingly influential and rigid bureaucracy, compelled citizens to do what they had done before by choice. Progress had created for citizens an ‘iron cage’ (p. 120), he said. The new system essentially did not allow people to opt out or choose alternatives, for without working within modern bureaucratic and economic protocols, the essentials of a livelihood are not necessarily within reach.

Weber’s work is problematic in a number of ways. There have been a number of complaints and challenges to the book. British sociologist Anthony Giddens’ claims are a usable summary of the main thrusts of the opposition claims: (1) He misunderstood Protestantism and ‘calling’: (2) he misinterpreted Catholic doctrine; (3) there is no real close association between Calvinism and capitalistic enterprise; (4) he deliberately made too much of the differences between older capitalism and the new form he identified as springing from Calvinism; and (5) his method was faulty and causality not shown (Giddens, 1976).

But Weber is still centrally useful. Whether critics of Weber’s methods, arguments and findings have a case or not, to any degree, is not destructive to my work. Whether or not he got the connection between Puritanism and capitalism right, what Weber identified and described is an early American psychological and cultural landscape that is woven into America’s foundational myths as we understand them today. Hughes and Bellah posit this. The mythologizing process blurs specifics because of its big-picture mentality. Even those who concede it is unlikely the George Washington took a hatchet and lowered his father’s cherry tree then ‘fessed up’ will remain influenced by the idea of the essential honesty of the American character ensconced in the myth his alleged action exemplifies. Myths are not brought down

through technical inaccuracy or inconsistency. The mythic stories that grow within a culture are not exact copies of events; they are constantly repeated narratives that embody social and cultural values and assumptions made recognizable and useable by being delivered and understood in story form (Barthes, 1972, 1987; Burke, 1955; Eliade, 1958, 1992; Leach). The Puritan-American capitalist myth was able to retain in its presentation a religious and community focus despite the fact that the modern capitalist machine no longer relies on these foci.

Changes in the Public Sphere

But as the machinery of capitalism developed and values became more socially and culturally based in America, the country did not similarly move on from beliefs in, and celebration of, our myths of origin. In a country enamored of change and newness, they did not change. Certainly one factor was the need for a society to have its own myths, but America had already defied the conventional wisdom of how society is constructed and functions so it would not be a complete surprise if those nascent myths continued to evolve and lost contact with their origins. America's news media, as town crier and record keeper in the public sphere, played a significant role in the enshrinement of the Puritan-American capitalism myth.

As religious-based motivation and justification for hard work and money making was being overtaken by modern social *raison d'être*, and as the capitalist structure in America was reaching a stage of sophistication that would eventually transform it, American news media were similarly proceeding through their own transformation from a public to a private, commercial, endeavor.

Where Weber saw the Puritan work ethic being subsumed by the machinery of a rapidly expanding nation and its modernizing capitalism, Jurgen Habermas found a contemporaneous

transformation in American newspapers. Puritan-era newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides abided by the Puritan ethic, and their producers saw themselves as working primarily for the good of community, an integral part of early America's free and open 'public sphere' contributing to and conveying discussions on public issues from independence to local politics. But they were transformed by the power of developing modern capitalism to the point where newspapers became a product and its primary quality was that it could be and had to be, profitable (Habermas; Kalberg; Weber). Habermas conceded that modern newspapers still sought to fulfill a public role and did so, generally, independently. But a compromise had been made.

Habermas' public sphere is a broad arena, a forum for ideas, a public access blacksmith's barn where the collective will of the citizenry can be forged. As America, and later other liberal political orders took over from old monarchical systems, private individuals come together to discuss the public affairs of the community, discussion formerly limited, at least if they were to be influential, to the aristocracy. Newspapers were a vibrant, and accelerating, part of that private citizenry's public discussion (Habermas; Hallin, 1985).

Although made in 1831-32, sometime after the Golden Age of American newspapers according to Habermas, Alexis de Tocqueville's observations about America newspapers showed them as vital in the public sphere:

In America there is scarcely a hamlet which has not its newspaper. It may readily be imagined that neither discipline nor unity of action can be established among so many combatants; and each one consequently fights under its own standard. (Tocqueville, p. 94)

Interestingly, de Tocqueville noted not only that there were a lot of newspapers in early America and that they presented a wide range of positions and ideas, but there were so many, all so easily and cheaply set up, that most could not expect to be significantly profitable. But, without the

demands of making more than an adequate profit, they relished wading into the debates of the public sphere.

America's earliest newspapers served local communities and displayed none of the design features that would later develop as standard presentation formats for newspapers. They were bound up with and identified with their communities. They were idiosyncratic weekly publications of local businessmen with a variety of backgrounds, characters and purposes rather than predictable productions simply because they were newspapers, although they shared a similar blandness because of their lack of design sophistication.

In the nineteenth century, circulation spread as technology allowed, and newspapers became closely associated and identified with political parties, openly delivering partisan-shaped reports with a distinct point of view and so reaching distinct audiences. Significant daily newspapers appeared and a wider range of subjects were covered. By the 1830s, increasing urban populations and technology developments lead to the "penny press" revolution, a rapid expansion of newspapers printing more local news and selling cheaply. This lead to more readers, more advertisers, and in turn more competition, and eventually the development of the newspaper as a sophisticated, profit-driven commercial enterprise. Now, rather than the narrow audience of a political party, more newspapers sought a broad audience for more profit, writing for and creating new sections and features for news consumers rather than people of a particular political persuasion.

With this process came an increasing predictability in the newspaper as individual owners were more businessman than many of their predecessors. By the early twentieth century, the pressure to be both deliverer of news and commercial enterprise became problematic at newspapers, and this confrontation spurred the beginning of a movement to make news a neutral,

objective commodity. It was also at this time that the first journalism schools began to appear, a development that helped transform news reporting into a profession (Schudson, 1978).

The public sphere as Habermas describes, is not simply a public assembly of people, although such gatherings are clear exemplars of it at work. It is the institutionalized collection of public discussion and thought that can potentially be collected into what might be called public opinion, even if that is an assumed consensus or assessment of public mood. It is the formative stages of public thought. In early America, Habermas found the conditions that guaranteed an open public sphere: accessibility of public forums to nearly all residents, be they street corners, taverns or public buildings, the absence of a prior privileges that could dominate, direct, or negate public desire at will, and a rational, open, and simple structure for public discourse (Habermas).

The cultural and social influences on what people thought, discussed, exchanged, and spoke of publicly were significant contributions in the public sphere, as were the events occurring in the new land. They were recorded and passed to the people in a number of ways, with newspapers becoming perhaps the most important. Habermas defined the public sphere as quite distinct from the state (as did Gramsci). It was not a part of the state at all; in fact, the two entities were not only separate but opponents in that they both sought to influence the way life in the young America was lived. To Habermas, the public sphere mediates between society and the state. Gramsci also recognized the same process. The state was distinct from the private agencies that influenced public thinking, according to Gramsci, and media was one of the latter.

Newspapers were indeed in use to oppose, or at least to counterweight, public authority itself in early America. In a developing market economy, Habermas, argued (as cited in Hallin, 1985, p. 138), “*The bourgeois public sphere* [italics in original] could be understood as the

sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated ‘intellectual newspapers’ for public authority on the general rules of social intercourse in their fundamentally privatized yet publicly relevant sphere of labor and commodity exchange.”

Writing about the first modern constitutions and their society, Habermas recognizes the important role played by daily newspapers in the second half of the eighteenth century as literary journalism developed and replaced earlier general news sheets which were usually little more than collections of notices. From there, they developed into both transmitters of public opinion and leaders in the formation of public opinion. In doing so, they became both more structured in terms of production and eventually more reliant on business models either to stay in business or show a profit, at the same time that the profession of journalism was influenced by technological advances under capitalism and built routines around them. The newspaper became influential through what it chose to print and how it chose to go about its reporting. It became part of the consumer culture (Habermas; Hallin, 1985).

Early America was not the only place where independent public sphere journalism was found. It is apparent to some extent during periods of revolution, when newspapers of the smallest political groups and organizations sprang up, for instance in Paris in 1789. Pamphlets and broadsheets in England during the Civil War in the 1640s and pamphlets in Eastern Europe during the challenges to modern Communist governments are other examples. In America and in France, the newspaper had proven a worthy revolutionary citizen: “Until the permanent legalization of a politically functional public sphere, the appearance of a political newspaper meant joining the struggle for freedom and public opinion, and thus for the public sphere as a principle” (Habermas; Hallin, 1985, p. 140). Habermas lamented that, “Only with the

establishment of the bourgeois constitutional state was the intellectual press relieved of the pressure of its convictions. Since then it has been able to abandon its polemical position and take advantage of the earning possibilities of a commercial undertaking” (Habermas, P 76). The journalism found in the newspapers was transformed, said Habermas, from one of conviction to one of commerce.

Habermas would eventually be accused by some critics as describing an overly simple model, as employing the Frankfurt School and Althusserian approach in decrying the media’s decline as little more than a predictable market inevitability: “Habermas is wrong in portraying the history of journalism as a decline from a golden age. But he is right in the contention that the logics of commodity production and of state power now intrude into the production of the news in ways they once did not” (Hallin, 1994, p. 6). Habermas provided an overview; his critics broke it down into smaller pieces with its attendant aberrations and contradictions, yet conceded that news is now influenced by commercial and political pressures. With the influence conceded, the only debate is the degree, and that will surely vary with time and circumstance.

While it is reasonable to lay the blame for this transition at the feet of the owners of the newspapers, journalists also had to change. It is interesting to note that Gramsci saw journalists as being drawn into the role of what he called traditional intellectuals, a group he compared to those he called organic intellectuals. The latter group arose naturally from within a social group or class, aware of their role as subordinate to the ruling class and able to fight for recognition and definition that would eventually define and possibly elevate that group. The traditional intellectual, whatever his origins, was essentially allied with the ruling class, his work and ideas supportive of their dominant hegemonic position. Nascent organic intellectuals could be drawn into a traditional role under the influence of hegemonic negotiations. Gramsci, himself a

crusading journalist, seems to have seen the profession as one full of the promise of producing organic intellectuals to oppose ruling classes, only to find that most became traditional intellectuals. Gramsci, a fearless journalist, apparently saw journalists as having the potential that both Weber and Habermas seems to have credited them with in the early American years of the profession, but then willingly, or least without much of a fight, trading those powers for an institutionalized security.

The Frankfurt School

The organic intellectual journalist, such as the early American journalist, Gramsci might argue, was entrenched in a position of skepticism and dedicated to not only representing but being a part of and identified with subaltern groups in challenging the dominance of the ruling classes. But once the transition to a commercial base was complete and journalists had become traditional intellectuals, news media had commoditized the role. Their challenge became a proxy, and journalists were now hybridized, traditional intellectuals claiming to function as organic intellectuals. Objectivity, the profession argued, was the device that enabled them to continue to function as challengers to the commercial class to which they belonged. The news media's challenge then became formalized.

Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer provided a powerful description of the media after its journey from a journalism of conviction to one of commerce. The phrase 'culture industry' was first used by Adorno and Horkheimer, in 1947 and their examination of modern media became some of the best-known works attributed to the Frankfurt School, a collection of Marxist-oriented social scientists gathered at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt am Main in Germany in the 1930s before fleeing the Nazis to continue their work in

the United States (Adorno, 1989; Adorno & Horkheimer). Habermas was himself associated with the Frankfurt School.

Hegemony theory is at work in the school's thinking, especially the argument that a deliberate distortion of social reality can be identified in the processes that maintain those in power:

The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School – Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Horkheimer – were primarily concerned with how ideology distorted people's perceptions of reality. Borrowing heavily from George Lukacs's concept of reification, the Frankfurt School theorists argued a social relationships and social interests were concealed by belief systems that disguised domination and power. (Artz & Murphy, p. 51)

The Frankfurt School scientists argued that a dominant cultural hegemony, "incorporated much less that can be clearly identified with subordinate class practice. Contemporary capitalist hegemony has negotiated more by way of avoidance, diversion and cover-up" (Artz & Murphy, p. 289). So class differences, the distinct interests of women or racial minorities for example, were subsumed by a single overarching ideology. Those differences blurred and made secondary, hegemony was an easier matter of manipulating fewer, broader, scenarios.

Adorno and Horkheimer saw modern culture as a product, an industry in the service of modern capitalism. Fellow Frankfurter Marcuse in his book *One-Dimensional Man* saw popular culture as increasingly homogenous and argued that complex cultural landscapes were essentially bulldozed flat by modern industrial cultures, their original topography replaced by a false one, a genuinely-varied culture replaced by a fake, a Potemkin village that served the ruling classes. The media, said Marcuse, accepted the dominant social order as enclosing all that was rational and valuable about modern life within its borders and thus considered ideas from beyond those boundaries as essentially meaningless (Marcuse). The debate the media took part in was contained entirely within the boundaries of the existing social order. The consciousness they

produced, moreover, he said, was one-dimensional; it accepted the existing social order as defining the limits of rationality and sought merely to reflect that order, rejecting any attempt to speak of values or possibilities beyond it. Capitalism, they argued, threw roadblocks and other deliberate distortions into what had been an open public sphere, restricting its former openness and limiting its ability to remain a cauldron of social change (Hallin, 1985).

The Frankfurt School argued that “the media were capable of producing an ideological consensus tight enough that the possibility of opposition to the existing structure of society became extremely problematic” (Hallin, 1985, p. 123).

One outcome of this situation was that it became difficult to distinctly recognize the real needs of people from those created by capitalism’s false consciousness. This leads to the possibility that readers of American mainstream news may not be able to, not in fact even see a reason to, determine differences between the cultural foundations they encounter and their potential differences from them. I will argue that a poor immigrant may more willingly identify with a chance to climb America’s socio-economic ladder, however slight that chance, than to see himself primarily as a member of permanent social underclass.

The Frankfurt School claimed that given social order, the status quo as it were, had supplanted a diverse concept of human freedom as the dominant idea presented by the media.

Adorno argued of the culture industry that,

The concepts of order which it hammers into human beings are always those of the status quo. ... In contrast to the Kantian, the categorical imperative of the culture industry no longer has anything in common with freedom. It proclaims: You shall conform, without instruction as to what; conform to that which exists anyway, and to that which everyone thinks anyway as a reflex of its power and omnipresence. (Adorno, p. 133)

To the Frankfurt School, media were complicit in producing an ideological consensus that was so focused that oppositional views of social structures had little chance of building enough

support to challenge the status quo. The Frankfurt School argued that the development of a culture industry led to tighter boundaries on what was being discussed in the public sphere and narrower ranges of deviation from what was acceptable even within those shrinking limits. Here, the Frankfurters echo Gramsci, who said the ruling classes used media to contain ideas and social groups that might develop the potential to challenge them, and did so by essentially building and then monitoring and maneuvering a dominant ideology through civil agencies and institutions (Gramsci). It is worth noting here that Gramsci was an elected member of Italy's parliament when he was arrested. His views were Communist and those views, and others like them, had been part of the public sphere debates in Italy prior to the rise of Mussolini's Fascists. Once in power, the Fascists shrank the perimeters of public sphere debate and were able to arrest and imprison Gramsci after a show trial with virtually no opposition. I concede it is a crude example, but its few, simple moving parts do provide a very basic example of hegemony at work.

With little opportunity to be educated in alternative or even revolutionary politics and to develop those ideas in practice in the field within a loose society, opposition had little chance to develop to any successful degree: "The total effect of the culture industry...impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop" (Adorno, p. 135). Here he is addressing the idea that Gramsci described with his concept of the 'organic intellectual,' the thinker who is able to see dynamic hegemonic blocs and negotiations at work and is able to develop and deliver an enlightening perspective, a choice other than acceptance, to those who are among the non-ruling classes.

While the Frankfurt School worked after Gramsci's writing, it is unlikely they were well-read in his work. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were sent to the Soviet Union shortly after his death and not published until after the Frankfurt Schools' main body of work was published.

The Journalism Field

Complaints against the Frankfurt School focus on their idea of a monolithic media steadily atrophying the range of acceptable public discussion and change, and call it an inaccurate or at least misleading picture.

Pierre Bourdieu, the originator of field theory, identified himself as being somewhere between Marx and his heirs and the cultural theorists (Benson & Neveu). He was also criticized on occasion for being too structural in the manner of the Frankfurt School or Louis Althusser. But he charged the Frankfurt School and Habermas as being too narrow in their criticism of modern media: "In relation to political economy, broadly speaking, field theory thus explicitly rejects the Chomsky-style notion that the news media's behavior can be explained solely by reference to their capitalist ownership and control" (Bourdieu, p. 334). Habermas's reliance on the single variable of commercialization as essentially affecting the modern news media's role in the public sphere, his argument that the media is in effect at the mercy of the market with no capability or will to effectively resist, was inadequate, according to Bourdieu. There was autonomy within the news media according to Bourdieu, something like its own free will, and he describes it in his definitions of field theory (Benson & Neveu). Yet, tellingly, Bourdieu does not disavow Habermas's conclusion of dominant market power; he simply finds that the market pressure is often found doing its work at a number of different pressure points rather than as a Habermasian one-trick pony. Mapping those pressure points would show that on different

occasions the relationships between various pressure points, and the intensity of each of them, would differ: “The relations between fields...are not defined once and for all, even in the most general tendencies of their evolution” (Bourdieu as cited in Benson & Neveu, p. 8).

What Bourdieu allows us to do is see that what appears at times to be a simple process, a one-dimensional process, can in fact be a very complex process. I do not argue that the use of foundational myths in news media is a simple, monolithic process, that it is a thoughtless default. It is a dynamic process with values at many of Bourdieu's intersections where different fields collide. But Bourdieu does not address myth specifically. And myth, as Barthes describes it, works at such depth and breadth that it is not recognizable in Bourdieu's confrontations as a specific, isolatable piece of influencing evidence. My argument then is that because myth, as Williams says, saturates us, it is only recognizable at work when investigated as a macro effect. Myth can be and is used to apply pressure in a number of different ways and at a number of different places; these actions are derivatives of the core myth which is the influencing agent. If Americans share the same foundational myths, then there is limited value in trying to determine the distinct values of opposing pressure points or intersections, even though they contribute to how the news media finally default to those myths. In the end, the default is the sum of the myths.

For Schudson perhaps, journalists in the field reporting stories will run into different blocs or sources of pressure and their assessment of foundational myth may differ, but those differences will be worked out, dissolved in the final text by the demands of the mythic narrative's base storyline. The news media then become a catalyst for the fusion of different appraisals of the same myths (Schudson, 1982, 2007). It is my argument that this fusion is forged

because America's foundational myths are employed by news media to present a story that blurs, or denies the existence of, limiting class differences.

Coding and Decoding Myth

Habermas and the Frankfurt school had bemoaned the absence of dynamic, independent relationships between the creators and consumers of media in a modern, industrialized, and flattened cultural landscape. Others saw media similarly in service to the capitalist way of life but argued that this apparently monotone culture identified by the Germans was not as one-dimensional as they suggested because of the various and often unpredictable ways readers interpreted what they experienced through media. Attention expanded from a focus on content of media, and news media, to include "the character of the relations established between communicator and audience" (Hallin, 1985, p. 123).

Unidimensional media did not simply deliver a unidimensional message that was always taken at face value. News, for example, not only tells us some of what is happening in our world, it helps us identify and understand who we are in relation to that world and other groups in it, and it does so by triggering responses conditioned by our backgrounds and psychological makeup. Jamaican-born British cultural scientist Stuart Hall comes close to seeing news media as acting both monolithically and specifically at the same time (Hall, 1979, 1982, 1993, 1997).

What media produces is the result of a dominant ideology that was itself produced to meet the needs of the dominating social and political interests of the ruling classes according to Hall, a position obviously reflecting Gramsci. That ideology is a social product, a system of signs and representations that accords meaning to social practices, those meanings widely accepted by virtue of their triumph over other possible meanings or values. Ideology then is the narrative, the

story that explained social practices: “According to him [Hall], we cannot ignore or escape the ideological because it isn’t just someone’s explanation of society. Rather, ideology is practiced daily through our actions, whether we are aware of it or not. Thus, ideologies work best through everyday practices that seem most natural” (Artz & Murphy, p. 65). Barthes would surely agree.

Subordinate classes, according to Hall, live within the dominant ideology, referring to it to find meaning in their own lives. Mass media effectively colonized both cultural and ideological spheres to the point that groups determine their own place in society by deciding their relationship to an ideology effectively created by the ruling classes (Hall, 1997). Because the representations in the dominant ideology have been manufactured, or at least selectively chosen and made prominent in the ideology by the ruling classes, they are not anchored deeply in the culture of any given group and thus are adaptable and malleable, capable of not only being interpreted in different ways by different groups but also of being altered by the ruling classes to maintain dominance (Hall, 1997). This is a process Gramsci observed, and it is the process at work when a simplified Puritan-American capitalism is delivered via news media as a one-size-fits-all description of the way American capitalism works.

To Hall, ideological distortions do not occur as the result of conscious decisions by journalists. What is happening, he said, is that the dominant ideology – that of modern industrial capitalism – is the lens that the news media use as they work and their selection and filtration system is unconscious because it is not perceived as a potentially influential physical barrier through which the Fourth Estate editorial professionals consider they have to pass (Hall, 1979, 1997). To Williams, ideology was something as nondescript and unnoticed as the ordinary man one passes in the street and does not notice or recall (Williams, 1977). So it is that journalists can

default to the Puritan-American capitalism myth without realizing they are editing or distorting the events they are covering.

Hall's theory of coding and decoding essentially argues, in terms of media, that producers of cultural artifacts, such as news, code what they publish by using a distinct set of values and socially- and commercially-based procedures to create the language/symbol mix that they deliver, and the consumer basically decodes that artifact by using her own values, standards, and histories to understand it in a way that fits their needs. Thus, the consumer is also a producer in that she rewrites or edits the news story to create a distinct product (Hall, 1993). What he is describing is a hegemonic negotiating process.

Hall also essentially argues, in his presentation of the concept of coding, that news is a selective process, that there is no overwhelming reason that the news presented should not be selectively chosen and edited. This can lead to a tenuous link at best between an event and the news consumer's eventual assessment of that event. This is an idea others have taken further.

Simulacra, Spectacle, and Pseudo Events

Jean Baudrillard sees media delivering a manufactured message which elicits specialized reactions from different people. Where Hall argues that different classes extract different messages and meanings from the same text, Baudrillard sees media creating messages that are so divorced from the reality of any class that the meaning is limited to the message itself. For Baudrillard, the big picture is not state-sanctioned nor for that matter shaped to be of service to the state. It is purely commercial and serves only a commercial purpose. As such it serves the interests of the commercial (ruling) classes. The material delivered bears only a passing or coincidental relationship with the reality that it originated from and sometimes purports to

represent. The material itself is the reality. The production of media has become so sophisticated in a profitable, expanding, capitalist environment that there is no longer a need for a media product to be connected to its original source. Being a product is enough. The product has only to look and feel real to be considered real. So media produce material that appears to be what the public has been socialized to expect the media to produce, and the public do not question what they consume. Where the Frankfurt School saw a media driven by a capitalist ideology, Baudrillard saw a media driven by capitalism itself, the inclusion of an overt ideology no longer necessary. Baudrillard described what media delivers in this process as simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994, 1998, 2006; Merrin).

Baudrillard argued that in simulacra, the real was being was replaced with a simulated reality produced by people relying on signs, assumptions, cultural practices, or commercial or ideological needs or expectations. This perceived reality becomes the accepted reality, more recognized and accepted, and expected, by the public than the original reality upon which it is based (Baudrillard, 1994; Merrin). He delivered a warning that, “a society’s capacity to replicate and manipulate forms of public culture forces upon all of us a virtual supersedure (sic) of the life world by the signifiers that previously represented it” (Watts & Orbe, p. 4). So, relying on this Baudrillardian position, I would argue that America’s foundational myths do not need to be falsifiable and do not need to be proven by social scientists or historians to be faithful depictions of a previous reality, which they are not. They have become an influential reality of their own.

Guy DeBord claimed that in post-industrial economies, mass consumption of spectacle replaces the exchange of goods of actual value, that is, sign value replaces use value, and the true essence of a people need not be sought by those people because it can be fabricated (DeBord). Historian Daniel Boorstin, using public relations and advertising as base tools, found that the

media's version of reproduction of events – what he termed 'pseudo events' – were more influential with the news-consuming public than the original event. This is a world, said Boorstin, "where the image, more interesting than its original, has become the original," and where "the shadow has become the substance" (p. 204). Boorstin lamented that "we fill our lives not with experience, but with images of experience" (p. 252).

Baudrillard, DeBord, and Boorstin viewed the media as delivering exaggerated, irrelevant, or false but saleable reality. These three researchers are important to this dissertation because they identify news media presentations that are at best loosely connected to reality as being accepted by the public. This suggests something of the suspension of disbelief employed by the theater goer or the reader of fiction is at work when news media is consumed. The Puritan-American capitalist myth works in these models because the reality it is bound to is assumed by the audience. They believe they know and understand it, that it is the environment of their lives, so references to it do not need to be proven to be anchored in actual events or ideologies. There is no reason to be suspicious, to question such stories.

What these scholars suggest is that there is no impediment to news media presenting foundational myths as representative of today's reality as it has a distinct, but not necessarily rigidly-policed or tightly-defined, relationship with the world of Puritan America. It is possible that a skewed understanding and appreciation of modern industrial western capitalism because of the predominance of the Puritan-American capitalism myth as it is delivered by our news media inhibits chances to search for and develop alternative solutions to current economic, social, political, and cultural problems. To Gramsci, this would be a successful hegemonic negotiation on the part of the ruling classes.

Gramsci and Hegemony

Gramsci based his thinking on Marx and remained dedicated to Marx's ideas throughout his life. But he was unconcerned with heresy, arguing that some of Marx's original work was too rigid to be applied to what he observed in Italy's northern factories in the 1920s. Worker groups, with his support, took control of factories but essentially succumbed to the ruling government's saber rattling and displays of armed force without a prolonged physical fight, and later much of the Italian working class would support Fascism. Gramsci questioned why, despite what he saw as ripe conditions in Italy for the overthrow of the ruling classes (or at the very least an aggravated opposition to them) and preliminary skirmishes in the industrialized north of the country, the working class did not confront the ruling capitalists as Marx said they would. In fact, they voted for them. Hegemony theory sprang from his attempt to find an answer to the paradox of a class of people supporting the class that dominated and exploited them. In describing hegemony, Gramsci was able to examine the creation, manipulation, and maintenance of ruling class dominance in terms that are as valuable today as they were then (Bocock; Germino; Gramsci; Martin).

Gramsci saw media as tools used by ruling classes as Marx had done. Marx had argued, and Gramsci agreed, that they were a part of the dominant ideology, not independent entities but products of the economic and social system and inevitably reflecting its structures and practices (Artz; Artz, Macek & Cloud; Brewer; Williams, 2006). But Gramsci did not see a rigid, predictable function.

Gramsci described what he called two superstructure levels in society: one is civil society, made up of private organizations, and the other political society, or the State. In its simplest form, hegemony theory explains the process whereby ruling class(es), while a minority,

retain power by employing a flexible combination of two factors – force, exerted by military, paramilitary, and/or police forces, backed with legislative and/or court authority; and non-violent civil persuasion, delivered from such platforms as schools and education systems, cultural and commercial incentives, media, and the arts. These are pressure systems whose rituals, values, rules, practices, and priorities are widely accepted, even entrenched, and used to create and to ensure a political situation wherein non-ruling class(es) and social blocs find more reason to accept life as it organized by the ruling class than incentives to challenge the status quo to the degree necessary to destabilize or overthrow it. The dominated are thus complicit in their own domination (Bocock; Gramsci).

Althusser identified two similar forces which he labeled the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), but Althusser described a model that was much more rigid, more classically Marxian, than Gramsci. It was a structuralist's view of machinery (Althusser). Gramsci was much more fluid and reactive in what he described. It is essential to note that Gramsci did not see the hegemonic process as static or even slow and clumsy. It was a dynamic and constantly evolving process whereby the ruling classes sought to maintain predominance by negotiating, as Gramsci called it, various arrangements with the non-ruling classes to keep them as junior partners, and then constantly renegotiating for the same purpose as time moved on and different potential challenges or mores rose to prominence (Gramsci). Gramsci recognized “the complicated way consent and coercion are entangled with one another, rather than as the delineation of a specific kind of power” (Crehan, p. 101).

Austrian Marxist George Lukacs had determined something similar, although there is no evidence the two met, even though Gramsci travelled to Moscow, as Lukacs did, and Vienna. Lukacs does not feature in the Prison Notebooks, but:

Lukacs emphasized the ideological consequences of commodity production, arguing that modern capitalism maintains social order and obstructs social change through cultural practices that distort human relationships and ideologies that disguise actual social conditions. Lukacs arrived at the conclusion while theorizing popular consciousness in capitalist society. (Artz & Murphy, p. 48)

The negotiating process is one of exchange between different participant groups. As the relationship between groups changes, the hegemonic balance shifts. The change was basically manipulated by and manifest in the dominant ideology of the time, which was leveraged for the purpose, perhaps accepting a change in values or meaning, perhaps stiffening against pressure to change it. Sometimes the ruling class gave more, sometimes less. Sometimes it would trade off and switch alliances to keep a hold on power. Some offers from the ruling elite would be more threatening, some more conciliatory. Gramsci saw a process that never reached a conclusion but was ongoing, a given group's membership and position constantly changing in relation to other similarly fluid groups. If the process is static, one is basically facing a state, as Gramsci was, akin to Fascist Italy or Stalinist Russia, and the persuasion of civil agencies becomes crude, part of the state's blunt authority, as Gramsci saw in the black shirts of Fascism and as was later seen in the swastikas and rallies of Nazism. It is because Gramsci's conception of hegemony in a dynamic explanation of social machinery that he remains relevant and useful to social and political scientists today. Gramsci wrote about Italy, but he abstracted himself to such a theoretical level that his writings are not solely applicable to analyzing a Fascism vs. Communism struggle but also to all clashes between social blocs in their relationship to power. He did not handcuff himself to history (Bocock; Gramsci, Williams 2006).

Anthropologist Kate Crehan again:

Gramsci was always concerned with understanding actual, empirical realities in all their shifting confusion, not with forcing them into rigid, predetermined theoretical boxes. It is not that Gramsci rejects theory; he believed passionately that those who wish to change the world must understand it and that this required theory. What he had not have time for

was theory that had become detached from the concrete reality of actual history. (Crehan, p. 28)

At any given time a society exhibits what I have termed hegemonic balance, being the state of negotiations at that particular time. Whatever the balance point, it is always under pressure to change, sometimes from a relatively benign source, sometimes from a more organized assault. Hegemony theory allows us to recognize power blocs and social forces and to observe, explicate, and attempt to predict, as we would expect to be able to do with a sound theory, their dynamic relationships with other blocs. In other words, we can use the theory to deconstruct the hegemonic negotiation process. Gramsci's work is relevant today because while names and the makeup and core values of the social groups and power blocs may have changed from his time and situation, the dynamic process of hegemonic negotiation and hegemonic balancing among them continues.

Williams produced perhaps the most succinct description and analysis of Gramsci's hegemony theory in his book *Marxism and Literature*. It is, I think, worth looking at in some detail:

[Gramsci's hegemony theory] sees the relations of domination and subordination, in their forms as practical consciousness, as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living – not only of political and economic activity, nor only of manifest social activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation or 'indoctrination.' It is as a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments or energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (p. 110)

Williams confirms that hegemony is a dynamic process, an adaptive process that reacts to its environment rather than imposing itself: “A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure” (p. 112). The nature of that environment will then influence the structure and application of hegemonic negotiation. Williams also makes it clear that hegemony is not a purely reactive force, that it is proactive when the ruling classes see a need for it to address potential opposition, and in these cases there will clearly be those who provide the necessary impetus. The news media would be one of those. Williams says of hegemony that,

...it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice. ...The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. (p. 113)

Gramsci focused on the role of cultural practices in the actual construction of social conditions and relationships. Ideologies can be powerful tools in hegemonic negotiations and dominant/dependent relationships can be built on false premises. It was, as Gramsci discovered, ideology that brought forth worker support for anti-worker Fascists. Gramsci held that “Ideologies may be disputed as true or false, but more important, they are legitimate to the extent that they are active in everyday life” (Artz & Murphy, p. 12). It is here that we come full circle back to Hughes. In hegemonic terms, whether the myths he identified are “disputed as true or false” is not as important in this dissertation as whether they are accepted facets of everyday life in modern America, and thus imbued with legitimacy, even though the value of that legitimacy may wax and wane.

Gramsci saw the Catholic Church as an especially powerful hegemonic force supporting powerful governments, but he also saw it as an extremely effective hegemonic machine of its own. This duality, and its power, is observed by modern students of liberation theology in hegemonic terms (Torres). Catholicism sought to retain an appearance of unity and avoid splintering as other once-centralized religions had done. There was, according to Gramsci, one Catholicism for the peasants and one for workers, one for women and one for the petit bourgeoisie, one for the rich, one for the powerful. There was also a Catholicism for the intellectuals, and that one in turn was subject to different interpretations and applications (Gramsci).

A parallel exists in the role of America's foundational myths, especially the capitalist myth. Just as the Catholic Church was to Gramsci, capitalism in America is a significant influence on the state. And Gramsci's description of the internal hegemonic machinery of the Catholic Church is also applicable to the Puritan-capitalist myth at work in American news media. The unifying face of the Puritan-American capitalist myth offers something to farm workers and something else to factory workers, to women, the petits bourgeoisie, the rich and, in similarly dislocated forms, something for the intellectuals. It also offers something distinct to the powerful, to the ruling classes. Unlike the church, it also offers each group below the dominant one a limited, although the myth says 'unlimited,' chance to move up while still in this life. Just as a peasant in Gramsci's Italy would decode a different meaning from a coded church ritual than the owner of a car factory, so an illegal immigrant to America would decode Puritan-American capitalist mythology and its rituals in a manner distinct from that of a Wall Street banker. Yet in both cases, the ritual is part of a shared reality which is a hegemonic influence. Gramsci's subject population, whatever their class and social position, shared the Catholic faith and, whatever their

position within the church, did not question or doubt its basic tenets. American mainstream news consumers, whatever their class and social position, generally share a belief in the Puritan-American capitalism myth and, whatever their position within its structure, do not ordinarily question or doubt its basic tenets.

There is another similarity with Gramsci's perception of Catholicism. Hegemony is not an abstract equation, it is a process firmly entrenched in everyday lives and deeply held beliefs and convictions, so that, like faith, it is influential even when we are unaware of it. It is the canvas behind the paint: "Hegemonic ideology enters into everything people do and think is 'natural' – making a living, loving, playing, believing, knowing, even rebelling. In every sphere of social activity, it meshes with the 'common sense' through which people make the world seem intelligible; it tries to *become* [Italics in original] that common sense" (Gitlin, p. 10).

Hegemony theory is commonly oversimplified by people who call on it or attack it, something that springs not only from a desire to find or critique a basic definition which may be used as a utilitarian platform or reference, but also from the way the theory was developed. Imprisoned, Gramsci wrote in pieces, recording his thoughts in notebooks. When one was full he moved on, eventually filling 2,848 pages in 29 notebooks. But he did not write lineally or chronologically, nor did he stay focused for long on one topic in one notebook or even necessarily in one section of a given notebook. He also rarely addressed a subject in simple terms. In both cases his reason was usually simple: his jailers were also his censors, relatively unsophisticated turnkeys who could be evaded by using code words or circumlocutions and avoiding a chronological pattern or logical theme development. Some of the fragmentary format of his work is also attributed to the harshness of his living conditions, combined with serious health problems. His thoughts on a specific idea may be scattered throughout the notebooks, and

so each piece must be considered in the assembly of the central idea. He leaves a topic and returns to it again and again. Sometimes there is evidence of an idea recurring because it has developed in his thinking over the previous reference; at other times, presumably his harsh (and it was) prison life interrupted his original thoughts and he returned to finalize them. So it is that hegemony theory, rather than being written in an easily identifiable sequence of sentences, actually emerges over time courtesy of some degree of understanding of his circumstances and from a broad reading of the *Prison Notebooks*. One does not find a single, succinct, complete description of hegemony in Gramsci's works (Germino; Gramsci, Martin).

Daniel Hallin addresses one common modern criticism of hegemony theory: "The strongest critique of the concept of hegemony, it seems to me, would be to say not that it is false – is it really plausible, after all, that major cultural institutions would not be closely tied to the structure of power? – but that it is too obvious to be interesting" (Hallin, 1994, p. 12). The flaw in the argument is to assume that "obvious" is synonymous with "simple." It is a forest/trees vision problem. Like myth, hegemony is a vast enterprise not completely recognizable to those focusing on more easily visible and accessible social and cultural influences. Interestingly, Hallin immediately offers his own refutation of the criticism he has aphorized: "But I am not persuaded by this view, in part because I do consider the relation of power to discourse to be contestable and subject to change" (p. 12). Hallin also offers another criticism, somewhat akin to the first. The term hegemony is one he does not use much anymore, he says, because demonstrating that the media are neither neutral nor watchdogs shining lights on powerful public and private interests is a case already made. My disagreement with this idea for this dissertation is buried in the idea that one should never stop trying to understand the machinery of how and why this happens because those processes are changeable and changing:

Nevertheless I do consider the basic Gramscian insight to be valid and essential: I mean here the idea that cultural institutions like the media are part of a process by which a world-view compatible with the existing structure of power in society is reproduced, a process which is decentralized, open to contradiction and conflict, but generally very effective. (p. 12)

These criticisms of hegemony are based on faulty assessments of the theory. Hegemony can only be seen as obvious if it is seen as virtually a blunt instrument with few working parts, a simple, predictable, largely unchangeable force with little uncertainty or complexity involved in its practice. But it is not. Gramsci had in fact challenged those who saw Marx's descriptions as rigid and closed, mechanical and inflexible. Hegemony is, as Gramsci described it, a constantly changing, or at least potentially changeable, dynamic interaction between classes or other social blocs. It will respond to challenges broad and narrow and is both flexible and sophisticated enough to operate effectively anywhere from the stage of a national government to a factory, utilizing various powers of persuasion in combination. A claim of boring or obvious assumes a static situation. There is something pre-Newtonian about a claim that hegemony is an obvious, boring process, something of a shortsighted shrug, a dismissal. An apple fell to the ground. Boring. The 'world-view compatible with the existing structure of power in society' that Hallin agrees with Gramsci is embedded in culture is, in the case of America, both embodied in and delivered by our foundational myths.

Gramsci said that whatever tools were used besides force to create and maintain ruling class power, they needed to be used pragmatically. They would not be rigidly bound to an ideology but needed to be malleable. They needed to fit the occasion, not stand on ideological principle, but of course they also could not be constructed without an awareness of their service to the underlying ideological imperative. The goal, after all, was not to institutionalize an

ideology but to institutionalize a ruling class. The news media perhaps employs values similarly.

Gans suggests a working definition:

If the news includes values, it also contains ideology. That ideology, however, is an aggregate of only partially thought out values which is neither entirely consistent nor well integrated; and since it changes somewhat over time, it is also flexible on some issues. I shall call this aggregate of values and the reality judgments associated with it paraideology, partly to distinguish it from the deliberate, integrate and more doctrinaire set of values usually defined as ideology... (As cited in Altheide, p.487)

Paraidelogy is a workable term for the reliance on foundational myth because it is not a structured ideology, rather a loose focus on a simple storyline, one that is flexible enough to be interpreted and produced as the basic idea for individual news stories.

Todd Gitlin has also focused on hegemony in news media: "...I retain Gramsci's core conception: those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly *and indirectly*, [Italics in original] by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and, if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout society" (Gitlin, p. 10). This 'limiting' is the same process that Hall recognized and is at the same time a good example of the Frankfurt School position. Limiting what is thought, and I would argue at the same time being significantly influential in the thoughts that do arise, is a role for which mainstream news media is well qualified.

Such limitations also arguably restrict discussion on the boundaries between classes, and it also arguable beyond that point that injecting myth-based narrative into news is a hegemonic replacement of potentially disruptive boundary discussion with a common theme.

Agonistic Pluralism

In the preface to second edition of their book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2000) employ hegemony to argue that a truly democratic society

will prefer to embrace differences between social and cultural groups rather than try to erase any such differences. It is a bad idea, they hold, for any society's leaders to prefer to, and try to, create a smoothie from a bowl of fruit. Better, they say, that the distinct fruits remains distinct: "Our approach is grounded in privileging the moment of *political* articulation, and the central category of political analysis is, in our view, *hegemony* [Italics in original]" (p. x). Also, "In order to have hegemony, the requirement is that elements whose own nature does not predetermine them to enter into one type of arrangement rather than another, nevertheless coalesce as a result of an external or articulating practice" (p. xii):

Social actors occupy differential positions within the discourse that constitute the social fabric ... This relation, by which a certain particularity assumes the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it, is what we call a hegemonic relation. As a result, its universality is a contaminated universality... (p. xiii)

Divisions or differences, separations, between groups are part of the political life, not something to be overcome to the point of destroying them by causing the political bloc to split and lose members to the biggest or most dominant group, according to this view. Antagonisms are boundaries within a society, boundaries that create meaning between groups and cause the development of effective discourse between them. A society that has as its goal a universal, homogenous society. or one in which boundaries are artificial, porous, meaningless, or subject to political attack, is not a true democracy, they posit (Laclau & Mouffe).

The aggregative model of democracy reduces the democratic process to a small range of preferences and interest, they say, and that it is an impoverished concept of democracy that assumes political identities are not pre-given but constituted and reconstituted via public debate. There is, they hold, no pluralistic democracy without conflict and division: "This is why we stress that it is vital for democratic politics to acknowledge that any form of consensus is the result of a hegemonic articulation..." they say (p. xviii).

In other words, differences between groups in a society are not erased by a natural democratic process but rather negotiated away as part of the hegemonic process where a single homogenous society is not a democratic goal so much as an economic one, a system which allows those who rule to remain ruling. The ruling classes do so by manipulating relationships between groups, so it is imperative that no impenetrable walls be allowed to be set up between groups, that they must in fact be willing and able to negotiate. Hall's arguments support this idea from a distinct perspective. For Hall, the boundaries remain inasmuch as distinct groups are led to believe they remain separate, but those divisions are not based in reality but in the groups' reading of the dominant ideology, their seeing distinctions where there are none in that homogenous ideology. America's myths of origin serve the role of boundary-erasers by reinforcing the idea that at our base, these myths remove boundaries in an organic, democratic manner.

News media help effect that situation by presenting a view of American capitalism that suggests all doors are open for success. The fact that opportunities are limited is not as important as the fact that they exist.

Resistance or struggle against inequality does not result from a unified class-consciousness but becomes possible in the moment that democratic discourse makes available an alternative imagery (Brummett, 2008). Without that discourse and that imagery, Laclau and Mouffe would insist that the opportunity for opposition would not develop enough to occur effectively, something Gramsci would concur with. The presentation of foundational myths as basic narrative structures minimizes the opportunity for the development of such an alternative imagery.

Whether one accepts agonistic pluralism as a basis for modern democracy or not, Laclau and Mouffe are persuasive in recognizing that modern hegemonic negotiations focus heavily on weakening the boundaries between groups. News media are especially influential in this process when they rely on myth for basic storylines, because stories based on mythic narratives are inevitably shorn of particularist distinctions because they are replaced by universal ones addressed to Everyman and made up of large concepts.

These two authors also provide a definition of class that is distinct from Marx and Engels, although they are not the only scholars to do this. Class, they said, was not the result of the machinery of production nor did it spring entirely from socioeconomic conditions as Marx suggested. It was in fact something created in discourse, and it was a deliberate and inevitable product of hegemonic practices: “In other words, people are not fixed into particular designations of subordination at the hands of one particular social group; instead, people participate in the discursive ideological construction ... of their social, political, economic, religious and historical identities and relations” (Brummett, 2008, p. 199). A hegemonic system then will benefit from delivering a discourse that is common to all classes, much as Gramsci saw the teaching, rituals, and practices of the Catholic Church. America’s foundational myths in media can indicate common ground to diverse classes, and in the case of the Puritan-American capitalist myth the value of embracing it and movement between or among classes is made easier by providing social movers with a common password. Such inter-class fluidity is a basic hegemonic practice. There is in effect a form of osmotic wall between the classes that allow some to rise at the same time some fall. This permeable barrier is an entity that allows the peacefully puncturing of the walls between groups, helping to create the breakdown between groups that Laclau and Mouffe see as a forced homogeneity. It is a hegemonic way to ease pressure from below while leaving no

effective confrontational residue among those left behind, at least not enough to create an oppositional bloc in Gramscian terms.

It is my contention that the enshrinement of our foundational myths in the news canon allows news media to do this without having to constantly change positions. Myth operates at such a distance that most apparent or potential challenges to the status quo actually find a place within it and can be seen as part of the story. Because of the broad sweep of mythic stories, the narrative produced can be many things to many people. It is my argument that the constant default to these foundational myths allows news media to write the same story over and over, with different details and names, as vehicles for what should in fact be distinctly different stories. Hall called this the 'limited repertoire' of the media, a surprisingly narrow range of narrative bases used to explain what is in effect a very wide range of reality (Althusser; Hall, 1985). This manipulation is a hegemonic function undertaken by the news media:

In liberal capitalist societies, no institution is devoid of hegemonic functions, and none does hegemonic work only. But it is the cultural industry as a whole, along with the educational system, that most coherently specializes in the production, relaying and regearing of hegemonic ideology. (Gitlin, p. 254)

Finally in looking at theorists, I turn to Adorno because his summary of the effects of the culture industry show that one of its most devastating roles is to stop the development of Gramsci's organic intellectuals, people who can eventually offer alternatives with some depth, weight, and the possibility of causing change:

The total effect of the culture industry...impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop. (Adorno, p. 135)

It is not only in theory that there is evidence of the role of myth in propping up accepted social norms and support for the argument that using myth as the basis of new stories amounts to

putting a thumb on the hegemonic scales. Ritual and narrative are where myth can be operationalized, can be observed and measured at work. Anthropologists who choose to look at media qualitatively help us be able to observe and explain the processes of social reality building undertaken by media, and how a reliance on myth by media can be so broadly influential.

The Anthropologists

History shows no community, civilized or not, without key story makers and storytellers (Burke, 1955; Crehan; Eliade, 1992; Fisher, 2000; Leach). Anthropology was drawn into the media studies field relatively recently as part of the ongoing search for ways to find alternatives to quantitative research. Focusing on culture, symbols, and meanings allowed anthropological researchers a new way into the subject of media.

Mihai Coman offers a description of the role of media as seen by anthropologists that is worth quoting at length:

...I will focus on the relationship (rarely approached by classical anthropologists) between media content and the concepts of myth and ritual. My anthropological approach stems from the hypothesis that mass media, like nonmodern manifestations studies with the aid of concepts such as myth, rite, sacred, liminality, magic, and so on, create and impose symbolic systems of thinking surrounding reality and of articulating it in cultural constructs that are accessible and satisfying to their audience. In other words, the anthropological view starts with the premise that mass media are a cultural system for the social construction of reality and the claim that this construction is made, under certain circumstances, with instruments that are not part of argumentative rationality but of symbolic rationality ... the anthropological approach imposes a perspective that places mass media at the center of the process of social construction of reality, an institution that generates specific discourses and logic. The products incorporating such values are distributed to the public and are assumed by the public as edifying images about the world, understandable in themselves, in agreement with its expectations, norms, hopes and fears. (Coman, p. 46)

These images are accepted, according to Coman, precisely because they are symbolic constructs, and in this role “signify in the same ways as the mythical systems and rituals of

nonmodern societies” (p. 46) function and Coman argues that anthropologists exploring mass media “should focus on the forms and processes media employ to build a symbolic representation of reality by means of myth and ritual” (p. 48). In the ritualization and mythologization of reality by the media that anthropologist should focus on, he says. “This approach would include studies that assert that ‘this mythical archetype is present in this news story’ or ‘this ceremony influences media coverage and formats’” (p. 48).

Since stories are something human beings use to assess their environment, they are also, to anthropologists, a source of how the approach changes their world: “How people see their world and how they live in it necessarily shapes their ability to imagine how it might be changed, and whether they see such changes as feasible or desirable” (Crehan, p. 71).

Communication is powerful social glue in which both content and meaning have power (Burke, 1955, 1989; Carey, 1989; Crehan; Leach). Claude Levi-Strauss is commonly considered to be the father of structural anthropology. To find where a society begins or ends, he said, move away from the center until you reach places where communication begins to break down. That idea is one of the primary reasons texts about immigrants were chosen for case studies in this dissertation. But, as structuralists will, he reduces communication to abstract, rule-bound deep structures and formations, usually large, unwieldy ones that have limited adaptability. There is something of Althusser in his approach. Yet, as James Carey does, Levi-Strauss reaffirms the idea that ritual communication is central to social formation and maintenance. Myths are the most powerful of all ritualized stories (Leach).

Crehan has specifically looked at Gramsci and notes that the Italian often judged something by how ‘organic’ it was. Gramsci used this terminology to indicate how naturally something occurred, that is, whether it was the product of the basic economic or social structure

rather than something imposed. Hegemonic negotiations, said Gramsci, were imposed as newly dominant classes tried to assert and enshrine their authority, but were eventually organic when done at their highest level of sophistication. The Fascists he of course saw as imposing unnatural structures and practices on Italian society (Gramsci). The point I wish to make here is that news media use of foundational myth is an organic practice, that is, it is not a superimposed policy or demanded practice. As Gramsci argued, the best, that is the most efficient for the ruling classes, hegemonic practices eventually took on an organic role.

An anthropologist's view is valuable in showing just how entangled within society hegemonic negotiations are. They are in effect rituals. One can think of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, says Crehan, "as a way of thinking about the complicated way consent and coercion are entangled with one another, rather than as the delineation of a specific kind of power" (Crehan, p. 101). Crehan focuses on Gramsci's argument that state and civil society "do not represent two bounded universes, always and forever separate, but rather a knot of tangled power relations which, depending on the questions we are interested in, can be disentangled into different assemblages or threads" (Crehan, p. 103).

Myth is not simply a narrative, it is ritual narrative. Community Infrastructure Theory (CIT) identifies this ritual narrative at work and shows how a mythic story, such as a story based on America's foundational myths, can insinuate itself into community dialogues and values.

The Relevance of Ritual

Community Infrastructure Theory posits that storytelling, by people, media, groups, and organizations, is both the blocks that build and the glue that binds communities. It explicates a process of ritual storytelling. The CIT theorists focus on what they call 'storytelling

neighborhood.’ It is through storytelling that neighbors and citizens recognize each other, find what they have in common and what is different, discover and develop manners and methods of dialogue and conflict resolution, form assessments of events and people in public life, and decide that they are indeed a community. Citizens take what they find in news media and incorporate it into their social discourse, providing significant power to the journalists who create and deliver it. The news is of course only a single source, but arguably the one that singly carries the most weight over time. Other sources include neighbors, public and private agencies and companies, friends, and so on. But news, because of a veneer of authenticity and the apparent legitimacy of the information it conveys, is central to the theory, the single biggest factor in what information the people within a community exchange with each other, in stories. News is also a source of what a community considered to be representative of their society and mores, and that information is then used by community citizens to make determinations about what is good and what is bad (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei; Kim & Ball-Rokeach). The presence of the Puritan-American capitalist myth in news stories indicates that the myth is soaking, to lean on Williams again, into the CIT conversations of the news audience, not as information but as assumptions that this system is what our founders created and one which we still live in, the right and proper and the only choice.

The creators of this theory admit to the power of news as part of Carey’s transmission model, but argue that news has also retained its significant power as a ritual communicator. They see that news still conveys more than coded or framed information; it contributes to values and standards by conveying information that helps people define their relationship to the community. I will argue that community consumption of stories relying on Hughes’ mythicized American capitalism help diffuse that myth through the community, acting not only as an oil to free up

community discussion as the theorists suggest, but also a brake on the development and discussion of differences and oppositions to the myth as accepted community practices. Since the Puritan-American capitalist myth is not deliberately forced intact and in toto into stories, the news media are accidental ritualists today.

Carey sees communication as a practice that enables social life. It does not simply describe our world and our lives, it is the tool we use to maintain or change them, to bring us closer to other people or to separate us from them. The newspaper, for instance, does more than inform the public about what happened, “it allows us to collectively partake in a social ritual, enabling a collective dialogue to ensue” (Carey, 1989, p. 101). Like Hall, he sees both the news media and news consumers as taking part in complex cultural rituals which determine our society, our place in it, and what we think about it: “It was Carey who put the paradox and the challenge of the media’s social impacts better than anyone else: ‘reality is a scarce resource...the fundamental form of power is the power to define, allocate, and display that resource’” (Couldry, 2005, p. 67).

Like Weber and Habermas, Carey also observed a significant change, in this case in communication, from early America to the modern capitalist America. For Carey, there are two meanings attached to the term ‘communication’ in America. A preindustrial understanding was that the term meant religious ritual, social solidarity, and community bonding. A newer meaning emphasized the practice of transporting goods, people, and information across space, “often for purposes of control” (Soderlund, p. 104).

In the nineteenth century, the second (transmission) metaphor took over the first (ritual) metaphor and became dominant. Now the accuracy of communication, especially as it pertained to business and commerce, was paramount, and increasingly information was valued for its

persuasive ability, arguably a technical value, over a broad social cohesive power that was less distinct and broader in application, including “the sharing of aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments and actual notions” (Soderlund, p 104). Looking at it from this point of view, one could argue that Baudrillard’s simulacra were the ultimate expression of Carey’s transmission model.

But Carey also claims that “...communication as ritual currently exists unnoticed and without deserved celebration...” (Soderlund, p. 104). Its ritual role is hidden behind layers of communication in the transmission model. There is I think a parallel process going on here in the changes Weber and Habermas saw. Where they identified the Puritan work ethic and the unstructured community-driven public sphere changing under the weight of expanding capitalism, Carey is seeing a community-centric ritual model of communication overcome by a transmission model. Yet ritual remains within that model. This is the same model we see when we look at the community-driven capitalism of the Puritans developing into modern profit-driven capitalism but taking with it the original form, in this case in the form of myth. As Carey writes, “In fact, journalism can present a coherent narrative only if it is rooted in a social and political ideology, an ideology that gives a consistent focus or narrative line to events” (As cited in Bird, p. 227).

Carey and Putnam see ritual as celebrating what we mean, transferring symbols representing what is important to us to a social form and practice that we recognize and share. They also both argue that the process is a negotiation of what we mean; it is not a closed loop, it reacts to and is altered by social and cultural changes and conditions, and media is how we exchange and convey shifts in what we mean to other groups (Carey, 1975_a, 1975_b; Putnam). This

is an elasticity similar to the one identified by Gramsci as he watched hegemonic negotiation changing in response to pressure.

Myth is not a one-dimensional alternative to this ritual adaptation process; it is not something that denies the dynamics of the process. Myth does not deny the negotiation, but, I argue, provides its boundaries. Ritual does not operate outside of the boundaries of a society's myths. Go back to Levi-Strauss's maxim that to find the edges of a society, go to where communication begins to break down. So whatever keeps ritual within its boundaries – in the case I am presenting, myth – is a hegemonic factor.

Ritual is generally defined in this dissertation not as formalized, stereotypical, repeated actions, but as “the expansive metaphoric interpretation of the concept as the ritual perspective of communication” proposed by Carey (1988); “ritual appears as a form of realization and expression of social communication, as a ‘model for’ communication processes centered not on the transfer of information, but on the sharing of a common culture” (Rothenbuhler & Coman, p. 4).

Ritual is not considered in this dissertation simply as a practice of affirming norms, rather it also is, or can be used as, a dynamic process of negotiation, and it is this quality that allows it to be incorporated into the hegemonic negotiation processes:

Anthropological theorists, such as Maurice Bloch and Pierre Bourdieu, have connected ritual not with the affirmation of what we share in common (the affirmation of real ‘community’) but with the management or conflict and the masking of social inequality. Unfortunately, in media analysis, whenever ritual has been introduced, it is the first, ‘integrationist’ understanding of ‘ritual that has dominated’ – and it is precisely this association of ritual with social integration and with the standard integrationist reading of Durkheim that we need to challenge. (Couldry, 2005, p 61)

The ritual associated with the repetition of myth, in this case the repetition of America's myths of origin, by news media is an act of mediation which has the power to influence the way news

consumers, and as Hall would point out, to influence different consumers differently, perceive the origins and operation of authority and accepted practices and values within a community. Nick Couldry asks a key question: “How can we doubt that the fundamental question about mediation is a question of power, the uneven distribution of the power to influence representations of social ‘reality’” (Couldry, 2005, p. 67).

The constant presentation of myth then is a ritual that affirms norms, at the same time consigning alternative or oppositional ideas to an inferior and arguably dangerous status. This is a process observed by Adorno and Horkheimer who address not only the delivery, but the construction of the mythic message.

The ritualized variant of events is generated when journalists feel the need to fill in a gap or meaning, or, on the contrary when they want to attribute a surplus of meaning to some situations – especially to those implying an element of formalization and possessing certain symbolic potential. Facts are reordered and interpreted as part of a ritual pattern - in other words, as if not belonging to the usual schemata of routine events and the common framework of interpretation. Thus it is the ritual pattern, not necessarily the structure of a specific type of ritual, that is applied to reality. This leads to the transference of a particular cultural system’s interpretation of events belonging to a different system of cultural reference altogether. (Coman, p. 50))

Myth, they suggest, is a privileged version of events, a version not only expected but recognized to the point that omissions, evasions, or edits can be made in the construction of a deliverable version of events:

This ritualization appears as a method of exerting control over the processes of construction and negotiation of views of reality. Employing this method, journalists draw attention, by means of a strategic difference, to a ‘privileged’ variant of events and consecrate the ritual mastery of their group, which promotes and validates their own version. (Coman, p. 50-52)

It is my argument that the mainstream news media produce such a ritualized variant of events.

There is also something of Baudrillard in this description with its observation of what is eventually an accepted disconnect between reality and the news presentation of that reality.

Where Baudrillard saw basically a commercial process in the development of simulacra, it can be argued that both ritual and myth are involved in the acceptance of the simulacra because they imbue the product with one of its key commercial features, a resonance across social and cultural borders within society.

Narrative and News

That stories should be the form used to deliver news is not surprising. We are storytellers; it is part of who we are as individuals and members of a society. We see ourselves and the world, and interpret our world, in dramatic terms, and we create stories to understand everything from what is important to us to the identification of enemies or allies to defining what makes us happy, or sad, or satisfied. We turn to stories to find an accepted order into which we can fit, and to find shared values and ideologies, to see ourselves in the people around us and to help us understand uncertainties that come into our world. People relate new events and emotions to stories they are familiar with so that they may understand them. Our myths are packed into stories we use to define ourselves and our origins, who we are and where we came from, what we believe, what we do not believe. We use them to illustrate the good guys and the bad guys and the characteristics of both. And we use them to educate our children of our values and our ways of life (Barthes, 1982; Burke, 1955; Carey, 1975^b, 1989; Crehan; Eliade, 1992, 1998; Fisher, 1972, 1987, 2000; Lule, 2001; 2002; Leach).

But in news, the narrative is also defined by its delivery system. Reading, or consuming news, is a ritual. When Couldry suggests ritual is not only a process of affirmation but also functions as a process employed in both the resolution and masking of conflict and inequality, he is describing the reception and processing of the news media's ritualized variant of events by

news consumers. Ritual has the power to suspend suspicion, and media rituals can replace skepticism and doubt (Couldry, 2003, 2005).

Maurice Charland points out that in *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke proposes 'identification' as an alternative to 'persuasion' as the key term of the rhetorical process. Audience members are actually taking part in the discourse by which they will be persuaded; they embody the discourse. This theoretical position "permits an understanding within rhetorical theory of ideological discourse, of the discourse that presents itself as always only pointing to the given, the natural, the already agreed upon" (Charland, p. 134): "...audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position. This identification occurs through a series of ideological effects arising from the narrative structure of constitutive rhetoric" (p. 135). And constitutive rhetoric, says Charland, "is part of the discursive background of social life. It is always there, usually implicitly, and sometimes explicitly articulated" (p.147). Constitutive rhetoric, as Charland describes it here, is embedded in mainstream news media.

Identification is then not only a process of recognition of position but also of masking, or denying, inequities. As a hegemonic tool, creating a text that narrows the range of possible identification can demand choices that deny, as Hall might argue, the actual social and cultural situation of that group. In other words, some audiences will choose an identification that is a creation of the dominant ideology rather than an organic product of the group itself. Stories that are familiar to us, such as myths, stories that are easily recognizable, play a part in hegemonic negotiations because they are received not as a communication that must be decoded for the first time but as reflections of assumptions we hold about ourselves. If they are the stories we expect, we react by casually nodding our assent. Our foundational myths have this power to influence: "Maintenance of political power depends less on the continual need to persuade popular opinion

(which of course can be unpredictable) but on the repetition of already well established general discourses, celebrating American democracy, that are entrenched” (Lewis, p. 264).

A related idea is proposed by Walter Lippmann: “For when a system of stereotypes is well fixed our attention is called to those facts which support it, and diverted from those that contradict it” (Lippmann, p. 119). There is a link here to the Frankfurt School in that ‘a system of stereotypes’ would seem to describe something the culture industry would produce to narrow the range of discussion.

According to Hall, a unified discourse is actually an articulation of distinct elements which do not necessarily share a commonality, and those elements are essentially forced to fit the discourse. Since they do not naturally belong, it is possible to rearticulate the discourse in different ways by claiming new meanings for each element (Hall, cited in Ginsburg). I would argue that Hall is identifying a process used every day by journalists.

There is an argument that holds that journalists and the news they produce are actually the originators of myth (Lule, 2001, 2002; Rosen). I completely disagree:

[E]ditors, reporters, sources, and readers consciously and unconsciously draw upon the universally understood stock of archetypal stories. When these fundamental stories become public, when these stories are told to a people, when these stories are narrated on a societal level to render exemplary models and represent shared social values and beliefs, news becomes myth. (Lule, 2001, p. 33)

There is a causality problem here. News does not create or become myth. The stock of archetypal stories drawn on already exists as myth. The journalist cannot simply cut and paste the event into a mythic narrative template. It is repackaged, adapted, and repeated. The journalist, I posit, essentially sees a way to create a master narrative using the myth as a loose and forgiving template. The maneuvering that Coman referred to earlier is part of the journalist’s work. A

“reporter’s job is to make meaning. A list of facts, even a chronologically ordered list, is not a story. From a list or chronicle the writer must construct a tale...” (Schudson, 2005, p. 121).

News media turn to existing myths because these stories are so ingrained in the community, folktales for centuries now, they will be recognized as legitimate and, then, valued: “Narrative can embody, and thus objectify or vindicate, a form of life but it cannot of itself either create, or compel acceptance of, that form of life. In its fundamental terms it has to appeal to the reader’s consent as an existential given” (Bell, p. 197). The reader’s recognition and acceptance of myth is implied consent when the narrative is produced by news media. Myths ingrained into the American psyche are the long-trusted guide dogs of the objectively blind media, leading them to the narrative inspiration they must have to transform event into report.

Condit’s criticism of Jack Lule focuses my opposition to the Lule and Hartley position. According to Condit, Lule’s application of ‘myth’ is limited because of its dependence on the Eliade and the Campbell model with the “emphasis on archetypal or universal themes with a nod to Malinowski’s (1954) more functional anthropological interpretation. The weakness of this ‘universalist’ approach is that it pays scant attention to the difference in time and place that produce particular cultural moments and narratives, rooted in particular histories. Furthermore, it ignores the participatory role of the culture in which the myth is embedded” (Condit, 1990, p. 332). Lule relies too much on the journalist, says Condit, attacking Lule’s idea that myth stays on the surface, which, she says, “seems to fly in the face of a truly anthropological understanding of myth more as a process than as text, as well as a joint product of storyteller and audience” (p. 332?).

Media stories can use any number of narrative forms. Researchers have found narrative structures built on Aristotle’s prescription for drama (Grabe & Zhou), and defined news as a

form of nonfiction theater (Zillman, Taylor & Lewis). Human beings understand using dramatic stories which employ such mediators as parables or metaphors. The newspaper may be considered as theater, an acting out of events in a dramatic form the audience expects and understands.

A story, in terms of human coherence, is more complete than a series of rational presentations or points delivered outside of the context of a narrative. Stories resonate with us without requiring analysis; arguments simply, at best, engage our ability to think. An influential narrative is not just a logical structure, not just reason (Fisher, 2000). A mythic Puritan-American capitalism narrative embedded in news texts is a false consciousness, as it were, a ritualized variant of events; the fact that it does not represent modern capitalism but a romanticized memory of an older version is not a reason for its audience to question it. The audience is not cognitively fact-checking, it is recognizing and accepting the story, allowing it to resonate. Perhaps Fisher might agree that ideographs are narratives. Narrative binds the totality of our experience together. We are taught reason, says Fisher, but acquire narrativity through the natural process of socialization. Narrative describes and identifies rather than deliberates. While it must be rational, its rationality is assessed not simply by a form of logical or mathematical inquiry. It must hold true not only in logic but in its representation of experience, which is why an influential narrative can be unreasonable (Fisher, 2000).

Fisher pounces on another quality of stories, including news stories – they are easily comprehended rhetoric, but what we comprehend is cognitively complex. The logic of a story need not be bound up in its argumentative or persuasive prose or be obvious or expressed in clear-cut inferential or implicative structures, it may just be.

There is within a narrative the opportunity to make changes as the story progresses without losing the essential storyline. Different people can tell the same basic story in different ways, with different emphases, and use it to make or support different arguments. What this flexibility essentially does is allow the storyteller, including the news media, to manipulate a story, to choose a version and to tinker with some of the presentations of that story. This flexibility allows the news media to adapt myth, as Coman suggests, fitting an event comfortably but not rigidly into myth's elastic storyline.

There are arguments that constraints on media such as deadlines and space, the clash between creativity and the need to produce (itself a constraint), and the routines news media have developed to allow themselves time to both "understand" what is happening and find a convenient template in which to build their stories, are factors in the final forms of stories, what goes in, what gets left out, how, when, and where the story reaches its audience (Gans; Schudson, 2005; Tuchman; Zelizer, 2008). Even alternative news organizations publishing stories they consider oppositional to the status quo rely on traditional news-gathering templates (Eliasoph). This is well established research, and I do not challenge it except to argue that all of these restraints and constraints function beneath the macro-level influence of mythic narrative. As I have argued earlier, this is not a process found in all news stories. Constrained by, for example, lack of money and a theater, a troupe of players could produce a modern Hamlet in a park, a quirky, perhaps unpredictable presentation quite distinct from a Royal Shakespeare Company production, one that perhaps even takes some liberties with the original. But the base narrative, and base reference for audiences saturated in the original, would still be Hamlet's paralyzing uncertainty.

Schudson argues news media operate in a sort of cultural soup (that they share with their audience) and make assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what is serious and dangerous and what is not, and what values are and how they may be changing in our society (Schudson, 2005, 2007). It is unthinkable that the news media can do this serendipitously or that there would be any wide-ranging similarity between the assumptions they make if there was not a reference system they all shared and were aware that their audience shared with them.

It is difficult to argue about the content and presentation of news without at least an acknowledgement of framing theory, but I will do so briefly because I do not believe it belongs here. Myth is essentially such a ubiquitous phenomenon, and one which is present in various forms and varying degrees of recognition and influence within our everyday lives, that it cannot be given enough of a strict, narrow definition to allow it to be a solid frame. Nor, for the same reasons, can it be fully identified, labeled, and extracted from a text. Suggestions that a myth is used as a frame inevitably require an unworkable definition of the myth or myths in question or of myth generally and an equally unacceptable predictability of the media effects of said myth(s).

The problem is well-stated in a criticism that argues framing researchers have neglected the relationship between media frames and broader issues of political and social power (Carragee & Roefs). This criticism argues that this neglect diminishes the scope of framing scholarship and creates a:

...theoretically and conceptually impoverished definition of framing in several ways. They reduce frames to story topics, attributes and issues positions, and neglect frame sponsorship and the asymmetries in power that influence the ability of sponsors to shape the news. (Carragee & Roefs, p. 227)

This position calls for more integration between framing scholarship and hegemony research which would consider the evolution of frames and the reactionary building of opposition and resistance to them. What is needed is a dynamic model, one that avoids a

mechanistic approach to hegemony and an inadequate understanding of cultural resistance, they suggest. But in calling for an otherwise powerful recalibration of the relationship between framing theory and social and political power, this argument does not adequately allow for the nature of both hegemony and myth. Hegemony is organic, constantly changing, and, because it may be reactionary or proactive, an evolving process which works through the everyday activities of cultural structures and actors. Myth is influential on any number of levels from macro to micro. Sometimes they both work so blandly that the activity goes unrecognized. To define them for framing purposes will lead to research into only a part of their work and effects, begging the question about what goes on in the undefined. Calls for an abandonment of “mechanistic definitions and applications of the concepts of hegemony and a dominant ideology” (Carragee, p. 342) are problematic in that such a definition will not encompass hegemony because hegemony is not an isolatable process.

There is also an argument that views framing from a constructivist point of view by looking at the news discourse on public policy, operationalizing news texts into categories – syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures: “The basic idea is to view news texts as a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts” (Pan & Kosicki p. 55). This approach arguably gets close to identifying the role of myth in news stories because it looks at discourse construction from the single word to the entire story. But it will come up short more often than not in trying to identify the role of myth in those stories. There is an old Buddhist canon that says trying to find a bird by tearing it into pieces will only leave you with pieces and no bird. Similarly, framing effects devotees can identify syntax and script and use them to identify frames and framing processes but are liable to miss, or even fail to look for, the

overarching role of myth. The researchers concede as much, saying, “this style of framing analysis does not uncover the meaning of the story to be conveyed to audiences” (Pan & Kosicki p. 69). While the basic concepts that are used to define and describe frames are abstract and general, myths, narratives, and metaphor are conceded as some of the most potent because of their power of being laden with meaning when received. Too laden, I would argue, to definitively effectively address the role of myth in news stories.

Narratives based on myth are polysemic, just as media texts are polysemic (Condit, 1989). While this dissertation does not address media effects or audience interaction with texts, it is worth noting,

Condit’s analytical distinction between polysemy and polyvalence; this distinction offers a means by which to assess the degree to which the varied and contradictory interpretations of media texts stem from intertextual relationships or from within the multiplicity of values audience members bring to their encounter with texts. (Carragee, p. 343)

Condit, to an extent following Hall, also pointed out that the need “to explore more precisely the relative decoding abilities of audiences and their access to counter-rhetorics” (1989, p. 119). For example, as a number of people have pointed out, Lincoln’s second inaugural address is considered a national treasure, but it read very differently to Union audiences than it did to Confederacy supporters. But foundational myths have a distinct advantage when it comes to decoding because they cross social and cultural lines and provide a simple common denominator. Even broad differences are subsumed. Those sections of the population that do not adhere to the principles of the myths are not a significant enough bloc to disrupt or challenge its dominance.

There was something of the same process afoot in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century as the ruling classes thrust the image of the empire to the forefront of public purpose, drawing rich and poor alike into an ideograph they supported. Britain’s colonies meant

profit for the rich but did nothing for the poorer classes, except perhaps driving them into a miserable military life in the ranks or keeping prices and services out of reach. Yet they cheered the empire and the empress, Queen Victoria (Brewer).

While decoding will, as Hall argued, be distinct to individuals or social groups, and while it is a creative process (Condit, 1989), foundational myths may well be able to confuse or scramble reactions by triggering a simple, universal or at least common, reaction which is unthinkingly visceral. At the very least, Williams' idea that we are saturated in myth would suggest difficulties in finding boundaries within the influence of myth. Whether polysemy or polyvalence, reactions and understandings by American audiences to foundational myths can transcend social and cultural, and class, divisions. These myths are signifiers, not the signified. It is here that the fact that the texts are newspaper stories becomes important. Newspaper readers know what they are holding, know the significance and history of news media and will not decode this text in the same way they might deconstruct a book or movie. Newspapers are an artifact of daily life, something with which audiences are familiar and whose format and emphases they expect and recognize (Altheide & Snow), but I argue the audience decodes the newspaper, not the news. That is, they have come to expect newspaper news to be objective and in a predictable format and do not expect sophisticated nuances in their news texts. What this means is that narratives based on foundational myths will not be decoded in a complex cognitive process. That in turn increases the stories' hegemonic influence.

Much hegemony research had lost touch with Gramsci's original theory, defining it in stiff, mechanistic terms:

Instead of launching an exploration of the rhetorical process of consent formation, the use of hegemony has become primarily a popular substitute for the older buzzword, dominant ideology...Theoretical models of consent formation and appropriate critical

methods are needed to supplement the matrix of dominant ideology critique in order to capitalize on the heuristic potentials of hegemony theory. (Condit, 1994, p. 337)

While I do not intend to approach theoretical models of consent formation, I do suggest that Condit's phrase "rhetorical process of consent formation" is a succinct description of what the newspaper articles in this study are engaged in. And Gramsci's work remains essential to maximizing the heuristic potentials of hegemony theory

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Introduction

This dissertation employs mythic criticism, a form of rhetorical criticism, to examine leading American newspapers' coverage of immigration and immigrants, legal and illegal. This method has the power to identify, contextualize, and explain various forms of narratives found within a text, to situate them and compare and contrast them, and to reveal not only their potential sources but the way in which they have been used, that is, to pry them loose from their motives and predict their consequences. And in doing so, it can help reveal not only intentions but the landscape of their use and show us in relief what might otherwise pass as uninteresting or unexceptional. It has the power to help us see a text from a different perspective, to trigger and release our own uncalled-on critical thinking skills.

Texts

The texts examined in this dissertation are news stories that address immigration. The texts make up four case studies. In each case, the basic texts are stories that have won, or been finalists for, the Pulitzer Prize for print news journalism. They were the most prominent stories found that were focused solely on immigration when searching the Pulitzer archives online using various search combination of the words immigration, immigrant, migration, migrant and illegal, and also using the phrases illegal immigration, immigrant or migrant. Similar stories, that is

news stories with a similar focus, style, structure, and from equally well-regarded print news sources, were selected for examination as secondary texts as a way to compare and contrast coverage. Immigration and/or immigrants are the most significant subject(s) in all of the texts. Stories with only passing, incidental, or gratuitous references to immigration were not considered. The texts in the studies are almost all ‘people stories,’ that is, articles and series of articles where the focus is on people and their lives more than a single news event, for example a piece of legislation or a crime. The sole exception is the fifth primary text examined, where the story focuses on an event. While the stories address a specific topic, the fact that they are “people”-focused stories provides not only a common ground but provides situations where narrative is paramount, because storytelling power is relied on in such stories, and the single most dominant factor in the presentation of the story. In discussing the lives of individuals, families, and communities, a normative social order is presumed in these stories.

I have used the words ‘immigration’ and ‘immigrants’ here as subject headings, not as strictly defined terms. The stories are drawn from a relatively narrow range of years (1996-2008) so that they cover both a long enough time period for examination but one that is not so long that there may have been significant changes in the styles and standards of professional or accepted journalism during their production. As Pulitzer Prize winners or finalists, the primary texts in the sample share a common quality of journalistic excellence as that concept is established effectively by peer review, and so reasonable comparisons can be made among them. It is inevitable that journalists consider other journalists as audience and thus on occasion write to impress them (Gans; Schudson, 1982, 2005; Tuchman; Zelizer, 1993). When a Pulitzer Prize is a potential result, it is reasonable to assume that journalists work with an awareness of what may impress judges and are, on occasion, influenced by it. However, it is unreasonable to argue that

such journalism is unrepresentative of everyday mainstream news media journalism which has its own external influences. It is, on the other hand, not only reasonable, but inevitable that Pulitzer Prize judges will not reward substandard journalism, that is to say, work that does meet basic professional standards, something I could not argue with a random sample which may produce an aberrant story that would skew analysis via its idiosyncrasies. Professional journalism and the news industry would surely claim Pulitzer Prize winners and finalists as superior work. It is surely also unreasonable to assume that journalists create such stories solely for the judges. It is their job, the same job they do every work day, and the stories are submitted as entries some time after they are published. Any aberrations from a standard news story, any crafting done to create a prize entry story worthy of being entered for Pulitzer Prize consideration, may be considered as essentially the same editing and polishing applied by conscientious journalists to everyday non-Pulitzer Prize entry stories.

The primary texts are also significantly longer than the average news story and/or are part of a series. The same holds true for almost all of the secondary texts. It is clear from their length, structure, and prize-winning reporting and writing that a significant amount of time was taken in their production. Such stories arguably minimize the influence of the newsroom and production demands as length, time, and space are not the significant restrictions they are with most news stories. With no pressing need to compress the reporting time or the length of the stories, without the need to compress writing and thus omit significant material or conflate or edit passages for efficiency's sake, and with the demands of a feature that requires adept storytelling, the writers were arguably able to tell the stories with the minimum amount of institutional or commercial restriction. In other words, they can be considered excellent examples of mainstream journalism's storytelling practices.

Feature stories are expected to be rich in detail and texture, through description, dialogue, essential background information, and observations, with superior narrative writing woven into a structure that does not stall the progress of the reader. They are also expected to be of almost literary quality, the writing telling a story in the manner of drama or fiction. The feature story is not a short, information-heavy vehicle for the reporter, so the feature reporter will make different choices than the breaking news or short news story writer. With more time and space and the need to write in a literary style, the reporter will ask different questions, examining his/her subject in far more detail. The writer has the time to collect far more material than needed, leading to more choices as to what to include and what to omit. The writer will also structure the sentences and paragraphs so that the narrative is strong, again making more choices, this time about placement, elision, juxtaposition, and flow-on between sentences and sectors of the story. These choices can be dug out of the text.

The subject of each of the texts is immigrants. Immigration reveals the boundaries of the culture, the places where what is American and what is not American come together. These boundaries are blurred rather than precise, places where non-American lives make a transition, an Americanization. It is here they begin progressing towards American mainstream values, especially, I argue, towards those enshrined in our foundational myths, primarily the Puritan-American capitalism myth. Immigrants approach and attempt to cross American boundaries, to discover and be part of what Americans accept or do not accept, and thus they create a useful topic for identifying and defining American values and the sources of those values. They must adapt their lives, and these stories reveal what it is that America, and mainstream American journalism, prefers or requires that adaptation to be if they are to be accepted.

Rhetorical Criticism

I have chosen to use rhetorical criticism because it has the power to unlock hegemonic and mythic activities with the text. Hegemony is everywhere in cultural and social life. It is not a rigid or easily-identified ideology which should be obvious to observers, so the method of its discovery must allow for the discussion and interpretation of texts. It can be revealed by argument, and that is what rhetorical criticism is capable of doing.

It is also a method that can employ Gramsci's work to expand our conception of and understanding of rhetoric in cultural communication:

...Gramsci can provide an insightful perspective on the cultural dominance of rhetoric and the formation of a critical *telos*. ...Gramscian notions can extend critical rhetoric into an enterprise that permits critical self-reflexivity and praxis and, through a Gramscian commitment to *telos*, create new opportunities and perspectives for conceptualizing communication. (Zompetti, p. 66)

Rhetorical criticism allows for "the systematic investigation and explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes" (Foss, p. 6). This investigative process uses analysis as a critical tool to understand the rhetorical practices involved but in turn also employs an understanding of those practices in criticism of texts (Foss):

Criticism as a specific performance of general rhetorical knowledge yields a form of scholarship that obtains social relevance by strategically reconstructing the interpretive design of civic discourse in order to diminish, bolster, or redirect its significance. Productive criticism, in fact, is commensurate with the rhetorical invention of social knowledge. (Ivie)

One of the enticing aspects of rhetorical criticism is the lack of rigidity in method and form. Rhetorical critics employ a variety of standards/tools/methods/perspectives/approaches/forms/structures in their criticisms. But with those choices come responsibilities. To have any value, rhetorical criticism must function as an argument. It is the responsibility of the critic to make an

argument that is open and complete and not selectively or relatively developed. Thus, the critic must address possible alternative and oppositional readings of the texts in question.

This method calls for the researcher to examine the texts as narratives but to be aware that a narrative is more than a storyline or plot. The power of words, phrases, conceptions, constructions, and the language of the text reach well beyond the way they are compiled and assembled into a story and beyond the face value of words and phrases. In examining the texts in this work, it is also essential to understand they are written by professional storytellers. It is also incumbent on the critic to remain aware that they are stories presented as news, a concept the public is familiar with and recognizes as distinct from interpersonal or other communication.

News stories are not free-form narratives; journalists are required to create stories according to rules and rituals which have been determined by professional practice and the demands of the medium and the occasion. Those factors must be recognized and the rhetoric within the text related to them.

The rhetorical critic must also be cognizant of the idea that reliance on myth may also serve the organizational needs of a news publisher by providing a familiar narrative for journalists to apply to a situation which otherwise may result in an unpredictable storyline which in turn can confuse news production routines and readers expectations, both time and money wasters. In choosing texts where writers have the least pressure to limit length and do not face a tight deadline, the influence of organizational routines and rituals should be limited.

It is the rhetorical critic's job to ensure that whatever is presented in argument is a coherent explanation for the whole text, not an assembly of unrelated parts and pieces. That is, "constructing a story from indirect evidence is exactly what the critic must do when a rhetor is tapping into a broader myth, but does not seem aware of it, or does not mention it in the text. It is

what the critic should do with mass cultural narratives, which may seem independent and fragmented from one another when viewed separately, but often reveal an underlying coherence when viewed in narrative time” (Rushing, p. 146).

There is no single answer to the apparently simple question ‘What is rhetorical criticism?’ Nor is there one simple single definition of critical rhetoric. But once we move beyond strict textual analysis and classic procedures and processes, there are guidelines and parameters in common usage, and others created by critics as they work that are relied on to create a synthetic critical rhetoric model.

The goal of productive rhetorical criticism is to present an argument about discourses and social processes (Brockriede, 1974, 1985). It is an active, not passive, creative process that does not simply reveal social knowledge but rather invents it. It produces interpretations of events in such as way as to allow insight into actuality from new perspectives rather than apprehension of actuality from a fixed point (Ivie). It is the performance of an argument:

Criticism, as a specific performance of general rhetorical knowledge, yields a form of scholarship that obtains social relevance by strategically reconstructing the interpretive design of civic discourse in order to diminish, bolster, or redirect its significance. Productive criticism, in fact, is commensurate with the rhetorical invention of social knowledge. It reveals and evaluates the symbols that organize our lives within particular situations and that constitute the civic substance motivating political action. (Ivie, p. 138)

The rhetorical critic must be capable of substantial rhetoric of his own lest he produce something that one might expect from sophisticated but unimaginative software. Flights of imagination loosely tethered to the practices and rituals of rhetorical criticism should be aggressively employed to provide an initial insight into texts and at the same time to pressure more systematic and wooden approaches that have crept into the discipline into submission:

We ought to reconstruct a rhetoric that is as full as that of Cicero, rather than pushing the pallid imitations we churn out in textbooks focused on speech fright, visual aids and other

‘techniques.’ To do this we must balance carefully on the edge of techniques of expert analysis and humane judgment of content. (Condit, 1990, p. 343)

Rhetoric as a Critical Practice

In critical rhetoric, the critic works as a “performer” (McKerrow), an integral part of the process. What distinguishes the critical rhetorical position is the dynamic proximity between the critic and the rhetoric. The critic interprets not only using accepted methods, but also by calling on personal positions. The critic must, then, reveal and explain those positions as transparently and completely as possible in order that his/her conclusions can be assessed.

The critic then is not only in the business of finding something, but finding something that has been disguised in some manner. “In practice,” said McKerrow, “a critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power. The aim is to understand the integration of power/knowledge in society – what possibilities for change the integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be appropriate to effect social change” (McKerrow, p. 26). Calling discourse the “tactical dimension of the operation of power,” McKerrow argues that the “task of a critical rhetoric is to undermine and expose the discourse of power in order to thwart its effects in a social relation” (p. 133). Particularly relevant to the examination of hegemonic balance is the idea that the critic should examine “the ‘normalization’ of language intended to maintain the status quo” (p. 133).

This method cannot be used impersonally or in a strictly technical manner. The tools at the rhetorical critic’s disposal demand judgment and daring if they are to be used well. The critic cannot distance himself from his subject as one might do with a purely quantitative method. Findings are established as valuable by the quality and transparency of the arguments on which they rest and the critic’s comprehensive effort to address a broad spectrum of possible

explanations. The critic must reveal the thoughts, assumptions, biases and motives behind arguments and conclusions. The critic must also be openly skeptical (Hart, 1994, 2005; McKerrow). The critic effectively builds an argument, letting everyone inspect the scaffolding, the tools, and the materials involved as he works, then must defend what has been created from his now well-informed critics. The arguments will inevitably fall short of certainty, but then again, that is not the goal. There is as much value in the reasoning behind them, and the application of that reasoning, as in the conclusions they deliver. The rhetorical critic's objective is to, "present your argument as best you can and that's what it is. It's an argument, basically, of a claim, and therefore criticism is inherently a rhetorical activity: therefore we cannot reach certainty on it. It's an activity that based on the probable and not on the absolute" (Rushing, p. 294).

There is a need for the critic to free himself from the bonds of systematicity. Being overly systematic endangers one of the prime traits that should be found in the rhetorical critic's work: originality. Without it there is less chance of producing another prime trait the final work should exhibit: significance. Criticism is not passive, not simply an assessment or interpretation. Nor for that matter is it designed to simply reveal new interpretations or understandings of texts. The critic seeks to create a work that actively enters into conversations about the topic with a persuasive, ideally confrontational or at least daring argument that has the potential to change the way an audience thinks about that topic. I have spent my entire working life as a journalist. This dissertation subject and this choice of method are not coincidences. I intend –as Nothstine, Blair and Copeland would encourage me to do – to call on the passions and curiosity of lifetime to inform and influence this work (Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland). I want to look at the news media and address questions that have become more intense to me the longer I have practiced the

profession and the more academic research about it I have done and learning about it I have consumed.

Michel Foucault is also influential in his description of what he called an archaeological approach to history. As the archaeologist gradually removed layers of accumulated artifacts and the detritus of history, he finds meaning in what is found not only in what it reveals but in its relationship to layers above and below and the objects and eras associated with it. Foucault approached criticism of texts similarly, and critics can emulate the practice to some degree by attempting to locate what is found in texts within a metaphorical archaeological layer (Foucault).

Mythic Criticism

To establish the potential value of mythic criticism in this case, it is important first to establish that the myths addressed are relevant and have clout in modern America and are therefore potentially able to play a hegemonic role. Burke argued that mythic patterns are not simply unchanged ancient ones that have survived intact but are active with a continuing influence from the country's foundational myths (Burke, 1955, 1989). Barthes and Eliade essentially agree with him, and for that matter, so do anthropologists (Bird; Crehan; Leach).

A news media story can be a text that incorporates various narrative threads, including mythic grand themes. The dominant myth's storyline may be easily recognizable or may be unevenly buried in a text, and it may also be distorted, fragmented, or disingenuously incorporated into the story. It is also possible that the myth is present in a text unintentionally, the text's authors unaware they are calling upon the myth, so reflexive is the recourse to the deeply ingrained storylines of myth. In these cases, the myth's fragments may be used randomly because no intent was involved, creating a maples puzzle for the critic. The rhetorical critic must

be able to untangle these various narrative forms and storylines to reveal the myth. The critic is looking then not so much to determine if the rhetoric of the myth as it appears in the text is historically or technically accurate, or even true or false, but how it is used, how it is mobilized, and to what ends it may be applied, even if they are not the ends intended by the rhetor. It is also the role of the rhetorical and mythic critic to consider that the myth may be fragmented and found scattered throughout the text, but also that it may be referenced in different ways and forms and by different sources, sometimes even appearing in different metaphors, within the same text. It is possible that apparently unrelated or oppositional references can be part of the same rhetorical context (McGee, 1980; McKerrow).

From meaning laid beneath the façade of the text, the critic works to uncover alternative or oppositional meanings, in this case meanings that perhaps play a hegemonic role. In other words, “the critic’s job is to propose differently, to construe a bricolage of signs inventively, creatively, even subversively, or else the critic merely reports what people already know” (Brummett, 1990, p.129).

There is an argument that the form and function of the myth studied should be narrow and delimited, bounded clearly and restrictively (Rowland, 1990_a, 1990_b). There is also an argument, with which I entirely concur, that such boundaries are both artificial and arbitrary and can rob the form of a significant amount of its power (Brummett, 1990; Osborn; Rushing; Solomon).

The argument to create clear-cut, rigid boundaries for what is or is not a myth or mythic relies on a claim that such restrictions not only help define myth but assist in its analysis and interpretation. Once restricted to boundaries, the myth can be successfully withdrawn from a given text because what we know with certainty what we are looking for and what we may

discard or ignore runs the argument. But imposing such boundaries may be little more than naming, labeling and comparing, at least as far as the form is concerned. In other words, it may be nothing more than a technical exercise based on a restrictive typology. It follows that in assessing the function and effect of the myth at hand, the limits used in defining the myth's form also influence how much the scholar can discover of its function in a text. The question then is whether limits do in fact create power in the use of mythic criticism as a method.

The limited access school was championed by Rowland (1990_a, 1990_b) who argued "for the importance of a narrow functional/structural approach to myth that is tightly grounded in research concerning the character of myth both in primitive and modern societies" (p. 101). His task, he said was to "attempt to discover the minimum components that must be present before a work should be fairly labeled a myth" (p.101). There is no shortage of those who disagree with him. Michael Osborn argues that the biggest problem in Rowland's approach is that it "risks narrow-mindedness. He wishes to separate discourse into tidy categories: A work is or is not mythic, just as it is or is not social or literary. Such a position would discourage us from finding a muted yet still important mythic presence in works that are not predominantly mythic" (Osborn, p.124). In responding to Rowland's call for limitations, Rushing offers no quibble with his intent to differentiate myth as a species from its genus narrative, nor with the demand that critical practice adhere to reasonable standards of definition. But, she argues, "Rowland's reformation of myth is a narrow and conservative one that imposes its own mythic worldview of functional empiricism on the conceptualization of myth, and encourages a sterile form of criticism that reduced the interpreter to a passive recorder of events" (Rushing, p. 136). Solomon is more to the point when she says of Rowland's work: "...he declares that myth must mean what he determines it to mean" (p. 117). She also criticizes Rowland's determination that mis-

application and mis-analysis can take place, charging that their use “suggests a dogmatism about critical judgments which is, itself, highly questionable” (p. 118). Osborn identifies what he obviously thinks is Rowland’s greatest fear: “that merely to stimulate in some artful way an embedded mythic pattern might be enough to activate it” (p. 126). What Osborn proposes here is, I argue, precisely what can happen when news media deliver archetypal and foundational mythic storylines.

A broad definition of myth is essential. Confined, the researcher is restricted to examining material that does not accept that myth can be used and be influential without being employed in a recognizable, limited form. For example, a myth that is employed as folklore within a text, or, in another example, a myth that is employed by an author who uses only passing references or allusions, is still functioning as myth but would fall outside a strict definition of myth. The narratives of America’s foundational myths can operate in many forms and guises, but some of them would be refused entry to into Rowland’s camp. Taking the position that myths need to be unbounded does not free the critic to identify any and/or every reference within a text as myth being used by the text creator. Argument and evidence is needed in each claim. I do not propose that, simply because a newspaper story contains references to the Hughes-identified myths, the work is automatically tapping into and using the mythic power of that narrative, even, for that matter, if it does contain all of Rowland’s core requirements. I might note in passing here that Rowland in effect concedes that the foundational myths identified by Hughes are worthy of his strict definition of myth, allowing that, “Our stories about the Founding Fathers and the frontier possess all of the characteristics I have identified” (1990_a, p. 106). It is also possible that myths, including America’s foundational myths, are not singular stories but perhaps better described as part of an anthology or series. For this dissertation, I have

argued that Hughes founding myths can operate both separately and at the same time to varying degrees. In this work, then, the critic faces the possibility that a number of myths overlap or are entangled, with images that may fit into more than one of them juxtaposed with references to others. The critic then has an added layer of construction to address on these occasions.

Most of our significant American discourses, such as inaugurals or State of the Union addresses, “have mythic overtones that tap into what Martha (Solomon) calls ‘mythic reservoirs’ and that you need a mythic criticism, along with many other kinds of criticism, in order to capture the fullness of that text” (Osborn, p. 280). I will argue that America’s mainstream news media tap into such reservoirs when they use America’s foundational myths as the basis of narrative.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDIES

In each of the cases under examination, I have focused most of my work on the primary text analysis, which is presented first. Secondary text analysis follows to complete each study. The texts are presented in no particular order, nor is the order intended to signify or convey anything about their contents. I gave each a number then used a random number generator to determine the order of study.

The Vietnamese Fisherman

Primary text. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service reporting in 1997 for a series of 40 articles published in March 1996 under the general headline “Oceans of Trouble.” The award cited the newspaper’s “comprehensive series analyzing the conditions that threaten the world's supply of fish.” The series was a broad look at how commercial fishing, primarily in the Gulf of Mexico and its environs but also worldwide, was facing a crisis of sustainability and an uncertain economic future. The 21st story in that series, written by staff writer John McQuaid, is “Immigrant Shrimper Honors Family Legacy.”

This is a feature story in newspaper writing terminology. While it is one of a series of stories, it can stand alone, beholden neither to its predecessor or successor nor to the series as a whole when it comes to readability. Some background information can be expected to be omitted

because it has been addressed in earlier stories. The series' introduction and early stories establish this detail.

It is interesting that the story is entitled "Immigrant Shrimper Honors Family Legacy" when the story is about potential devastation facing the industry worldwide and especially in the Gulf. It is what might be called a soft headline, a non-confrontational introduction for the story, one which immediately signals an intention to focus on family, not on the problems of the industry, the reason the series was undertaken and published. This approach leaves writer and editors with a less focused topic and more room to roam within the feature structure. It allows more choices. That, apparently, is not unintentional.

The story is narrowly focused, essentially staying with a single family. The narrative is also assembled simply. It is the story of a Vietnamese immigrant and his family at a time of economic downturn in the shrimping industry in the Gulf of Mexico. The story introduction is juxtaposed with an illustration, a photograph with this caption:

In the off-season, Tuong Cao spends eight hours a day repairing his nets and gear under the carport of his home in Cut Off. Since coming to the United States from Vietnam more than 20 years ago, Cao has worked tirelessly, and now owns a boat. Devoutly Catholic, Cao steers his boat with the help of a compass, a crucifix and an American flag.

The story itself begins chronologically, with a young boy growing up in Vietnam, and that is technically the lead paragraph. But the photo caption is a summation, and it usurps the role of lead here because it gives the entire story away. It acts as an introduction to the story, a synopsis, a teaser that tells you what is coming up. It is impossible to believe that readers will not be drawn to it first; it is the heart of the story in a very succinct form. It acts like a headline, enticing people to read the whole story. The small space allotted to the caption forces the newspaper to identify the most important parts of the story. These then reveal the newspaper's most basic assumptions and assessments of his subject. It is a distillation of the newspaper's accumulated

research and assessments. Journalists producing a feature story such as this have a wide range of choices because after reporting they have a wealth of information and a choice of styles. The importance of a lead paragraph and how to write it are perhaps two of the most taught skills in journalism schools.

In this story, we are introduced to a poster boy for the Puritan-American capitalist myth. He has ‘worked tirelessly,’ and the paragraph’s simple structure leaves no doubt it is the basis of his success. He ‘now owns’ his own fishing boat and runs his own business, something clearly he could not do in Vietnam and would not have been able to do here unless he ‘worked tirelessly.’ But he worked and now he owns. He also owns his home. The writer has chosen in this introductory paragraph to not only applaud Cao’s work ethic but to put extra emphasis on it, highlighting the fact that he works at home and works in the off season, a place and a time when one might expect him to take some well-earned time off. Working at home and in the off season suggests he disregards any formalized hours or place-of-work limitations on his endeavors, that work is something he does without clock-watching, that work is more than just a money-earning activity. Cao was a hard worker back in Vietnam, according to the story’s second paragraph, and throughout the story his work ethic is established as self-driven, not the result of the necessities of employment but because he has always functioned this way. The story will also present hard work as the single biggest factor, by far, in Cao’s success.

This introduction promises a story that celebrates the Puritan-American capitalist myth. In doing so, it also validates the myth as an integral part of today’s American life. I think perhaps Bormann would argue that in reading it, news consumers would be ready to react and join in a conversation, would immediately recognize the story and be ready to share support and to begin to chain the idea.

This introduction claims, “Devoutly Catholic, Cao steers his boat with the help of a compass, a crucifix and an American flag.” Even with this trite flourish of hyperbole, the story begins and remains within a limited field: simple workman’s tools, faith in God, and a belief in America are a trinity on which to base a life of hard work which will inevitably bring success. Also true to the Puritan ethic model, the story will show the work and the success are family-oriented. The simple irony that Cao’s religion is Catholic is unimportant to the modern American myth, but his Christianity may not be.

In the lead, Cao’s name and Vietnamese origins are presented matter-of-factly, with no suggestion that they set him apart. He is not the Other. His bona fides are instantly established because he works hard and lives by an American trinity. His unusual name, through which we clearly may assume he is an immigrant, is not positioned to define separateness; instead, it is a juxtaposition which elides an immigrant life into the American way as the paragraph moves on. He is not a threat. He is not the Other. His capitalist success is all the proof we need. He is instantly approved because we recognize the Puritan-American capitalist myth and he has passed its trials. He has completed both a physical and emotional journey, just as the Puritans did, and as they did, he built a life built on work and faith when he arrived in America. The lead summarizes this story and puts Cao into a mythic narrative reader now expect to be delivered. All that’s left to surprise them are some details. This is a somewhat disingenuous introduction, the writer delivering a very standard lead knowing that a foreign name will interrupt his audience. Any doubt about Cao is gone at the end of this introduction, largely as the result of the ideograph of the compass, the crucifix, and the American flag.

In addition to having an inevitable effect on structure, the lead of a feature story delivers expectations. They must be met in the body of the story. In a series about threats to the fishing

industry, this lead does not discuss that subject, even though there are examples later in the story that might well have made exciting reading and done as good a job, perhaps better, of hooking and holding readers. Physical threats to the Vietnamese immigrants and overfishing are good examples. So why did the journalist, or the editorial team, choose this lead? So packed is it with American icons and ideographs, almost to the point of caricature, it is reasonable to argue that it was used as a sort of *fait accompli*, a textbook example of how America has fulfilled its mythic promise. Searching for an anchor in this story, the newspaper resorted to using a narrative bound up in America's foundational myths.

Cao left behind an old world rampant with problems as crushing to freedom of religion and enterprise as those of seventeenth-century Europe were to the Puritan escapees. He sought what they sought, and like them, he found it and embraced it through his work ethic, and in turn it rewarded him as it is expected to do. We are reminded throughout the story that Cao was always a hard worker:

Cao grew up fishing with his father on a small boat out of Vung Tao, a seagoing town on the coast of South Vietnam. From the time he was 13 or 14, he spent almost every day on the water from dawn to dusk, pulling up nets of finfish and shrimp.

He might have spent the rest of his life that way, but the Vietnam War changed everything.

The predictability of the story the introductory paragraphs promises evokes the culture industry concept of the Frankfurt School in that a complex series of intermingled cultural and social stories have been blended down into one contained inside the myths' boundaries. The Frankfurt School position must suggest that simplification of narratives will occur within the culture industry, if only because as the range of narrative choices lessens and/or the range of acceptable dissension or opposition to the dominant ideology decreases, there will be a regression to a base narrative that does not highlight, and certainly does not celebrate, differences from that ideology.

That is of course also a hegemonic process. Here the story of a transition from Vietnamese fisherman to Gulf of Mexico fisherman, a transition wrought by war and filled with tension and danger, is oversimplified to work as an allegory for the Puritan's fleeing Europe.

We have a story where only the coincidences matter, those times when Cao's story can be made relevant and be understood as an American success story, when it can be given relevance through our own recognition of his role as a character in those myths, when there is some part of his story that readers can, using those myths, ascribe value to and compare themselves to by recognizing their own positions past and present.

The description of Cao is what we might call a compound-ideograph, a tightly glued collection of iconic images that represent and illuminate an almost fairy tale storyline, in effect a visual ideograph. This lead will be recognized, as McGee suggests, as something that does not need to be carefully read, parsed and puzzled over, but as something to react viscerally to without asking oneself for an explanation. Once upon a time, a man dispossessed and battered in his own land, a land of darkness, made a perilous journey to freedom and light and understood where he had arrived and what was required of him, what was expected, what he owed. And in paying that debt, or perhaps in fulfilling that requirement, the American of the Puritan capitalist myth allowed him, and his family and his community, to thrive. The journey is not just physical and financial; Cao changes, his life changes, he lifts himself up in material and spiritual condition, and he becomes a shining example of the hope of America that is ensconced in Hughes' collection of foundational myths. He becomes a fully accepted convert to America's civil religion. The journey in other texts examined in this dissertation offer similar examples of continuing multi-faceted change throughout a never-ending journey: change in status, change in outlook, and change in increasing Americanization.

When he arrived in America, Cao and his family had virtually nothing. But the story chooses to make it clear that he did not consider any course of life in this country other than one of work. The story shows that he did not oppose the ruling classes nor seek to isolate himself or his family from the community, nor stand in opposition nor to advocate change to the existing political or economic system nor challenge the social status quo. He bought into the system and took advantage of it, working his way up. In doing so, he did two things: he accepted what had to be done, hard work, and he made use of an osmotic wall between the classes. I have used the word osmotic because the liminal border between the classes is a two-way street. As some move up, some move down, and they can do so, if they work hard, with little or no resistance. Any resistance could of course be counter-hegemonic.

Cao moved up in socio-economic rank. In the story, movement is a constant motif, an aspect of the endless journey Cao is undertaking. He moved from Vietnam, but he is not static in his new life; he continues his movement, his journey of change. He is measured to some extent by the writer in terms of this movement, by how much more he makes and how much bigger his boats get.

His success is the result of Gramsci's hegemonic negotiation process. Cao's success, for that is what his boat and business ownership exemplify in the story, follows a pathway from his arrival as a refugee, his foot not yet on the lowest rung of the American ladder. This story, and for that matter all of the other texts examined in this dissertation, does not suggest that this success is inevitable for those who exhibit the Puritan ethic. But what it does indicate is that a pathway exists and it is travelable. In Gramscian terms, the pathway ensures that the lower classes do not become an historic bloc, do not solidify around positions where change is unlikely, do not see the upper and ruling classes as inevitable, intransigent enemies, but in fact

aspire to join them. It is not entirely an economic pathway. As economic success comes, so come changes in the way immigrant life is lived. Because of people like Cao, the ruling classes are able to assure the lesser classes that they can be joined. The rise of people like Cao is evidence that the pathway is potentially there for everybody. Better to toil within a system that allows escape than to oppose it. And the negotiation is all about capitalist success. Thus it is that when Cao joins the class above him, and every time he moves up further, the ruling class is accepting into its ranks someone who shares their view of America, someone who endorses the Puritan-American capitalist myth. But can he ever really be “accepted” and “acceptable” as a non-Anglo model of success within the system? The story does not go there, even in a token way. Yet it is a reasonable question, and one the story’s acknowledgement of racial and ethnic tension, for example in the Klan reference, raises elsewhere. Given the choice, the journalists involved in producing the story avoided the issue, one which may challenge the myth’s assumptions.

The hardships of his life in Vietnam and the trials of his escape are essential preambles to his life in America. It is a hellish life, thanks to the war, he has to escape, and the escape will not be easy. So his case mirrors the Puritan situation. It also shows that by the time he arrives, he is worthy of what America will offer him. He is pre-qualified by his struggle against evil as a soldier on our side fighting for our values in a far-off land, a safe subject, and his value is further established through evidence that he has always been a hard worker who also knows the value of money. In essence, this is all the American capitalist myth asks of immigrants.

Cao was a 23-year-old soldier in the South Vietnamese Marines when his side lost in 1975. Discharged just days before the end of the war, he and other soldiers made their way home on an unmarked bus, worrying the whole time that they might be stopped and captured.

Meanwhile, the Viet Cong were closing in on Vung Tao. Cao’s family feared the communists would seize their boats and decided to flee. On edge, they prepared an escape and waited for Cao and his brother to return from their military duty. Cao made it, but his brother was left behind.

On April 29, 1975 — a day before Saigon fell — 80 family members and neighbors, including Cao’s parents and his wife, Cay Nguyen, packed into a 40-foot shrimp trawler and made for the shipping lanes. The boat rode low in the water and its engine strained as it headed out to sea.

“A lot of people were seasick and were vomiting all the time. We were all afraid we wouldn’t make it — afraid we would run out of water and food, that we might sink, or the motor might break down, or that the Viet Cong might stop us,” Cao said. He spoke through an interpreter, though his English is passable.

But good luck followed the refugees. After three days at sea, an American cargo vessel spotted them. Cao remembers watching as many people threw themselves up against the side of the ship during the rescue operation, trying to get aboard.

The journey is a rite of passage, a movement from dark to light and the story describes, albeit briefly, the miseries of life in a collapsing South Vietnam being overrun by North Vietnamese forces. The dark which must be escaped is quickly established. Vietnam was the Puritan’s Europe, made so of course not by America’s allies but by her enemies. Cao and his family must now go through fire, must be tested, to be proved worthy to come and work and earn in America. They leave a corrupt and hellish life behind, sailing blindly out into open waters with nothing but hope, because there is certainly nothing to ensure their lives on this offshore boat ride. But then, on the waters, there is a sign of divine intervention in the form of an American cargo ship. That this merchant ship is in the coastal waters of South Vietnam a day after Saigon fell, an unlikely time and place to find such a ship surely, seals the Caos’ pre-qualified status.

There is an attachment here to the foundational myths of America that is unavoidable. The story is calling on its reader to recognize the narrative. This is the journalistic equivalent of whipping up a crowd. The story continues to lay before its readers clues as to what is happening. This is America, the place that those fleeing injustice must surely turn to. Not for the only time in these texts is there an absence of alternatives. America, the ‘natural’, ‘chosen,’ innocent’ nation of Hughes’ myth is presented as the only chance they have. Readers are on the shore waving and

cheering them on, because they know only in the America of Hughes' myths can Cao and his family be completely free and able to work to succeed. In other words, the abstract Hughes' myths are here in this story, and in the other case study texts, as an unstated presence. Cao's flight to America is not given a second thought. Where else would he go? It is certainly true that Cao would have had few choices as he climbed aboard the American freighter. But the story does not address this, it simply assumes that this would be where he went.

Just as the Puritans had, the new immigrants came to a hostile place full of dangers and savages, in this case perhaps best represented by the Ku Klux Klan and hostile local American fishermen. The Klan is such a bogeyman that the very mention of it may relieve the reporter of the need to develop any other threats:

It wasn't always that way. Arriving as refugees in several waves during the late 1970s, they at first were considered interlopers by local shrimpers. Their use of Asian-style push nets was quickly banned in Louisiana waters when other shrimpers complained.

In 1981, arsonists torched two shrimp boats owned by Vietnamese immigrants in Seadrift, Texas, and the Ku Klux Klan held a rally against the Vietnamese in Galveston Bay, Texas, according to "Gulf Coast Soundings," a book on shrimping by anthropologist Paul Durrenberger.

Nothing came easy

This is an example of what I call tokenism. This violent opposition to arriving Vietnamese migrants is clearly something the newspaper could not avoid addressing. But in passages of tokenism, such as this one, they are addressed only to the degree that the newspaper can say it was covered. It is almost dismissed, but as a topic arguably central to the story, it is one that could be far more developed. Editorial choices would have been made in the assembly of the story, and somewhere in that process this aspect of it was apparently not considered for development. Why? Why was it passed over so that other aspects of the story could be developed more? Once the lead was decided, the narrative was decided. The main development is for parts of the story that coincide with recognizable parts of the myth. Other aspects of the story are

covered but only to the point that essential information is delivered. Its briefness, however, does not stop it from standing out as a challenge to the mythic narrative and in doing so allowing the capitalist myth to demonstrate by example its goodness and superiority.

Despite the fact that Cao and his family are Vietnamese, ethnic and cultural differences are minimized in this story; a bland, sanded-down cultural façade is offered, acknowledging differences only in passing. If we were to edit this story and change Tuong Cao to Tom Cowell, and change Vietnam to Canada, would the profile description change very significantly? Apart from a reference to Cao's English as "passable" and the efforts and he and his wife make to learn the language, there is surprisingly little to indicate, or at least to accept and/or celebrate, Vietnamese ancestry. It smacks of Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, suggesting that the differences ignored are secondary, that where it matters, as members of an American capitalist society, we are more the same than different, that those characteristics and qualities we look to in order to assess our relationships with those around us are those that can be assessed by their place in the Puritan-American capitalist myth. Working to achieve something for family and community is a non-ethnic value in the American capitalist myth, as it is within America's civil religion. The family's ethnicity is addressed, but in the leanest of terms, a passing consideration arguably inserted here or there by the writer as color to add a little exoticism for a quicker pace or mild surprise. It is superficial. It is, in the end, treated as unimportant within the narrative. It is possible to see a function identified by the Frankfurt School. The story is narrow, that is it does not diverge very much from a centerline which is the Puritan-American capitalism myth. This small degree of divergence draws in the boundaries of the story and essentially all of the tension and problem solving, the character development and crises, the stuff of good dramatic narrative, take place within a predictable framework.

The story provides information that allows us to assess Cao's work ethic on a number of occasions, and presents it with little uncertainty about how we will react. It is surely reasonable to assume that on these occasions the newspaper is aware of how we will approach this exercises, as it is possible to think the newspaper had collected enough information about him to find other, or perhaps just more, examples.

Since that day two decades ago, Cao has worked ceaselessly to build a life for himself and his family in the United States.

"We do it day and night," he said. "From the time we leave the dock, the engine never stops. It's go, go, go until we come back. Then we go out again. We have to keep making money."

Cao continues to work as the story develops. He says 'we have to keep making money.'

Money then is why Cao works as he does, but it is presented ambiguously in this context – is 'have to' used in the sense of being driven to by personal beliefs and ethics, or is it Weber's iron cage at work? Perhaps it is used deliberately vaguely here. But his work ethic remains unquestionable and the assumption that work is the core value of American life is made simply:

Cao started out a penniless refugee. The steady upward arc of his life since then almost makes fishing look easy. But success came only through consistent, sometimes backbreaking, effort.

"After he had made his 40 hours the first week, I told him in sign language he didn't have to come back the next day," said his boss, Mark Gulotta, who now owns a Western boot shop in New Iberia. "Then he went back into the shop, and someone came out and said, 'What did you tell him? He's really upset — all he's saying is, no want go home, want work.' It was at a time when I really thought we had lost the work ethic in this country, and there he was asking for more."

He and Cay got jobs in fish houses, cracking crab claws four and a half days a week. He commuted to New Orleans for a day and a half of work at the shoe repair job. On Sundays, he rested.

The five worked 12 hours a day on a rented lot near a shipyard, where they bought cut steel, tools and other materials

"We work day and night, then we come in and sell a lot of shrimp, and people get mad at us," he said. "We are catching more shrimp than the Americans and they don't like it."

Cao works 'ceaselessly,' a repetition of the dedicated worker image of the lead, and because of his work he is able to 'build'. He does not overtly accumulate, that is hoard, wealth, nor does he

seek to use capital to build more capital; he builds boats so that his family and his community can succeed. At least that is the story's story. The narrative dwells on how the toil of Cao and his family allows children to go to school, including college, and these references define education as a part of the ladder climbing, a way to more wealth, and they also define it as work, very simply drawing education into the base Puritan-American capitalist narrative. It is fair, I think, to see Adorno again in that education here is simply another aspect of work and subsequent socio-economic ladder climbing. In culture industry terms, the story ignores the potential for education to be developed as something more than an economic asset. It is, after all, at the least a key to the assimilation of younger generations of immigrants, to introducing American values to those generations who then go home and mingle those values with old world ways of life, a way for younger American generations to develop a better understanding of the world beyond our shores, something we are so bad at, as a way to personal development and fulfillment and so on.

The boat Cao owns in America, built with his own hands, is 62 percent bigger than the one he left to the Communists, and in addition to owning it, he captains it. In the Puritan-American capitalist myth, one does not succeed, or become 'saved,' by simply collecting wages. One must not only contribute to the wealth and health of family and community. One must direct and dedicate one's own success to these ends or that success is not worthy of being considered a sign of salvation in the Calvinist view. In this story, Cao works and works and works, but he does it for family and community. Even before he went shrimping, he worked exceptionally hard in more menial work, which is more evidence of his worthiness. He is described as amusingly misunderstanding American working conditions and refusing to take a weekend off because he thought he was actually being denied work. If this were a movie, one of its American characters

might be given to smiling at Cao's confusion, then nodding his approval to indicate that 'this guy's gonna be okay.'

Biblical overtones intrude into the story. "On Sundays, he rested," says the story. This phraseology brings religion from the near background to a flashy foreground cameo, reminding us that religion is the base and work is the superstructure. One of the demands of journalism is to produce a story that reaches a wide audience, reaches people from a variety of backgrounds. The Biblical reference here is somewhat crude in its simplicity and perhaps was included to extend the reach of the story to readers who will be hooked with simpler references. Perhaps a Biblical reference is an access point into the myth for people less well-educated. Because the myth is so universally recognized in America, the newspaper does not have to be explicit: resting on Sunday means Cao is as solid an American success story as if he had been born in the Bible Belt and grown up without any doubts. There is no reason to question that Cao is devout in his Christianity, and I would not challenge the reporter's judgment. But to present his routines in such stark terms is not only to invite, but almost to demand, a comparison. The Bible says that God ended his work and rested on the seventh day from all his work.

The story emphasizes that Cao built his own boat with family help. He was not a professional boat builder; however, he and his family could build a boat, something of a feat if we assume stringent regulations adhere to ships before they can be licensed to be put to sea in commercial ventures. Self-reliance is another key to the Puritan ethic as Weber describes it, and this is a classic example. The Puritan version of capitalism champions business within the family structure because work should not only be done *for* family but *by* family.

Those close ties enabled Cao to move from being a minimum-wage employee to a successful boat owner with impressive speed. In eight months during 1986 and '87, Cao, a cousin and three brothers-in-law built the 64-foot St. Joseph — without help from professional boat builders.

The five worked 12 hours a day on a rented lot near a shipyard, where they bought cut steel, tools and other materials. Cao was in charge of materials, which he bought with a loan pooled from family members and friends. The others, who had worked building other boats, handled the drilling and welding.

Once again Cao is central to a tokenism, an oversimplified description that suggests that work alone is the basis of success, a slightly dumbed-down version of the Puritan-American capitalist myth. Like the Puritans, Cao faces extraordinary hardship, but, like them, he does not flinch. He simply works and works and is delivered: “At a time when shrimping has become a culture of complaint about cheap imports, oppressive regulations and other problems, Cao says he tries not to worry. His complaints are few. He just wants to shrimp.” He just wants to shrimp? This is again tokenism. A significant factor in the story, one which must be addressed, is addressed because the editorial team knows they must cover it, but they do so with almost cavalier disregard for the need to explain it comprehensively. Instead, they present it almost as an aside; major industry problems, which clearly affect the subject families, are squeezed into a short paragraph, and their complexity and challenges are dealt with via some sort of monosyllabic stoicism. While tokenism in these texts is based in brevity, it can be done because the newspapers assume the readers, aware of the mythic narrative, will not be left wondering.

This is a common structure in the texts under examination: something that is not a core part of the mythic narrative must be addressed because journalistic practices require it since it raises questions during the delivery of the narrative. Cao surely had to face some pressure? But in these cases, in these case histories, the very act of addressing them, divorced from the effectiveness of this approach, is considered an adequate handling of the subject. Cao’s got major problems? No problem, he’s stoic and hard working and that will handle them.

Stoicism in the face of racism and bitter competition for a share of the market is a Cao family character trait, and it is accepted by the writer who does not dwell upon it or apparently

ask for more material about it for the story. It is implicit. Just do the work, don't get involved in what is not important, because in the end, success comes from the simple story of the myth's broad vision, not the niceties of administration or slick business practices. But we know they are important. In shrimping, regulation, dramatically falling catches, aggressive competition, and cheap imports do affect livelihood, so bypassing them with 'he just wants to shrimp' is disingenuous and misleading. There is no reason why this aspect of the story should be so ignored, be subject to tokenism, unless it does not meet some central need of an editorial plan. Surely the battle Cao fought, with his competitors, neighbors, new countrymen, and local racists, would make riveting reading, and for that matter be more central to a story which is part of a series about trouble in the industry.

Here are more echoes of the simple, unidimensional facades that the Frankfurt School identified in media. Cao is a one-dimensional man. The base story is the mythic narrative; Cao is made to fit it. The reality of problems is trumped by ceaseless hard work, a grossly oversimplified model. The need for a complex business plan is trumped by, or at least secondary to, faith in the system. This simplicity is championed in this story. While it may be implicit that business skills are also required, they are not addressed to any adequate degree. Perhaps a success that relied to any great degree on commercial skills would be too much of an atheistic success and pull too far away from the central mythic narrative: "Cao started out a penniless refugee. The steady upward arc of his life since then almost makes fishing look easy. But success came only through consistent, sometimes backbreaking, effort." Success then was inevitable because of his work ethic, and that success is an arc, a steady upward movement. But the journey doesn't end; America is not a place to rest, say the myths. One can keep moving into a higher socio-economic bracket and in doing so become more successful, one rises not just to be richer

then. The reason the journey doesn't end for immigrants, I propose, is that the myths hold that America must be constantly won. The immigrant cannot simply arrive. Coincidentally, hegemony is also a constant process.

The writer addresses the Americanization, or assimilation, of the Cao family, a synchronous event to the socio-economic ladder climbing in the life of the Caos. Assimilation is part of the Gramscian negotiation between classes, for not only do the climbers get more successful as they climb, they become more tightly tied to the ways of America's civil religion, the blueprint of the ruling classes. There is a correlation between ladder ascension and a swapping of old class tenets for new ones in this story. The more Cao climbs, the more he represents the central achievement of the myth, the personal triumph that primarily benefits others as it provides for self. The Cao family's business success is paralleled by their assimilation into the shrimping and residential communities where they live: "In just 20 years, Vietnamese immigrants have become part of the rich tapestry of fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. With iron bonds of family and community, they have weathered the shrinking industry's changes."

A tapestry is a tightly woven product, individual strands blended into a whole; the single image one sees is actually the product of distinct threads. 'Family and community' are central to success, and that success is here assessed in economic terms. Vietnamese fishing operations have remained viable businesses at a time when others have not, and family and community are offered as prime reasons for this. There was no reason to suggest this was any more than good business, good modern capitalism, but the writer makes sure we see the family influence first. The good of the community that Weber saw as the prime goal of Puritan capitalism is served by the Caos even if, in this case, the community is, according to the story, somewhat isolated and

bounded by ethnicity. Family is ultimately credited with his success, or at least the degree of it: “Those close [family and community] ties enabled Cao to move from a minimum wage employee to a successful boat owner with impressive speed.”

Religion too is a powerful force behind Cao’s success. The image from the lead is repeated in the body of the text to reaffirm this:

Their Catholicism helps. Its symbols are everywhere, from the praying hands mounted high on the rigging of the St Joseph to the rosary beads draped on the windows of the wheelhouse, near a tiny American flag. They attend a Vietnamese-language Mass in LaRose everyday Saturday evening. At the beginning of the shrimping season in April, a priest blesses the boats and sprinkles them with a little holy water.

Cao’s boat is the St. Joseph, and other Vietnamese-owned shrimp boats are also named for Catholic saints. It is possible to overread the significance of this, but it does tend to suggest the close link Cao sees between his success and his faith, a base Puritan dynamic.

We can also apply Laclau and Mouffe’s argument that assimilation coerces erasure of natural borders and moves people into groups they do not naturally fit into and can only join by making awkward adjustments. The failure of the writer to delve further into the ethnicity of the lives of this family and some of their feelings and stories about becoming Americanized and accepted in America may well have been driven by the realization that the Cao family did not want to go there, to admit to abandoning their history in return for success. There is also the possibility that the writer and editorial team decided that the Cao family should not be presented as different or quizzed on their differences from local mainstream shrimpers, only the similarities. Perhaps the newspaper also did not want to assess, or reveal, the cost of the Cao’s social climbing as it suggests a loss of family identity, at least as Vietnamese people, and that runs counter to the myth. It is imperative to remember that the newspaper is all powerful in that he is making the choices.

It is also actually worth noting just how easily the Caos apparently let slip the bonds of Vietnam in exchange for success. A failure to do so would suggest a bloc might develop, based in a Vietnamese identity resistant to Americanization. So, over time the hegemonic negotiation process in America has found a way to draw immigrant classes away from their limited bases by opening the gates of the pathway to capitalist success. Hall sees media as delivering different messages to different groups and classes within the same texts, but if the messages themselves are class-free, as they are in the Puritan-American capitalist myth, or at least if the messages offer a similar faith to all classes in the manner Gramsci argued the Catholic Church does, then the process Hall identified is working in America not to falsely maintain class distinction but to actively blur it, a hegemonic process, by finding the ultimate social commonality – we’re all in it for the money and some of us are going to get it, a process which is influential to those who come after them at the foot of the ladder. Certainly, in this story all classes of readers would be expected to identify the article as a story that reaffirms that you can be what you want to be in America.

The Vietnamese are building more shrimp boats than any other group of fishermen in this region, according to the story. The capitalist myth says that success assumes dedication to and a long-term belief in the American system of capitalism. One doesn’t work for quick windfall profits that are accumulated and used selfishly. You invest yourselves and your families for social and community gains over the long term. The family believes in and is investing in their future. The story reaffirms this value to a readership that may have no awareness of immigrant communities. The readership expects, whether it knows it or not, that immigrants do not want to go back, because the America of the Hughes’ myths is, as it was to the Puritans, the acme.

The admiration of the Americans for the Vietnamese shrimpers is a reluctant one. It is in the end the way competitors in the story judge their Vietnamese rivals, not by their ethnic distance or social isolation, but by their familiar capitalist success. The story suggests that how well they fight for commercial superiority is a base indicator of just how good they may be as Americans: “Some competitors resent the newcomers, who tend to keep to themselves. But many have grudging admiration for their work ethic and persistence.”

There is only one non-Vietnamese fishing industry source in the story. The reporter interviewed Joe Rodriguez, described as a boat and boatyard owner in the area:

“This is the land of opportunity, and a lot of what we complain about, they see as opportunity,” said Joe Rodriguez, a boat owner and owner of Rodriguez Boatyard in Bayou La Batre, Ala., which in the last year has had a small boom in building for Vietnamese-American shrimpers.

‘They’ is the Vietnamese shrimping community. Two obvious questions arise: why was this quote the sole one of Rodriguez’s used, and why was he the only Anglo fisherman in the story? It is unlikely it was the only thing he said to the reporter, and equally unlikely, if we expect, as we can, a lot of time and effort was put into the reporting, that he was the only Anglo questioned. On the other hand, if this is not the case, why? Does he simply fit a need to support the status quo by providing facile support for it? Perhaps. But it appears to be a clumsy reinforcement of the teleology of the story, predictable, unimaginative and essentially moving the narrative along its tracks. It is impossible to believe that there were no other Anglos who could have contributed something of value to the story. The quote is inordinately lame, supporting a point already made, and that in itself should lead to a questioning of its validity. Here is tokenism again, a one-dimensional tokenism, a superficial citation with no depth or insight in the context of the story. There is something of Baudrillard in its use. The token American is a cardboard cutout who walks into and out of the story doing nothing more than a disinterested cameo. The thoughtful

American he represents and who we assume is back there, isn't anywhere to be seen in this story. Is he a pseudo event in Boorstin's terms, a player dragged into the story for the sake of the story? If DeBord is right, and I believe he is, in claiming that spectacle has replaced the exchange of goods of actual value, that sign value has replaced use value, then this Anglo fisherman is delivering is nothing more than a predictable and inert *deus ex machina*, someone who comes along out of the blue at the right time to provide something needed to move the story where it is intent on going.

There is possibly something else happening here. Perhaps a narrow range of interview questions, perhaps including leading questions, created a situation where this was the obvious thing to say to the reporter because he realized it was expected of him. Reporters who have time to interview in-depth in non-deadline situations commonly find that their subjects begin to assume where a line of questioning is going and try to be helpful by aiding the process. The result is a predictable answer to the predictable question that sought it. The quote from the Anglo fisherman, as well as quotes from Cao and his family, may well be examples of this sort of elicited quote.

The Cao family is also something of a flimsy unit in terms of the depth of description, and we are left with an image of their single-minded dedication to work, family, community, and success. When we read skeletal descriptions, with little character development, with no flesh and bones beyond the trite, predictable, or pedestrian, then there is every chance that what we recognize in the storyline is the myth, and we automatically, without fanfare or question, fit the story characters into their rightful place in the myth. Myth is so easily recognized that we know the story, so unless the writer surprises us, and in this case he does not, everyone is in their place, with only the names, and some incidentals such as country and industry, having been changed.

The story also uses numbers, in this case primarily dollars figures, to indicate business success. Their use indicates an assumption that readers understand profit/loss statements and costs, that quantitative business data is a common device through which we learn how our world works and as such is also a way to assess those around us. The numbers tell us where in the system Cao and his family are in relation to us. Surely there is no one who won't compare his income/work load to Caos. It can also be argued that those who do not succeed where Cao does are not firmly entrenched enough in their beliefs in the system, they have fallen back: "We work day and night, then we come in and sell a lot of shrimp, and people get mad at us," he said. "We are catching more shrimp than the Americans and they don't like it." Those frustrated Americans in the story, those represented by the complainers have, the story suggests, failed to be true to the Puritan ideal. They have not worked hard enough and they have not had enough faith in the system. Perhaps they have betrayed it by expecting rewards they have not done enough to earn. Perhaps they assumed an unwarranted superiority over immigrants, especially Asian immigrants. Cao is a reminder that, followed faithfully, the mythic dimension of American capitalist is a simple road to follow. You just need a compass, a crucifix, and a flag, along with a belief in all three.

In the public sphere, this story conveys a startlingly simply narrative. This is the story of a man journeying from a hellish place to America, where he swaps his misery for salvation. It isn't even that hard. Its simplicity arises out of its assumptions and the process it describes so flatly. Hardships are speed bumps, but the American capitalist road is a self-correcting entity and eventually success is inevitable. There is a bent towards submerging racial and ethnic identity. In this story, capitalism is the most powerful tool, and it shapes the Cao family more than any other single factor in this story, allowing them to 'succeed,' and once this is done or being done non-

capitalist, i.e. ethnic, differences are trivialized. Even the family's Americanization is dropped to the bottom of the story, not perhaps solely as an afterthought, but certainly something that follows Cao's 'success' as a shrimp boat owner which essentially gave him a de facto citizenship before he ever swore allegiance in public.

There is very little sense of the loss or hardship felt by the Vietnamese in their adjusting to America in this text. It is as if America were an assumed destination that we all naturally head towards, and all of Hughes' myths support this narrative ideal. As we will see in other texts, the effort of the journey, in so many cases beset with exceptional hardship and misery, is considered by the writers to be worth the struggle, and so the personal travails are rites of passage, their burden something immigrants must endure to learn how to advance, ritually no different than painful tribal initiation ceremonies in primitive societies. Once here in what the boat builder in the story calls "the land of opportunity," we see that opportunity is a strictly monetary construct in this story. An immigrant who does not do well in the pursuit of money is, according to this text, unlikely to be described as a 'success'. There is, in other words, a predicted path to success, and Cao follows it.

Narratives need endings, and journalists look to end stories in a way that ties up the threads of the story, brings them together in a satisfying conclusion. This story ends thus: "I am an American citizen," Cao said. "I try to remember and to keep contact with Vietnam, but it's much better here than there." The journey from dark Vietnam to light America is complete; America's capitalist promise has been kept. Cao sees life here as "much better" than Vietnam. The writer has described in the story a transformation, how Cao became the successful capitalist, something of value, by working hard, and the writer has chosen this ending as a way to bring the story to a conclusion. Working and earning is a natural right, something all men should aspire to.

It says this is what is supposed to happen in America to immigrants who understand our Puritan ethic and are prepared to buy into it and work for it. Teleologically, it was bound to end here; the writer gave the story no real chances to go anywhere else.

The glaring omission of a more than cursory look at the role Vietnamese shrimpers themselves have played in the very problem the series discusses – overfishing – is an indicator of the selectivity procedures of the editorial staff behind the story. The claim that the influx of Vietnamese shrimpers was a significant factor in the problems of the Gulf shrimping industry was not a peripheral or marginal debate. It was widely considered part of the problem at the heart of the matter, overfishing. To leave it out of the story as a significant element was inevitably an editorial decision, because the editorial team, given their extensive research, must have been well aware of it, and indeed the story sideswipes it in passing. The reporter was inevitably briefed and de-briefed on his story; it is not possible to put together a 40-part series without discussing each part with the reporter before they begin work, with duplication or lack of focus being but two of the problems to avoid. The decision to reference the Vietnamese roll in overfishing only in passing was inevitably influential in the approach the reporter took to the story. The newspaper then decided that the mythic narrative was the way to go, and the rest of the story fell into place after that narrative was launched with its lead paragraph.

Secondary text. Four feature stories on Vietnamese shrimping families from the Gulf of Mexico region are used as secondary texts in this case study. Three form a series that ran in the *St. Petersburg [Fla.] Times*, December 26, 1988 page, page 1A in the newspaper's national section. The other story is from the *Washington Post*, September 6, 2005, and ran in the financial section of that newspaper.

The focus and structure of these secondary texts allow for some direct comparison. They profile Vietnamese immigrants fishing families from the Gulf of Mexico environs under pressure, as did the primary text, and as features they would have a similar production and presentation history.

In the first story from the *Times*' series, "A Touch of Vietnam on the Mississippi - Refugees push to succeed in Louisiana," the newspaper gives us the same picturesque opening of life in a small town that the primary text chose to use as an introduction. But immediately beyond the introduction, in the so-called transition that moves us from the beginning into the middle of the story, one of the most important parts of a newspaper story in terms of structuring it so that it will read coherently and present a 'story', the newspaper introduces Nguyen Cao Ky, a former leader of the Republic of South Vietnam. Here is arguably a controversial figure in the Vietnam war – his premiership was in the mid-sixties and he was vice president in the early 1970s. The full breadth of his role at a time of intense turmoil for U.S. involvement in Vietnam is not addressed here, although it does appear in the final story in the series. The first word of choice to describe him, in fact the first word to describe anyone in this story and thus a significant choice by the newspaper, is 'invested.' He is used in the story as an investor in the lives of the Vietnamese fisherfolk. It is entirely possible that his role as investor was more important to the newspaper than his notoriety, because the economic basis of the industry is the foundation of the story. The fact that the industry is structured, is stable and mature, that it provides livelihoods, that it is an integral part of the regional and national GDP, is important to this story. Because of that, the story can assume that the industry can present the industry as an important contributor to the American GDP. Placing the families within an industry, establishing that industry as a reference point, allows us to recognize what they are doing and to make

judgments about them by comparing them to us, most of us presumably working within an industry. At the same time, this decision indicates an acceptance of their assimilation into America's economic machinery, a de facto stamp of approval. Their understanding of American capitalism, and their ability to be good at it, is now assumed by readers.

Investment is the scaffolding on which the narrative machine will build the story; it will be the constant reference point. The investment storyline will help determine what material is to be probed and developed and what is to be subject to tokenism by being ultra-briefly summarized. The material will be assessed based on its relationship with the dominant investment storyline.

The Vietnamese are introduced in this story, in this series including the primary texts, with one primary characteristic: they work hard, and they work to advance within the American capitalist system, and that hard work inevitably pays off by their promotion and conversion within the system:

No new jobs or development were brought in and the area stagnated.

The only major new construction was a block of public housing for welfare recipients. In 1976, some Vietnamese refugees were moved into the public housing. It wasn't too long before some of the refugees had moved out and bought homes and land in the area with their savings.

"I've never seen any people work as hard as them," says Walter Hodges, 61, who has lived in the area for 20 years. "It seemed like whenever there was a piece of property for sale, a Vietnamese guy would come forward with the money and buy it."

Refugees, they come with nothing to a rundown town and are assigned public housing used for welfare recipients, and through hard work they thrive and begin building successful American lives. It is reasonable here to evoke Bormann in that these words can be expected to elicit a cheerleading response: yes, these guys are hard workers and I know what that means and I support it. Welfare and handouts are not for the hard working, something also specifically brought up in the *Post* secondary text. While it may be acceptable to be brief in the link between

hard work and success, nowhere in the series or in the *Post* story is that link detailed. It is shorthand, it is ideographic. I think I would argue here too that ideographs, while they elicit a predictable response, do not have to be logical. Such a simple equation assumes that the opportunity is inherent in the system. It needs no more explanation than the fact that hard work is all that is needed to take advantage of it. The stories, in both primary and secondary texts, do not consider that hard work in and of itself in fact does not automatically lead to success; but it does not. Ask anyone working long hours for minimum wages in factories or fields. There is a skill to maximizing income from hours worked to advancing to earn more money from the same hours. The ideograph taps into the capitalist myth, relying on head-nodding from readers who recognize the simple saw and connect it to the myth.

A long-time local resident is relied on for a quote that reinforces the efficacy of the process. In a three-part series, there will have been an enormous amount of reporting done, people interviewed, and notebooks filled; the newspaper has chosen a simple reinforcement quote. Although not as blatant as the example cited in the examination of the primary text, by a fraction, it serves the same purpose. Such reinforcing quotes are standard enough fare in a feature story, a sort of backup or second opinion letting the readership know the reporter is good, but it is telling in the context where it is used, that is, what idea is to be reinforced by its use. In these stories, it is resorted to for the purpose of pressing into the readers' understanding that the hard-work-equals-success model is at work here. In other words, reinforcement constructions in these texts appear to be secretive.

There are several of the same anecdotal accentuates, what I might call narrative shorthand, in this series of stories as in the primary text. They are simple sub-storylines within the narrative. One common shorthand description is the loss of material possessions followed by

the amassing of new ones in America. The original wealth is also a descriptor in this series as it was in the primary text, a way to assess the subject's potential to be a successful member of the Puritan-American capitalist clan before they came to America, a way to judge what sort of people they were. Their standing in Vietnamese society and their cultural skills or accolades would be of little relevance to an American audience unfamiliar with what constitutes such values in Vietnamese society, but the fact that they made, and valued, money does tell us something the writer feels we want or need to know.

The *Times*' series ends with a simple summary: "Vietnamese refugees have brought the best of the values that are seen as symbolizing America: enterprise, hard work and a strong feeling for individual freedom." Descriptions of the hard work the Puritans demanded, and the success that they said it promised, occur constantly through this *Times*' series:

Trung and Tho Tran came to Versailles 12 years ago with 10 children.

They own two houses a block away from the public housing they used to live in. Trung, 58, a former fisherman, is now a self-taught carpenter.

Tho, 52, who had never worked outside the home in Vietnam, is busy from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. During the day, she mows lawns for the city government; in the evenings, she works in her vegetable garden.

When her husband returns, he puts away his car keys, grabs a can of beer and joins her in packing produce to supply local groceries.

They work, work, work. They own two houses, a success tied simply, almost carelessly, certainly informally, to their work ethic in this passage. The self-taught carpenter is the self-reliant Puritan laboring with what God gave him. This passage is what the newspaper felt were the best initial descriptors of this couple to put before us. There is also evidence in this text, as in the primary text, of the deculturization found in the texts examined in this dissertation: good ol' boy Trung "grabs a can of beer" as he eagerly joins his wife in working yet another job, the epitome of the American working man caricature. Perhaps this is unfair; perhaps the reporter is just using a single, valuable, descriptive phrase from a notebook to help us see Trung, to know him better. Of

all of the possibilities available to the reporter, the one selected is one that suggests an average middle-class American worker. There is something of what Stuart Hall might argue is a dominant culture at work here, the Vietnamese arguably positioning themselves in relation to that dominant culture, finding in a grabbed cab of beer a talismanic, everyday gesture of belonging.

“The Trans were on welfare for their first two years in America. Mrs. Tran hastens to explain that it was because she was pregnant. ‘No welfare, no food stamps. I don’t like,’ she says vehemently. ‘My own money now.’” Why include the welfare anecdote in a story about shrimping? Because it is written as a feature profile, certainly, and the more descriptors, the better we know them. This anecdote tell us something about them by allowing us to read something of their character by observing their fierce self reliance, their determination to make good in the American system the way one is supposed to according to the old Puritan capitalism myth. It is another ideographic homage to self-reliance. We may not know where they stood in Vietnamese society, but we know how they fit here because we know their relationship to the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

There is also evidence in the secondary texts of the pre-qualification ritual, the establishing of not only good character but an understanding of the workings of capitalism present in immigrants before their arrival in America. These subjects understand the concept of creating wealth, so they would be able to build their own success and contribute to America’s wealth:

Xuan Tran (no relation to Tho and Trung Tran) recalls that her parents had a jewelry business in a small fishing town in South Vietnam. They lost all their wealth - 400 ounces of gold - to pirates and cheats in their efforts to come to America. "They decided they want to go to a place where there is never any war," Xuan says. "Only peace, all the time."

In another example, in the second part of the *Times*' series, this pre-qualificatory wealth is matched with evidence of how it helped bring success in America, a success noted in financial and business terms as a way for readers to see just where the subject stands among us in terms of the capitalist success ladder: "At first, Diep - who had been wealthy in Vietnam and had servants - would go out to sea with Tran to help him. Now Tran can afford a helper and earns \$ 30,000 to \$ 40,000 a year."

The second story in the *Times*' trilogy begins anecdotally, a standard enough introduction for a feature story. The Vietnamese fisherman's anecdote comparing crabs and communists is amusing enough, a way for us to smile with him. But still, in this introduction, when the writer chooses the first insightful quote, the revealing detail about him she chose above all other details, it is that he used to be wealthy back in Vietnam. There is of course a value in introducing a story close to its chronological beginning, and perhaps that is what the writer searches for here, but the regular presentation of information about previous wealth and financial success, or at least self sufficiency, suggests that the writer has discovered a trait that readers will not only recognize but be able to use to place the subjects into the American landscape. The immigrants' relationship to the work equals success equation is constantly presented: "Some other Vietnamese consider his career as a fisherman unambitious, Tran knows, but he is beyond caring. 'I have seen so much. It doesn't matter to me.'" 'Unambitious' is now a slur – like labeling him not a real American. Ambition is a necessary part of being American, a core value in the Puritan-American capitalism myth. It is a force that helps build families and communities, an inherent part of Weber's 'spirit of capitalism.' In the myth, as in the Puritan era, it was a force for good. It is so here too, with these families ambitiously driving themselves to build their community. The aberrant Tran is just that, an exception confirming the rule.

“Hoang Tran on the verge of bankruptcy. Tran bought the shell of a boat for \$300 and made it seaworthy. It now performs as well as a modern fishing boat that costs \$6,000, he says.” This paragraph also offers dollar amounts for us to assess the worth of Tran’s work. They show both material and spiritual Americanization. Tran refuses to succumb to bankruptcy, but he also refuses to go to court to get relief (just as characters in both primary and secondary texts refuse to accept welfare). He works his way out. It’s the American thing to do, the American capitalist thing to do. As the texts show, hard work alone will succeed, and again in this example the process is not described, simply alluded to. The Puritans knew that hard work led to success, but hard work was a simpler thing in that era of a far simpler economic structure.

But there is also evidence in the text to another base of the Puritan myth, the idea that one works for family and community rather than self-wealth beyond need. It is couched within a simple correlation that hard work not only leads to monetary success but also to family unity:

Tran and his wife live frugally in a rented trailer in a marina, meeting past debts and saving for their children's education.

Tran's family understands the feeling that fuels his 12-hour work days. When he comes home, his daughter comes out of her bedroom and sits beside him. His son switches off his Nintendo video game and tells his father he's going to play drums in the school band. Diep kneels down and pulls off his wet boots (he cannot bend far down in his oilskin jumper).

The second example above is a *mélange* of iconic images, of how hard the work is and of the family life the work is dedicated to. But it is also another example of tokenism and deculturization. A complex family life, something certainly the readership would expect to see addressed and accounted for in this story, is painted in a few brush strokes and with descriptions that show commercial success and Americanization. Nintendos and school bands are byproducts of Tran’s work. Like grabbing a quick beer and heading off to a second or third job, they are used as indicators of the continuing journey of the family, from the culture they left to the culture

of America. The Puritan-American capitalism they practice, exemplified here by the work ethic, is credited with the transformation. In other words, the work is doing what the Puritan myth says work should be for. It is also in scenes like this that the hegemonic role of using the myth is seen. Work delivers people to the way out, the way of life that lifts them up the ladder. In climbing the ladder, they not only validate the myth, they are drawn further and further into the one-dimensional culture of America, into a position from which they will not challenge the status quo.

The third story in the *Times*' series brings us back to Ky, pre-qualifies him via his equality of position, at the time, with President Johnson and Secretary of State, and reconfirms that investment is the scaffolding of the series: "Nguyen Cao Ky, who used to make deals with Lyndon Johnson and Henry Kissinger, now makes deals with shrimpers in the Mississippi delta, 9,000 miles away from the country he once ruled." Ky works from a small office where "a \$ 20 bill is pinned over America on the map as a good luck charm." But it isn't just a good luck charm. It might be considered harsh to consider this \$20 as anything more than the good luck charm the reporter, and presumably Ky, says it is. But a choice has been made, a choice by the writer to promote this as an American symbol. It is not a \$5 or a \$10; it is enough to suggest prosperity, a significant buying power, a financial achievement worth the effort it took to make it. Rather than suggest this is a Baudrillardian simulacra, there is after all a substantive reality about earned income. I would suggest that this image stands in as the face of the myth. It is not a huge denomination, not a thousand dollar bill, it is an everyday banknote, and, used as a symbol, it says the money for a good family life is there if you work for it. It is to the Puritan-American capitalist myth a church icon, a face, a representative of broadly held beliefs. Where Baudrillard suggested church icons have in fact replaced reality and become actual objects of worship, this

\$20 is not divorced from its source. It reflects but does not replace that source, and that source is the myth which continues to be the primary reality.

The story backgrounds Ky as something of an unpredictable and perhaps unreliable businessman but one who has managed to “set up his family in Huntington Beach, Calif., and who, after disappearing from public view after a gambling problem, resurfaced in the New Orleans area and invested in a boat for some Vietnamese shrimpers to use. The venture was so profitable that it has grown to include a canning factory.” Ky has returned to his community and is working for its good, says the story, and that is apparently considered enough for him to be the core source in this story. When one works for family and community, says the myth, reward comes and it is valid. Past indiscretions, to use a euphemism, are forgotten or at least virtually ignored, addressed via tokenism if the need to address them is seen at all. Ky’s resurgence is drawn as something of the return of the prodigal to core values, leaving gambling behind to get back to basics by investing in his community. It is also worth nothing that while the story relates his investing, it does nothing to describe where the money he invests comes from. Investment, in this story, is tokenized. The newspaper assumes readers are familiar with its practices and purposes of investment and so finds a way to avoid elaboration:

Ky hopes his presence in the seafood industry will provide a spokesman for Vietnamese fishermen, whose rapid success has earned them jealousy and racial attacks. He says he understands the resentment of some American fisherman, but insists that the Vietnamese have thrived because they work exceptionally hard.

Ky’s insistence is accepted by the newspaper. There seems to have been, by looking at the text, no challenge or even counter-question to the statement from the reporter. This narrative continues to throw into relief its obverse, that American shrimpers complaining about Vietnamese success do not work hard enough, and throughout the primary and secondary texts in this case study, a failure to be successful is tied to a less than complete devotion to the Puritan’s

hard work equals success formula. Resting on one's laurels or assuming American is better than immigrant, undercurrents in the American complaints in the story, are presented as an expectation of earning and status that the myth does not support. One cannot stop working or work less for more. The myth demands honest hard work. Anything less is not American, and thus there are times in this case study where immigrants are afforded a position closer to the core of the myths than native born Americans.

What I call tokenism also jumps center stage in perhaps one of the best examples in any of this dissertation's case studies:

Vietnamese refugees and immigrants tend to live in enclaves because they have a strong sense of family and community, and many first-generation settlers do not speak English. Their desire to eat differently and raise their children differently is sometimes misunderstood as a rejection of American ways, Ky explains.

Tokenism, as I have defined it, is the process of addressing what is expected to be addressed in a feature news story, a subject that would be a gaping void if it were not covered, but doing so solely to avoid the presence of the void, that is, to do an adequate job, no more, something that leaves such sections the poorer compared to other parts of the story, and thus significantly discounted when the story's influence on news consumers is considered.

Throughout the secondary texts in this case study, as was the case in the primary text, the Vietnamese families and communities are significantly deculturized, painted in largely flat, non-ethnic images without vivid or detailed cultural context. The question that hangs center stage is whether the immigrant community is so completely Americanized. This single paragraph in the *Post* story addressed the questions to avoid the void, a simple description that ironically leaves the questions even more prominently unanswered, a reality, at least for a significant section of the Vietnamese community that is not addressed in any meaningful depth anywhere else in the *Times'* series:

Tensions between Cajuns and Vietnamese ran high in the past. Local police recall incidents during the 1990s of Cajuns and Vietnamese shooting at each other to get better shrimp spots off the coast, though no one was seriously hurt. But relations have improved dramatically, mainly because there aren't too many shrimpers left.

The *Washington Post* story was written after Hurricane Katrina wrought havoc in the shrimping industry in the Gulf of Mexico, especially to Louisiana- and Mississippi-based fishermen. In a commonly-used opening to a feature news story, a person is introduced in the lead, the effort of the writer to 'hook' the reader:

Ngo Van Nguyen fled the communists of North Vietnam as a child. In the 1970s, he braved his way to the United States as a refugee, bringing along his wife and two young children. He then faced down initial suspicions from many Cajuns in bayou country while trying to establish his shrimping business. And starting with one small boat, Nguyen built his business over the years into a 30-boat fleet, complete with his own ice house and shrimp shed.

It is a compact description of what the Puritan-American capitalist myth stands for. It is another lead that announces the story will be spun around the myth. After such a lead, it is difficult to take the story anywhere else. He 'braves' the journey, faces down suspicion and presumably hostility, to 'establish' a business and just how successful that business has become is quantified so we may assess the degree of his success. The newspaper would have had access to a variety of life stories among the immigrant Vietnamese fishing families if we simply accept a lot of legwork by the reporter and, since the immigrant community is not small, a range of life stories to be found. It is unreasonable to suggest this life story is stereotypical, that all stories in the immigrant community would be essentially the same. If that argument were made by the newspaper, unlikely though that may be, the response must be that the newspaper needed more reporting to find nuances and differences rather than present this as a distinct profile. Did the reporter, after gathering his material, sit and see the success story as the best story that could come from it? Schudson says that the events reported will determine what can be made of them,

will have a major influence on what narrative the reporter chooses (Schudson, 2007). Hall wonders why so few basic narratives are found in mainstream news. For Hall, the reason was cultural, limited by the need for a dominant class to find a story the lesser classes could understand and identify themselves in. The *Post* then saw in this success story the most compelling narrative, the one with the widest appeal, and that means simply the one most recognized. It is also, I believe, one Hall would argue is the one within which the readership can most easily recognize and place itself, that is, all of the distinct readerships it reaches.

When Hurricane Katrina struck Bayou Lafourche, Louisiana, where Nguyen lived [incidentally the story notes that he lives in Cut Off, the same home town for the primary text's main Vietnamese protagonist family], he did not leave; he stayed to protect what he had built for his family over 40 years:

“I wanted to stay with my business,” said Nguyen, 55, who learned the shrimping trade as a child. He hails from a long line of shrimpers, including his great-grandmother, who lived to at least 100.

That business has suffered severe damage -- and is possibly beyond repair. Nguyen's losses include his \$1 million ice house, two tractor-trailer beds to haul shrimp and several heavy-duty scales that cost roughly \$15,000 each. And his \$10,000 conveyor belt was damaged by a large, green dumpster that was blown into it by the storm's winds.

The business is almost personified here, and Nguyen is a heroic figure standing firm and steadfast in a deadly hurricane to save it. The business is not the faceless, bookkeeping exercise of the mega-corporations, rather it is something that was built by hand with blood, sweat, and tears. This visceral connection between the man and his company is an echo of what was achieved by the personal toil of the Puritans. Long hours, months, years, decades of hard work yielded homes and schools and churches, a family protected from the elements and hunger, it created a situation where the young had the chance to learn and then go out into the world and do it for themselves. Dollar figures are rolled out here as they are in the primary and other

secondary texts in this case study, to allow us to assess just how much Nguyen had succeeded in business. A green dumpster is tossed around by the hurricane's winds, a frightening visual image of the storm's power and unpredictable danger, but the newspaper cannot resist including the dollar value of this missile's damage within the imagery.

This *Post* story looks at the possible prospect of the Gulf shrimping industry, already reeling from foreign competition and high fuel prices, failing catastrophically because of the damage from Katrina: "In a sense, Katrina has accelerated a day of reckoning that had long been approaching: Will this community of trawlers remain loyal to the hard-earned family business or will they, especially the younger Vietnamese Americans, leave shrimping behind in favor of a new way of life?" The story maintains its family focus, seeing the natural progression of a business from generation to generation, as the Puritans, organically, saw it as under threat now. The family is part of the business unit. The story reaffirms the connection, reaffirms the proposition that in America we work primarily for our families and community, and that they are the rightful inheritors of the wealth created:

Timmy Tran, 37, Nguyen's brother-in-law, embodies this dilemma. His 100-foot-long shrimping boat lies crippled and beached on its side off Bayou Lafourche, tossed there by the storm's deadly winds.

Tran, a high school dropout, does not know how he will survive without his boat. His monthly expenses include a \$1,500 mortgage payment, \$700 for his wife's 2005 GMC Yukon sport-utility vehicle and the costs of raising his three young children -- not to mention the loan and insurance fees still due on the boat.

"That's all I got right now," said Tran, pointing at his green and white shrimping boat, named T-Brothers after Tran and his two siblings, one of whom is also a shrimper. He purchased it nine years ago for \$250,000.

Dollar amounts are used again as a way for readers to evaluate the work and worth of Tran and for that matter to realize how much financial trouble he and his family could be in because of Katrina. As is the case in other stories in this case study, in the primary and all of the secondary texts, the hard work ethic of the Vietnamese shrimpers is never far from the surface, and the

welded link between hard work and family and success is constantly placed within those references:

“You work all day and all night,” he said. “You don't sleep out there. At first I liked it, but now I don't like it.”

...Boat crews go out for at least two to six weeks at a time, trading their family life for the constant smell of diesel and salty spray from the gulf waters. The groups of four to five men work all night -- shrimping is best in the moonlight -- tossing out nets and hauling them in. ...The season runs from May... until October or December, depending on the size of the boat and where it is trawling.

...Nguyen, his wife, Lap, and their two young children left Vietnam in 1975, making their way to a refugee camp in Guam and eventually to the community of Port St. Joe, about an hour east of Panama City, Fla.

“Luckily it was near the coast and they could fish and shrimp,” Vuong Nguyen said. “Five families lived in one three-bedroom trailer, and they used one car to drive 20 some people to work.” His mother worked at the docks, sorting fish out of the shrimp nets; his father repaired nets.

Now the industry is threatened and people like Nguyen are facing the prospect of either starting over again, starting a new business or simply working for someone else. The last make him stare dejectedly at the ground, realizing that his work is to build family not just earn a wage.

In the late 1970s, they moved to Panama City to try their hand at the shrimp business. They saved and borrowed enough money to buy their first small boat for \$5,000.

Vuong marvels at how his parents made it. “They saved and saved and saved,” he said... “I started at the bottom,” Nguyen said. “I sold my first boat and used the money from that to buy a little bigger boat and then I bought a little bigger boat. I went step by step by step,” he said.

This story is another to raise the welfare argument, although it does not specifically use that word, which was also raised in the primary and the other secondary texts. Welfare, it seems, is a sort of rock bottom recognized by people as the perfect zero, and the distance from there someone has travelled by their own hard work is a measure of them and how well they have used the system in the way it was meant to be used: “‘People would think the government gave us money,’ Nguyen said. ‘I would just say, ‘No sir. I work for this.’”

Towards the end of the story is a passage one might have thought would come earlier. The Nguyen family is going to be okay because of the way they have invested their money. Perhaps an obvious explanation is the best one: leaving it until here maintained the suspense of

the story as readers wondered about their future. Nevertheless, it does convey the promise of the Puritan-American capitalist myth that one can keep on building, getting wealthier within the system:

Even before Katrina, the Nguyen family had begun accepting the bleak future of the shrimping business. Two years ago, they opened a 49-room Days Inn in the town of Galliano, some 20 miles from the port where the Nguyens operate their shrimping business. The inn mainly houses workers from offshore oil rigs. And last month, the family opened a 64-room Best Western, whose only guests now are electricity workers coming to restore power to the bayou.

I would suggest that the brevity with which it is described is something of a tokenistic approach to this long-term wealth building aspect of the myth, almost as if the newspaper didn't want to spend too much time, space, and detail on modern investment capitalism and its superior long-term earning power over the hard work equals success formula of the myth.

In a wonderful irony, the hotels will be used to house family displaced by Katrina, keeping family and business together as they should be. But community is also served by the hotels: "...Nguyen and his relatives have offered help to many beyond their own family, opening the hotel to the community and serving 400 plates of boiled shrimp to passersby from the bayou area. When they ran out of plates, they used paper bags." Shrimping provided a way to move up to a better class for the first generation of migrants from Vietnam. The next generation is already finding different ways to use the industry, from being an electrician to designing hotel rooms. The way out is the way immigrant families can leave behind the poor, immigrant community and culture they were part of on arrival. When mainstream news media show immigrants using the way out, they show others in the immigrant community that it can be done and that action has a hegemonic value, as it mitigates hard feeling against the ruling class hardening into a potentially counter-hegemonic oppositional bloc among those yet to climb. Why would anyone within these

Vietnamese immigrant fishing communities want to oppose the ruling class? They want to join. The ruling class wants them to join.

The story is personal profile only loosely tied to the general subject of the series. As such, the writer has a lot of room to pick and choose in his approach to the story, reporting it and writing it. Editors too would have had a similar freedom. The story constantly focuses on and elaborates aspects of Cao's personal and family life that exemplify his status within the tiers and layers of American capitalism. The problem that the series addresses, the fishing industry in serious peril, is a secondary player. Cao's work ethic and family-centric belief in American capitalism is the main player. There is an apparent effort to describe the overfishing problem as something almost like the weather, something that happens inevitably but which the superior character will be able to overcome, especially when it is grounded in the Puritan-American capitalist myth's values. There is an inevitable oversimplification factor in the story because of this approach. The free market, as it were, is virtually ignored. The myth's simple storyline dominates the choices made by reporter and editors, and tokenism is relied on for subject matter that must be addressed but does not fit so neatly into that mythic storyline.

Mexican Meatpackers

Primary texts. In 2003, *The State Journal-Register*, Springfield, Ill., published a four-part series which was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2004 in the category of National Reporting for S. Lynne Walker's "candid, in-depth look at how Mexican immigration transformed an all-white Midwestern town." The town is Beardstown, Illinois.

The introduction to the first story in the series plays the role of a pseudo-lead. While it precedes the actual lead of the story, it is the first presented paragraph the reader consumes. It is

not only an introduction to the series, it is a summary and a teaser; it is editors promoting their series. As is the case with any introduction, it not only announces priorities and sets the tone, it is a major influence on how the story will, or can, develop. An introduction such as this can be expected to reflect the accumulated wisdom and intent of the series. Written after the series is complete, as the only way the writers can be sure to present a complete, thoughtful overview, this introduction co-serves with the lead of the story as the hook that grabs the readers firmly enough for them to want to continue:

For more than 200 years, the peoples of the world have been welcomed in America, a country built upon the backs of immigrants. In cities and in small towns, new waves of immigrants look to improve their lives and those of their families in the same land of hope, opportunity and prosperity sought by their forefathers.

The relative simplicity of expectation conveys an underlying assumption: These immigrants are essentially the same as earlier migrant generations and they expect the same, and America today can deliver that, if things work out as they should, and they should if this immigration population acts like those former immigrants. It is basically a simple equation, the Puritan-American capitalist myth in 56 words.

Only four paragraphs into the first story in the series, there is a quick description of Beardstown life, which is another indicator of what I have called journalistic tokenism wherein a complex situation central to the story is described briefly and over-simply: “Bike-riding children waved to octogenarians resting in porch swings. People turned out for fish fries, baseball games and Fourth of July fireworks. Everybody knew everybody's name.” While there is perhaps no place to be expansive in a description of the town this early into the story, this is Rockwellian by any standard. Such a compact description informs the audiences that there is a willingness here to compact some reporting within the storyline. In this case, an entire town is described as an American cliché. Beardstown has been drawn as an idyllic, storybook rural community. The

description works ideographically, conveying to the readership that this town is comprised of mom and apple pie values. It also has overtones of the Puritan era, a simple, idyllic place presumably the result of the hard work and basic values of the people who live here and who came before them. My argument is that the tokenism employed in these case studies reveals aspects of reported stories that are chosen by editors to be addressed minimally, even though they are essential to the story and could just as easily have been treated more expansively. My argument is that these aspects, while necessary to present a thorough and complete narrative (stories can be thorough without being complete), do not aid the development of the central narrative as much as other aspects of the story. That central narrative is based on the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

An economic crisis faced Beardstown, Illinois, a small mid-western country town. The town's economy was collapsing after the departure of the huge Oscar Mayer meatpacking plant. The economy and what we might call the soul of the town are conflated in this story, its economic health essential to the all-around well-being of the citizens. But a new meat packing company is coming. It will eventually bring Hispanic workers, mostly Mexicans, because it cannot find enough local and regional labor. This will create a situation where residents and immigrants are in oppositional camps:

In 1996, Beardstown wasn't a community, but two separate groups of people: Anglos and Hispanics...

From the beginning, there was "tension between the two groups," Weitzel [St. Alexius Catholic Church's Rev. Eugene Weitzel] said. "This is a redneck town. They are slow to accept outsiders. Whenever we have people who are different, we seem to have a fear of them."

...Victor Sanchez remembers feeling alone and alienated in 1998 as he walked down [school] halls filled with Anglo students.

"I was, like, shocked because I hadn't seen so many white people in one place," he said. "I felt strange. It's hard to get along with people when you don't talk the same language."

The series of news stories sets up a confrontation, a dramatic tension, and there is no doubt that the narrative to come will be about the possibility and the path to resolution, to reconciliation: “By the late 1990s, everybody in town seemed to understand the Hispanics were here to stay. The challenge facing Beardstown was to find a way for Anglos and Hispanics to grow together instead of growing apart.” This binary situation is caused by the needs of the factory, for example labor and the need to make a profit, and the story does not question those needs. It is evident early in the story that it is the factory’s economic success that will in the final analysis allow or deny reconciliation.

Through the course of this series, the success of the new plant and the future of the town are considered not only intertwined but in lock step. So we find a situation where what the company must do, or simply does, to make the plant work is considered common sense, by both citizens and the newspaper; as Gramsci would say, a no-brainer, accepted wisdom, something that had to be done. Thus, the hardships this causes are also accepted, again by both citizens and the newspaper, as inevitabilities that must be endured rather than deconstructed and/or challenged: “Excel has been silent about many of the issues surrounding its Beardstown operation. Repeated requests made over a seven-month period for a face-to-face interview with company officials were denied.” What it takes to achieve the town’s economic well being, which is assumed to rest almost entirely with the meat processing plant, is then not significantly questioned. The series is about reactions to what the company does. The assumption that the company is the prime mover is a shoulder-shrugging capitulation to the capitalist myth, an underlying acceptance that the company can do what it wants as long as it brings jobs. The company is Excel, eventually credited with saving the town by opening a new pork packing plant in the shuttered facility of the town’s former main employer. Excel’s fiscal practices, its business

practices, its profits, and the compromises it demanded and received to come to town, are not probed or explained to any serious degree. There are attempts, recorded in the story, to get the company to talk to the newspaper, and there are descriptions about hiring and other practices that raise eyebrows. But they are not pursued with any vigor; they are pro forma inquiries and paragraphs that are apparently considered adequate. This is what I have called tokenism, addressing a subject because the failure to do so would be a glaring omission, but doing so in a cursory manner, just enough to be able to ensure the subject was not ignored. I do not imply that these passages are intentional attempts to avoid presenting essential facts, many of them do that, simply that they devote only a minimum of space to that task within a story form, a feature series, that does not have significant space restrictions. In other words, they could have, but did not, do more than the minimum required in these passages but did in others. This means that relativity and selectivity are at work, and I argue that the capitalist myth's storyline is the deciding factor in these choices because it demands some aspects of the story require more development than other. In this instance, the failure to do more inevitably leads to the conclusion that the newspaper felt that repeated requests, without answers except for a written statement, presumably one approved by public relations practitioners and lawyers, were a sufficient action. The foundation for building such a position must be an assumption that the company is an agent of the myth, an instrument created to help those working hard to achieve what hard work could achieve. It plays the role that the farm played in the Puritan world: "Although the company denied it knowingly hired undocumented workers, it was an open secret that most of the Hispanics - perhaps as many as 80 percent - had purchased false IDs to get their jobs." Here, simple juxtaposition is a shoulder shrug – it happens, what can you do about it, and we certainly aren't going to go after the company, they've made their statement.

This series is clearly meant to be an in-depth look at the situation of Mexicans moving into Beardstown; the length of the series alone tells us this, but this minimal engagement with the company is troublesome. While the series is not an investigative work, and indeed the Pulitzer committee did not consider it such but rather a feature story using a depth-reporting approach, it is a detailed work. Yet there is an acquiescence to the company's stonewalling minimalism. Excel will want to control what is written and said about it as much as possible, so the newspaper's expectations must have been limited to begin with, but why stop at what appears to have been perhaps a phone call or email or two? Why is the company allowed to produce a brief self-serving statement and not pushed harder? Why was there no effort made to talk to company officials via informal, off-site contact? I assume this was not done because if it had been there would surely have some reference to it in the story.

The town's former Mayor says of the company's practices: "They take Hispanics, blacks and the downtrodden to work in their plants - those who don't have the computer skills or the basics for today's work environment," he said. "They seem to prey on that type of people. They take advantage of the disadvantaged."

As he left office in 1990, the ex- Mayor gave his successor some advice, apparently aware of the company's inevitable long-term hiring strategy.

"I told him, 'If you don't stay after Excel, you are going to have a lot of Hispanics and a lot of Asians come in here and take those jobs.'"

"That's exactly what happened," he said.

The Mayor is a critic of what Excel did and how they did it, but he is the only forthright one.

Token passages like these are found in all of these texts in this dissertation, and they are examples of what Habermas saw as dereliction of duty in the public sphere by the modern media.

This tokenism is caused, I suggest, by the assumptions of the capitalist myth that include the belief that a community's well-being is the result of practices that have their negative side but what can you do about it. It's the breaking eggs to make an omelet conundrum.

The newspaper sets up a basic tension in the first story, headlined “Tension in the Air”, a simple Us vs. the Other confrontation. But the tension is not set in a vacuum. There is an independent variable: the plant. So the tension is not entirely black and white. If the plant succeeds, goes the thinking in the story, the tension will ease and community will succeed. This is the story’s telos, the end to which it ineluctably progresses.

The company initially hired some of the town’s laid-off workers and some other employees regionally. But as it expanded, it had to look elsewhere to find the amount of labor it needed. To be fair, there was not enough local and regional labor for an expanding meatpacking plant. Resorting to looking for labor in Hispanic communities, in America and Mexico, is not a surprise. That’s how ex-Mayor Bob Walters was able to predict it. Nor do I suggest that it is anything other than a company looking for labor. I do, however, argue that the newspaper’s acceptance of the practice reveals its acquiescence to the idea that plant management has to do what it has to do. The story reveals that former mayor Walters was made aware of this via an implied threat, or perhaps a simple statement that without some concessions from locals, in this case wage rates, something lower for Hispanic workers than local labor, the town’s engine would stop running:

When [ex-Mayor] Walters sat down at the bargaining table with Excel in 1994, the company made it clear that “if they continued to have those costs ... we were probably looking at closure.”

...Every week, Excel officials interviewed job candidates, but “they weren’t able to get enough people in the job pool here,” said Walters. “In order to build the factory and get the people they needed, they had to go outside the area.”

So Excel began to look for workers from south of the border who acknowledged they didn’t gripe about every ache and pain.

...Yes, they hired local folks. But they also recruited a stream of immigrants, most of them Mexican, to feed their insatiable demand for strong, young workers.

The scene is set. Non-local, non-white, non-American labor is coming. Hispanics are coming.

The stories accept that the Mexicans who will come to town are needed by the company, there is

no choice involved because without them the plant will fail and in this story that is tantamount to the death of the town. The dominant need of the capitalist system is assumed to determine what is and is not acceptable and where the bottom line is. Nowhere is an alternative to Excel's success based on Mexican immigrants noted.

Using the former and future Mayor Walters as a sounding board, the story sets the essential collision by conveying his broad concern as Mexicans moved into Midwestern towns with meatpacking industries short of local labor. He was right. Between 1987 and 2000, Beardstown's Hispanic population grew by 3,229 percent:

People from different cultures who spoke different languages were crowding into communities where white, English-speaking Americans had lived for generations.

The new arrivals brought new music, new foods and new holidays. They also brought new social problems.

They weren't creating towns, as earlier waves of Europeans had done, but moving into tight-knit communities. Sometimes, the towns lost their identities and people from neighboring communities poked fun at them, calling them "Little Mexico."

The journey, in its role as a rite of passage with all its struggles and rituals, is a dominant theme in this series as it is in all of the texts under examination in this dissertation. Dark places will be left behind and passage to the light must be earned with hard work, perseverance, and triumph over adversity, and once again the measuring stick will be how well the Mexicans work, not only for themselves, but for the community.

The story quickly lays out the exception to the normalcy suggested in the introduction: this is not like those earlier immigrations. The story continues to develop the idea. These are strangers in a strange land, not like many of the immigrants from 200 or so years ago who came to relatively empty lands or to towns or parts of cities where their countrymen were established:

Although the town had been built by immigrants in the early 1880s and had been home to people of foreign ancestry ever since, "this new wave was different," said Loraine Brasel, who was a member of Beardstown United.

“They came right from Mexico with no established support group here. They didn't speak English. So they formed their own cohesive group,” she said. “It was like having a little country dropped right in the middle of Beardstown.”

The reference is a reminder that immigrant communities did come long ago and that a comparison can be made. The reference hooks the myth, reminds us that these early immigrant communities worked hard and built a future for the community. This reflexivity offers hope that it can be done again and also introduces a fear that perhaps it might not get done right this time. All the while, in the background is the plant, the one agent that might make it work.

Gramsci saw tension as building when two blocs, or classes, confront each other. Hegemonic theory says that the ruling class will find a way to dissipate that pressure, to ensure that the lesser class does not effectively challenge or disrupt the ruling class. If the lesser class manages to develop leaders who understand the situation, those leaders can forge a bloc that will in fact be oppositional and challenging to the rulers. Interestingly enough, this series of stories actually pits two groups against each that are similar in socio-economic stature. While Beardstown residents have a more established presence, they are, in these stories, competitors for vitally-needed jobs at the plant. The meat packing plant is considered by the newspaper to be an agent of the myth. It is the plant's ability to give members of both blocs a way to personal, family, and community prosperity, and it does it in the same way, providing jobs and money, and this way is neither a Hispanic nor Anglo-American ritual but a neutral, secular machinery to which both sides much commit. The Anglo community has already committed to this civil religion, has bought into the Puritan-capitalism myth, and in this series the Hispanic community is drawn into it as well. Thus the blocs, while suspicious and even fearful of each other, do not solidify into distinct oppositional entities.

The myth is employed differently in this case than in the case of the Vietnamese Fisherman. Here is a larger community, and it is this immigrant community that replaces the individual. There are inevitably more dynamics as a community attempts to do what a single fisherman undertook. The myth then is more evident in the movement of a group, and while individuals within it must be like the fisherman, there is less emphasis on personal than on group conduct. In turn there is also more focus on the host community and from there on the reactions are between two distinct cultures and tradition rather than within an individual.

Laclau and Mouffe hold that when two distinct communities or classes merge into one, it is an unnatural, forced transition. At the start of this series we have two distinct communities, yet the telos of the series is an inevitable merging of the two. What is covered in the story is chosen on the basis of its relationship to that eventual elision. Activity which hinders such a merger is considered a problem to be addressed; evidence of activity that helps is described as a positive. Should the communities remain distinct, while Laclau and Mouffe would applaud, the ruling classes could have reason to fear that within their distinctness organic intellectuals may develop that would organize and crystallize the community into a position of active opposition (in this case perhaps to the Excel plant) What's more, the process is not just two distinct communities melting into one, it is a process that also allows people from both to climb the socio-economic ladder. Both processes benefit the ruling classes in hegemony theory by decreasing potential opposition or bloc building among lower classes.

The series exemplifies a core difference in the Puritan-American capitalist myth and the church as hegemonic negotiators. The capitalist myth works as an active machinery, not the passive instrument that is the Church in Gramsci's description of hegemony. Capitalism allows people to change the physical way they live their lives by allowing people to move into higher

socio-economic layers. The Church influences through shared faith accessed by rituals and iconography that does not prevent the development of blocs but instills an acceptance of life within those blocs, an imposed hegemonic balance that the lesser class members of the church do not challenge. There is a similarity, however, in that under capitalism not all people can climb to the next highest socio-economic ladder rung, and those left behind do accept a position somewhat similar to that delivered by the Church to its least powerful members. The story highlights the fact that Hispanic individuals and families in these stories exhibit such a belief in the myth. Whatever hardships they face, there is an assumption that it is worth it and it is not necessary to, or at least there is no reporting of any inclination to, form a distinct oppositional bloc. It is at loci such as these, places where pressure is applied to Hispanics either through company hiring and workplace practices or through tension in neighborhoods, that one might expect an oppositional historic bloc to begin to form. But it does not happen. Even raids that send relatives and friends summarily back to Mexico do not trigger an oppositional reaction. An unanswerable, although not unreasonable, question arises: did the reporter observe but discount such opposition? And if so, was it a minimal and random opposition, or was it ignored because it fell outside the accepted narrative of the myth, an aberration that could not be fit neatly enough into the story? The story suggests that it is not there, that the ability of some of the Mexican immigrants to get paid well and to advance themselves into higher socio-economic layers is a pathway up and out, and as long as the pathway works the blocs will not form. Those within the Mexican community that might suggest an opposition bloc be formed, perhaps workers with union ties, would seem to lack the influence needed among the Mexican community at large where some members build homes for rent and own bars and cars.

It is also apparent in this series that the cultural landscape has again been flattened and the Frankfurt School's limited scope model appears to be in use. The immigrants are Mexican, but they are simply drawn, if not stereotypically, then at least one-dimensionally. The story also accepts that cultural differences will be worn away not by any cultural acid but by the demands of the civil religion and capitalism accepted by both. The myth is essentially the only common ground. The church, as the story and a number of individuals quoted in it suggest, might be expected to be a shared institution, but the newspaper reports the deep rifts and antagonisms within the local churches. In the end, it is not the people of the town or church personnel who have the power to resolve that tension, it is the factory. The factory is part of the way of life ordained by the myth. The hardships it creates are rites of passage, rituals of the journey.

The story cites a major move toward normalization or assimilation as the opening of businesses by the immigrant community. The prominence given to these openings by the newspaper suggests it is a natural first step, a sign of coming together within the civil religion of America or commerce, an indication that the Mexicans are 'getting it' and their pathfinders are beginning their climb. It is also a sign of the hegemonic power within the capitalist myth. There is always a way for some in immigrant communities to climb the economic ladder by starting a business, and the business in turn illustrates the growing maturity of the immigrant community in terms of its understanding of the American way, and the newspaper in turn presents this as evidence of progress, the journey bringing the migrants closer to the Puritan-American capitalism myth ideal.

When the number of Hispanics reached nearly 500, businesses began to cater to the new residents' tastes.

Su Casa, a Mexican-owned grocery store, opened near Beardstown's historic town square and offered tortillas, chilies and nopal cactus. A bar, El Flamingo, was opened by an American woman and her Mexican husband.

The journey analogy is applicable throughout these texts, but it includes not only a movement from an old world to a new one but at the same time a conversion from old world values to the civil religion values of the American way. Successful newcomers are baptized into the American Puritan capitalism myth. Their old ways are destined to be shed, a process considered a natural part of the journey and the transition to American values as the newspaper presents it: “With each passing month, more Hispanics were recruited to Beardstown for jobs at Excel Corp.'s pork slaughterhouse. The new arrivals brought lifestyles and attitudes that made Americans feel uneasy.”

The town is alive with Mexican flags and Spanish in the Wal-Mart. For the Mexicans, life was increasingly lived on quiet suburban side streets. And there was no corruption, no bribery needed to get or keep a job. Education and other services American take for granted were wonders to the Mexicans, more evidence that continued to progress on their journey from dark to light. Marisela Chavez is quoted as flashing back to her hometown in Mexico, and the description is of a simple rural Third World life, a life in a system that cannot create the wealth or fulfill human potential the American system is able to. Life in this Illinois meatpacking town is then the result of an enlightened capitalism, clean and honest, providing above all a family and community that has the power to enrich itself as it grows.

It is impossible in the second part of the series not to notice the \$20. In a working class neighborhood, \$20 is not a trifling sum. It is enough to convey and symbolize prosperity and the possibility of prosperity, as it did in the previous case study when pinned to a wall: “Her Beardstown neighbors sent greeting cards to Chavez’s two daughters on their birthdays, at Easter and Christmas. Chavez smiled as she remembers the moment her daughters opened the Christmas cards and found \$20 bills tucked inside.” It is, of course, a simple, common

generosity. And it could be easily over read. But while generous, it is also an indicator of the value of money in a familial setting in America. One would imagine the givers also tucked the bills into cards for their own children or young relatives. But there is also here something akin to the exchange of gifts and artifacts between early white settlers and Native Americans which were more than simple an exchange of products. For example, when the new expanding European culture met the native American culture head on during the Lewis and Clark expedition, the explorers handed out specially forged medals that were actually of little use or exchange value to either side, but were chosen after considering what may be given that appeared superficially to show common ground and a shared goal, but in fact showed images of the white way of life that was expected to triumph, peacefully. So the \$20 is not just a generosity, it is also a representative, a sign of a new social order into which the Mexicans are moving:

A blatant law-breaking is part of what must be done to make Excel successful. As noted before Excel claimed to check every Hispanic worker but it was generally accepted that about 80 percent of them had fake identities.

The Rev. Tomas Alvarez had been in town only a couple of months when he realized he would be ministering to people who had to lie about everything - even their own names - in order to be hired at Excel.

“It was very difficult for me to accept in the beginning,” said Alvarez, who arrived in 1998 to lead the Spanish-speaking congregation at the Church of the Nazarene. “I cried a lot because I knew I was lying along with them. I began to talk with God. I said, ‘God, they left their country to work as undocumented people. It is not my responsibility to judge. You must judge them. Let me help them.’”

I would argue here that the newspaper has joined hands with Rev. Alvarez, deciding it is not its responsibility to judge. Deciding just how much activism a newspaper should be guilty of in a case like this is not going to be attempted in this dissertation. But it can be argued that when the passionate public sphere activism Habermas identified in the early American media was replaced by an objectivity founded in the needs of commercialism, there arose a situation where this form of fence-sitting could be presented straight-faced as depth reporting. The illegal

documentation is accepted as an economic necessity. The damage done to some Mexican families is presented by the newspaper as collateral damage. It is written about as a part of the process. That process is driven by the needs, demands, and success of Excel. The newspaper shows false identity at work and illuminates some of the emotional strain it creates but does not challenge its necessity. Newspapers supporting Mussolini reported show trials such as Gramsci's with the same objective ambivalence, and inaction can be hegemonically as influential as proactivity. There is a counter argument, of course, that the newspaper is being both compassionate and not a law enforcement agency or proxy. It is entirely possible, even likely. But nevertheless, this situation which makes everyone so uncomfortable and does so much damage is presented as an accepted cost, part of the ritual journey. At least this series acknowledges the effects of this fraud:

The dual identities filled school records, health records, police records and voter registration lists with inaccuracies.

...Pregnant mothers were urged to give their real names when they arrived at hospitals to deliver their babies. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to prove they were the children's real mothers.

At the Cass County clerk's office, irregularities cropped up on voter registration lists. A single Social Security number was sometimes used by as many as four registered "voters."

...Beardstown's police also ran into dual-name problems. When they stopped Hispanics for traffic violations, some had several IDs with different names in their wallets. A few were mistakenly arrested because charges were filed against the people whose documents they had bought.

Like most of Beardstown's legal residents, Alvarez worked out his own way of dealing with the shadow world inhabited by many of the town's Hispanic residents.

I went to the (former) chief of police and told him people have different names. He said, "If I were in their shoes, I would probably do the same thing."

"I went to Excel and they told me, "Pastor, we don't want to know anything. We are contracting American citizens."

In the end, the identification problem serves a purpose for Excel, it helps allow immigrants to become part of the mythic narrative even though it continues to do damage:

Life in this small, quiet town had brought prosperity to Beardstown's immigrants. But their prosperity was built on lies as well. Their spending could continue only if immigration agents didn't show up in the town.

"I feel trapped," sighed a 49-year-old woman who left Acapulco in 1999 and crossed the border illegally.

...Immigration agents showed up at the Excel plant in 1995 and pulled 60 workers off the production line for questioning.

"Everybody who wasn't Caucasian, they called into the office," said Sergio Ruiz, 36, who is now a chief steward for the UFCW, Local 431. "They asked you questions and they said, 'Leave. Stay. Leave. Stay.'"

The company is apparently asked about fake identification and answers with a simple statement.

Excel is apparently not pushed, at least there is no evidence of it and it is reasonable to assume if

the newspaper pushed harder and the company refused to respond that might have been included

in the series:

Excel has been silent about many of the issues surrounding its Beardstown operation. Repeated requests made over a seven-month period for a face-to-face interview with company officials were denied.

However, Excel said in a written response that "We make every effort to validate employment eligibility while protecting against discrimination. Despite what some might speculate (based on no facts), we are very good at verifying employment eligibility."

In a section describing federal raids searching for illegal immigrants, the newspaper continues to see the paperwork problem as a part of doing business and reports the community essentially feels the same way, suggesting that the Hughes' myths of a natural, chosen, and innocent nation more powerful than the law of the land. Abstract America is a place where what is right is commonly known because it is a natural phenomenon and legislation is a man-made artifact which, when it does not fully encompass what is naturally right, may be considered flawed and right, in this case the right to work and fulfill human destiny, carries more weight. Like the Puritans, these immigrants are journeying to a promised land, a place of myth, not a place where man-made law can deny the promise of those myths. This law breaking then, is

accepted as justified by the newspaper because it is done in the name of the myths, America's highest promise and one that outweighs legislation:

Even people in Beardstown who've come to care about their Hispanic neighbors are bothered by the fact that they're violating U.S. immigration laws. American residents are uncomfortable with the laws that force people into a shadow world and they are uncomfortable with the people who live there.

The problem came into sharp focus in June, when dozens of federal agents swept into Beardstown and arrested 12 Hispanics for selling birth certificates and Social Security numbers to Excel workers. Charges were dropped against four of the people, but five others have pleaded guilty. Three more are awaiting trial on the charges, which carry a maximum penalty of five years to 15 years in prison.

Walters said his "hope is that the arrests will not only send a message to illegals who come here but to Excel about its hiring practices. They play in the gray area. They don't violate the law, but they sure don't play by the book, either."

Excel refused repeated requests over the past seven months for a face-to-face interview with a company official. But the company said in a written statement that, "like other businesses, we follow the government's I-9 requirements for verifying employment eligibility."

Gramsci was aware that the hegemonic pressures from cultural agencies were not always benign persuaders. It was not his claim that negotiations were a true give and take proposition with an equality involved in the process. The ruling classes needed hard labor in factories, a cheap labor pool, and acquiescence to the rules of the workplaces. They wanted the negotiations to be peaceful if possible, but the power of the armed forces behind them meant that this was not a necessity. Their prime goal was not a harmonious hold on power; it was just a hold on power. Harmony was a profitable plus. The idea, according to Gramsci, was for those in power to give as little as possible. What we see in these stories, especially this third and final part of the series, is an arrangement where the labor force does not protest some harsh situations. The newspaper here describes this situation with clinical disinterest, as a fact of the matter to be dispatched after a relatively brief description. There is a softness when writing about fake identities, a confusion, there is none of the outrage one assumes Habermas would have expected from newspapers in the public sphere in the early days of America. I do not suggest the newspaper should have launched

a campaign or a crusade, but this subject could have been addressed with a bang instead of a whimper. What is delivered is a description, a passage that allows the unchallengeable demands of journalistic subjectivity to prescribe what is written. The story also implies that these conditions are a minor inconvenience compared to working and living conditions back in Mexico, and as such the journey from dark to light is succeeding, for hardships are just part of the ritual.

Rarely in this text or others in this case study and in others do immigrants remember their old homes fondly. It is as if there is an unwritten supposition that relief and gratitude will dominate their thinking about America: “‘Every day I'm here, here, here,’ she said, sweeping her arm in the direction of the two-story home she and her husband bought. ‘We almost never go out. I feel very lonely.’ As she remembered her home in Mexico's famous beach city, Acapulco, she sighed again. ‘Right now, our mango tree would be full of fruit. I miss the coconuts, the breeze from the sea,’ she said. ‘I tell my husband, “Let’s go back.” But he doesn't want to go back. My husband is happy here.’” It is interesting that the writer would choose this example. It is almost bucolic, a carefree life, a longing for simplicity. It is the sort of life the Puritans expected to find among the simple Native Americans, a lack of sophistication, a state that Indians could be saved from by the Puritan work ethic which would lift them out of a primitive state. It is inevitable in Beardstown that this simple satisfaction was not the average lot of those who chose to leave Mexico. But mango trees, coconuts, and sea breezes are not a bucolic dream of a simpler, happier time, they are icons of a Third world economy where under the mango tree there is no decent health care, education, or jobs. Juxtaposed in the image is the woman’s longing to go home counterbalanced by her husband’s happiness in Beardstown. It is a taut mini drama within the story, a common enough aspect of feature writing. But we know from the series

that Mexico cannot offer what America can. The journey is a leaving behind what cannot possibly make you all that you can be, and mangos and coconuts are products of a former simple, unfulfilled life.

It is fair to ask this question: Why did the newspaper choose this remembrance? I think there are two reasons: the imagery is post-card pretty and evocative of relaxed god times, a valuable dash of color for the story, but is also firmly situates the immigrants' old home as poor and backward. It is primitive, and you had to leave it to come to a more developed place or your rewards would have been nothing more than this simple rural life. This former existence can't do medicine or education or provide you with more than basic needs. Mangoes and coconuts are for primitives unaware of American bounty production. It is also reasonable to ask why more longings for a culture and a home left behind for an alien world never surface in the stories. We are left with the impression from the story that few regrets, few reminiscences or yearning for old homes ever surface. I would argue that this is unlikely given the number of immigrants and the number of interviews and that an editorial decision was made. Perhaps the thought in the newsroom was that such flashbacks would slow the story down. But perhaps it was also that in the Puritan-American capitalism myth narrative, the journey is always moving forward and transforming people for their own good.

It is interesting to think of these immigrants as modern day Puritans, but they are also to some extent comparable to the Native Americans the Puritans encountered when they arrive in the new world. Civil religion, and with it the work ethic, will transform them the story suggests. It is as if there are stages and the Mexicans need to move up into the next preparatory stage of the journey. Perhaps immigrants from Europe in earlier times were further along the evolutionary trail to capitalist success when they arrived. But once introduced to the civil religion and to

capitalism's role in the transition from the old ways to the new, the hegemonic negotiations speed up and ladder climbing begins:

They bought a \$53,000 house and just two years later, they only owed \$18,000. They refinanced and used the money to open a tavern called Salon Azul. They also bought sound equipment that Bernal rented out under the name "Si Se Puede," a Spanish phrase meaning, "Yes, it can be done."

The references to this standard capitalist procedure of going into business are used again as a sort of membership card for America. Migrants who were simple and uneducated at the border are now fully functional in the system, using their work to build family and community wealth, to open businesses. Dollar amounts are used as easily-understood indicators of the extent of the process, knowing that readers can assess their relative wealth.

Looking at the entire four parts of the series, it is possible to see the gradual assimilation of the Mexicans not just into everyday U.S. culture but into the mythic capitalist way of life. There is an inevitability about it, with the newspaper rarely surprised or questioning of success. Here businesses spring up because businesses are part and parcel of the migrant community buying into the myth. They cannot be outside it, they must be inside it. The store and bar owners are on the pathway up and out, they are leaders whose example will cause the remainder of the community to prefer joining the ruling class to opposing them. They might well have become Gramsci's organic intellectuals, community leaders who will educate their people on their inferior status, but before they can champion their own bloc they are pulled away from dedication to it by the lure of the myth and a split in that dedication between community and capitalism. Their businesses are community-oriented, they serve the local Mexicans, and this is the way the myth insists it should be. It is a milestone, a check mark that attests that the process is moving as it should.

Throughout the series, the separateness of the Mexicans and the Beardstowners is emphasized, naturally enough since it is central to the story. Education does influence assimilation. But it is arguably a commercial enterprise, at least considered primarily as such by Hispanic parents and young family members, who see it as a way to lift their children onto the higher rungs of the American workplace ladder. It is seen similarly by the newspaper. The Puritan-American capitalist myth identifies a similar process because education was a tool to help the Puritans build the thriving communities they considered valuable indicators of salvation. Education in these case studies brings an old-fashioned wealth to the immigrant community through social standing, an achievement in America made by the children of the original immigrant, evidence that they are being drawn into the American way of life and that they will be able to profit within in.

In the second story in the series, we read:

For Hispanic parents who worked Excel's grueling jobs in extreme heat and cold, amid blood and fetid smells, Beardstown's schools offered their children a way out of a life of manual labor.

Like the immigrants who came to America before them, Hispanic mothers and fathers wanted their children to become professionals. For them, having children who ended up cutting meat at Excel represented their own failure.

Tomas, who is about to graduate and go to college, reveals how what had been the pinnacle of achievement for the first Mexicans is not enough anymore. The statement is tart evidence that the new generation has adapted to American capitalism: "I know some real smart people who stayed in ESL. They're out at Excel now." Education transforms. But the education is only referred to in this series, and in the Vietnamese fisherman story, as a ticket into a higher socio-economic group. The better the education, the higher the rung of the ladder.

Church-based efforts did little to bridge the gulf between the two communities:

“Father Weitzel has been the worst thing for the Mexicans, because he tried to push the Mexicans on Americans instead of letting people try to live together,” said Eugene Gyure, a 64-year old retiree who attends St. Alexius.

Many in Beardstown insisted they didn’t feel any animosity toward Hispanic churchgoers.

“People at the church don’t like the separatism. They want to be one parish,” said Jackie Tanner, 47, who moved to Beardstown in 1998. “They don’t like two services. They don’t like two youth groups. Resentment. That’s what you have when you separate a lot.”

Edmundo Bernal, a 35-year old Excel worker who had attended bilingual Masses in Chicago, was dismayed by the separation. “We share the same religion. The only difference is that we have a different language,” he said.

The second part of the series also shows the eagerness of the Mexicans to work harder than the people they compete with for jobs, something seen in the Vietnamese fisherman story, and it is evidence that they are trying to succeed as John Calvin suggested: “‘They think they are better than us,’ he said. ‘They think when the Latinos are coming here, they are going to steal their work. But the companies prefer Latinos, you know? Because we can work more. Because we need more.’”

In the Puritan work ethic, work was a driving force because there was a need for it, work as the basis of salvation. Work produced enough for families and communities to thrive and demonstrate their piety and acceptability to God. In this text, as in the Vietnamese fisherman text, there is a suggestion that a failure to work and/or a failure to work for the right reasons, creates problems, and it is the Americans who demonstrate this axiom. There is something of an implied charge in the text that the Americans have abandoned some, or much, of the Puritan ethic and expect to continue to profit from less committed effort than the myth requires. They have turned their back a little, gotten a little lazy, became too self centered, and problems arise automatically. The myth does not allow this; the hard work must be done and done honestly.

The story measures the immigrants in much the same way the text suggests they are beginning to assess themselves, by their worth in dollars:

The new arrivals bought cars, big-screen TVs and satellite dishes that brought Mexican news programs, soap operas and soccer games into the living rooms. They bought homes with huge down payments and paid them off with five years loans.

They delighted in knowing that when they went shopping, they had money in their pockets to buy almost anything they wanted. And they still had money left over to send to their families in Mexico.

“Economically, you live like a king here,” said Alejandro Martinez, 35, who moved to Beardstown in 1994. “I have an account at the bank. I bought a car. We eat shrimp twice a week. We go to the store and if we spend \$200 or \$500, so what?”

Martinez and his wife used their Excel paychecks to buy a house and six rental properties.

“In Mexico, for people at our level, we would live like donkeys,” Martinez aid. “Here, everything that I have wanted I have bought.”

Capitalism in America is doing its job for families, they now have plenty. Until the Martinezes buy rental properties, money is not used for investment, it is used for necessities for a better family life. The story notes that the properties are to help provide housing for Mexicans, however, an acceptable practice within the myth. And incidentally, investment is not mentioned again. Perhaps we have a little glimpse behind the mythic curtain, perhaps the story needs to subtly, quickly let us know that the Mexicans are going to make it all the way to really big money. The same thing was seen in the ending of the Vietnamese fisherman story.

Their work has lifted them from need. Martinez talks about people “at our level,” which of course assumed that there are other levels. At once he is comparing their life to their lives back in Mexico and also eyeing higher levels. The Puritan-American capitalist myth sees people as part of a community more than as individuals, their individual success predicated not only on hard work but a primary concern for their community. Yet the rental properties purchase is also indicative of the essential need of modern capitalism to do what it eventually had to do in the Puritans day, create more capital. This little flash says that some of the Mexicans are moving up to the next step on the ladders, they are moving further down the pathway up and out. They are also moving closer to Weber’s iron cage.

The journey theme is never far away in these case study texts. It is the ritual the immigrants are undertaking and we are constantly reminded of it. Edmundo Bernal, a successful man from Mexico and a legal resident now, told the reporter this story:

He struck out for the border in 1987, and 10 times he was detained by immigration agents in San Diego. Ten times, he crossed again. That year, he said, nearly 1000 men from his town (not pueblo) of Villa Guerro headed for the United States.

He came, with his wife, to work for Excel. It is they who bought the house and used it to build a business as mentioned earlier. They work. They earn. They live well. They begin to benefit the community by creating a tavern, a communal meeting place. The story leaves little doubt that the newspaper is citing Bernal as an exemplar. He was chosen, his story written in some detail, evidence of the newspaper's priorities when it came to choosing what to include and what to leave out. The mayor of the Beardstown has watched Bernal run his bar and says, "I wish I had 6,000 people like him in Beardstown, with his attitude, the way he approaches things." "He wants to be part of the community." Voila! That community is no longer the Mexican community, it is Beardstown.

The fourth and final story is a description of the economic rebound of Beardstown. It begins with this summary introduction:

Over the last 15 years, Beardstown has been transformed by the arrival of hundreds of Hispanics and others to work at the Excel Corp. pork plant.

By autumn of 2003, Beardstown had once again settled into a comfortable rhythm. But the rhythm was different than before.

Beardstown was no longer a community of white faces, where people spoke only English and bragged about banning minorities. Instead, it was part of the new American Midwest, where brown faces and Spanish are woven into daily life.

...In the 16 years since Excel Corp. opened a pork slaughterhouse at the outskirts of Beardstown, the Hispanic population has reached 30 percent. With Excel hinting at increasing production and some longtime residents of this town of 7,000 moving out, many people believe Hispanics will become the majority here, too.

The town is not perfect, but what had to happen did happen. The Excel plant had to succeed for the town to succeed, and Mexicans were needed to do it and the machinery that saved the town drew the Mexicans into sharing America's civil religion with the townsfolk:

One thing people didn't complain about was how the economy had rebounded since the Hispanics' arrival:

Per capita income in Cass County, home to Beardstown, shot up 70.5 percent between 1988 - the year after Excel opened its plant - and 1997. Two-income couples employed at Excel now earn about \$50,000 a year, a handsome sum in a town where monthly mortgage payments are as low as \$400.

Beardstown's sales tax revenues are growing about 3 percent a year, with Excel a major contributor to the town's economic well-being.

...There is stability in Beardstown now, but it is a fragile stability propped up by one large employer, a partially undocumented work force and uneasy residents.

Even at this point, there is no resolution and the plant is left in command, unchallenged because what it must do is necessary, a kind of coda that repeats and reaffirms the machinery of commerce as the inevitable starting point for the transformation of immigrant, and, in this case, locals.

Secondary text. "Hiding in Plain Sight; for an undocumented family, life in a sanctuary city is feeling less safe all the time" is from *New York Magazine*, by Jeff Coplon, December 8, 2008.

This story offers a passage that exemplifies the suggestion in many of these texts that there is a natural, supra-national right to success for those who are qualified by their dedication to the Puritan-American capitalist ethic and who will work for it. Access to this right is blocked back in Mexico or Central America, and here access can be restricted by the vagaries of the system and the law. But in America the right to access is more important than man-made law:

...a slight 23-year-old named Rajesh, an undocumented Trinidadian of Indian descent. A high-school valedictorian, he began his senior year pointing toward medical school. "I wanted to help people," he said. "I wanted to be a pediatrician. I like kids." But that fall, when he needed a Social Security number for some scholarship forms, Rajesh realized he was out of the game. He slogged through premed at Hunter College, going through the motions. "I felt like I wasted a lot of time," he said. "You want to do good, but what's the point?" Now 23, he works construction full-time for a family friend.

The story also introduces Luisa, and she too represents an unfulfilled life that she has come to America to complete:

A medium-size woman with a smile that channels Meg Ryan, Luisa is a pillar of her Park Slope church and the former secretary of her PTA. At a parent meeting five years ago, she stumped the translator by asking about the "psychometrics" of a standardized test. College-educated, the principal thought. In truth, Luisa drew her knowledge of the world from the Sunset Park branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, where she devoured biographies and monthly issues of *Selecciones*, the Spanish Reader's Digest. By last spring she'd begun to see herself as a nurse or a Head Start family worker. But in the next breath she'd sound deflated: "What I like, you need papers for."

Her dreams will die and she will work as a housekeeper and babysitter until the work runs out. Instead of being someone who can benefit from the Puritan-American capitalist myth, she helps others as the myth demands, she is unemployed, a waste of human potential. The story leaves little doubt that this is a tragic waste of human potential, something that is just flat out wrong in America. The America of Hughes's abstract myths exists precisely because it can fulfill human potential, not let it wither or be suppressed because of old world restrictions or limitations. The story clearly conveys that the right to work, and earning so that family and community can grow and thrive is a base American right. Impediments are unnatural in "Nature's Nation." Yet they exist and so must be addressed. But the tenor of these passages, much in the manner of the primary text's approach to fake identification, indicate that the impediments are the problem: they represent imperfect man-made attempts to reach a rightful place. The story adheres to the mythic narrative in these passages: the problems holding the subjects back from their fulfilling their human potential are ritual trials. Overcome them and you will inevitably succeed. The story

then defaults to the mythic narrative, using it as a normative situation and the problems like a lack of documentation as a divergence to be corrected, not an illegal, anti-American act.

The *New York Magazine* story opens anecdotally, as feature stories commonly do. It is a descriptive beginning showing a family living in fear because of their illegal status. The lead is followed by some data on the number of illegals in New York City:

Embedded in multiethnic neighborhoods like Bushwick and Astoria, these newcomers paid taxes and joined church groups; they went out on their senior proms. And city officials recognized their value better than most. “Although they broke the law,” Mayor Bloomberg told the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, “our city's economy would be a shell of itself had they not, and it would collapse if they were deported.”

Mayor Bloomberg states the obvious. But in doing so he makes the simple argument that illegals' economic contribution makes their law breaking acceptable. There is an imperative here. It must be done. The Frankfurt School position that media present a limited range of options that bound what is acceptable in a society is applicable. The River God, in this case capitalism, determines what is and is not appropriate in our society. The machinery of capitalism must be kept running and illegals are needed. What happens, however, is that this position is dominated and eventually subsumed by the myth. Rather than being simply factory fodder or workers needed to fuel the machinery of capitalism, the immigrants in this and other texts are portrayed, even when they are laboring below the lowest rung of the American socio-economic ladder, as followers in the footsteps of the Puritans, freedom seekers who now may fuel the machine but have the opportunity to benefit from it, building families and communities.

The story also repeats a common assumption, that the country they are leaving behind is not only less than the mythic America but can never attain, or help its citizens attain, the rewards of life in America. It's easy to argue that this is not hard to see, that the quality of life in the United States far exceeds what it was back in Mexico. But in these statements there is again not

even the shadow of a doubt that America is the place to go because your country of origin can never be America. In the end, this is because of all of the Hughes' myths, the practical capitalism myth and the myths of abstraction. This immigrant was a policeman who could not earn enough to build a big house:

It was as close as Alberto could get to his grand obsession, the same goal that had driven Marcelo Lucero to Long Island: to some day own a spacious home. Alberto began building one in Puebla in the mid-nineties, but saw that he'd never finish on his policeman's salary.

There is no suggestion that he should stay; clearly he was unable to maximize his potential, and no changes to the political or economic system could change that enough. Here, we are told, a policeman would be able to build a spacious home, and that is his right. Later in the story there is this: "Their children in tow, Alberto and his wife gathered cans and hawked tamales from a shopping cart. At their low point, Luisa stood in line, ashamed, at a church pantry." Why was she ashamed? Shame indicates a perceived failing on her part. She has done something wrong or failed to do what she was expected to do. Her shame must spring from a flaw. She is accepting charity because in illegal alien families sometimes it is difficult to find enough work without risking being caught. Yet despite this situation being beyond her control to a very significant degree, she is ashamed. The only explanation for her feeling is that accepting charity is shameful because the American system offers plenty to those who live its central storyline and work because work offers the opportunity for success. The editors and journalists producing the story have included this description presumably because they see it as not only dramatic writing but because she sees herself this way. In other texts, including the Vietnamese Fisherman, any form of state or welfare help is eschewed. Self-reliance is a Puritan value, it indicates worthiness. Her attitude in this case may well have been included to indicate just such worthiness. I think in these cases the stories are choosing people who do present as potentially valuable to the American

scene as they become more and more a part of it; in other words, the stories cherry pick – perhaps it unfair, perhaps I should say lean towards – exemplars in the illegal immigrant community who have the potential to be good, hard-working, contributing Americans.

This story clearly shows the misery of undocumented aliens. It is not the claim of this dissertation that this side of alien life goes unreported but rather that it is subsumed by the myths, that this fearful frustrating life is portrayed as an essential part of the myth, a ritual passage required by the River God of American capitalism. The reporting does describe bluntly aspects of the undocumented life of illegals. For example:

New York suddenly seemed more like Providence, where nervous Latinos steer clear of the Wal-Mart, or Phoenix, where the sheriff sweeps Hispanic districts into panic. And a recession bodes worse still. Economic crises are doubly cruel to the undocumented. On the one hand, they become more expendable as companies large and small founder; on the other, they serve as handy scapegoats when anxiety runs high. “New York at one point was impenetrable,” says Marisol Ramos of the New York Immigration Coalition's youth council, “but now the fear has become very real.” It is stoked by each mass arrest across the country. After ICE swarmed an Iowa meatpacking plant out of Upton Sinclair and handcuffed hundreds of illiterate Guatemalan and Mexican workers, Alberto told me, “You live with that fear-you're never sure.” It's why he asked that this story use his family's middle names. “But you can't stay home with your hands folded. If you're going to live like that, why are you here?”

The worth and necessity of the capitalist structure is unchallenged, and for that matter there is no need seen to challenge it or examine whether the misery is the result of the excesses required by capitalism rather than unfortunate bumps on the road of a ritual journey. There is of course an unwritten comparison between Puritan-American capitalism and the exploitive, destructive capitalism of the countries these immigrants are fleeing.

It is as if American capitalism is a wall we can all see and recognize, so there is only a need in news stories to describe and explain individual bricks. It is that saturating myth that Williams observes, it is that everyday felt and lived way of life that no one questions that Barthes

saw, and it is the one-dimensional description that the Frankfurt School identified, a bounded place within which all social and cultural life happens. For example:

Locally, they [illegal aliens] represent 10 percent of the resident labor force and the backbone of the low-skilled service sector—more than half of New York's dishwashers, close to a third of its cooks and maids and construction workers, a fifth of its janitors. They wash tower windows and make the school pickups and pack the baby greens picked by unauthorized farm workers. In hard times they preserve our luxuries on the cheap: the \$13 manicure, the \$50 house cleaning. “They subsidize us in many, many ways,” says Smith. “Have you ever been to Europe and seen how much fruit costs?”
...For a time he tried working for himself, picking up construction skills and a small network of contractors. A year ago, he was commissioned to create a home office in cherry wood, making \$10,000 over three part-time months. “It's all me,” he said proudly, leafing through a photo album of sleek panels and clean-shaped moldings. “All this work is my work.” But freelancing proved unreliable, and last January Jesse lured him back for \$11 an hour, right around the poverty line, with no health insurance or time-and-a-half. “A temporary thing,” Alberto said, until he found a better offer.

Passages such as this one carry a dual impact. Not only is the subject [Alberto] working his way up, or at least trying to use the system to earn more and more, in other words demonstrate how to take full advantage of American capitalism as we are expected to, but it asks and answers another question: what of the people who benefit from the work of illegal aliens? What of the people who buy the cherry wood creations? Who employ the maids, buy the baby greens and enjoy cheap manicures? Nowhere in the texts examined in this case study is there any suggestion that this is illegal or immoral, in fact those who benefit do not exist in these texts. One again the myth functions at Williams' saturation level. We are so thoroughly stained by it that the process that allows so many illegal aliens to stay, employment, is not significantly approached by the news magazine. This is the same reticence shown in the primary text. To the simple counter-argument that ‘the story is not about employers or consumers,’ I would say that the story is about whatever the editors wanted it to be about and they have chosen not even to offer a token consideration of employers and consumers.

In this text as in the primary text, very rarely do illegals look back fondly or with an acknowledgement of a quality of the life left behind. The reporters apparently don't ask them to, or ignore reveries that are offered. Tokenism delivers only a few thoughts, for example: "Sometimes I don't know what I want," she said with a sigh. She missed Puebla's balmy climate and the freedom of a life lived more out of doors. Most of all she missed her mother, whom she last saw eight years ago. The forced separation clearly weighs on her." There is also only passing, token references in any of the dissertation texts to the possible return of illegal immigrants to their country of origin, relying on Hughes' core myths to assume that America is in fact the end of a journey. For example:

But when Alberto looks at his young ones, he knows that they cannot go home again. It's too hard to picture Juliana's quirky Brooklyn fashion sense-her fuchsia leg warmers and maroon nail polish-in outer Puebla. Or to see Berto happy where he can't afford a Whopper or the latest game for his PlayStation Portable. Those who moved to this country before their early teens, the "1.5 generation," have punched a one-way ticket. "What are they going to do in Guatemala or Mexico or Ecuador?" says Marguerite Lukes of NYU's Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. "They speak the language, but they're from a different culture. It would be like immigrating." When Berto was born, Luisa says, "I wanted a different life for him. I had this view that he could be what he wanted to be. It was just bigger." For son and daughter both, she imagined some high profession: "Lawyer, pediatrician, ophthalmologist?"

Commercial band names are used here and in other texts are an image-booster, a way to add depth to a product by calling on the audience's familiarity with its colors and logos. The simple acceptance of brand names as adjectives suggests they are part of everyday lexicon.

The story immediately details the fears and misery of many of the illegals. But in doing so it gives us a chosen image: the immigrant, poor, probably illegal, who is in the United States to work hard and better himself and his family:

Sitting in his fluorescent-lit kitchen in Sunset Park, Alberto heard the bulletin over Univision: Four days after Barack Obama's triumph, seven Suffolk County high-school students drove off on a ritual they called "beaner jumping." Toward midnight by the Patchogue train station they found their man: Marcelo Lucero, 38, a soft-eyed Ecuadoran

who worked at a dry cleaner's, sent pay home to his sick mother, and draped an American flag around his TV set. The teenagers circled Lucero ("like a lynch mob," a prosecutor said), punched him in the face, stabbed him in the chest, and left him to die in a driveway.

This story doesn't hold back in its description of undocumented aliens, and it is sometimes graphic in some of its descriptions. But there is still little doubt expressed about the necessity of the situation they are in. The story constantly refuses to see the immigrants' misfortune as anything other than a part of the ritual they must undergo to be worthy. No alternatives, such as staying at home, are looked at again in this text. Certainly this text, like the others, was chosen as a feature story which focused on personal and family lives, and one could argue that alternative legislative or regulatory discussion belong elsewhere. Even so, in the narrative discussion in this story, even the undocumented do not consider alternatives, they know what they came for and also seem to accept this ritual test.

There is one long paragraph I will cite here because it is, I think, additional evidence that the magazine considers the underworld of illegal employment simply a necessary part of the capitalist machine. But it is a good capitalism because it is the capitalism of the Puritans, eventually dedicated to family and community. So this way of working is, like struggling to reach the border, a ritual illegals travel through, not something they are destined to be stuck in. But never does the text doubt the worthiness of the journey, its necessity:

Luisa's children are still innocent of their tenuous place in the world. The last time I checked, Berto aspired to be either an FBI agent or a singer, while Juliana hoped to teach fourth grade. They recited why their parents crossed over, like a bedtime story they'd yet to outgrow. "My dad's dream was ...?" Juliana said haltingly. "What was his dream, Berto? He told us all of his dreams."
"To live a better life and raise a family," her brother said.

In the *Newsweek* (U.S. Edition) article of April 10, 2006, is "America's Divide; The lawmakers see legals and illegals. But many immigrant clans are a mixture of citizens and relatives at risk. A portrait of a different kind of family," by Arian Campo-Flores; With Holly Bailey, Daren

Briscoe, Eleanor Clift, Jennifer Ordonez, Catharine Skipp and Jamie Reno. The magazine calls it a family “portrait” so it fits well into this case study even though it is relatively short by comparison; there is a familiar chosen approach to illegal aliens:

“I try not to think about it all,” says Raymundo, 28. But the feeling of vulnerability gnaws at him.

...Another sister, Sandra, who was also illegal, recalls with frustration how she couldn't qualify for financial aid at a community college. “I felt like I was handicapped,” she says. “I had a lot of potential to be whatever I wanted to be, and I just couldn't.”

In the Hughes myths, refugees came here to fulfill their human and spiritual potential and destiny. This was the place, this was the nation, that God and nature had ordained for that purpose. It was not a simple or easy journey from Europe, it was perilously difficult and on arrival there was a need to work hard. In these paragraphs, illegal immigrants are struggling similarly, and what they are doing according to the story is not law-breaking but bravely trying to build a new life they have every right to in a hostile environment. They are figures standing fast in the face of challenges, they are brave and they are earning their rightful place in the sun. The quote from sister Sandra reveals her frustration at being held back unfairly, a position the magazine not only does not challenge but presents as a complete argument in the lead of the story. The right to be whatever she could be was hers from God, not man. In the America of the Hughes' myths, it is assumed that she is striving to fulfill her potential as a human being. Overcoming the paperwork problem is part of the ritual. The news magazine concurs, presenting the anguish of those without legality with sympathy, not as wantonly breaking the law. That sympathy attests to *Newsweek's* acceptance of the Hughes' myths.

There is a question, one that is worth raising but one I cannot answer, that can be asked of this quote from sister Sandra, where she says “I had a lot of potential to be whatever I wanted to be.” One can ask, “Is it the result of what a courtroom lawyer might call ‘leading the witness’?”

Quotes that efficiently serve or reinforce the dominant narrative and mythic base of the stories, such as this example, are found commonly in these case studies. For example, several were cited in the first [Vietnamese] case study. They are succinct in efficiently conveying an idea. Perhaps they are selected from a full reporter's notepad as the most relevant. Perhaps the quote came first and inspired the writer to approach the story buried in that quote. But there is arguably a possibility that Sandra was led into talking about her situation by the context of the interview, possibly even via leading questions. I do not suggest such quotations are inaccurate or fraudulent, simply that they may well be the result of a focus during interviews where reporters dwell on an aspect of the subject's story and pursue a much more intense and prolonged form of questioning, not accepting first-thought answers as they may well do in questioning about more mundane activity and thinking. The quotations may arise after a series of exchanges following an initial question and so may well be thoughts pertaining to a specific scenario created by the questioner. If this is the case, then the reporters have gone out of their way to add depth and context to the mythic storyline by eliciting, and using prominently, quotes that occurred during questioning.

There is in this story a wonderfully brief yet surprisingly complete description of the ritual journey, or at least of its physical content:

That was certainly true of Irma Palacios's mother, Maria Hernandez. Abandoned by her husband and left to raise six kids on her own in Reynosa, Mexico, Hernandez struggled to make ends meet. So she set off alone one day in 1986 and illegally crossed the Rio Grande into Texas. The kids stayed behind, with the eldest caring for the little ones. When Hernandez arrived in Homestead, Fla., where she had friends, she immediately got to work, picking tomatoes, squash and limes. After settling down and scraping together some savings, she began an arduous two-year process of bringing each of her children across the border. She secured false birth certificates for some, and arranged "coyotes"--guides who help migrants cross over--for others. Palacios made it across easily--fast asleep in the back seat of a car. Her brother Jorge, though, suffered a harrowing journey in which he nearly drowned, and was then caught and deported once he arrived in Texas (he succeeded on a second try). Eventually, all the kids joined their mother.

Properly used, the American socio-economic ladder not only raises those who work but it self-selects those of continuing value to capitalism, and those who can be seen by their own communities as trail blazers. For example, this immigrant, like others in these texts, is someone brimming with potential:

She put her legal status to good use, leveraging her 4.2 high-school GPA (11th out of a class of 500) into admission to Florida State University, where she got a bachelor's degree in Spanish in 1999. For her part, Sandra, now 32, has worked two jobs, 70 hours per week, over the last nine years to finance her education at Florida International University, where she'll earn her degree in public administration in December. Both are now applying for citizenship.

Sandra is presented as an example (not the only one in the story) of selflessness, of being someone who works for the good of all, not just her own status and wealth. This attachment to and devotion to family and community has remained central to the Puritan-American myth.

Success is a family asset, not a personal one. Houses and careers are almost by-products of the journey, trophies picked up along the way, the fruits of the system:

And Sandra, the Florida International University student, is plotting her own immigration rally and teach-in on campus. "Our family taught us to fight--luchar --for those who can't," says Palacios. She thinks her mother, who died four years ago, would be proud of what she and her siblings have accomplished: not just owning homes and developing careers, but offering succor to those striving illegal immigrants who have arrived in their wake.

What they have achieved and the dedication to family is juxtaposed to their hardship in facing America as an illegal. Success, as homeowners with careers and a continuing dedication to family, the success that the journey promised, are evidence that the American system has 'worked.' Opposition to big immigrant numbers is addressed, and in this story it is not done in a token way; some considerable time and detail was applied to that work. But when people reappear, the common image of a journey, a struggle to leave the dark and arrive and thrive in the light, is reestablished.

This story, and in fact other texts too, focus on those people who have made the most use of the American capitalist system, with an underlying assumption that they were pre-qualified, that they had some ability and drive that only needed to be freed and out to use by America:

In 1995, though, the younger sisters became legal with the help of an immigration attorney. Palacios remembers the giddiness at discovering her newfound freedom. That December, she told her mother that she needed to earn money to buy Christmas presents. When her mother suggested calling up the packing plant, Palacios agreed--then instantly caught herself. "Wait a minute," she said. "I have my papers. I can go work at Publix [supermarket]!"

The stories in both primary and secondary texts view the migrant assimilation process as an inevitable victory of the Puritan-American capitalist myth and the trials and tribulations immigrants face in communities such as Beardstown as something akin to tests faced in the ritual transformation of the newcomers from immigrant to American. There is something of Gramsci's church observations that could be applied in this case. Yes, it is rough there at the bottom; if you can endure, you can succeed. Do not be cowed by the weight of your burden because a better life is coming. The success of some of the migrants is evidence that the system works, and its burdens, such as stressful living and working conditions, are necessary. Once again, tokenism rears its head in these texts as a quick way to address topics that must be addressed, allowing the series to spend as little time as possible on them. Solid editing allows the news media to pack a lot of information into a relatively small space to do this efficiently, but without the passion and crafted description used in more favored passages.

Exodus

Primary texts. The 2003 Feature Writing Pulitzer Prize was won by Sonia Nazario of the *Los Angeles Times* for a work called "Enrique's Journey." It is the story of a five-year-old Honduran boy who is left behind when his mother decides to illegally go to America. Enrique

will become an example of children left behind who decide to follow their parents, and he will be an example of people from Mexico and Central America who decide to try and reach the U.S. border, then cross it illegally. On his journey, he will meet and interact with scores of other would-be border crossers from his part of the world.

It is an extremely long work for a newspaper series. As such, it must be approached with an understanding that the reporter undertook the assignment with an awareness that she had virtually limitless space and time. What she wanted to do she could. What she wanted to include, she could. This series of stories would not have proceeded without the editorial staff involved being clear on that, although of course it may have started as a lesser project then, potential seen, been given the green light.

In his story, and the secondary stories used for comparison, illegal immigrants from Latin or Central America journey to the United States-Mexico border, risking life, limb, and emotional well-being, then attempt to cross, risking life and limb again. The Hughes myths here are buried deeply in the assumption that the journey, with all of its ghastly and potentially deadly or disfiguring hardships and a very good chance to die, is worth it. It is a ritual journey from dark to light. It echoes the Puritans hazardous trans-Atlantic crossing not only in allegorical terms, but in the reality of its terrors and dangers. And America remains the beacon it was to the Puritans. In this text, it is the Myths of the Natural, Chosen, Christian, and Innocent nation that are dominant throughout. The Puritan-American capitalist myth is not as dynamic as it was in the first two case studies. It is held aloft in the text as an instrument of success once the ritual physical journey is complete. Much as it was for the Puritans, capitalism allows them to fulfill the promise offered by the new land, but in this case the journey to the border, and the crossing of the border are the foundation of the story.

If mothers leave, if fathers leave, they depart dirt poor Latin or Central American homes and countries to seek riches. But the story suggests the leaving is not one driven by greed for riches, rather by a need for them to fulfill human potential. Without the money, they are not only poor, they are unable to live a life with the basic needs and rights. They are powerless, and the capitalism of their own country is completely incapable of providing for them. The values held in Hughes myths are the reasons the illegals begin their journeys, risk their lives, and endure until they can cross.

The introduction to the first story in the series is a dramatic tour de force. A Honduran five-year-old, deeply attached to and reliant on his mother Lourdes, unknowingly watches her leave his life. We know he will be in intense pain, and we know in just a few paragraphs his anguish is hopeless, she does not come back:

They live on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, in Honduras. She can barely afford food for him and his sister, Belky, who is 7. Lourdes, 24, scrubs other people's laundry in a muddy river. She fills a wooden box with gum and crackers and cigarettes, and she finds a spot where she can squat on a dusty sidewalk next to the downtown Pizza Hut and sell the items to passersby. The sidewalk is Enrique's playground. They have a bleak future. He and Belky [his seven year old sister] are not likely to finish grade school. Lourdes cannot afford uniforms or pencils. Her husband is gone. A good job is out of the question. So she has decided: She will leave. She will go to the United States and make money and send it home. She will be gone for one year, less with luck, or she will bring her children to be with her. It is for them she is leaving, she tells herself, but still, she feels guilty.

The Pizza Hut reference is probably no coincidence; it will be easily recognized by readers and is also a reminder that America is reaching out to this poor part of the world. She sits outside but she wants to get in. America here stands in stark contrast to the poverty the family lives in and the complete lack of hope that it will change. Money can make the difference. It is a simple decision in a way. America can provide the family with money, those who have gone before have shown it. It is the primary spur. But as the series moves on, America becomes more than an

ATM. The introduction leaves Enrique's abandonment for a short time to detail how many Central American and Mexican children head for the border to try and find their mothers in America. The details are heartbreaking. But as the series progresses, America becomes more than money, it becomes the place Hughes' myths describe. It does so not by direct description, but by the hope and promise it offers the huddled masses from south of the border, the shining city on a hill it seems to them:

Many, including Enrique, begin to idealize their mothers. In their absence, these mothers become larger than life. Although the women struggle to pay rent and eat in the United States, in the imaginations of their children back home they become deliverance itself, the answer to every problem. Finding them becomes the quest for the Holy Grail.

Is it too much to suggest America is being held out here as the mother to all these children?

Lourdes quickly begins to send gifts from America:

Boxes arrive in Tegucigalpa bearing clothes, shoes, toy cars, a Robocop doll, a television. Lourdes writes: Do they like the things she is sending? She tells Enrique to behave, to study hard. She has hopes for him: graduation from high school, a white-collar job, maybe as an engineer. She says she loves him.

The material booty of America is arriving as Lourdes said it would, but it is insufficient as we know it will be, because it cannot replace a mother. But in her sending she also conveys the link between the bounty and the future, America is just stuff right now but it is also more than that, it can make dreams come true, you can be an engineer now, is the message.

The mother image returns quickly, and Enrique's sister Belky struggles to get on with her life, trying to be grateful for money from America that pays for schools. She lives with Lourdes sister Rosa Amalia: "But Rosa Amalia thinks the separation has caused deep emotional problems. To her, it seems that Belky struggles with an unavoidable question: How can I be worth something if my mother left me?" In all of the texts under examination in this dissertation, reconciliation is a core value, a constant process. In the coming stories, Lourdes is not seen or

heard from more than in passing, America is conflated with Lourdes, they are one and the same. Alienation is a related and constant motif, theme, and Enrique's alienation continues as, motherless and in a dysfunctional, poor family, he finds no way to gain control of his life. He is lost. The story watches him plunge into a hellish life, but it will be redeemed when he decides to find his mother/America and begins a journey. He has been through hell and seen the light. He is the Puritan deciding to sail to the new world. The journey itself will be another traversing of hell and will in the end make him worthy of the land of Hughes. But his cruel fall from being a happy five-year-old is rapid and terrifying to behold. The damage to the children's lives has not been counterbalanced with the improvements and optimism Lourdes either expected or hoped for: "Lourdes sends Enrique \$50 a month, occasionally \$100, sometimes nothing. It is enough for food, but not for school clothes, fees, notebooks or pencils, which are expensive in Honduras. There is never enough for a birthday present." She is now just a voice on the phone on very rare occasions, and one year he does not speak to her at all. The whole dream of America is falling apart. It becomes obvious to Enrique she is not coming back. She starts a family in America, more evidence that her return will not happen. Enrique begins to realize that if she will not come back to him, he must go to her. The America of Lourdes is not painted prettily, it is a place that takes advantage of her and gives her very little in return. But there is an awareness in the text that she is not going to leave it. But there is no suggestion, explicit or implicit, that she is wrong to stay. She still has hope; things can get better, although they won't in Honduras. And the money she sends puts her daughter through private school and saves Enrique's from life as a scavenger. America is the alternative. Life in Honduras is not going to get any better for Enrique. In America it can. This is the inherent promise in the story.

So he reaches a point of despair where he can no longer resist the call of America. It is his last hope to fulfill his destiny and his promise as a human being. As Enrique tries to reach the United States, he fails seven times, only to make it on the eighth. He and his fellow travelers face a hellish journey, for example, in the Mexican state of Chiapas:

Arrayed against them are Mexican immigration authorities, or la migra, along with crooked police, street gangsters and bandits. They wage what a priest at an immigrant shelter calls "la guerra sin nombre," the war with no name. Chiapas, he says, "is a cemetery with no crosses, where people die without even getting a prayer."

Rapists, murderers, and assorted cutthroats are arrayed against kind people, simple country people with little of their own who help the migrants as they pass through clinging to a train. But in the middle of the journey, kindness:

Enrique is stunned by the generosity. In many places where the train slows in Veracruz, at a curve or to pass through a village, people give. Sometimes 20 or 30 people stream out of their homes along the rails and toward the train. They smile, then shout and throw food.

The towns of Encinar, Fortin de las Flores, Cuichapa and Presidio are particularly known for their kindness. These are unlikely places for people to be giving food to strangers. A World Bank study in 2000 found that 42.5% of Mexico's 100 million people live on \$2 or less a day. Here, in rural areas, 30% of children 5 and younger eat so little that their growth is stunted, and the people who live in humble houses along the rails are often the poorest.

Families throw sweaters, tortillas, bread and plastic bottles filled with lemonade. A baker, his hands coated with flour, throws his extra loaves. A seamstress throws bags filled with sandwiches. A teenager throws bananas. A store owner throws animal crackers, day-old pastries and half-liter bottles of water.

While America is the goodness in the story, the writer grabs at the few examples she can find of this human kindness along the route of the journeyers. Not everyone is bad, says the story in a brief celebration of good people amid the awful. It can be looked at, I think, as an acknowledgement that what America is can be found everywhere, but only on occasions. Only in America is there a way of life that allows the good and the kind to become part of a system that lets them become wealthy and free.

When Enrique finally arrives in America, all is not sunshine and roses. He must get used to a mother he hasn't seen for a more than a decade, along with her new family. He must go to work. While the transition isn't smooth, it is made. The stories do not indicate the journey or the transition will be easy, quite the opposite, but they do portray them as essential if the people involved are to find a place where they can rise to their full height and build families and communities.

The writer cites instances of these would-be immigrants awareness and longing for the superior civil rights they will find in America, but this part of the story does not develop. Even those who are here talk little about it beyond a cursory recognition. This is possibly the work of editors; perhaps the immigrant talked more of it and this was something not considered central to the story. But for the time and effort that went into the series of stories, that would be unlikely. A recurring reference to civil rights would certainly have been worthy of some detailed passages because of its motivational role in the journey. There are possibly two factors at work here: first, during the journey there is only a single goal, to earn money to help families left behind; civil rights are a luxury for the future. Second, the stories lead us to believe that the biggest single right that these immigrants lack is the right to make a living. It is, in the end, the money-making power of the United States that is the ultimate lure. But, the story suggests, it is not just because they will have money, it is because that money is the foundation of a different future life, not just spending cash. This is important I think because throughout these stories the illegal immigrants' journey are part of a qualifying process, a way they can be worthy of participating in the capitalist myth when they get here. They are dirt poor, they do not have the background in earning money and being aware of its value and the value of the freedom to work to make money for a family that the Vietnamese demonstrate in the first case study. But they will not arrive on

American soil unprepared. For Weber, the Puritan approach to capitalism gave all ranks of people the chance to succeed, to work for family and communal wealth. But they did have to qualify, they had to be Puritans, they had to journey to America and then work hard, they did have to buy into the workings of the capitalist system and also its intention to give people a chance to demonstrate their probable salvation.

The prime need of the illegal immigrants moving north in these stories is to support families. Family is a strong image and one integral to the Puritan-American capitalist myth. I would again argue that selectivity is at work on the basis of the myth. Why is family so much a motif, at least to the extent that simple desire for a life of less hardship? It is not that family is unimportant, it may even be a paramount consideration, but that is disproportionately featured as virtually and virtuously the only significant concern for journeying to the United States because family fits the myth. While some seek personal riches and some simply seek a life for themselves, the stories virtually ignore such people, assuming apparently that they are a small percentage of the travelers. Most of the subjects in the stories come from families and have strong ties to them.

The core observation made about this text, and the secondary comparison texts, is that the journey is worth it, even necessary. All the trouble, the heartaches, failures, and relatively high risk of being assaulted, robbed, raped, or killed, is worthwhile. In this story, Ernesto takes chances that could easily kill him. Clinging to the side of moving trains, jumping from car to car on moving trains, risking capture by gangs who prey on illegals moving north, and even walking up to a door to ask for food in a village is potentially lethal. Yet he does it again and again. In the story, Ernesto the little boy grows into a drug-using, poor, angry, and extremely frustrated teenager. The life described by the author is miserable, even unbearable.

“Enrique’s Journey” leaves no doubt that this boy, a tabula rasa at its beginning, can only find his true future by reuniting with his mother, and she has become synonymous with the calling of the United States.

The journey of the boy then, as it was for the mother and the others in the story, is (a) essential/necessary; (b) worth it whatever happens; (c) a rite of passage; (d) a prequalification; (e) not enough – it just makes you worthy, once you get here you have to work; (f) something that must be done; if you fail, try again; and (g) his only chance to be all that he can be.

He fails seven times. Yet each time he tries again, facing the same risks of death and other horrors. The story does not question his motivation. He wants to be with his mother, he wants to be in America and the two are part of the same whole. He is willing to die trying to get there. The story describes his motivation, overtly and subtly, as something unstoppable. It is so fierce, so intense, and it is a grand, noble idea he has. America, or at least an end to inequity, is worth dying for. Throughout the story, this is evident not only in the case of Ernesto, but in the people with whom he journeys on each of his attempts.

The journey to the border is a ritual fire to be walked through, a cleansing that prepares the immigrants. It is also a process that lets American know the immigrants are worthy of American capitalism and will now be where they need to be and be able to contribute. What we can see in this story and in the secondary stories under examination in this case study is a lack of questioning of the motives of the journeyers and a lack of any doubts. They are imbued with worthiness. The worth of the journey is implicitly understood. There is no probing of the social and cultural systems they live in before they set out. There is some token description of places devoid of the advantages of the Puritan ethic and its product, Puritanical capitalism, places where character cannot emerge freely but is the product of a corrupt and bitter way of life, and the

story's descriptions of Ernesto's home town are shockingly raw in their detail of its degradation. But where is the urging of potential border crossers to be revolutionaries, to attempt to improve their own political system? Where is the detailed criticism of these systems? Is there perhaps a suggestion, an undercurrent that only our system will work, that these Central American governments are the old Europe that needs to be shed completely to start anew in the land of Hughes' myths? That there is no point in attempting to change them because only America can deliver what the citizens need. This is then the Millennial Nation myth, and we see it in the primary and secondary texts, that the old world is one that will be changed by the emergence of America.

As in the Beardstown story, there is virtually blank acceptance that illegal border crossings are made and illegal immigrants go to work in the United States. Yet the morality of the immigrant, who is blatantly breaking the law and openly admitting it, is not questioned. The Puritan ethic shares with the other Hughes myths the 'huddled masses' idea that new immigrants should come because America alone has built a way of life that can lift even the poorest to a new life. The sympathy and empathy afforded to Enrique and his fellow travelers indicate an assumption of their eventual worth to America, that they will be able to use the opportunities offered to them.

The Frankfurt School and Baudrillard are relevant here. While the Frankfurters saw ideology as forcing media into ever narrower and narrower confines of predictable narratives with limited options, it is possible that myth can do the same thing. The news media assumption in these texts is a similarly simple storyline. The primary and secondary texts rely on a narrative based in a simple idea: the America of Hughes's myths is a natural attraction to people who do have the benefits of America. But inside that simple boundary, these texts do not observe and

report the process without a central idea. The events that happen on the journey are seen not only as random events but as events that relate to America's myths of origin. The worth of various events and information depends not only on what happened but where it fits in the mythic narrative.

We ask critical scholars and wielders of rhetorical criticism to avoid a systematic approach, to argue from every point of the compass, to daringly challenge the status quo and be prepared to defend unexpected positions. Journalists may argue that they are similarly charged, but their stories, at least in this case, are predictable. All of the surprises come from within expected boundaries. Characters may be surprising, events such as dangerous train rides or midnight Rio Grande crossings may be dramatic and surprising, but they do little to change the basic mythic storyline. The reason, I would posit, is that it is not possible for news media in the end to challenge the myths they embrace. Those myths are buried deep in texts, so it is possible to employ them without their use being obvious. In other words, those myths are a border drawn with an invisible ink that only journalists see. Go outside the lines and maybe lose your relevance to your readers whom you assume will absorb the mythic narrative between the lines, and maybe then lose income.

Hall would perhaps argue that the journeyers are being depicted as what we want to see in them, pre-qualified yearners, and that their culture erodes as they journey, eventually to be replaced with ours. The story's audience can, "ask are we simply seeing it happening or are we doing it?" Does their cultural heritage molt as they journey, or do the newspapers slowly strip it from them? As in the case of the Vietnamese Fisherman or the Mexican Meatpackers, ethnicity is the thinnest of veneers. The values of this boy's life in Guatemala, like his mothers, are

replaced as he journeys. We know his story, he is a journeyer and he is coming to the promised land.

This is what Baudrillard, I think, is seeing: the journey is the thing, the only thing, and it is a separate and bigger thing than its participants who are subsumed by it. While it is not the event that Boorstin and DeBord see as being especially put together to attract news coverage, it has become a news event, a recognizable news staple. When that happens, there is pressure on news media to stick to the basics of the storyline. I do not suggest that the texts in this chapter manipulate or edit to mislead. But the public is so well-versed in the ritual narrative of border crossing, in the journey story, that their familiarity becomes something of a variable in how the stories are received. Knowing what story the audience expects must influence to some degree the way the story and its elements are gathered and assembled. I'll predict that the cross-border journey will one day be the basis of a television reality show.

The journeyers in this story are all one 'type,' all Hispanics. There is little time spent in these stories trying to recognize differences between Hondurans and Nicaraguans, perhaps because the differences that exist are being buried under the weight of 'the journey.' By the time they reach America they will all be the same. Perhaps the writer makes a little effort to distinguish, but in effect they are more common than different because they are all pilgrims and it is pilgrim qualities, not national characteristics, that the writer is looking for.

Enrique's mother becomes a wage earner in America and then, even with only the slightest foothold on the bottom rung of the American economic ladder, she continues her journey. She is in a second transition. The first moved her from Honduras to America. The second, from considering a few dollars as the culmination of her journey, she moves into the workforce with American expectations. She has crossed that hegemonic bridge that means she

and other illegals like her are not likely to swell the ranks of a concentrated opposition to the American ways of the ruling class.

This is a story about a mother and son – it is binary and biblical, it allows little choice. There is a simple right/wrong choice. The boy is in pain all his young life after she leaves but his mother did no wrong, she did what was necessary, so he must lift himself from this sordid life and journey to her. Both are noble, both will be worthy Americans.

From the beginning of this story, the boy doesn't have a chance, an immediate comparison with life in America. The world around him offers him nothing. The difference is quickly established. There is also an optimism in his mother's leaving; she will bring or send something of American back home. But that inevitability makes the whole venture more worthwhile. While readers know this won't work from being aware of what the series is about, we know it is worth trying. And as the story goes on, this becomes the core of the effort: to bring resolution and closure to the separation caused by a lack of equality.

Secondary texts. These secondary stories, and also the primary text in this case study, have drawn a somewhat different response in terms of the application of rhetorical and mythic criticism than that employed by both primary and secondary texts in either of the two preceding case studies. There is a need to be more distant, more remote from the actual storylines as they develop because rather than finding distinct, specific references to foundational or original myths, these stories rely on broad assumptions. What is identifiable is a theme within the constant repetition of the journey as a ritual transition from dark to light. Rather than a specific sentence or construction, the structure of an anecdote or the use of certain words in conjunction or opposition to others, the myth is hidden in a broad storyline. Rather than deconstructing the

big picture into smaller parts, the myth is actually within the big picture itself. As one character in one of the stories says, this is an exodus, complete with biblical and Puritan overtones.

Whether Moses was left handed or not was a superficial question to the readers of Exodus.

Whether a border jumper was Guatemalan, Honduran, or Mexican is similarly superficial to these stories.

The storylines then, develop with the audience aware of the roles of the principle characters. They are reading a story of a people fleeing tyranny, poverty, and hopelessness, struggling with little or no help to find the promised land and religious and commercial freedom. Within that narrative structure, the events and the people fulfill roles ascribed to the original journeyers. We know they are good people, embarked on a just journey, doing what they must to arrive where they were destined to go. This in turn pre-qualifies them to be people who can enjoy and use the American capitalist system. The people are good, family folk, persecuted by venal, incompetent, and freedom-suppressing government and local authorities, unable to find good, honest work to meet the needs of their families, something America guarantees, at least in their eyes. They risk all for America, so precious is what they know she offers. Lives are risked, sometimes not only their own but their children's, and sometimes so recklessly the journeyers place their entire hopes on America and will accept nothing less. There is, throughout the texts, evidence that America is not just a paycheck but a state of mind to the immigrant. And that state of mind is tied to the idea that freedom (tied to earnings via the Puritan-American capitalism myth) is something to strive and risk all for.

There is again no doubt in the writing, nor in the minds of those interviewed, although of course I only have reporting and interviewing to rely on in making such a judgment, both choices made by the reporter and the newspapers, to know this. When parents not only send their

toddlers into the night to be lead across the U.S. border by human smugglers, then re-send them after they have been apprehended, they doubly risk their lives, but not only do those parents say it is worth it, the news media in these texts does not challenge that assertion. There is a dramatic ‘give me liberty or give me death’ quality to their quest, heroized by the writing. Read the story: these are not people seeking to make a quick buck, they are pilgrims. They seek the freedoms enshrined in America and nowhere else. To them, they are journeying to the America of Hughes’ myths, a land unencumbered by entrenched mediocrity and underachievement and man-made restrictions on freedom. Also, as is the case in other texts, they are coming to be a part of America. While they will enjoy, and use, and in turn benefit from and return that benefit, Puritan-American capitalism, they will also become part of the Natural and Innocent and Chosen nation, adding to its power, proving and reinforcing its superiority as the epitome of what man can do. Perhaps to some extent this is not a surprise; after all, many are poorly educated and do not need a sophisticated understanding of America or American history to know this is where they want to be. But the reporting abets this simplicity, this naiveté, this quality we seek among our immigrants, possibly with some witness leading involved.

Throughout these secondary texts, there are the telltale signs of feature stories, description and character development, anecdote and story development, generally situated within a broad story examining people involved in trying to cross the border illegally or trying to stop them, or recounting stories of when they were involved.

The *New York Times*, May 25 2006 (Late Final edition; Section A; Column 4; Foreign Desk; Page 12 is a story entitled “On a Paper Border, Mexico's Poor Hide, Scramble and Hope,” by James C. McKinley Jr., introducing a familiar figure:

As an orange sun rose over the desert here, Jose Angel Huerta, 36, a silversmith down on his luck, waited under a shrub pine with several other migrants, watching for a chance to

scurry across the border and make the 20-mile hike to Yuma, Ariz. It would be his second try. Two days earlier, the Border Patrol had picked him up and returned him to Mexico. “I just want to improve my life a bit,” the sad-eyed Mr. Huerta said, explaining that his silver shop in Taxco, in southern Mexico, went under last year. He left three children and a wife behind to try to find work picking apples or working construction in Washington.

There is of course the necessary dramatic setup, the introduction the narrative needs to attract and eventually lead to storytelling that will hold the reader. But if these secondary texts show us anything, it is that there is no shortage of people trying to cross the border, and it is reasonable to expect that the reporter had many subject to choose from. This one is almost stereotypical. He is pre-qualified for America because he has a trade and would work if there was any. His family is the reason he challenges the border. I would suggest that “I just want to improve my life a bit” is another of those fortunate, perhaps elicited, quotes that help bolster the central storyline. There is a stiffness to it. Of course, translation may be a factor. But it is reasonable to suggest that the questioning that led to this statement was unlikely to accept for the story anything substantially different in its perception. Other characters paint a similar picture:

Ernesto Arreolo, 28, said he left a job driving bulldozers and other heavy machinery in Michoacan, where he earned \$324 a month. His friends who had gone to the United States always seemed to be loaded with cash when they came home to visit, he said.

“The few jobs there are don't pay much, the money doesn't stretch to cover your needs,” he said. “If we had a government that respected our rights and provided us with good jobs, we would stay home.”

Antonio Rivera, 37, a construction worker, said he earned only \$40 a week, but it cost him about \$20 a day to feed his family. “We don't have enough to buy food the other five days,” he said.

The subjects are bulldozer drivers and construction workers, solid folks, not lowers and would-be criminals. They have skills, they work hard, but they cannot make a living. Rhetorically, the story is simply setting up their environment as inadequate. But if they are good, hard-working people who cannot make a living pursuing their trade, then the blame must fall on the system.

They are also, I would suggest, the sort of people America would not only welcome but who would be useful, who could use and help expand the capitalist system

In another *New York Times* story, “At Unforgiving Arizona-Mexico Border, Tide of Desperation Is Overwhelming,” by Ginger Thompson (May 21, 2006 Sunday; Late Edition – Final; Section 1; Column 1; National Desk; Page 24), the same figures appear:

All the talk in Washington about putting walls and soldiers along the border with Mexico did not stop Miguel Espindola from trying to cross the most inhospitable part of it this week with his wife and two small children.

Their 6-year-old daughter, Karla, clutched her mother's back pocket with one hand and a bottle of Gatorade with the other as the family set out across the Sonora Desert on Thursday. Miguelito, 7, lugged a backpack that seemed to weigh almost as much as he did.

“Yes, there is risk, but there is also need,” said Mr. Espindola, explaining why he had brought his children on a journey that killed 464 immigrants last year, and a 3-year-old boy this week.

Looking out at the vast parched landscape ahead, Mr. Espindola, a coffee farmer, talked about the poverty he had left behind, and said: “Our damned government forces us to leave our country because it does not give us good salaries. The United States forces us to go this way.”

The journey, according to the source, Mr. Espindola, is inevitable, it must be done. The Mexican government is damned and faulted, but it is faulted for not supplying good salaries, something that is not entirely in the control of the Mexican government. The Mexican government is also charged with forcing the immigrants into America. And America is charged with forcing immigration, apparently via its superior wage structure and loose immigration control. Simply repeating the claims of illegal immigrants is facile at best. And I will wonder again if these responses do not come from a far more developed and intense conversation/interview, one where context and relativity come more from the situation of being interviewed in particular circumstances than from spontaneity:

A couple miles down the road, two sunburned men, their clothes tattered and their lips severely chapped, look the image of needy. Raul Calderon, 60, and his 22-year-old son Samuel, had been walking in the desert heat for four days.

Natives of the western Mexican state of Michoacan, they said they had been abandoned by the smuggler -- known among immigrants here as "coyotes" -- they had hired on the second day of their journey.

On the third night, the men said, they lost track of the 10 other people traveling with them in the darkness. And by the fourth morning, they had run out of food and water.

"Our government has forgotten about us," the father said. Then nodding toward his son, he added, "Each generation stays as poor as the last."

Their government has "forgotten" them and they are destined to remain poor, as is their family.

The father is calling on the government to be as responsible as the government of the United States, and the reader is already aware in this context that this will not happen. These characters are in fact forcing the readers to make a simple comparison: the American government does not forget you; nor does it create a situation where each generation of the poor must remain a poor underclass. The subjects have no choice, they must strive for all they are worth to find America. For the newspaper to accept, and then to reproduce, blanket claims that the government is the source of the problem is disingenuous; this story focuses on illegal immigration, there can be no uncertainty that the problem these border runners face is not as simple as government inadequacy. So why run these claims above others that presumably the people being interviewed have made? These quotes offer a simple, stark comparison: the United States is above this, it is the natural, innocent, chosen nation. Yes, it is overly simple, but as both Barthes and Williams suggest, myth is a common-place, quotidian thing, and as Lewis argues, the repetition of its basic tenets is enough to decide a national audience.

This text also addresses an aspect of illegal migration that is subject to tokenism in these secondary texts. The huge number of illegal immigrants leaving Mexico has left villages, towns, and even cities with the curse of emptiness; it has left families without a head of household and in doing so inevitably changed the makeup of the local society and culture. The absence of detailed reporting in these texts can be partly explained by their audience, they are written for

American audiences. There is something of the inevitability seen elsewhere in texts here, an acknowledgement that what has to happen has to happen and there's nothing you can do about it, which is the draw of America:

Mr. Calderon said his native town of Churintzio had been nearly emptied by migration to the United States. He himself had gone back and forth across the border for much of the last two decades. But he said he had spent the last five years in Mexico, trying to start his own restaurant.

It would be reasonable to suggest that this is an aspect of the story for which there is no room and probably no audience. Yet I would argue it is part of the assumption of the myths of Hughes. If the people must leave because only America can fulfill their potential as human beings, then this sort of emptiness is inevitable and can't be seen in a negative way. It is, as has been seen in earlier texts, accepted as collateral damage, something that can't be avoided as the capitalist system and the Puritan-American capitalist myth intertwine. It is something of a cleansing fire, revealing to the old country that it is inadequate. And once again, it is possible to identify that limited Frankfurt School argument: a potentially devastating effect on the old country's culture is passed off with a reasonable, even honest, but hopelessly inadequate explanation. It is, as is in all the cases of tokenism necessary but insufficient to fully explain what is happening.

Another *New York Times* story, "By a Back Door to the U.S.: A Migrant's Grim Sea Voyage," by Ginger Thompson and Sandra Ochoa, (June 13, 2004; Sunday; Late Edition – Final; Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Page 1) is an account of a human smuggling journey on a fishing boat from the coast of Ecuador to the coast of Guatemala, from where the illegals will head on land for the U.S. border.

It also looks at the 'emptiness' problem and its flip side, the supply of money from America back to Central and Latin America and its growing, influencing role in domestic life and culture. This section is pure tokenism; lip service to that which must be addressed because it

is obviously a core aspect of the discussion. It is in sections such as this that there is evidence that the focus on people, the abstraction of the journey, and the reluctance to spend any more time than is absolutely necessary on the subject suggests this paragraph is little more than gratuitous:

David Kyle, an expert on migrant smuggling at the University of California, said Latin American governments, which have grown dependent on money sent home by migrants, put up little more than symbolic fights against smugglers and even celebrated illegal migrants as national heroes. In the United States, the fight against the smuggling clashes with powerful economic interests that depend on illegal workers.

The story finds and interviews (by phone) one of the kingpins (queenpins?) of the human smuggling from Ecuador to the United States, Rosa Hipatia Zhingri Angamarca. The story says, “She runs her business” from the town of Cuenca in the Ecuadorian Andes. What she does – illegal and dangerous human smuggling – is, for the purposes of this story a business; it is structured, organized, and operates for a profit with a basic grasp of accounting. In the interview, Ms. Zhingri admits as much and does her best to explain its simple structure. She makes money by helping people, she says. The way she does it is elaborated to reveal just how the business works. Yet this person and her fellow businessmen are not only human smugglers, they treat people appallingly and put their clients lives at risk to profit from them, with little or no visible or recorded concern. This much is evident from the rest of the story.

It is clear that one may argue that the newspaper chose the business model because Americans would best understand how Ms. Zhingri is operating because they understand simple corporate operations, basic business as the American man in the street knows it. The business model is used again and again in the story to explain the machinery of human smuggling, and as such there can be little doubt that describing a commercial structure affords the newspaper a way to create a simple comparative structure. But with it, of course, comes the assumption that

business structures are good things, as they are touted to us in everyday life. But there is an antiseptic odor to it, an even-handedness born of journalism's vaunted disinterest: is this operation no less repugnant than a crooked American business outfit, in which case, though it is bad, it is not that bad (it still relies on business principles):

One of the most important groups involved in the January voyage of the *William* was led by a young woman named Rosa Hipatia Zhingri Angamarca. She runs her business from Cuenca, a quaint colonial town high in the Ecuadorean Andes.

In a telephone interview, Ms. Zhingri, a 30-year-old mother of two, acknowledged that she smuggled migrants. But she described herself as a good coyote. She said she made sure her clients traveled safely, if not comfortably. If her clients are intercepted by the authorities before reaching their destinations, Ms. Zhingri said, she arranges for them to make two more attempts at no extra fee.

"I am only trying to help people," she said, "Not hurt them."

The rise and fall and rise again of her own family runs parallel to the struggling region where she runs her business. Until five years ago, she said, her father ran a successful bus company. A serious crisis in 1999, caused by plummeting oil prices and billions of dollars of damage from storms, plunged the economy into ruins. Ecuador adopted the dollar as its national currency to help stop soaring inflation. But the value of Ecuadorean wages fell by half; devastating families who could barely make ends meet.

Ms. Zhingri said her father's bus company went bankrupt. Friends invited him to get in on the booming migrant trade. Her father had been a migrant, she said. He traveled back and forth to New York to work in restaurants. So he had established contacts that could help move others, too.

The smuggling business has been good for the Zhingri family, and brought new signs of life to an otherwise dying region.

This is a singularly interesting construction. Tokenistic, it does dwell on what is going on. But the idea that business process brings new life to a downtrodden area suggests approval. Indeed, the subject is accorded a preferred status with the reporter. I conceded that to get the interview the newspaper had to wheel and deal, an acceptable process given the value of the interview to the story. But, given that, is it not possible that the *Times* is, in this statement, promoting its own story at the same time it is reporting it? And if so, relying on its business context as a sales tool? If Ms. Zingri were a public company (no matter what her product), would it not be, courtesy of this story, more attractive to investors than it was before they opened their *Times*?

At least 30 people on the William said they were clients of Ms. Zhingri. One of them, a woman named Blanca Chipre, said of the Zhingri family, "They are millionaires."

The January voyage of the William, for which 205 migrants paid an average fee of \$10,000 each, was worth at least \$2 million.

When asked to explain the division of that money, Ms. Zhingri said the owner of the boat earned about \$1,200 a passenger, more than enough to cover the cost of the vessel if it was intercepted and sunk by the authorities.

About \$800 a person went to smugglers in Guatemala, she said, for retrieving migrants from the beaches and providing them food and lodging.

Migrants pay an estimated \$2,000 to guides and safe house operators that help them through Mexico. Then they pay a final \$5,000 when they reach Los Angeles, a smuggling hub considered the beginning of the end of their journey. From there, the migrants take planes, buses and cars throughout the United States.

Ms. Zhingri said her cut was \$1,000 to \$1,200 per migrant.

Perhaps I use too much of the original text. But it is worth seeing because the reliance on business structure and through it business analogy is paramount to the storyteller at this point in the story.

Note too that this story touches on the 'emptiness' problem and the growing reliance on remitted U.S. dollars to boost, perhaps shore up is a better description, the country's economy. Perhaps it is unreasonable to ask for more focus on these factors, given that the story must move along with the smugglers and the smuggled. In the primary text, however, the misery of those left behind is fully probed. While it may not be central to the story in any of these secondary texts, it is arguably worth more space and detail than is given in that we may assume that life in these places where immigrants begin their journey is not such a black and white thing. We will concede there is poverty, terror, and other base negatives, But the subtlety of the lives, their anguish, and the dramatic act of choosing to go or stay is, Frankfurt School style, jammed into a single image or metaphor. Nowhere in these texts is the choice to go or stay anything but a foregone conclusion. The goodness of the cause, the Biblical/American bedrock of it, makes it okay whatever the details:

Some migrants disappear for good, killed in accidents or in flashes of violence among smuggling gangs fighting for control of routes and clients in Arizona. Bloodshed, however, is bad for business, and so there is little of the violence that has, for instance, become a signature of the drug trade.

Still, unscrupulous behavior takes a heavy toll, as does the callousness of many of the smugglers who treat their human charges as little more than cargo. To them the numbers of dead matter less than the numbers on the wadded American dollars they receive.

The story also asks the ever-present question in the secondary texts in this Exodus case study.

Why do they do it? It is commonplace to ask and answer the question without more than a passing acknowledgement that the answers are overly simple:

A young passenger named Vinicio said he had lived through worse. He looked about 15, but explained he was a veteran migrant. He had previously tried to reach the United States twice by land, and once by sea. Each time, the authorities caught him and sent him back to Ecuador.

Home to him was Queens. Vinicio had never made it there. But that is where his parents and two older brothers live, he said, and he would take as many boat rides as necessary until he reached them.

'I need to get to Queens' is perhaps a reasonable answer from Vinicio, but it should not be accepted and reproduced at face value, or least not recorded and reproduced with such little context. Tokenism rears its head again. An obvious statement is only obvious because, although apparently simple, it strikes a broader chord, one Barthes and Williams would recognize immediately: American is home to us all, especially those downtrodden.

America's mythic pull is always the answer. Changes in the way life is lived in their countries of origin are never countenanced. It is as if they can't be done, at least to any degree where those countries may offer these wretched of the earth something approaching what they can find in America:

"They do not think about this once or twice, but a thousand times, before they do it," Mr. Segura said of the fishermen's decision to ferry migrants across the ocean. "But what else can they do: accept pennies for their work and let their children die of hunger? They either work with coyoters, or they live in misery. It's simple."

In this story, the illegal ship's captain explains briefly why he does what he does. In doing so he describes a fairly average American income, but to get it he must be on the wrong side of the law. We are shown that in the Ecuador of the underclasses, the work ethic is not enough. The accumulated concentration of power and a venal political system, old-world negatives washed away by the American experiment, are a man-made barrier that makes a mockery of the hard work equals success equation.

The *New York Times* article "The Crossing: A special report.: A Perilous 4,000-Mile Passage to Work," (May 29, 2001 Tuesday Late Edition - Final Section A; Column 1; Metropolitan Desk; Page 1) by Charlie LeDuff, also begins with a familiar introduction. People living in darkness have no choice but to risk all for the American light:

When the migrants returned, they gathered their belongings off the desert floor. They had missed their ride, the guide told them. They would have to camp and walk a third night, another 25 miles, to the next pickup spot. The men took shelter beneath a spiny tree, wrapping themselves in garbage bags to hold in the heat that never came.

"I'm so cold," said Eduardo. He was thin and frail and his teeth rattled. "I told my father I didn't want to do this."

"You're a Mexican," said his friend, Mario Huerta. "What else can you do?"

What else can you do? There is nothing else they can do. They must undergo a ritual journey.

Only America can free them, that is America's mythic role. But they must prove their worth first.

In this story, a human smuggler reflects on what he has done and sees himself as the good guy, helping people who are destined to a life of misery in Mexico get the chance to fulfill a higher destiny. The writing allows some sympathy for him, as if he too is part of an inevitability caused by the pull of the United States, and that in finding a way to get relatively rich in his barrio he has helped some people out of it to America, in itself a worthy thing to do. Human smuggling, an opportunist crime in this case, is presented, much like the use of fake identity documents in other case study stories, with some ambivalence. The ends apparently temper

judgment of the means. Since he is helping people who must fear, in Calvinist terms, that they are among the unsaved, to fulfill a natural God-given right to work for salvation-earning income, then he is, perhaps to some degree, an agent of God. In this, he is similar to the boat captain.

The *New York Times* provides another comparison text, "Salvadorans Stream into U.S., Fleeing Poverty and Civil War," by James LeMoyné (April 13, 1987, Monday, Late City Final Edition Section A; Page 1, Column 1; Foreign Desk). Once again a familiar figure leads us into the story:

Driven by unemployment and war at home, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans are estimated to have gone to live in the United States in recent years, according to American and Salvadoran officials.

...Maria Alvarado, a busy laundress in San Salvador, would like to join the exodus. She is 28 years old, speaks no English and has almost no money. But she has three cousins and two brothers who have made the trip without a visa, and she wants to join them. "It must be beautiful," Mrs. Alvarado said as she finished some ironing last week. "Everyone who has been says they like it."

There is more evidence in this text that the exodus is more than the movement of one or two people and is, perhaps we could say in a Biblical manner, a movement of peoples, a history-changing reorganization of people in much the same way the exodus of people from Europe to America had been in this country's early years. In this case America also bestows its wealth back on the places of origin, and in doing so reinforces the essential differences between a natural, chosen nation and lesser nations:

In the impoverished northern village of Santa Rita, residents say at least 40 of their neighbors have gone to the United States. Elsewhere, as in Intipuca in eastern La Unión Department, local officials estimate that half the village's population has gone north. It is difficult to meet a Salvadoran, no matter how humble his origins, who does not have a relative or close friend in the United States.

..."Salvadorans in the United States are, in fact, an integral part of the Salvadoran economy," said an American diplomat here who has studied the flow of migrants. "The money they send home is a key, if hidden, part of the country's income."

The American Embassy here estimates that Salvadorans in the United States annually send \$350 million to \$450 million of their earnings to relatives back home. Other studies suggest the amount could be almost twice as high. Whatever the figure, the money sent

back comes close to equaling, if not surpassing, direct American economic aid to El Salvador.

The remittances constitute a much-needed cushion in a land where the economy is stagnant, unemployment and underemployment stand at 50 percent, inflation is running at more than 30 percent and the population may double by the end of the century in a peasant land that is already the most densely populated in Latin America and has landlessness as a major problem.

Later in the story, a common irony seen in other secondary texts in this case study pops up.

Human smuggling is good business for a wide range of business interests. Just as newspapers are uncertain if human smugglers may do some good work, here human smuggling is a business model. It develops to service a need, as basic a description of American capitalism as you could want, and an acknowledgment that business is business. A newspaper may eventually condemn it, or not, but there is no denying it is free enterprise:

A thriving business has developed here to service the needs of Salvadorans already in the United States or still desiring to go.

Newspaper advertisements eagerly promise door-to-door delivery from San Salvador to a variety of American cities. Simatours Travel in downtown San Salvador promises to take immigrants to the Mexican border for \$800. Once there, a brochure delicately states, “if you desire, we have a guide who will take you to Los Angeles and any other place in the United States for an additional \$700.”

The story ends with another familiar anecdote, this time with the subject in the introduction being used to wrap the circle of the narrative:

Mrs. Alvarado, for one, still remains hopeful. Her 33-year-old brother made his second trip to Los Angeles five months ago, and she is thinking of following him.

“They say it is harder now, but he went without a visa,” she said. “That’s probably the way I’ll go too.”

The Atlantic Monthly story chosen for comparison is headlined “Exodus: the ominous push and pull of the U.S.-Mexico border” by Marc Cooper (May 1, 2006; Page 123(10) Vol. 297 No. 4). This article also quickly offers a common scene:

A few yards away, the Red Cross has just opened its first-aid trailer for this year's season, and its advice is also readily spurned. “I tell them that they run a great risk,” says uniformed paramedic Amado Arellano. He even shows them a colorful but macabre wall

map--provided by the Tucson-based Humane Borders group--that marks every spot where a migrant has died in the desert. Hundreds of fatal red dots cluster just above the border. "We try to tell them not to go," he says. "But no one listens. The necessity is too great."

'Necessity' is an interesting choice. This attempt to cross is seen as a response to a natural urge among populations. The death toll is vividly demonstrated to the would-be crossers, but the need outweighs the risk. Death, it seems, is preferable to staying home. Later, attempts to stop a young girl and her child from attempting the crossing run into the fatalism of the crossers:

In the courtyard once more, Solchaga [Jorge Solchaga, a thirty-eight-year-old diplomat who works with the Mexican consulate in Phoenix, AZ] spots a dark-skinned girl with a nursing-age infant in her lap. She stares at the ground as Solchaga gently warns her that she is about to put her life and that of her child at risk. When he presses her on the dangers, she barely nods. Almost inaudibly she says that she's twenty, but she looks five years younger and somewhat terrified. However, the die is cast. She's given up everything back home and will be heading out into a new world within a few minutes.

Would the Puritans have given up, have smothered the urge to cross the ocean to America?

Remaining was not more a choice for them than it is for these journeyers. A terrified teenager with a nursing-age infant must have the greatest possible reason to risk both their lives. It is worth nothing that in this case study, life in Mexico and other sub-border countries is miserable and commonly offers little or no hope for a brighter future, but the journeyers are not victims of genocide or enslaved. It is perhaps a fine point, but at the very least it means people are making a choice. They could stay. They could try and change the system, although it has to be conceded such an effort would almost certainly be fruitless or dangerous. But because the crossing is a choice, I would argue that America is pulling more than Mexico et al are pushing. That is, in the primary and secondary texts in this particular case study, America is natural destination for people because it is Nature's Nation more than because it offers better income.

The journalist for this article relies on authors who have written books about the border and cross-border smuggling. He cites them regularly:

“The Mexican border is the only place” Bowden [Tucson-based journalist Charles Bowden, author of more than fifteen books, most of them set along the border] writes, “where the cyberspace world of a major economy rubs up against a world of raw sewage and mud huts. The world of mud is failing to sustain its people.”

This quotation is succinct to the point of crude efficiency. The choice is so stark. It is Europe or America, and the would-be crossers are Puritans. There is actually no choice. It is also a citation that offers a simple exercise in understanding that pull of the United States. It is the place of Hughes’ myths. But another Bowden quote is even more prescient: “What we’re seeing is something right out of the Bible. This is an exodus.”

The Biblical undertones of the journey have always been there. The author, a little later in the story, concludes:

When asked, they quietly tick off their home states: Oaxaca, Veracruz, Puebla, Chiapas, Michoacan. And they aren't shy about their destinations: Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, San Bernardino, Portland, New Jersey. Bowden is right. An exodus, indeed.

The breadth of the exodus is starkly presented here, but in the primary and secondary texts of this case study, it is obvious both from the numbers of people crossing, their varied starting points, their ages, genders and family ties, from the empty quarters left behind and the amount of money flowing back from America, that this movement is not narrow, that it is an entire population on the move. And when they arrive they fit in, they work and live and go to school and buy houses and colonize neighborhoods. The scope and scale of this movement is a true echo of the Puritan’s exodus. The movement is to the country of Hughes’ myths, not just to a job. There is no doubt raised by the journalists that the terrified teenage mother and her nursing baby are on a mission, not a job search.

The article’s writer cites another author that makes clear the life to be left behind is inhuman, putting into high relief the gravitational pull of America. For the American audiences

of this story, the images, especially this one, are other-worldly. America then is not just an employer. It is the higher world, the world above the abyss, a chosen nation:

In his earlier and equally luminous nonfiction work *By the Lake of Sleeping Children*, Urrea [Luis Alberto Urrea, author of *Devil's Highway*, a 2005 Pulitzer finalist for general nonfiction] takes us into the stinking, rotting heart of the Tijuana municipal dump. Here an entire community, dedicated to squeezing a living out of the rubbish, has mushroomed. On one storm-ravaged day, the dump floods and the washing walls of water erode the surrounding banks. Improvised children's coffins, made of cardboard boxes, slide loose and break apart, and hungry seagulls pick away at the remains. The lake of sleeping children.

The story also makes a very simple point. What is lost in this debate, or at least what is not addressed in these texts to any degree, is that these border crossers are labor: Borders that are open to the free flow of capital are going to be readily crossed by job seekers (human capital), with or without visas.

A *Newsweek* story from August 30, 1999, Atlantic Edition, headlined “Coyote Inc.” by Allen Zarembo, ran in the magazine’s World Affairs section. It focuses on human smuggling as a business. While this next text is marginal because it does not meet the requirements to be called a feature, it does present good examples of how describing human smuggling as a business is a preferred model, presumably because American news consumers can make assessments and judgments valuable to themselves. We can see organization, estimate efficiencies, assess profits, decide whether it is a business model one would invest in if one could, and so on. For example:

The business is as old as illegal immigration itself. But just a decade ago, the trip to Phoenix cost \$200--if migrants bothered to use a guide at all--and the money was paid in advance. Now, few illegals attempt the journey alone, and the smugglers offer a guarantee: you don't pay until Phoenix. The coyote is still the boss of the operation, but he employs several subcontractors (graphic). A street-level recruiter works in Agua Prieta and throughout Mexico and is the only person in the chain who gets his money even if the migrants are turned back. A guide uses a mobile phone--and in some cases even night-vision goggles--to deliver migrants across the border, either to a waiting car on the highway or a safe house in Douglas. A safe-house operator keeps migrants overnight until they are picked up. A driver delivers the migrants to a house in Phoenix, where they stay until the money is wired from a relative in the United States. From there, they fan

out across America by land or air, with the arrangements made by the smuggler. In the last four months, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents have arrested and deported more than 3,000 illegals in various sting operations at Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport, but the traffickers are caught far less often.

Or:

Douglas, too, is living off the illegal-immigration business. There is more money here now, says Maruffo, a furniture salesman who says some of his biggest customers live in Agua Prieta and pick out their furniture from videotapes he sends them. Last year there were seven taxis in Douglas. Today there are more than 50. The town's three towing services are doing fine business towing cars confiscated by the Border Patrol for hauling illegals. And at the Safeway grocery store, the butchers are running side businesses. One plans to refurbish five apartments he inherited in Agua Prieta. Two co-workers are nearing completion of 20 apartments in Douglas that they are hoping to rent out to new Border Patrol agents. Says Frank Padilla, one of the partners: They're the only ones here who can pay \$530 a month.

The *New York Times* offers another comparison story, "More and More Women Risk All to enter U.S." by Lizette Alvarez and John M. Broder (January 10, 2006 Tuesday; Late Edition – Final; Section A; Column 2; National Desk; Page 1). The lead follows the dominant formula:

And finally, Ms. Gallardo, 38, who earned \$50 a week at an Acapulco hotel, had to contemplate life without her two vivacious daughters, Isabel, 7, and Fernanda, 5. That once unimaginable trade-off -- leaving her children behind so they could one day leave poverty behind -- had suddenly become her only option.

She simply did not earn enough money, she said. If she paid the electric bill, she fell behind on rent; if she paid the water bill, she could forget about new clothes for the children.

"My heart broke, my heart broke," said Ms. Gallardo, who crumbled as she recounted her decision to leave her girls with her sister and make the uncertain journey across the border. "But I had to give them a better life. I told them I would go and work, and we could buy a small plot of land and build a little house and have a dog."

The goal is not just money, it is an Americanized life, and news stories such as this one domesticate the border crossers into mainstream American life and simplify their goals into simple Americanized values. This is an example of the process of deculturization seen in the texts, a process whereby the subjects are described, and thus understood, in terms of their relationship to things American. They are coming to a place where hard work equals success for

a person and the person's family, a way of life unheard of to them, and they are described as already being in that manner of thinking. Rather than being stripped of their culture in these texts, they can be seen as being allowed to step free of the falseness they have been wearing and freely delight in what is important, the America of Hughes and the Puritan-American capitalist myth. Baudrillard might well argue that this sudden new façade is a simulacra, that there is nothing behind it, that they are poor immigrants at the bottom of the social ladder and cheering a life they do not yet and may never live. In fact, they are still who they were until they can be assimilated, something which may happen only to a degree, but by making it an instant process, a quasi-religious conversion, the news texts resituate them in a myth where American news consumers can easily recognize them.

It was not uncommon in a process often called the civilizing of the American West to see photographs of recently subjugated Native American in a sort of before and after pose. Before, they are dressed in pre-Columbian tribal mode. After, they are dressed in suits and ties and other acceptable styles of the modern mainstream white American. I argue that these texts do something similar. By having the border crossers stripped of their old presence and then seen as converts, even though there has been little chance for more than a superficial, photographic, as it were, conversion, the texts place the subjects within the mythic narratives as characters playing roles originally played by Puritans. The process is something DeBord and Boorstin would see as a created event, a necessary move by the news media to create a saleable, or at least recognizable, story. In Baudrillardian terms, these converts are in fact de-linked from both their past and their future, living only in a transitional present.

The story is another that emphasizes the concept of the inevitability of the exodus, the accepted idea among the journeyers that whatever the risk or downside, what is to be gained

makes it worth it. I would emphasize again that to continue to focus on this position, to use it prominently in these texts, the news organization relies on the mythic America of Hughes. The goal must be lofty, what is offered must be mythic. It would not be a plausible narrative to have people risking life and freedom, seeing their future as finally fulfilled human beings within successful families, to reach an America whose only attraction is \$11 an hour in a bean field:

But to most of the women who cross the border, the debate over illegal immigration and the ire of taxpayers has little bearing, if any, on the difficult decision they make to undertake the journey. “Vale la pena,” said Kat Rodriguez, an organizer for the Human Rights Coalition in Tucson, echoing a refrain among the women. “It’s worth it.”

The final comparison text in this case study is from the *New York Times*.” Crossing With Strangers: Children at the Border; Littlest Immigrants, Left in Hands of Smugglers,” by Ginger Thompson (November 3 2003; Section A; Column 2; Foreign Desk; Page 1). A familiar description leads us into the story:

They were barely old enough to cross a street by themselves, much less a border. But there they were, alone on a hot August evening at a United States immigration checkpoint, surrounded by law enforcement officers wearing badges and guns. Eight-year-old Jose Cruz Velazquez held the hand of his brother Sergio, who was 6. The Mexican boys had been seized from a smuggler hired by their parents living without legal papers in Pennsylvania. They were two of a growing number of children traveling without families who have been snared in the net that American and Mexican agents cast to stop illegal immigrants from crossing the border.

I will cite some passages from this story that are very similar, and, given the focus of the story, not surprising. Parents risk their children’s lives by sending them, alone, to be taken across the border by coyotes who specialize in human trafficking with no special ability or talent to help children make the journey. There is no doubt from reading these passages that these young lives are at risk. But the newspaper again shows little of the outrage we may expect Habermas would have liked to see in the pages. This is public sphere debate, but it is dampened, crafted, and sheltered by the professional shibboleth of objectivity. But also, using the assumption that the

goal of the parents is a natural human right, the parents are described in relationship to the loftiness of their goal, which coincides with the loftiness of America. The end is such a natural human endeavor, we are told, that the means can be seen sympathetically.

Children are handed to a human trafficker who, via a simple definition of what that occupation entails, is not a reliable or responsible person. That person, who has already profited from the children, goes with them to somewhere unknown to the parents or family and keeps them in unknown conditions. He will eventually smuggle them over the U.S. border, an act known to put their lives and emotional and physical well-being in danger. The newspaper interviews the parents, but, apparently to remain objective, does not appear to ask questions critical of what has transpired or seeking to probe the mindset or values of the parents, does not appear to consider the parents people who should be grilled. This is a fine example of how the journalism of commerce that Habermas saw takes over from what was a journalism of conscience has been diluted. The subject matter is still there, as Habermas agreed, but where is the passion?

...parents living in the United States illegally find increasingly that they can no longer afford the growing risks and expense of returning home to retrieve their children. They face a harsh choice: either they allow others to raise their children far away, or they hire strangers to smuggle their children into the United States.

“If my children stay in El Salvador, I will definitely lose them because of the distance that separates us,” said Rigoberto Centeno, a Salvadoran immigrant who lives in the Washington suburbs and who recently hired a smuggler to help reunite his family. “If they come with a coyote to the United States, there is a chance that I will lose them in the desert.

“But there is also a very good chance that they will make it across. If we want to be with our children, there is no other way.”

...To the parents of Sergio and Jose Cruz Velazquez, who had made a new home in a city in Pennsylvania, the pain of separation from the boys outweighed the risks of a journey with a smuggler.

“I did not feel good when my sons were so far away,” said Rosa Velazquez, the boys' mother. “I wanted them with me.” She and her husband agreed to pay a smuggler \$5,000 to bring the boys across.

“We never talked about the danger,” Mrs. Velazquez said. “Both of us have crossed the border with coyotes. We know that it is difficult. But we believed that our sons would be fine.”

...It rained on the first Saturday in September about 1 p.m. In temperatures that soared past 100 degrees, United States Border Patrol officers had found a 5-year-old in pigtails, Karen Tepas, walking with six adults across a stretch of desert 10 miles east of Douglas. When Mr. Escobar arrived, Karen was crying for her mother.

...Rigoberto Centeno had agreed to pay \$10,000 to a smuggler to deliver his son Emmanuel, 11, and his 6-year-old granddaughter, Maria Ivania, to his home near Washington, where he has lived for most of the last 15 years. But near Monterrey, Mexico, authorities seized the children and a coyote from a commercial bus. They spent five weeks in a Mexican shelter before being sent home. Mr. Centeno returned to El Salvador to receive them because he feared authorities there would not turn them over to anyone else.

...He embraced the bewildered children. “They are probably going to be scared for a little while,” he acknowledged. But he vowed to return alone to Washington and send for them soon, again with a coyote.

Mexican and American authorities say that immigrant parents often undermine their efforts. In Agua Prieta, Bilha Villalobos runs a shelter that takes in many of the children the Border Patrol finds. Most times, she lamented, it operates like a big revolving door. Children come in from the border for a few days. Parents call with urgent promises, saying they have learned their lesson and will send their children straight back to homes in Mexico.

The parents of Jose Cruz and Sergio Velazquez were driven by the same determination. After learning of their sons' detention in Agua Prieta, Rosa Velazquez agonized. “I told my husband that maybe we should leave the boys in Mexico,” she said. “Maybe it was too dangerous.” It was an option the parents could not accept. They sought another smuggler. By the end of August, the boys had reached their new home.

Perhaps there is some sort of reverse need at work here. If a reporter finds people south of the border willing to risk the lives of their children to smuggle them into the United States, shouldn't we be worth it? The news organizations do not want to trivialize the risk these border jumpers make. There are two ways to ennoble the effort: one is in the motivations and potential of the immigrants, the other is in the worthiness of the goal. These stories offer both validations.

The Imam

Primary texts. The 2007 Feature Writing Pulitzer Prize for journalism was awarded to Andrea Elliott of *The New York Times* “her intimate, richly textured portrait of an immigrant imam striving to find his way and serve his faithful in America.” The Imam, an Egyptian native, comes to Bay Ridge, New York, to head a Muslim immigrant community. The introductory story in this three-part series begins with the expected narrative setup, the lead that hooks the readers, that intrigues enough to create an interest, a desire to read on, delivered through strong writing. Given extensive reporting (there were six months of interviews with Mr. Shata, according to the text) and this being a three-part feature story with plenty of room, the newspaper has a lot of choice in picking its lead. That first paragraph and the structure and content choice for the paragraphs that immediately follow in what is a lengthy introduction set the stage for what is to come: “The imam begins his trek before dawn, his long robe billowing like a ghost through empty streets. In this dark, quiet hour, his thoughts sometimes drift back to the Egyptian farming village where he was born.”

The demands of the narrative are strongest here, dominant over detail and information. There must be a powerful image and the promise, only the promise at this stage, of an equally powerful story to come. That the story is about an immigrant Muslim imam, an Islamic cleric in New York, is known to the reader from first glances at headlines and pictures. The writer chooses a robed figure with ghostly qualities in the dark, his thoughts still attached to Egypt. It is the Other, presented simply.

The text continues to build a vivid picture of daily life for the cleric, Sheik Reda Shata, full of people and places and quotidian activity. He attends to his calling in a “plain brick building, nothing like the golden-domed mosque of his youth,” a place with cracked linoleum

and a cluttered office, an indication that the ornate religious props and rituals of the old world are replaced with a working man's tools in America:

To his congregants, Mr. Shata is far more than the leader of daily prayers and giver of the Friday sermon. Many of them now live in a land without their parents, who typically assist with finding a spouse. There are fewer uncles and cousins to help resolve personal disputes. There is no local House of Fatwa to issue rulings on ethical questions.

Sheik Reda, as he is called, arrived in Brooklyn one year after Sept. 11. Virtually overnight, he became an Islamic judge and nursery school principal, a matchmaker and marriage counselor, a 24-hour hot line on all things Islamic.

Here, the introduction imagery gives way to reveal the core of the narrative tension, the essential that is in fact the story subject: "Day after day, he must find ways to reconcile Muslim tradition with American life."

America's transformative powers are also included in the introductory paragraphs.

Immigrant narratives are treated in feature news stories in these case study texts as stories of a journey. A journey full of physical hardship over which they must triumph coincides with an emotional and psychological journey which changes the immigrants. The journey is transformational; it frees people from their bonds from the old world and allows them to become more complete, to fulfill their destiny as human beings because America can do that for them. America, in these stories, is the America of the Hughes myths rather than just another country. That is how the journalists who created this text and the secondary comparative texts in this case study appear to perceive the skeletal framework on which the story will hang. The introduction ends this way:

"America transformed me from a person of rigidity to flexibility," said Mr. Shata, speaking through an Arabic translator. "I went from a country where a sheik would speak and the people listened to one where the sheik talks and the people talk back."

This is the story of Mr. Shata's journey west: the making of an American imam.

Two words stand out here. Mr. Shata undergoes a 'journey'. The word conveys more than travel, it is a ritual, a complex movement of more than a person and their goods. Discovery is implied,

including self discovery, and change is implied, learning and experience converting the traveler. The second word is 'making,' a choice that not only assumes and acknowledges that change has happened, but that what was done was some form of production, a predictable construction or manufacturing process. It implies a product inasmuch as tools and pressures can be used to forge this entity, it is not necessarily a natural process. The American machine reshapes its immigrants and the newspaper chooses this to be a foundation of the story. An essentially organic process is described as an industrial manufacturing process. Perhaps it is simply a good secular word for the process. Either way, Shata is drifting from the old world way into the news, his strict religious background already challenged by America's civil religion. It is as if the newspaper knows that Mr. Shata must be drawn into American ways for his reconciliation purpose to succeed. The newspaper shows the transformation, but for what he leaves behind, what is lost, American gives Mr. Shata something in kind. He begins to learn to fulfill his role.

It is the inevitability of the transformation that links this case study to the previous ones. As in those cases, there is a journey undertaken. The myth of Puritan-American capitalism does not demand a complete conversion, an oath-taking dedication to a set of strict terms. As a hegemonic device, it provides context, a broad set of parameters, an umbrella under which there is a range of permissible behaviors. Shata does not only have to adopt some of the new ways of America, he has to shed some of the old ways. The myth wants him inside the boundaries, which determines that he has recognized the boundaries and crossed them but is not demanding as to where inside the boundaries he has to settle. In the previous case studies, the transitions were simpler, so the terms of the transformation were simpler. People who worked for a living came here. Now an intellectual and religious leader comes here. The myth, as we expect, adapts,

asking perhaps little more than a recognition that it is now the dominant ideology in his life and maybe those of his congregation, by however little margin.

The distinct difference in this story of course, is that Mr. Shata, and the other immigrants that feature in the story, are not Christians. The Puritan-American capitalist myth is, however, based on work, not religion, on work and reward disguised as religion, and civil religion at that. The other Hughes myths are also buried in an American ideal that, while it grew from religious origins, or at least from the pursuit of religious freedom in America, is essentially secular. Perhaps they might also be called hyperrealities, in that the myths are commonly known to Americans and held to contain basic truths, yet they are more a map of a distant reality than a reality itself. Extending freedom to Cuba or Iraq by force, for example, calls the myths the way ancient warriors called on banners, but the actual tenets of myths do little to chance the reality of the invasion involved. The myths have no real material presence. Nevertheless, in this text I will argue that the newspaper sees at the core of the immigrant Muslims' struggle to reconcile with America, and a synchronous struggle by the Imam to assist the process, uncertainties and roadblocks caused not only by not having any affinity to immigrant groups who have made this transition before in the American experience, but also by not being able to recognize the allegorical narrative of Puritan-American capitalism because it is allied in the final analysis to Calvinism, to everyday activity as seen from a Puritan, or Christian, standpoint, even though the Puritans in this case were as much pioneers of capitalism as religion.

Where Mexicans, Central Americans, and Cuban immigrants, people of almost completely Christian background, recognize the implied connection in the myth between religious, secular and capitalist values, the Muslim immigrant community has no social or cultural education that lets them not only recognize, but approve, the narrative of the myth. This

is also true of the other Hughes' myths in that they are myths which tend to find their strongest influence on American attitudes in the consideration of foreign policy. The added wild card of moving to America which is, to say the least, perceived as antagonistic to Muslim countries and cultures among Muslims, makes the recognition and movement towards acceptance of the tenets of the myths a far more difficult process. But I will argue the newspaper retains a reliance on the myths as the lens through which to approach this immigrant community, an assumption that the transition of the immigrant community towards the values in those myths is what the journalists involved expected to use as their primary narrative starting points.

That same assumption by the newspaper has to account for the process described by Laclau and Mouffe in their expression of agonistic pluralism. The reluctance, or perhaps hesitancy is a better word, of the immigrant Muslim groups in this primary text, and in the secondary texts, to begin to consider embracing the Puritan-American capitalist myth as the way forward, means that some other incentive is needed or there will be a situation where any assimilation will be forced.

What I think the newspaper begins to realize is that separateness between the immigrants and the local population is pronounced and does not offer the same optimism that was found, for example, in Beardstown. This situation in turn is a challenge to the process of hegemonic negotiation. With less apparent inclination in this immigrant community for people to avail themselves of the chance to begin to climb America's socio-economic ladder, hegemonic negotiation, based on upward movement between the classes is challenged more than in other case studies.

After the introduction, the text reconfirms the essential tension in the story, the confrontation that we will expect to see being addressed and solved as the narrative progresses,

with Mr. Shata as a leading representative of the expected amelioration process: “For many Muslims in America, life is a daily clash between Islamic mores and material temptation. At the center of this clash stands the imam.” Shata, we are told, is not the simple, stereotypical imam of caricature, not one of the “robed, bearded clerics issuing fatwas in foreign lands”:

In the Islamic world, imams are defined as prayer leaders. But here, they become community leaders, essential intermediaries between their immigrant flocks and a new, Western land. When Islamic traditions clash with American culture, it is imams who step forward with improvised answers. Outside the mosque, many assume the public roles of other clergy, becoming diplomats for their faith.

Throughout the text, these immigrants struggle with social and cultural problems that are not seen in other texts. Simple, everyday aspects of American life, from hamburgers to alcohol-filled candies, perplex them. Concepts such as shame and divorce were seen differently in America by both immigrants and locals:

The religion's fiqh, or jurisprudence, is built on 14 centuries of scholarship, but imams in Europe and America often find this body of law insufficient to address life in the West. The quandaries of America were foreign to Mr. Shata.

It is possible that the Calvinist perception of work and success and the Puritan work ethic, inspirers of capitalism, provide a foundation from which it is not difficult to convert modern immigrants to America's civil religion. But perhaps if those immigrant do not have a Judeo-Christian foundation or perhaps lack Christian religious beliefs, the process becomes disorienting and is a less intuitive or predictable journey. It is possible to read this series as suggesting that these non-Christian immigrants are not, as a group, as ready to proceed into the capitalism phase of their lives as the Vietnamese, Mexicans, Latin/Central Americans, and Cubans found in the other texts.

The text describes immigrants in a kind of hegemonic no man's land where negotiations, as Gramsci describes them, are failing. The ruling class is not finding a way to avoid a collision

with a solid group. The ruling class is not able to create enough of a pathway through the osmotic layer between the ruling and dominated classes to ameliorate the tension and stop this group from perhaps remaining solid and oppositional. If this is the case, Shata is a potential organic intellectual in Gramscian terms, potentially a leader and educator who can show this group that they are in opposition.

Alienation is a problem for Mr. Shata, especially among young Muslims. The text probes this alienation, and in doing so suggests that it is the result of a lack of the pathway, a lack of way for young Muslims to begin the process of broad assimilation. But while the Muslims struggle with religious, social, and cultural differences, there is no civil religion to help them because they do not embrace it naturally, they do not recognize its rightness the way Mr. Shata saw the righteousness and value of freedom of speech, something he embraced when he first left Egypt for the West, in his case Germany.

The story is a profile of a man and his community, so it is necessary, as it is with all the texts in this work, to allow that the form and subject dictated some of the writer's moves. By the same token, as a feature story the journalist did have a lot of leeway.

America's transformative power is constantly on display in the story, which of course reinforces the idea that someone needs transforming. In only the tenth paragraph, the writer asserts that the Imam's work in Brooklyn has "opened his mind." And indeed we later find the Imam himself agreeing to this proposition, as noted earlier. The journey is not just an exercise in getting from Point A to Point B. Shata says in the first story: "The woman who comes from overseas, she's like someone who comes from darkness to a very well-lit place." The story leaves no doubt that a transition is happening within the Muslim community, as would be expected in virtually any immigrant situation, anywhere in the world. But this is an inhospitable

America to this population. America does not, as it does in three of the other texts, provide a degree of familiarity based in a predominant religion and derivative social mores. Without those, the move to integration into the Puritan-capitalism myth has no organic starting point. There is, as it were, no inherent natural inclination to turn to American capitalism.

In the first story in the series, the writer notes that, “Like the parish priests who came generations before, imams are called on to lead a community on the margin of American civic life.” While it is an obvious historical analogy, the writer has put the Imam in a difficult place. The earlier communities lead by parish priests shared a religion with their new hosts. What’s more, many had journeyed primarily to be free to express and follow that religion in their own way. Income was not going to be significantly superior to their European homelands in most cases. As Weber noted, when those old parish priests urged men and women to work to achieve lives and communities, assimilated communities, that they could consider pleasing to their God, it was not a discordant note. Nor was it a call for dogmatic rigidity. Puritanic capitalism was both a tool to build and reveal God’s presumed assent and at the same time a very malleable process that let people achieve in a variety of ways. There are similarities, however. The Imam is a community leader, one of the most influential Muslims in Brooklyn within the immigrant Muslim community, and is a major factor in determining and approving the values of the community. The imam’s struggles as the story proceeds and the lack of progress within the immigrant community towards capitalist success indicates a backwardness, a lack of pre-qualification, a missing step in the progress from the old bad places to the enlightenment of America’s civil religion. Is it because the physical journey to New York was almost certainly by aircraft and not the harrowing, but pre-qualifying, journey of the Vietnamese and border-crossers found in other texts? There is of course the possibility that a widely held antipathy to modern

American global capitalism in many of the Muslim nations from which the immigrants in this story come are a negative influence not really probed in the text.

Reactions to the September 11 attacks on New York are well addressed in this story. It is unlikely the reaction among New Yorkers would have had a major effect on the local immigrant Muslim community's desire to succeed as capitalists; after all, the immigrant communities in the other case studies faced antipathy, if not necessary quite so hot so fast. The attacks seem to have forced open a divide that mythic narratives might have been expected to keep closed. As Laclau and Mouffe suggest, the dissolving of one group into another is a process whereby the group that is giving up the most is doing so under duress of one form or another. After 9/11, assumed similarities or assumed blending between this Muslim immigrant community and the indigenous were revealed to be far less well developed than might have been assumed. This story then is addressing the repairing of this damaged process and as much looking for more advanced progress in the transformation process.

In this text, religion is not the predictable religion the news media (and the bulk of its audience) is used to, so the usual narrative strategies used to handle religion are not always going to work:

A teenage girl wants to know: Is it halal, or lawful, to eat a Big Mac? Can alcohol be served, a waiter wonders, if it is prohibited by the Koran? Is it wrong to take out a mortgage, young Muslim professionals ask, when Islam frowns upon monetary interest?

Shata decides that mortgages are necessary to move forward in America. In context, this is not a blatant prioritizing of commerce over religion, it is cited among a number of changes that are necessary to move forward in America. Compromises such as this are made throughout the story and too much can be made of them. It is more of a necessity to just get along than a religious epiphany. No mortgages, nowhere to live.

As the series goes on, there is less overt commercial and entrepreneurial success demonstrated, or at least reported, than there is in the other sample stories, and that creates a tension in the story. It is as if the Imam's migrant community is unsure if, or at least how, it should pursue American capitalist success because it is not assumed in the immigrant community that this is what they're here for. But if not, then why are they here? It may be a matter that for Americans, including the audience that the reporter is writing for, the assumption is that immigrants mainly come here expecting a better life financially, and it is natural to expect to see a movement towards it. New Yorkers will be familiar with stories of Irish, Italian, and Jewish families arriving on crowded ships and seeking work and prosperity immediately. One possible source of this uncertainty, I have argued, is the lack of a Christian background, the lack of motifs, icons, words, phrases, and rituals that are recognizable to the vast majority of readers without needing elaboration. It is also possible, when looking at the other case studies, to see something of a lack of reverence for the United States. The journeyers do not have that holy land look in their eyes that the immigrants from south of the border are credited with, at least it is not as evident in this text as the writer presents it: "Day after day, he must find ways to reconcile Muslim tradition with American life. Little in his rural Egyptian upbringing or years of Islamic scholarship prepared him for the challenge of leading a mosque in America." The reporter uses the words 'reconcile' and 'tradition' here and suggests a broad difference, a gulf, not found in the other sample texts. Reconciliation indicates a strained approach, a rift, a less than complete assimilation into American life. That reconciliation is between Muslim "tradition" and American life, not between Muslim life and American life, says the text. Not entirely apples and oranges, but it does suggest that now we have a slightly different process, we are using metric measurements to fit American machinery and the fit will not be easy or predictable.

The transformational power of America is repeated and established by example. Here ‘people talk back’ and the Imam is faced with an eroding of the old ways and the beginning of a replacement with the new, a dialectic he has to negotiate. It is as if in this story the process of transforming migrants must take an extra step, one that removes some of the more entrenched Muslim traditions so that the migrant community bears some resemblance to the communities of new migrants from Christian backgrounds. The story now accepts the process will be more difficult but is no less convinced of its necessity and inevitability. The journey will need more steps and take longer:

Islam is a legalistic faith: Muslims believe in a divine law that guides their daily lives, including what they should eat, drink and wear. In countries where the religion reigns, this is largely the accepted way.

But in the West, what Islamic law prohibits is everywhere. Alcohol fills chocolates. Women jog in sports bras. For many Muslims in America, life is a daily clash between Islamic mores and material temptation. At the center of this clash stands the imam.

By revealing that “life is a daily clash between Islamic mores and material temptation,” the text describes capitalist success as something that to obviously large parts of the immigrant population in this story is an anathema. But tradition is entrenched in culture, so essentially the normal path to integration through absorption at least into the fringes of America’s civil religion is blocked; there is no pathway for leaders to take. The process is stalled. This is demonstrated as the story does not have a clear linear development from a problematic beginning through a cathartic middle to a sunny end where assimilation is happening. The story wanders and jumps as the reporter tries to find glimpses of that process.

Bellah’s description of the development of a civil religion relies on a lineal process. This civil religion developed from Christianity, based primarily on a Calvinistic view of Christianity, and Christian tradition, rituals, and routines were its skeleton. Gradually, as Weber concedes, these formative values shifted from a base in formal religion to being considered informal

religious values that coincided with the values taken on by growing communities. There was, in other words, a recognized coincidence between community values and the religious values that had preceded them. Eventually American values became, in effect, secular, with the myths attached to them, especially the Puritan-American capitalism myth endowing them with a patina of Puritan or Christian foundational values. The Muslim community in these stories does not see, nor would it be expected to understand, the same coincidence between the values of the American capitalist myth and its religious tradition. The process, it would seem, has to be forced. There is a tension in this news text that appears to be the result of this estrangement. It appears as a hindrance to the development of a narrative based in the myths, that is, the journalist appears to struggle to fit the elements of the story into their assumed place within the broad mythic narrative.

Early in the story describing Mr. Shata as “a work in progress,” the writer indicates that the journey, and a transformation, is underway, with the American way of life orchestrating the changes. This is the expected movement. But it reinforces the idea that America has the power to change people, that Nature’s Nation, and the Chosen, Innocent, Millennial, and Christian Nation is a place that not only offers people the chance to fulfill themselves, but by its very way of life facilitates that change.

Mr. Shata, 37, is neither a firebrand nor a ready advocate of progressive Islam. Some of his views would offend conservative Muslims; other beliefs would repel American liberals. He is in many ways a work in progress, mapping his own middle ground between two different worlds. The pull between old and new worlds is developed to a far stronger degree in this series of stories than any other case study in this work. The inclination of the Imam and his community to let go of the old with a happy anticipation that the new will be better is not as pronounced.

Uncertainty is rampant because, unlike other case studies, this means moving away, to an uncertain degree, from a religious tradition. In the other case studies, the movement to a civil religion dominated by the Puritan-American capitalist myth does not entail this much movement, this degree of separation between religious tradition and the new life. A key problem seems to be a dissonance caused by the disconnect between working and earning money and the role of those activities in Islam. In the dominant Puritan-American capitalism myth in America, work and earnings are interwoven with, or at least seen as emanating from, religious ritual and practice. In America's civil religion, they are basic dogma, but in this Islamic migrant community, they are separate from religion to a greater degree.

Even small references can be jarring in this respect. I assume the *Times* does not condone product placement, so references to brand names in this text is a storyteller's device: "A Moroccan woman falls to her knees near the imam's Hewlett-Packard printer." This is not a common practice in the texts under review, but it is interesting to note that brand names can be used in American newspapers as evocative adjectives. Later, Dunkin' Donuts will be similarly employed. In America's civil religion, brand names may be the equivalent of pop figures from scripture.

The Imam's background is another example, found widely in the texts examined, of how an immigrant's life can be laundered of much of its foreignness. This is a process of deculturization I have suggested before. To read about his life is not to get any feeling of a life strikingly different from a lot of American lives. His birthplace was "a village of dirt roads and watermelon vines," and he "was the son of a farmer and fertilizer salesman, Mr. Shata belonged to the lowest rung of Egypt's rural middle class. His house had no electricity. He did not see a television until he was 15":

Islam came to him softly, in the rhythms of his grandmother's voice. At bedtime, she would tell him the story of the Prophet Muhammad, the seventh-century founder of Islam. The boy heard much that was familiar. Like the prophet, he had lost his mother at a young age.

Too poor to buy books, the young Mr. Shata hand-copied from hundreds at the town library.

When he graduated, he enrolled at Al Azhar and headed to Cairo by train. There, he sat on a bench for hours, marveling at the sights.

"I was like a lost child," he said. "Cars. We didn't have them. People of different colors. Foreigners. Women almost naked. It was like an imaginary world."

He could be from a small Southern town, steeped in religion the way so many young people are in Southern Bible Belt towns. He is poor, he works hard, he graduates and he goes to New York. It is an Americanized story. It is also a thick example of the Frankfurt School's work, with all the references chosen to describing home coming from a simple model of the American success story. He is indeed, in this description, one-dimensional. Space is not a significant problem for this series, yet his background is treated with a display of tokenism, a quick character sketch, which must be included, with the words drawn from what Hall might call a very narrow range of choices. The words suggest nothing particularly Egyptian, and if we simply change his name to Bubba and switch Muhammad and Jesus, we are in the dusty, rusty Bible Belt in the middle of a southern nowhere. He is one of us. It is not that an overt effort has been made to make him less ethnic or less foreign, but that virtually no effort has been made to describe him outside of those aspects of his life or character that resonate with the core American narrative success story. Is it because the writer thinks readers expect it or will recognize it, or is she pre-qualifying him to be an American success story? Or both? Her skills would allow her to describe his foreign childhood better than this. Shucks, I bet he skimmed stones on the river and walked the railroad tracks with a fishing pole over his shoulder whistling the Andy Griffith Show theme. Note also that this same de-cultured, prequalifying narrative that is found in other sample texts. In writing a

feature news story about immigrants, it is perhaps de rigueur to highlight those qualities that will allow them to become productive Americans living within the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

Throughout the stories in this series, evidence of the Imam's pre-qualifying success are dropped like breadcrumbs: "After four years, Mr. Shata graduated with honors, seventh in a class of 3,400." It is of course a valuable insight to know he is such a good scholar, but the context also suggests that we can assess him the way we assess ourselves or our neighbors or relatives, by looking at where he finished on the graduation scale at school. It is as if the writer keeps dipping into the most useful parts of his resume. The writer also points out that upon his arrival in America Mr. Shata was familiar with Kant and Voltaire. This is pre-qualification, the process of showing the readership that, while the Other at the outset of the story, Mr. Shata was well able to become valuable in the American system.

At one point in Egypt, "Mr. Shata craved greater independence, and opened a furniture business. But he missed the life of dawah and eventually returned to it as the imam of his hometown mosque, which drew 4,000 worshipers on Fridays alone." He was a businessman! To be fair, it's what he did. In the texts under examination, qualities from the homeland that suggest preordination for success in American are often used, perhaps as a way to suggest that the qualities valued by American capitalism are universal and broader in scope than religious or cultural differences found in life in other countries. Those qualities surface again here: "In 2000, Mr. Shata left to work as an imam in the gritty industrial city of Stuttgart, Germany. Europe brought a fresh new freedom. 'I saw a wider world,' he said. 'Anyone with an opinion could express it.'" With virtually no reason in his background for him to embrace broad civil liberties and pluralism, at least not in the text, he does so without hesitation, the text recognizing this step in pre-qualification. Freedom to express an opinion is recognized in America as the ideograph

“freedom of speech” and Shata’s recognition of it, in fact embracing of it, indicates his natural inclination to move away from the rigidity of his old world religion:

Most imams are recruited to American mosques on the recommendation of other imams or trusted scholars abroad, and are usually offered an annual contract. Some include health benefits and subsidized housing; others are painfully spare. The pay can range from \$20,000 to \$50,000. Mr. Shata had heard stories of Muslim hardship in America. The salary at the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge was less than what he was earning in Germany. But foremost on his mind were his wife and three small daughters, whom he had not seen in months. Germany had refused them entry.

Earnings data in dollars are listed as a way to slot Mr. Shata into our relative assessment of work and value, especially when the text also describes job benefits. Foreign imams offered employment in America “are usually offered an annual contract. Some include health benefits and subsidized housing; others are painfully spare. The pay can range from \$20,000 to \$50,000.” This description allows us to compare his to ours, what he earns, what benefits he gets. As a cleric, we might have assumed that his earning and job benefits were not that important in our assessment of him. But we do know that Shata would earn a reasonable salary and so would be part of our middle class: “The salary at the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge was less than what he was earning in Germany. But foremost on his mind were his wife and three small daughters, whom he had not seen in months.” He would earn less than he had been, but there is a yearning, a journey to be made, one does not come to America for no reason. He could have gone to Egypt. But he chose the U.S. for apparently more than solely spiritual reasons, he chose based in large part on the openness of American society. Relativism within the text positions America as the America of the broad Hughes foundational myths: he is choosing a place superior to Egypt, to Germany, to Europe. Choosing New York because it was a good fit for his family rather than just for the money, endears us to him more. It is additional evidence that his mindset is not dissimilar to ours:

Pornography was rampant, prompting a question Mr. Shata had never heard in Egypt: Is oral sex lawful? Pork and alcohol are forbidden in Islam, raising questions about whether Muslims could sell beer or bacon. Tired of the menacing stares in the subway, women wanted to know if they could remove their headscarves. Muslims were navigating their way through problems Mr. Shata had never fathomed.

For a while, the imam called his fellow sheiks in Egypt with requests for fatwas, or nonbinding legal rulings. But their views carried little relevance to life in America. Some issues, like oral sex, he dared not raise. Over time, he began to find his own answers and became, as he put it, flexible.

Is a Big Mac permissible? Yes, the imam says, but not a bacon cheeseburger.

It is a woman's right, Mr. Shata believes, to remove her hijab if she feels threatened. Muslims can take jobs serving alcohol and pork, he says, but only if other work cannot be found. Oral sex is acceptable, but only between married couples. Mortgages, he says, are necessary to move forward in America.

The story shows the breakdown of old traditions and Mr. Shata's inevitable need to play a role in it. The community is adapting. The changes are more cultural, and there is less evidence that wealth is an engine of change to the degree it is in the other texts. So many confusions are at a simple cultural level. Mr. Shata's work is frustrating, in large part because of these everyday misunderstandings or confusions. The newspaper suggests in passages such as these that progress up the socio economic ladder, success within the Puritan-American capitalist myth, will be a struggle because the foundation for such is shaky to a significant degree because of the clash of cultures and religious traditions. There are so few similarities that can be used as negotiating points when compared to the everyday lives of migrants from Christian backgrounds. These passages in the text are also interesting because the solutions are as idiosyncratic as the questions and solve one problem at a time, rarely advancing the path of assimilation in doing so:

The imam is saddened to see so many Muslims leave America, pushed out by new immigration policies, intimidation or despair. He also fears for those who have remained: for the teenage boy in his mosque who is suddenly praying at dawn, having drifted from a high school that left him alienated.

The imam now rises to deliver his Friday khutba, or sermon, before rows of young men, some in low-hanging jeans and baseball caps turned backward. Many have come to learn more about their religion so they can defend it at work or at school. Others no longer feel at home elsewhere. They have been passed over for jobs, or stopped and questioned by the authorities too many times.

It is these men, and their sense of alienation, that most worry Mr. Shata.

The series highlights the fact that a lot of Muslims, especially younger generations, are turning back to their religion, dissatisfied with secular life in America. Is this a sort of hegemonic no man's land? It is reasonable to ask if Shata and other Imams could act as organic intellectuals in the way Gramsci described them, as increasingly prominent voices educated in how their community functions outside of the ruling class and able to influence their community. It also raises the question of what happens to the hegemonic balance if the work ethic and its accumulation of wealth do not grow out of religious foundations but beside it, creating parallel values with religion getting the casting vote if necessary:

But in Bay Ridge, he fights alienation with an open heart. He is increasingly a blend of East and West, proudly walking to the mosque in a robe and sandals, while warding off the cold with a wool Yankees hat. "I feel like I'm living in my country," he said.

It is a message he repeats everywhere he goes, one he says is the antidote to hatred. He meets with Muslim youth groups at mosques around the city, telling them not to wait for an invitation to embrace America. Even if Muslims feel singled out, Mr. Shata often says, America is still the freest country in the world.

He has arrived; the transition is complete enough to be inevitable. The newspaper is making a progress report. The newspaper's juxtaposition of alienated youth and the Imam's dedication to America suggest he is an American force drawing them in. He is the pathway out of the old community. He has arguably, in Gramscian terms, moved from a position of organic intellectual to traditional intellectual, no longer a champion of the group from which he arose but of the group to which they are expected to adhere and support and eventually to some degree become part of.

In the third story, the reporter digs further into Muslim life in Bay Ridge:

The young Egyptian professional could pass for any New York bachelor.

Dressed in a crisp polo shirt and swathed in cologne, he races his Nissan Maxima through the rain-slicked streets of Manhattan, late for a date with a tall brunette. At red lights, he fusses with his hair.

What follows is a chaperoned date and an example of the different ways younger Muslims see their earning power. The Egyptian man is an engineer; the woman he meets in her parent's home with the Imam, is a lawyer:

An argument ensued. Voices rose. Ms. Abdelkader's mother took her daughter's side. The friend wavered. The bachelor held his ground. The imam tried to mediate.

Indeed, he was puzzled. Here was a woman who had grown up amid tended lawns and new cars, yet she rejected materialism. And here was a man raised by Muslim hands, yet he was rebelliously moderate.

The young daters are presented as surrogates for somewhat stereotypical positions apparently commonly found in the immigrant Muslim community. Each presents their case. There is no resolution of the tension that arises, as there is none at the end of this series of stories. The couple do not click. One of the reasons is her devotion to Islam and preference for it over wealth, which is a sentiment he does not completely share. There is an almost palpable sense of discomfort in this situation, and the young woman takes an ironic position. She is doing something that the myth holds valuable, looking to earn only enough to benefit her family and community. He wants to accumulate money. Yet should her views prevail widely, the advancement of capitalism would be endangered because the myth is not the reality. Modern capitalism needs more than the Puritan's family and community work ethic, it must create excess capital, and to refuse to be part of the iron cage of Weber, to actually live as the myth suggests rather than just use it as an image, could threaten its ability to continue.

The writer is looking into the problem of adaptation, yet this one is not just a simple example, it shows how deep the disconnect is. I do not charge the newspaper with deliberately choosing or unnecessarily prioritizing this scene to help any agenda or point of view. It is an anecdote that enlivens and enriches the feature. But it is fair to say that by its length, detail, and prominence that the *Times* felt it encapsulated one of the significant tensions with the immigrant

Muslim community. The choice and presentation, if they are not part of a willful manipulation of the narrative, and I don't claim that they are, reflect the newspaper's preoccupation with the necessity of the transformational process and focus on roadblocks to its progress. While this anecdote describes a problem Mr. Shata is involved in trying to solve, it also presents mindsets within the immigrant community that are detrimental to that progress. The newspaper is in essence saying that the transformation is in trouble because of such knots.

The second part of the series ends this way:

Muslims feel isolated, yet crave acceptance, he [Shata] said, likening them to their ancestors 14 centuries ago, who sought refuge from the king of Abyssinia.

"O king, we have come to thy country having chosen thy country above all others," he said, reciting the words of the group's leaders, Jafar Ibn Abi Talib.

"It is our hope, o king, that here, with thee, we shall not suffer wrong."

The newspaper chooses a citation from Shata that is important because the modern journey of his immigrant community is compared to an earlier journey. As it was in the first journey, it is a spiritual as much as material quest. In America, in the America of the mainstream news media, working and earning for family and community is how spiritual and material needs are enjoined, so whatever the immigrants expect from the American King will come from his capitalist system.

The *Times*' series assumes that assimilation into America's civil religion is essential.

There is no suggestion that this immigrant community will remain separate, in fact the newspaper probes those points where assimilation is faltering or challenged, as if trying to describe and elaborate on the problems within them that must be solved to accommodate such assimilation. Laclau and Mouffe would point out the newspaper's assumption that the immigrant community must change, that its separateness cannot continue. It must, goes the assumption, find a way to be assimilated for its own good and the greater good of American capitalism.

Secondary texts. This text is from *Newsweek*, “American Dreamers: Muslim Americans are one of this country’s greatest strengths. But they are vulnerable as never before,” by Lisa Miller with Roya Wolverson in Lackawanna, Sanhita Sen in Queens, Karen Breslau and Robina Riccitiello in Silicon Valley, Julie Scelfo in Trenton, Arian Campo-Flores in Boston, Hilary Shenfeld in Chicago, Roqaya Ashmawey in Ann Arbor, Aisha Eady in Minneapolis, Christopher Dickey in Paris, Mark Hosenball, Daren Briscoe and Abby Dalton in Washington and Owen Matthews in Istanbul (July 30, 2007; U.S. Edition. Cover Story. Page 24).

Stories about Muslims, such as the primary text and these secondary texts, often address both immigrant and American Muslims within the story. This case study’s comparison texts have been chosen because of their similarity to the primary text. They feature immigrants and immigrant communities prominently as well as American-born Muslims. The introductions of cover stories will inevitably be the product of considerable discussion by reporters, editors, and writers, perhaps more so in this case with so many reporters involved. *Newsweek* would not be careless with its choice of lead:

Fareed Siddiq is a successful businessman [he is described five paragraphs later as “a financial adviser at a major investment bank”] and a father of two. He lives in Chagrin Falls, Ohio--a 19th-century mill town built on a river and known for its scenic waterfalls and dams--in a five-bedroom house he recently paid for, in cash, with his savings. Prominent in local civic and religious organizations, including the Red Cross and the chamber of commerce, Siddiq was invited to the InterContinental Hotel in downtown Cleveland earlier this month along with about 400 other business leaders to hear President George W. Bush speak.

I have referred to arguments sometimes critical of examining hegemony in journalism because it is all too obvious. Actually, that is the point. This lead is an example where critics might perhaps say, ‘So what,’ but the subject profiled in the lead of a story about Muslims (the headline would have left readers in no doubt as to the story’s focus), a successful businessman awash with cash and prominent in distinctly non-Muslim (at least I would argue in public perception) charitable

and business organizations. Yes, he was part of a group of 400 business leaders invited to listen to President Bush. He is a poster boy for the success waiting to be mined from American capitalism, the Puritan-American capitalism that expects the community to benefit as a by-product of wealth building.

Newsweek looks at America's Muslim community and compares it to those in Europe and other parts of the predominantly non-Muslim world in terms of its potential for extremism:

America, the officials said, has so far provided relatively infertile ground for the growing and grooming of Muslim extremists. "Most Muslims in America think of themselves as Americans," says Charlie Allen, intelligence chief at the Homeland Security Department.

In fact, Muslim Americans represent the most affluent, integrated, politically engaged Muslim community in the Western world.

According to a major survey done by the Pew Research Center and released last spring, Muslims in America earn about the same as their neighbors, and their educational levels are about the same. An overwhelming number--71 percent--agree that in America, you can "get ahead with hard work." In stark contrast, Muslims in France, Germany and England are about 20 percent more likely to live in poverty.

The assessment is that Puritan-American capitalism works, that by working hard to get ahead, and getting ahead because the system delivers on its promises, the Islamic community is firmly Americanized, or at least has the potential to be. It is also textbook hegemony, the affluence, integration, and political engagement stopping the bloc formation found in places where there is no way out. This assessment is born out by this entry a few paragraphs later:

This profound diversity and relative affluence sets the Muslim community here dramatically apart from those in Europe, where Muslims came from their native countries as many as four generations ago largely as factory workers or laborers. "The Moroccans, the Turks, they were recruited for their illiteracy, for their strong hands and good teeth," says the provocative Dutch singer Raja el-Mouhandiz, whose parents were from North Africa. When the factory jobs went away, Europe's Muslims continued to live in ethnic ghettos, isolated from the larger society--a society that tended to be white, homogenous and, on some basic level, impenetrable. In most European countries, Muslim employment is 15 to 40 percent below the population at large.

Significantly, one of the more notable cases in America--the young men from upstate New York, dubbed the Lackawanna Six, who were arrested in 2002 and pleaded guilty to having trained with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan--grew up in an environment somewhat analogous to that of Europe. Yemenites migrated to Lackawanna in the 1930s for jobs in

the steel mills. Those jobs disappeared, but the Yemenite population, now fully American, grew and stayed, and the young people there continue to struggle with drugs, crime and unemployment. In the Yemenite neighborhoods of Lackawanna, about a third live below the poverty line.

The second paragraph above, which describes a situation “somewhat analogous to that of Europe,” is a corollary to the first: without ability to thrive as part of Puritan-American capitalism, that is, the Muslim migrants stayed bunched on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder without the desire or ability to climb up. You get Europe and you get a new historic bloc boundaried and oppositional to the ruling class. Lackawanna did not offer Muslim youth a way out and up.

More evidence of assimilation comes via a growing use of courts by Muslim in America, evidence, says the story, of just how invested Muslims are in the American system:

To combat the discrimination many were feeling, many Muslim Americans turned, in classic American fashion, to the courts. The Council on American Islamic Relations, an advocacy group, counted nearly 2,500 civil-rights complaints by Muslim Americans in 2006, a dramatic increase over the previous year. These are the kinds of stories that make news--women who sue for the right to wear the hijab in their driver's license photo--and Muslim Americans say they show how invested they are in the American system. This is important: history suggests that thriving civil societies tend to smooth the sharper edges of faith.

The final sentence of this citation reveals a reliance on America's civil religion as a way to explain the progress of Muslim integration and assimilation. The reference is not just to civil societies but the ‘thriving’ civil societies and their power to stop different religions or perhaps even religious sects from confrontation, and their power to blur the differences between religions and (thriving) secular society. The lesson is clear. Civil society don't tend to smooth the sharper edges off faith and aid in fruitful assimilation that leads to peaceful prosperity, thriving civil societies do. No country exemplifies this process to the degree that the United States does. It isn't work that does it; it's the thriving that comes from work.

The journalists behind the story have presented a simple storyline, one that demonstrates something so basic that many people may see nothing but the obvious. But to do so assumes that storylines occur organically, derived solely from the reporting, something that is not the case. Hall saw a narrow range of storylines in media. But choices were made, certain people were approached, and from them certain people were interviewed, and from them certain people were chosen to be in the story, and from their information only certain quotes were chosen. Certain descriptions were crafted which included some facts and features about the people and left others out. This is not a process of organic coincidence. To find content so similar to the texts in similar circumstances indicated an agreement on the telos of the events covered, that is, the assembly of the information gathered, itself the result of a distinct approach to the story, into an ordered narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

The story also reveals the media's reliance on the capitalist myth by wondering what happens if it fails in its hegemonic role. What if affluence and education do not provide a way up the socio-economic ladder, an osmotic wall that draws those who strive into the upper classes? What if that is no longer what they strive for? What if religious zealotry on a grand scale is a better offer? What is an oppositional bloc is a more desired goal for a large percentage of Muslims than assimilation?

Muslim American advocates have critiqued the press coverage of the Pew study, saying it focused too much on the bad news and not enough on the good. The bad news, however, bears repeating: 26 percent of Muslims age 18 to 29 believe that suicide bombing can be justified. Thirty-eight percent of that group believe that Arabs did not carry out the 9/11 attacks. These data, combined with the rising religious conservatism of young Muslim Americans, have led some experts to argue that differences between Europe and America have been overblown, that affluence and education do not inoculate a society against radicalization. "This idea that all those who are middle class are exempted from extremism has always been false," says Geneive Abdo, author of "Mecca and Main Street," "The leadership of the extremist movements have always been highly educated Muslims."

There is evidence of that in this story, and it is presented as a conundrum, as something without an answer:

The deeper problem is a growing sense of alienation among young Muslims, a sense that they don't feel part of the American story. According to Pew, 39 percent of Muslim Americans age 18 to 29 believe that newly arrived Muslims should remain distinct from society at large, compared with 17 percent of Muslims older than 55.

The Muslim sources in the story tend to be successful. In a paragraph describing Muslim reaction to 9/11 and its aftermath, the story interviews two successful Silicon Valley professionals. I have avoided quantitative analysis, so I will not investigate this further, but it does suggest, anecdotally, that those who have been assimilated and have found success in the Puritan-American capitalist system are considered better sources because the audience can relate to their position and their climb to it and thus put more weight on their words.

The *Washington Post* story, October 27, 2001, "An American Dream, Slightly Apart. N.J. Muslim Family Feels a Separateness," by Anne Hull (Final Edition; A Section; Page A01) begins with a familiar figure:

Mohammad Al-Qudah fires up his Weber grill and throws on a few lamb steaks. It's a glorious October evening. He has prayed three times already and will pray twice more before he goes to sleep.

His wife, Nadia Kahf, third-year law student and mother of two, mixes hummus in the blender. She's not wearing the hijab she usually wears in public.

They recently left an apartment for this sprawling split-level in the suburbs, proof that Al-Qudah has come a long way since arriving from Jordan in 1989 and cramming into a Paterson boarding house with several other Middle Eastern immigrants.

Are they the Jeffersons? Is what they did the same thing as George and Louise Jefferson "moving on up, to the east side," because they "finally got our piece of the pie." There is little doubt that the progress here has been based in working and climbing the American socio-economic ladder. It is lamb steaks, not burgers, but it is meat (on a brand-name product) and the image is very basic; this person has succeeded, has bought into the system and used it as it was

meant to be used, evidence that the machinery for building families and communities via success is accessible and works for all, converting people to the American civil religion. He has been changed by his ritual journey. It is of note that nowhere in these case studies is there any trace of someone who succeeds in gaining wealth and helping to build family and community who does not change, who remains the same person he/she was on first setting foot in America

This story seems to wonder about the same process the previous story brought up. Is that opportunity to succeed enough to transform the Muslim community?

Born in Syria, Kahf arrived here 17 years ago, when she was 12. America seems to have been good to her. But her embrace is tentative. In a study this year titled “The Mosque in America: A National Portrait,” 82 percent of American Muslims strongly agreed that high-tech America offered opportunity; 28 percent said the nation was immoral and corrupt.

The sources in this story, a portrait of family life in Paterson, NJ, one of America’s most concentrated and largest Muslim enclaves, are people, to use the story’s own words, who are invested in America. Kahf is a law student. Another is finishing her master's in politics at New York University. A pharmacist. A black Lexus SUV driver. When Kahf, with a bachelor’s and master’s degree in hand, was turned down for a job because she wore a head covering, she went to law school, evidence of the endless ways the system can be used for upward mobility.

The cultural landscape flattening continues as family life is described in a singularly non-ethnic way. Their lives are lived within the boundaries, within the single dimension of Marcuse. Before this entry, the story revolved around a baby shower. The familiarity, the quotidian activity, presents the effects of the transition from the Other to one of us. Such is the power of the America of the Hughes’ myths. The process seems to confirm the argument of the agonistic pluralists that join everyone into the same democracy by having them share a macro belief that is above their differences; in other words, similarities trump differences. The emphasis on this

oneness of American life, that Nintendo playing and kids with heaping backpacks bad mouthing fifth grade math are things that bring us together and erase differences:

...Kahf is starting dinner.

“Finish your math,” she tells her daughter.

“Oh, Mom, I hate math,” says Mariam, 9, slumping over her backpack on the kitchen counter. “Fifth-grade math is a killer. Can I just get a zero?”

Kahf calls into the living room to her 5-year-old son. “Abdallah, you said you were just going to play one game of Nintendo.”

She hears the garage door open. “Daddy's home.”

Mohammad Al-Qudah embraces his children. His wife takes the spinach pastries from the oven and kisses him. “How was your day?” she asks. His gas station business is down 15 percent since Sept. 11.

Al-Qudah, the gas station owner, is heading to Las Vegas on a business trip. Business success is the ultimate common denominator within the Puritan-American capitalist myth. It is something we all understand. It is part and parcel of the rituals of civil religion in America. It's what we do. “I was born in Jordan,” Al-Qudah says. “But America makes me feel alive.” Wherever he was born, America is still the standards by which all he is now and all others in these texts are judged.

Newsweek, August 29, 2005, carries a story entitled “Islam: A New Welcoming Spirit in the Mosque,” by Lorraine Ali (U.S. Edition; Cover Story; Page 52). Their story places a sentence as a highlight, a pull quote, which references the story:

A younger generation finds its shared faith is erasing the old boundaries that separated their immigrant parents. But that process is also a cultural process. A purer Islam is attached to changes tied to the American way of life.

During a discussion between prayers, Javed's peers agree that stripping away cultural baggage from their parents' home countries (such as customs limiting women's rights and racial dictates) is the only way to practice a purer Islam.

...Children of immigrants are the fastest-growing group among the nation's estimated 7 million Muslims, and they're changing the face of Islam in this country by combining their faith with the American tradition of diversity.

In the end, I think Hall comes to mind. The relative narrowness of the stories in the secondary analyses is not uncommon. I have seen the Frankfurt School model in much of this, a failure to

take the story beyond the predictable which is tied to the myths, especially the Puritan-American capitalist myth. The range of people in the stories is not great, they are somewhat similar. Their positions and problems also have a simplicity to them. It is as if the news media which produced these texts is striving along with everyone else to help create a happy assimilated ending.

This case study more than the others suggests the news media may pursue alternative ideas. In Britain recently, the leader of the Anglican Church suggested that at some point in the future, because of an ever increasing percentage of Muslim citizens, Islam's Sharia law may have to become part of British law. Radical, perhaps, but it something one would never expect in these texts. There is frustration, clearly evident in the texts, but the news media's reaction appears anchored in the Puritan-American capitalist myth that says hard work, for the right reasons (family, community) will bring success, and when that process does not appear to be as on track as it is in earlier case studies, the editors' reactions seem to be simply to push on because in the end it must work.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The studies support the idea of a mainstream news media reliance on America's foundational myths, especially the Puritan-American capitalism myth. The myths' broad, simple, basic storyline can be unmasked as the narrative base upon which these feature stories are built. The myth's narrative does not overpower the stories, it is an undercurrent, but it allows the news media in question to select which part of the stories will be elaborated and which will be ignored or given only token attention. It allows the news media in question to discuss character in shorthand, highlighting qualities they know the news consuming public will be able to understand and will decode and elaborate on them themselves. It allows the news media in question to situate the stories in a particular place in American life, a place the news consumers will recognize as stops at the stations on the journey from the Other to successful American. It also allows, and may actually promote, the use of counter-myth, introducing apparently contradictory oppositional ideas which are presented as evidence of the tolerance and sweeping nature of the myth, in essence being used to reaffirm it.

In the first study, *Vietnamese Fisherman*, the profile of the central character and his family, initially refugees from Vietnam, is detached from the focus of the series of which it is a part. Fishing the world over, and in the Gulf of Mexico in particular, is examined by the long newspaper series, yet this profile shows a man and his family battling their way from arrival in America as a homeless refugee to successful business and family man with strong ties to family

and community which both contribute to his success and are the beneficiaries of that success. There is also evidence in this story of a tokenism. I have defined this tokenism as the minimal coverage of an aspect of the story, a token coverage of it so that the questions it raises are not ignored, but no more than that. These tokenism episodes can be compared to other parts of the stories where descriptive writing with little space restriction is found. For example, in this story, the Vietnamese are charged by others of over fishing, being part of the problem the series addresses, yet this is tokenized while the central character's work ethic is celebrated by writing about his tireless off season and after hours work habits.

This is perhaps the case study that most clearly outlines the myth being used. The newspaper has not really left the profile format to any great degree to spend time and space directly addressing the issues of overfishing and business model crises that the series addresses. This leaves the journalists almost *carte blanche* over the construction of the story and where emphasis can be applied and where it can be avoided, which in turn means that those decisions are revealing when they default to foundational mythic narratives as a primary choice, making the case that those myths are not only most readily used by the newspaper but are expected to be most accessible to the audience. The process in the other case studies is similar but not as simply worked.

In the second study, *Mexican Meatpackers*, tokenism also arises in the very basic coverage of the working conditions at the plant. Assumptions based on the myth are evident in all four initial studies. In this case, the assumption is that hardships caused by a production system, (the meat processing factory) are to be expected and create what is essentially collateral damage as success is being built. Another theme found in the Vietnam story also surfaces. This is the journey. Just as the Vietnamese journeyed here from a war zone, the Mexican migrants

coming to the meat processing plant in Illinois face hostility, frustration, uncertainty, and even physical danger. But facing and handling them earns a sort of merit badge from the mythmakers; it is evidence they are the right stuff.

There is far more turmoil in more people's lives in this series than in the first case study. This isn't surprising; the first study was basically a profile. In stories such as these, it appears that the underlying reliance on myth is more broadly applied. Neighborhoods and relationships are more complex, if only because there are more of them, and with that complexity the newspaper has more opportunity to ease examples into the text. It also has more opportunity to present counter-mythic stories. This series contains stories-within-stories, subplots, and they are used to build the stories as the work goes on. This is a more complex drama than the first case study, and as such it uses a more sophisticated narrative and dramatic structure, which in turn means that the mythic references are present in more ways than the somewhat simple presentations of the first case study. With this structure the newspaper has more occasions, and thus ways, to employ myth.

In the third study, *Exodus*, the story structure in the primary text is valuable because it is again distinct from the other case studies, and the same can generally be said of the secondary texts too. The myths here will be recognized more viscerally. They are not often seen working in sentences or phrases but are buried in the beliefs and attitudes of the subjects. It is not in what they say or how they hold themselves, it is in what they believe. Unlike the first two cases, the myths are most evident by the absence of the overt applications of their storyline found in the first two cases studies. For example, the stomach-turning description of a foul-smelling garbage pile that is home to doomed children in Mexico or a hellish life in the slums of Honduras employ

the Hughes myths simply by representing a hopelessness than can be alleviated by the America of myth.

In this study, the Hughes' myths are basically rolled into a single American myth, although one dominated by the Puritan-American capitalism myth. The mythic narratives are harder to find but reveal themselves again in assumptions. In this case, the most basic assumption is that the journey is a quasi-religious experience tantamount to the Puritans' dangerous crossing of the Atlantic. Lives and limbs are risked and journeyers put themselves under huge emotional and psychological stress. But it's okay, it's worth it, even when children are the ones at risk, because America is salvation.

In the fourth study, *The Imam*, the mythic narrative is more buried than in the previous cases, but it eventually becomes evident, ironically through a façade of confusion. The leader of a Muslim community in Brooklyn, NY, tries to 'reconcile' Muslim migrants to the American way. There is a sense here that the newspaper series is searching, trying to find entry points into the story. Looking back at the previous case studies, the most obvious difference is the religion of the subjects. America's myths of origin arose from a Christian outlook on life, and it is possible that in the previous stories it was taken for granted that the Christian background of the Vietnamese, Mexicans, and Central Americans helped them belong. It also allowed them to slide into membership in America's civil religion and to buy into the Puritan-American capitalism myth. But Muslims do not have that. They are not, as it were, pre-qualified. This leads to what is detectable as an uncertainty in the development of the series. How, it seems to ask, can these migrants leave their past behind without being naturally inclined to move, at least split, their allegiance with America's civil religion and its the Puritan-American capitalist myth? The migrant subjects of the series are confused and seem hesitant to move into a new way of life, and

the stories suggest that this reluctance, this uncertainty, this sense many of them have of having no affinity with or possibilities within the American system, may be laid at the feet of their inability to be naturally drawn to a system that will provide this movement: the Puritan-American capitalist myth.

In feature news stories with relatively little limitations on presentation space or reporting time, mainstream media tend to rely on America's foundational myths, most particularly the Puritan-American capitalism myth as the basis for narrative. The myths provide a lens with which to approach the subject and a base narrative which serves as the skeleton upon which the feature is hung.

The myths are not presented in an obvious way nor are they relied on to the point where stories lack individuality or originality. America's myths of origin are in the text as they are in our society, ubiquitous and easy to fail to recognize. Myth is not dominant. It is the canvas behind the painting. Williams has suggested that they are like a nondescript man that walks past you in the street and whom you pay no attention to; these stories have that same every day, everyman quality.

There are several motifs or themes that help reveal the presence of the myths as the main structural support for the feature story's narrative in four of the five case studies. The Journey is a constant motif. It is not presented simply as a physical trial. The immigrants also face changes in their emotional lives. The references draw on the journey of the original American immigrants, who, according to America's foundational myths, journeyed for reasons beyond money. There is a nobility ascribed in the myth to the journeyers who left Europe, an acceptance that they journeyed for more than the chance to make money, that they came to build a new kind of country. The texts show a similar assumption.

The texts also create what I have termed a pre-qualification standard. The journeyers, the immigrants, are not just the poor, the tired, and the huddled masses. They show in many of the texts that they understand the opportunity before them in America, that they are fit to become Americans. It comes from their suffering and refusal to bend, from their devotion to family and community rather than acting as individuals trying to get rich. It comes from evidence of their understanding and/or commitment to capitalism principles back home before they left, especially the case of the *Vietnamese Fisherman*. In the Puritan-American myth, it was necessary to work to succeed, success was not handed out or a derivative of someone else's work, it was earned by work and character, and evidence of it came from family and community benefitting from that work.

Hard work, an unswerving acceptance that the work ethic is the foundation of a new life in America, is also featured in the stories as a pathway, a way up and out. Work is not work like it was back in the dark country where it may have been little more than indentured servitude and hopeless, it could never be a vehicle that would let the human spirit fulfill its potential. The host countries are assumed in the texts to be incapable of changing this situation because they do not have the mythic tools available to America, the beliefs that have the power to change things. Especially in the *Exodus* stories, the host countries are ignored, labeled losers by being considered inept in helping man fulfill his destiny. In America, work gives one that chance to succeed, it comes with mythic properties; if you work you will succeed and so will your family. We see time and again the belief invested in this by the news organizations watching people continue to work and assuming that they must eventually win success

What I have termed deculturization is also a prevalent theme in these stories, again with the outstanding exception of the final case. Not only must the immigrants transform, part of their

ritual journey, but the journalists help by ignoring much of the cultural context of the people's homeland, cultures, and traditions. America's civil religion will fill the void; you won't need that old stuff, so we won't dwell on it too much. This aspect of the stories is linked to the pre-qualification in that, like people being introduced into a new religion or order, they will be expected to shed old ways for new. There is also something of tokenism arising here, because this deculturization accepts that a person may be Vietnamese or Guatemalan, and says so, but rarely goes any further than labeling. When there is some character development, it is slim enough to almost be charged with stereotyping. Deculturization is also another assumption, one that says what you leave is less than what you seek, that the worth of America will more than replace what you leave behind, not only replace it but surpass it in value.

What I have called tokenism in the text is, I would argue, the result of editorial choice-making. What could and perhaps should have been written has not been, and only necessary detail has been included. There is no development. It is a name, rank, and serial number approach. We did what we had to. That is, only enough detail for the news organization to argue that it has indeed covered the subject is used. The paragraphs are tight and there is no elaboration. For example, in the *Vietnamese Fisherman* stories, the Ku Klux Klan and other assaults on the Vietnamese fishing community are included in the briefest possible manner, as is the Vietnamese sense of isolation, of wanting to remain to some extent, Vietnamese. A potential story development has been ignored in these passages. Editorial decisions have been made that these topics, while they must be addressed, are not worthy of the depth of coverage given to other aspects of the story. Those aspects of the story that are, conversely, perhaps given more than might be considered necessary tend to be those that support the mythic narrative.

Tokenism is related to the presentation of counter-myth. Tokenism as it is used in this work refers to the minimizing of the coverage of aspects of the story that would seem to challenge or disrupt the mythic narrative functions. But tokenism can also be the term used to identify description that “glorifies the exception in order to obscure the rules of the game of success in capitalist society” (Cloud, p. 122). In these texts, counter-myth also fulfills this function. The mythic narrative is never completely left behind; the counter-myth, the oppositional or contrary position, is in fact functioning as a reaffirmation of the narrative. They are the exceptions that prove the rule. For example, the image of immigrants on welfare, found in two of the four case studies, in fact is used to show that while it is available, it is anathema to the immigrants, something wrong, something to be avoided, something for those who do not measure up to the standards of the myth. These occasions demonstrate the elasticity of mythic narrative.

These mythic narrative structures are not imposed. They allow contradiction and challenge to emerge because their absence could severely diminish the power of a mythic narrative by demonstrating a dogmatic rigidity which invites exceptions. As is the case with hegemony, mythic narrative functions organically. The presence of counter-myth, or apparent aberrations within the mythic narrative, is allowed, even expected, and functions as evidence of the values contained in the myth. And it does so in these texts (Cloud; Lucaites & Condit).

It may be that myth needs is challenged in the text to establish and legitimize its narrative superiority, that without it mythic stories may be more suspect:

...because social systems and their prevailing ideological justifications (capitalism and liberalism in the United States) are always contested, social stability depends on the ability of the ideology to absorb and re-frame challenges. For this reason, contradiction, rupture and multivocality are taken by the hegemony theorist not as signs that a democratic compromise has been achieved, but that a few token voices are allowed to speak within the “permissible range of disagreement.” (Cloud, p. 118)

Immigrants, illegal and legal, in these stories are mostly labor for the American way of doing things. But painted in Biblical and mythic terms, they are seeking freedom rather than answering employees wanted ads. The focus is on their journey and its spiritual and heroic side, the worth of risking all or of completely changing cultures because only in America can they fulfill their human potential as individuals and as part of the leadership of the Natural, Chosen, Innocent, Millennial, Christian Nation that is America. And they come here to partake of a Puritan-American capitalism that is first and foremost about family and community building.

The feature stories in these studies have two readerships, us and them. The mythic narrative, however, suggests that essentially we are all on the same train. Being in the rear cars may reflect a relative poverty and lower class status, but the fact that poor immigrants are on the train is more important than where their car is relative to others. Gramsci's description of the Catholic Church as hegemonic suggests the same thing: that a shared faith can mask material inequities and quiet those who do notice them. The poorest immigrant in these stories is considered not only poor, which is all he was before, but poor and on his way to success at the same time.

The mythic narrative is something we can all share, and as Bormann suggests, it can be the basis of a public daydream, a shared drama where we all know our parts and can contribute easily and eagerly to it running its course. It may well be that the journalists involved in these stories, in the field and in the offices (and they are clearly some of the most capable people in the profession) might respond to me with something like "Well, that's the story, what else would I do?" Researchers have in the past found that journalists, when asked why a story is a story, fail to provide a detailed logical answer and often fall back on crediting a professional hunch or a talent or a 'nose for news' (Gans; Tuchman). Schudson and other have suggested that the events

covered somehow contain within them characteristics or qualities that determine how the story is approached and finally presented, that despite professional rituals and restraints, the event determines form (Schudson, 2007). I would argue that, in feature stories such as these under examination, the event is matched to the myths at the journalists' disposal.

The myth provides a narrative skeleton, but one that is flexible and malleable as long as one doesn't stray too far. It allows adequate freedom, so it can be followed, adhered to, without ever being dominant, and that can be seen in the feature stories under examination. To a casual reader they are features, distinct and unboundaried, but thematically they can be gathered under the same mythic narrative umbrella.

The disquiet in Hall's voice when he sees media at work with a relatively narrow range of stories and choices to offer rises from his concern that a simple cultural pastiche, a la the Frankfurt School, is being delivered. Its apparent sophistication and diversity is part of its marketability. Hall seems to fear that people are decoding from a plastic sales message. The diversity is fake, it is a Baudrillardian simulacra. It is a Potemkin Village; it looks like diversity but in fact it is a unified message in which the distinctions are too shallow to matter. He's Egyptian and a religious and social leader, she's Honduran living in a trailer in North Carolina and working three jobs; doesn't make much difference really. They are journeying to America. In the past, of course, we saw the Puritans who left France or England similarly freed of their past and assumed to be part of a joined future.

With the shift to a more commercial base as modern capitalism began to dominate the American landscape, news media needed to attract a wider audience. Ironically, they did so by narrowing their range. Lots of readership groups were herded into fewer readership groups. The niche focus on the early years, where Habermas saw the power of new media's support for and

role in the vibrant public sphere, was overtaken by a general reporting that tried to appeal to a wider paying audience. From this era came the idea of objectivity, a way to write so disinterestedly that pro and con readers would alike seek the newspaper for information they would then use in their own way. But this move also held the origins of a cultural flatness. To be objective and to appeal to all at the same time meant blurring distinctions, making us all part of the same mythic family. Subjectivity helped build the culture industry. And while these feature stories under examination appear to be different, there is very little internal movement from the mythic narrative.

Telling and retelling the same myths influences hegemonic negotiations by installing those stories as our basic reference point. Newspaper feature stories are telling the mythic stories over and over because that's what you do with myth. The potential consequence is that a narrative that favors the status quo, that benefits those in places of power and influence, becomes our fantasy, our public daydream, and it is to this story that lower classes look, as Hall would say, to find where they stand. And when they do, they do not see any oppositional position, just a ladder that some of them will be able to climb.

Richard Nixon and others have been charged with presenting to the world during the Vietnam War the America of Hughes' myths, deliberately ignoring the fact that the absolutized myths had been behind much of the excesses of American foreign policy and global capitalism at home and abroad (Campbell). It is noticeable in these feature stories that the excesses of the myths are not addressed. Perhaps the most noticeable occasions are the unchallenged practices of the factory in the *Mexican Meatpackers* story and the acceptance of the misery of the border crossing journeys of illegal immigrants. Editorially then, perhaps there is another theme that might be called turning-a-blind-eyeism. While journalists may argue that "this is not the occasion

for that sort of reporting and writing” that very answer would suggest that these stories proceed knowing that they have produced a very narrow and traditional view of the myths they rely on, one that is to some degree wanting.

The texts under examination suggest that a myth that Hughes did not identify is influential in much the same way as the myths he did address. The texts suggest a Myth of the Middle Class Nation is another of the myths America lives by and indeed may be considered a foundational myth. The relative absence of description or discussion about upper class or ruling class lives and financial practices and assumptions is balanced with a notion that lower class status is a temporary or at least correctable condition, because movement into the middle class can inevitably be achieved through hard work. There is almost a timidity in the texts when subjects begin to get wealthy enough to become investors of capital purely and are moving beyond situations where hard work is their primary strategy for earning money. The Myth of the Middle Class Nation then would contain the idea that American is the great egalitarian society where there are no extremes determined by wealth and that Americans primarily identify themselves by their middle class values rather than wealth. This is an idea that may well be worthy of further study to scholars who probe how the news media see the liminal spaces on either side of the actual middle class.

There is ample room for more work to probe just why journalists choose to present an event in the way they do. There is a question within that question that would ask to what extent journalists are prepared to be unpredictable, to go against the grain and surprise editors and audiences. But if feature news narratives hung on the storylines of America’s myths of origin present a limited cultural landscape the Frankfurt School would recognize, then it is worth looking into how journalists can be taught to recognize its limitations and reach beyond it with

unpredictable stories that challenge the myth as much as they support it. Perhaps the new age of digital and social media will help this approach to stories go the way of the old fashioned reliance on the inverted pyramid story structure.

Examining different formats of news presentation for evidence of reliance on foundational myths is a way for future researchers to investigate the processes that lead to its use and to investigate different intensities and other variations in any such use. For example, the breaking news format suggests that there are boundaries and transitions between any employment of mythic narrative and its non-use. That is because of its absence in that format. Using mythic and rhetorical criticism to analyze Pulitzer Prize-winning breaking news story texts that are comparable to the texts in the four case studies, that is, that meet the criteria cited in the method section, there is no sign of a reliance on myths of origin in the narratives. These texts are about the recovery of a six year-old Cuban boy, Elian Gonzalez, from the home of Miami relatives by federal agents in April, 2000. The primary stories, a series, and almost all of the secondary stories were published the morning after the rescue (see Appendix Four for a list of these texts).

These are hard news stories, written quickly and immediately after an event. The boy had been found at sea, alone, after his mother and others trying to raft to Florida from Cuba had perished. A tug of war between his Miami relatives and the Federal government ensued. It ended when the boy was removed from the home by federal agents backed by a court and reunited with his father who had flown from Cuba.

The texts are tight with detail, action-packed, generally providing a chronological breakdown of what happened. The immediate observation is that there is virtually no reliance on the narratives of America's foundational myths or the Puritan-American capitalist myth. It isn't

there. There are subtleties that might be interpreted as favoring them, but they are too faint to be claimed as primary mythic references. Myth may be buried here, but a reliance on it is not here.

In this case the myths are eschewed for another form of narrative scaffolding: the dramatic adventure story. There is no time, in both production terms and in terms of providing a dramatic, action-filled story that readers will be hooked and held by, to leave what is happening for any tangents, asides or writing that takes more than the minimum time to convey the maximum impact of what happened. The demands of these breaking news stories, primary and secondary, are such that drama determines what is written. The timeline emphasizes the staccato rhythm of a breaking story. The event is the entire subject. Words, phrases, sentences, must describe action. Adjectives and adverbs modify action, not secondary description. There are few if any diversions into description or character development or for comparison to people not immediately involved in the action itself.

There is no respite from the need to move the story on. Time is the most pressing agent. The events reported are still happening. The reports bring us up to what has occurred by deadline. Space is another limiting factor. Breaking news stories run prominently in newspapers, taking up precious front and near front page room. The inevitable conclusion is that hard news, with its strict time, focus, and space constraints, and its demands for a tightly written drama, does not offer journalists the conditions needed to present a storyline with any independence from events. But such conditions must begin to develop because feature stories rely heavily on them. It is improbable that there is a strict line where one practice ends and another, already fully developed, begins. Further research could expand our understanding of the relationship between news-producing journalists and foundational myths.

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APPENDIX ONE
PRIMARY TEXTS

The Vietnamese Fisherman

From the *New Orleans Times Picayune*, March 28, 1996. Written by staff writer John McQuaid. Story entitled “Immigrant Shrimper Honor Family Legacy.” This story was the 21st in a 40-part series which was published under the general heading “Oceans of Trouble.” The story won the Pulitzer Prize for public service reporting in 1997.

[http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/1997-Public-Service_\(The_winning_series\)](http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/1997-Public-Service_(The_winning_series))

<http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/6026> (Primary text)

Mexican Meatpackers

NOTE: This series is not available online. See Appendix Three.

Exodus

From the *Los Angeles Times*, this story, “Enrique’s Journey” by Sonia Nazario, ran as a series published in what the newspaper called six ‘chapters’ from September 29 and October 7

<http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/2003-Feature-Writing>

The Imam

From the *New York Times*, a series of three stories that ran March 5-7, 2006. The 2007 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing was awarded to “Andrea Elliott of The New York Times for her intimate, richly textured portrait of an immigrant imam striving to find his way and serve his faithful in America” according to the citation. The first story was headlined “A Muslim Leader in

Brooklyn, Reconciling Two Worlds,” the second “To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire” and the last Tending to Muslim Hearts and Islam's Future.”
<http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/2007-Feature-Writing>

APPENDIX TWO
SECONDARY TEXTS

NOTE: Taken as a whole, these secondary texts are long. While they are not instantly accessible online, they are accessible via University of Alabama databases. So I have refrained from including here a vast amount of additional pages.

The secondary texts are:

The Vietnamese Fisherman

St. Petersburg [Fla.] Times, December 26, 1988, page 1A in the newspaper's national section. "A Touch of Vietnam on the Mississippi - Refugees push to succeed in Louisiana."

Washington Post, September 6, 2005, in the financial section. "A Family Business Beached." He brought shrimping from Vietnam to Louisiana, but Katrina has dealt a blow to an already precarious enterprise."

Mexican Meatpackers

New York Magazine, "Hiding in Plain Sight; for an undocumented family, life in a sanctuary city is feeling less safe all the time." By Jeff Coplon. December 8, 2008.

Newsweek (U.S. Edition) article of April 10, 2006, is "America's Divide; The lawmakers see legals and illegals. But many immigrant clans are a mixture of citizens and relatives at risk. A portrait of a different kind of family." by Arian Campo-Flores; With Holly Bailey, Daren Briscoe, Eleanor Clift, Jennifer Ordonez, Catharine Skipp and Jamie Reno

Exodus

New York Times, May 25 2006 (Late Final edition; Section A; Column 4; Foreign Desk; Page 12 is a story entitled "On a Paper Border, Mexico's Poor Hide, Scramble and Hope," by James C. McKinley Jr.

New York Times story, “At Unforgiving Arizona-Mexico Border, Tide of Desperation Is Overwhelming,” by Ginger Thompson, (May 21, 2006 Sunday; Late Edition – Final; Section 1; Column 1; National Desk; Page 24)

New York Times story, “By a Back Door to the U.S.: A Migrant's Grim Sea Voyage,” by Ginger Thompson and Sandra Ochoa, (June 13, 2004; Sunday; Late Edition – Final; Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Page 1)

New York Times article “The Crossing: A special report.: A Perilous 4,000-Mile Passage to Work,” (May 29, 2001 Tuesday Late Edition - Final Section A; Column 1; Metropolitan Desk; Page 1) by Charlie LeDuff

New York Times provides another comparison text, “Salvadorans Stream into U.S., Fleeing Poverty and Civil War,” by James LeMoyne (April 13, 1987, Monday, Late City Final Edition Section A; Page 1, Column 1; Foreign Desk).

The Atlantic Monthly story chosen for comparison is headlined “Exodus: the ominous push and pull of the U.S.-Mexico border” by Marc Cooper (May 1, 2006; Page 123(10) Vol. 297 No. 4)

Newsweek story from August 30 (Atlantic Edition) August 30, 1999, Atlantic Edition headlined “Coyote Inc.” by Allen Zarembo ran in the magazine’s World Affairs section.

New York Times offers another comparison story, “More and More Women Risk All to enter U.S.” by Lizette Alvarez and John M. Broder (January 10, 2006 Tuesday; Late Edition – Final; Section A; Column 2; National Desk; Page 1).

New York Times.” Crossing With Strangers: Children at the Border; Littlest Immigrants, Left in Hands of Smugglers,” by Ginger Thompson (November 3 2003; Section A; Column 2; Foreign Desk; Page 1).

The Imam

Newsweek, “American Dreamers: Muslim Americans are one of this country’s greatest strengths. But they are vulnerable as never before.” By Lisa Miller; With Roya Wolverson in Lackawanna, Sanhita Sen in Queens, Karen Breslau and Robina Riccitiello in Silicon Valley, Julie Scelfo in Trenton, Arian Campo-Flores in Boston, Hilary Shenfeld in Chicago, Roqaya Ashmaway in Ann Arbor, Aisha Eady in Minneapolis, Christopher Dickey in Paris, Mark Hosenball, Daren Briscoe and Abby Dalton in Washington and Owen Matthews in Istanbul . (July 30, 2007; U.S. Edition. Cover Story. Page 24)

Washington Post, October 27, 2001. "An American Dream, Slightly Apart. N.J. Muslim Family Feels a Separateness," by Anne Hull. (Final Edition; A Section; Page A01)

Newsweek, August 29, 2005, carries a stories "Islam: A New Welcoming Spirit in the Mosque," by Lorraine Ali. (U.S. Edition; Cover Story; Page 52)

APPENDIX THREE
MEXICAN MEATPACKERS

Primary Text (not available online)

PART I

The State-Journal Register, Springfield, IL.
November 9, 2003. Sunday

Part 1;
Tension in the air

BYLINE: S. Lynne Walker

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 2690 words

For more than 200 years, the peoples of the world have been welcomed in America, a country built upon the backs of immigrants. In cities and in small towns, new waves of immigrants look to improve their lives and those of their families in the same land of hope, opportunity and prosperity sought by their forefathers.

Off and on for the past seven months, reporter S. Lynne Walker of the Mexico City bureau of Copley News Service lived in Beardstown. Walker's fluency in Spanish allowed her to understand a side of the immigrants' story not widely heard in central Illinois. The work of Walker and photographer Kristen Schmid Schurter offers an intimate look at the clash and commingling of distinctly different cultures.

Beginning today, we are pleased to present the first part of their four-day report examining one community's 15-year adventure in social change.

Barry Locher
Editor

BEARDSTOWN - On winter afternoons, in the sliver of twilight dividing day from night, Mayor Bob Walters drove along his town's quiet streets troubled by the changes he feared were coming.

Beardstown was an all-white community of 5,200 people built by German immigrants. No one remembered an African-American ever setting down roots in this Illinois River town. When Mexican immigrants began flowing into the state, they, too, had bypassed Beardstown.

An intimacy had grown from that cultural isolation.

Bike-riding children waved to octogenarians resting in porch swings. People turned out for fish fries, baseball games and Fourth of July fireworks. Everybody knew everybody's name.

But in that winter of 1986, Walters could feel the comfortable rhythm of small-town life slipping away.

In just two years, three Beardstown employers had closed their doors, eliminating 500 jobs. Now, the town's biggest employer - the Oscar Mayer pork slaughterhouse - was shutting down, idling another 820 people. With no hope of finding work, families were beginning to leave.

Walters, who worked for 18 years as a ham boner at Oscar Mayer, had reservations about what many saw as the salvation of his dying town.

Excel Corp., the second-largest meatpacker in America, wanted to reopen the Oscar Mayer plant, and most of the town's residents were enthusiastic about the offer. They thought life would be the way it used to be, with an influx of money, thriving businesses and jobs for their children and grandchildren.

But during his travels as a representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Walters had seen what happened when meatpackers, operating on profit margins of just 2 or 3 percent, opened plants in the rural Midwest.

Yes, they hired local folks. But they also recruited a stream of immigrants, most of them Mexican, to feed their insatiable demand for strong, young workers.

What Walters had seen on his trips across the Midwest was already starting to attract the attention of the nation's top demographers. By the late 1980s, they were recording the transformation that occurred when the meatpacking industry moved into small American towns.

People from different cultures who spoke different languages were crowding into communities where white, English-speaking Americans had lived for generations.

The new arrivals brought new music, new foods and new holidays. They also brought new social problems.

They weren't creating towns, as earlier waves of Europeans had done, but moving into tight-knit communities. Sometimes, the towns lost their identities and people from neighboring communities poked fun at them, calling them "Little Mexico."

Walters didn't know these new immigrants as people, but he knew their presence was changing a way of life in America's heartland.

He knew his own town, too. In 1858, the people of Beardstown had gathered in the town square to hear Abraham Lincoln deliver a stump speech opposing slavery. But a century later, they had hung a noose in that same park, warning blacks to stay away.

"It had been an all-white, redneck community for 160 years," Walters said, "For a community like that to have a different ethnic group come in, well, it's hard to adjust."

* * *

On a sweltering June afternoon in 1987, Excel quietly opened the company's first pork-processing plant in Beardstown. With no fanfare, the town took its place in the dramatic demographic change sweeping America.

By the year 2000, Beardstown's Hispanic population would grow 3,229 percent.

Illinois welcomed Excel because economically depressed Cass County, home to Beardstown, was one of the poorest in the state.

Gov. Jim Thompson signed special legislation waiving the requirement that Excel's parent company, privately held grain giant Cargill Inc., open its financial records before being allowed to locate in a free-enterprise zone at the outskirts of town. Excel received all the economic benefits Illinois had to offer, including state funds for job training.

But Beardstown already had a labor force trained in the meatpacking business. With downstate Illinois facing rising unemployment, Excel dropped the starting wage from \$8.75 to \$6.50 an hour.

At one of his first meetings with Excel officials, Walters pushed the company to hire former Oscar Mayer workers.

"I wanted Americans to hold the jobs," he said. "There were a lot of local people looking for work. I wanted to give them the opportunity first."

Excel finally agreed to hire 250 Oscar Mayer workers. Another 100 employees came from nearby towns.

Every day, more than 5,000 hogs were chopped into pieces and boxed for shipment. The plant's work force put bacon on America's breakfast table, sent pig tails to canners for pork 'n' beans and shipped snouts to Alabama for pickling.

The money that Excel's workers earned flowed back into Beardstown's economy. Hardee's and McDonald's opened hamburger franchises to compete with the town's old-fashioned coffee shops serving biscuits and gravy. In 1989, Sam Walton Jr. phoned Walters from his private plane to say he'd be landing at Beardstown's tiny airport to look at a site for the town's first Wal-Mart.

The visit was so sudden, "we didn't even have time to get out the marching band," Walters said. Still, "they said they liked what they'd seen, that they liked our town."

Walters took great pride in pointing out that in Excel's early years, no Hispanics moved to Beardstown.

Although the 1990 census recorded 31 Hispanics, Walters insisted, "There were no Hispanics here. I'd like to think I had a lot to do with that."

He wasn't motivated by racism, Walters said, but his years of experience in the meatpacking industry.

"They take Hispanics, blacks and the downtrodden to work in their plants - those who don't have the computer skills or the basics for today's work environment," he said. "They seem to prey on that type of people. They take advantage of the disadvantaged."

As he left office in 1990, Walters gave his successor some advice.

"I told him, 'If you don't stay after Excel, you are going to have a lot of Hispanics and a lot of Asians come in here and take those jobs.'"

"That's exactly what happened," he said.

* * *

The first Hispanics who showed up at Excel didn't last long.

When Excel hired Brad Hunter, a former Oscar Mayer worker, in 1989, "there was very few coloreds and very few Mexicans," he recalled. "Every time we'd try to tell them to do something, they'd look at us stupid. So we'd start harassing them and they'd quit."

But two things changed the equation: Excel stepped up its production, increasing the need for workers. And worker compensation costs began to soar, with injury claims reaching \$7.8 million a year by 1994, according to UFCW representative Duke Walters, who is the mayor's brother.

In the dangerous meatpacking industry, accidents were inevitable. Workers carved up a 265-pound hog every 4.5 seconds, and in the process cut themselves with knives, hurt their backs and suffered from repetitive stress injury, Walters said.

Excel's most serious accident came in 1990, when workers inhaled ammonia gas that leaked from a cooler where slaughtered hogs were kept, according to Occupational Safety & Health Administration records. Seventeen workers inhaled the toxic fumes; seven had to be hospitalized.

When Walters sat down at the bargaining table with Excel in 1994, the company made it clear that "if they continued to have those costs ... we were probably looking at closure."

Employee turnover was also a problem, reportedly hitting 100 percent a year by the mid-1990s. The company's slaughterhouse was strategically located near farms in Illinois' sparsely populated countryside that produced the hogs Excel slaughtered. But there weren't enough workers living nearby, so when Excel increased production, the company had to import its labor.

Every week, Excel officials interviewed job candidates, but "they weren't able to get enough people in the job pool here," said Walters. "In order to build the factory and get the people they needed, they had to go outside the area."

So Excel began to look for workers from south of the border who acknowledged they didn't gripe about every ache and pain.

"After starving to death, after sneaking across the border, people are prepared to do anything. There is no pain," said a Hispanic man working in Beardstown. "If I came into the United States under a pile of avocados, what right do I have to complain?"

Excel confirmed in a written statement that "we have done mobile recruiting in areas of high unemployment where people were looking for work opportunities. This included northern states as well as southern and western."

The company, which refused repeated requests over the past seven months for a face-to-face interview with a representative, sent recruiters to California, Arizona and the Texas border towns of Laredo, Eagle Pass, Brownsville and El Paso, drawing job candidates with spots on Spanish-language radio.

Excel sent nurse Lisa Mincy to the Texas-Mexico border at least 10 times during the eight years she worked at the plant. Sometimes, Mincy administered drug tests and gave physicals to 35 job seekers a day during the two- to four-day trips.

"One guy rode his bike 12 miles to get to me," said Mincy, who left Excel last year. "It was hot. It was like 110 degrees that day."

Those who passed Excel's physical exam got a \$400 advance and a one-way bus ticket to Beardstown.

* * *

Nobody can remember when the first Mexican families moved into Beardstown. Suddenly, they were just there.

The Rev. Eugene Weitzel recalls looking out at his congregation at St. Alexius Catholic Church in 1995 and seeing a handful of Mexicans in the pews. Soon, they were knocking at his door, asking for a Spanish-speaking priest.

Buffy Tillitt-Pratt, a longtime real estate agent and a member of the famous Beardstown Ladies Investment Club, can still recall the first time a Mexican family stopped by to ask if she might have a place for rent.

"It is against the law to discriminate. Some of the people in Beardstown probably did not realize that at first," said Tillitt-Pratt, who rented them a three-bedroom house she owned.

Principal Pam DeSollar remembers a Mexican mother and father walking into her kindergarten office and using hand signals to enroll their 6-year-old son.

"How were we going to talk to this family? How were we going to fill out the forms?" DeSollar said she wondered at the time. "We couldn't communicate."

DeSollar's concern was echoed throughout the town. For the first time in their lives, Beardstown residents weren't able to talk with their neighbors.

They didn't understand anything the Mexicans said or did. And the Mexican families didn't understand the stuffy, small-town rules that now dictated their lives.

Police officers showed up at Mexican homes because American neighbors complained the mariachi music was too loud. City officials arrived to caution Mexicans that their lawn had grown taller than Beardstown's 8-inch limit. Police were constantly ticketing Hispanics for driving without insurance and driver's licenses.

"We didn't know the laws," said Antonio Carrillo, 36, a father of three who works at Excel. "That was part of the problem."

The police department was unprepared for the arrival of Spanish-speaking residents. None of the officers was bilingual. During routine traffic stops, police officer Jacob Swan pulled out his own license to show the new residents which ID he wanted to see.

The town's schools were also caught off guard. In 1993, the district had just one Spanish-speaking student. By 1996, it had several dozen.

Immigration agents showed up at the Excel plant in 1995 and pulled 60 workers off the production line for questioning.

"Everybody who wasn't Caucasian, they called into the office," said Sergio Ruiz, 36, who is now a chief steward for the UFCW, Local 431. "They asked you questions and they said, 'Leave. Stay. Leave. Stay. Stay.'"

Despite the scare, Excel's Hispanic work force continued to grow.

Ruiz brought 26 Hispanics to work with him at Excel in July 1993. At the time, there were only about 15 Hispanics working at the plant, he said. Excel also paid its employees to help with the recruiting, handing out \$150 for each new worker.

When the number of Hispanics reached nearly 500, businesses began to cater to the new residents' tastes.

Su Casa, a Mexican-owned grocery store, opened near Beardstown's historic town square and offered tortillas, chilies and nopal cactus. A bar, El Flamingo, was opened by an American woman and her Mexican husband.

But as the Hispanics' presence became more obvious, ambivalence by some longtime Beardstown residents turned to resentment.

Martha Martinez, 29, was denied her right to register to vote at the same time she applied for a driver's license, which she was entitled to under Illinois' "motor-voter" law. She asked why and was told, "it was because I was a naturalized citizen, not a citizen citizen."

Martinez's family was also the target of hate crimes.

"They threw flaming rags at the house," said her husband, 35-year-old Alejandro. "They punctured our tires. They said we came to take their jobs."

* * *

On Aug. 10, 1996, Beardstown was rocked by its first murder in seven years.

Jorge Arambula, a 28-year-old Mexican who worked at Excel, was accused of fatally shooting Beardstown resident Travis Brewer, 22, at El Flamingo. Brewer was a friend of another Beardstown man, whose ex-wife was living with Arambula.

The next night, a 6-foot-high makeshift cross was doused with diesel fuel and set ablaze in front of the bar.

Arambula was detained five days later at his home in Monterrey, Mexico. But Mexican law enforcement authorities refused to extradite him to Illinois. He has never been tried for the murder in Mexico, and the case remains open at the Beardstown Police Department.

The decision infuriated Beardstown residents. On Aug. 16, 1996, El Flamingo was gutted by fire, and anonymous callers warned the owner of Su Casa his business would be next. He stripped his shelves and closed the store.

Police soon arrested a 28-year-old resident of nearby Rushville, but Illinois state police patrolled the town for weeks.

When rumors circulated that the Ku Klux Klan was headed to Beardstown, the Mexican community braced for the arrival with its own whispered threat.

"For every one of us they kill," one Mexican resident remembers people saying, "we're going to kill five of them."

Continued on Monday.

Excel at a glance

Beardstown plant

- * Opened: June 1987
- * Purchased from: Oscar Mayer
- * Employees: 2,000
- * Annual payroll: \$50 million in wages and benefits
- * Average annual salary: \$29,000
- * Average hourly wage: \$10.70
- * Annual tax payment to city of Beardstown: \$720,000
- * Production: 17,400 hogs slaughtered daily
- * Brand name products: Tender Choice, Sterling Silver

Corporate data

- * Nationwide employment: 33,000
- * Corporate headquarters: Wichita, Kan.
- * Number of U.S. plants: 15
- * Number of foreign plants: Five, located in Canada and Australia
- * Parent company: Cargill Inc.

PART II

Part 2;
Conquering the great divide

BYLINE: S. Lynne Walker

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 2520 words

Over the last 15 years, Beardstown has been transformed by the arrival of hundreds of Hispanics and others to work at the Excel Corp. pork plant.

This is Part 2 of our report. BEARDSTOWN - Shaken residents of Beardstown flocked to church services on Aug. 18, 1996, as bells pealed for unity and ministers exhorted their congregations to overcome "the darkness of hate."

But when people heard those words, they knew the sheltered lives they once enjoyed had slipped from their grasp.

Eight days earlier, a Mexican immigrant had murdered a Beardstown man. The incident had been followed by a cross-burning and arson. In the aftermath of the violence, lifelong residents were torn between fear and uncertainty.

Beardstown's residents had been shaped by where they lived, where they went to school, the things they had in common. Now, like the residents of many small towns across the United States, they were seeing their community reshaped by immigrants who'd made their way north from Mexico.

By 1996, the meatpacking industry had opened plants in almost 150 Midwestern towns. Other industries were also beginning to draw Hispanics to communities throughout small-town America. In Dalton, Ga., Hispanics manufactured carpet. In Kennett Square, Pa., they harvested year-round mushroom crops. In Rogers, Ark., they cut and boxed poultry.

With each passing month, more Hispanics were recruited to Beardstown for jobs at Excel Corp.'s pork slaughterhouse. The new arrivals brought lifestyles and attitudes that made Americans feel uneasy.

They saw Mexican flags popping up all over town and heard Spanish spoken in the aisles of the Wal-Mart store. Hispanic children rode their bikes past the town square where a plaque cited Abraham Lincoln's famous anti-segregation speech, "A house divided cannot stand."

Hispanics also worried about the town's future. They had moved here after dangerous trips across the border or from jobs in big cities where they'd lived in poor, crime-ridden neighborhoods. Many felt that in Beardstown, they'd found not just a job, but a place in the United States they could call home.

They weren't herded into ghettos, as they had been in other meatpacking towns. Some bought houses on the town's tree-lined streets and were looking forward to raising their children. They appreciated the low crime rate and the city services that were provided without the "gratuities" they were used to paying in Mexico.

The good things about Beardstown reminded Marisela Chavez of her hometown in the Pacific Coast state of Michoacan.

Her Beardstown neighbors sent greeting cards to Chavez's two daughters on their birthdays, at Easter and Christmas. Chavez smiled as she remembered the moment her daughters opened the Christmas cards and found \$20 bills tucked inside.

"I think the people in Beardstown are like we are in our pueblo. They all know each other. They know where everybody works, who their children are," said Chavez, 38, who moved to Beardstown in 1995 and works with the school system's bilingual program.

Like other Hispanics, Chavez believed a mix of Anglos and Hispanics made Beardstown a stronger community.

When the town's 11 churches called a meeting after the arson, 60 people showed up to discuss their concerns about the growing tension.

By the end of the meeting, Anglos and Hispanics had formed an alliance called Beardstown United. Plans were made to enter a float in the town's Fall Fun Festival, and a block party was planned for October.

Beardstown United noted that the racial divide touched every facet of the residents' lives.

Although the town had been built by immigrants in the early 1880s and had been home to people of foreign ancestry ever since, "this new wave was different," said Loraine Brasel, who was a member of Beardstown United.

"They came right from Mexico with no established support group here. They didn't speak English. So they formed their own cohesive group," she said. "It was like having a little country dropped right in the middle of Beardstown."

There were concerns about whether the schools were teaching Hispanic children to assimilate into American life. People were also beginning to complain about the new Spanish-language Masses being offered at St. Alexius Catholic Church.

In 1996, Beardstown wasn't a community, but two separate groups of people: Anglos and Hispanics.

* * *

At St. Alexius Catholic Church, the Rev. Eugene Weitzel heard the hushed complaints.

People were uncomfortable with his staunch defense of Beardstown's Hispanic residents and his decision to offer separate Spanish-language Masses.

It had been almost a year since four Hispanics knocked at his door and asked him to offer a Mass in Spanish. Weitzel, a 76-year-old Springfield native who didn't speak Spanish, readily accepted their proposal.

At first, most of his Spanish-speaking parishioners were men who'd left their families in Mexico when they came to Beardstown for work. But as Beardstown's Hispanic population grew with the arrival of women and children, so did attendance at Spanish-language Masses.

From the beginning, there was "tension between the two groups," Weitzel said. "This is a redneck town. They are slow to accept outsiders. Whenever we have people who are different, we seem to have a fear of them."

Weitzel said opposition was so strong that four or five families eventually left the parish.

"There are people here in my own parish who would be happy as a lark if they'd just leave town," Weitzel said. "One of the men came up to me and said, 'If they can't speak the language, then get the hell out.' Well, come on. His folks came over from Germany and they didn't speak the language."

Weitzel's outspoken remarks became a lightning rod for criticism about Hispanic residents.

"Father Weitzel has been the worst thing for Mexicans, because he tried to push the Mexicans on Americans instead of letting people try to live together," said Eugene Gyure, a 64-year-old retiree who attends St. Alexius.

Many in Beardstown insisted they didn't feel animosity toward Hispanic churchgoers.

"People at the church don't like the separatism. They want to be one parish," said Jackie Tanner, 47, who moved to Beardstown in 1998. "They don't like two services. They don't like two youth groups. Resentment. That's what you have when you separate a lot."

Edmundo Bernal, a 35-year-old Excel worker who had attended bilingual Masses in Chicago, was dismayed by the separation. "We share the same religion. The only difference is that we have a different language," he said.

* * *

The racial divide was also clear in the schools. In a town where friendships were formed in kindergarten, it was hard for youngsters who didn't speak English to squeeze into the closed circle.

Victor Sanchez remembers feeling alone and alienated in 1998 as he walked down halls filled with Anglo students.

"I was, like, shocked because I hadn't seen so many white people in one place," he said. "I felt strange. It's hard to get along with people when you don't talk the same language."

Victor and his family came to Beardstown from the central Mexico state of Hidalgo. The 13-year-old Victor was placed in seventh-grade English as a second language, or ESL, classes, where most of Beardstown's 153 Hispanic children - about 12 percent of the district's student body - were enrolled.

Victor picked up English quickly. In three months, he learned enough to help his mother, who worked at Excel, adjust to life in Beardstown.

"If you don't learn English fast, you get stuck," he said.

But as his language skills improved, he began to understand the comments Anglo students were making about their Hispanic classmates.

"Beaners. Wetbacks. Go back to Mexico," Victor remembered some kids saying.

"They think they are better than us," he said. "They think when the Latinos are coming here, they are going to steal their work. But the companies prefer Latinos, you know? Because we can work more. Because we need more."

Georgeanne Osmer, who teaches family and consumer science at Beardstown High School and helps coach the girls' softball team, watched her students segregate themselves.

"If I have four tables in my food class - four kitchens - I can guarantee that all the Hispanics will be at one table," she said. "There's not animosity, but there's not a cohesiveness, a togetherness."

Tomas Alvarez was thrust into this divided world when he arrived in July 1998 at the age of 12. His father had been called from Guadalajara to a lead growing Spanish-speaking congregation at the Church of the Nazarene.

Tomas didn't speak English, so he was sent to ESL classes with Victor.

But after his first year, Tomas said, "It was obvious I wasn't learning much. I learned more from my friends than from the ESL teacher."

Tomas' teachers recommended that he be moved to English-speaking classes, and in eighth grade he became an A student. Tomas, who plays football and has helped the school district update its Web site, will be going to college after he graduates in May.

He's certain that if he'd stayed in ESL classes, he would have faced the same future as several of his classmates. "I know some real smart people who stayed in ESL," said Tomas. "They're out at Excel now."

* * *

For Hispanic parents who worked Excel's grueling jobs in extreme heat and cold, amid blood and fetid smells, Beardstown's schools offered their children a way out of a life of manual labor.

Like the immigrants who came to America before them, Hispanic mothers and fathers wanted their children to become professionals. For them, having children who ended up cutting meat at Excel represented their own failure.

But the school system wasn't prepared for students like Elvia Montoya, the first Hispanic student to graduate from Beardstown High's ESL program.

When Montoya arrived in Beardstown, she didn't speak English, so an interpreter accompanied her to most of her classes.

Her goal was to get her master's degree and become a Spanish teacher. But after she graduated in 1998, her English skills were so poor that she couldn't even get into the local community college.

"Sometimes, I blame myself for not learning more, or I don't know if it was their fault because the program was just beginning," said Montoya, 24, who works as an interpreter at a Hispanic community outreach center in Beardstown. "I didn't come out of high school with good English; I came out with enough English to survive."

Kathy Haut, one of Montoya's ESL teachers and now coordinator of the bilingual program, said the arrival of Hispanic students "put a huge burden on the school system."

One 15-year-old Mexican boy who had been selling flowers on the streets of Tijuana arrived with a second-grade education. Another teenager came from the Mexican countryside, where he had been working his family's fields with oxen and a plow. When teachers asked him to use a computer to do his schoolwork, Haut said, he couldn't figure out how to switch it on.

"How are you going to have quality teachers for all those children? You're not," Haut said. "You're just doing the best you can. Parents don't understand that we can't just go out and pick up bilingual teachers. They can do it Chicago. They can do it in San Francisco. But who wants to come here?"

She's frustrated because she hasn't been able to solve the problems of bilingual education.

"As glad as I am that these people are here, they have to understand how hard it is to go from a school system that's 150 years old and all Anglo to suddenly having a bilingual program," Haut said. "If they think this school is going to be a Mexican school, no, it's not. It's going to be an Anglo institution."

Hispanic parents said Haut's staff pressured them to keep their children separate from Anglo students. They were warned that moving their children from ESL to regular classes would be tantamount to robbing them of their culture.

Haut blamed Hispanic parents for not getting involved in their children's education and suggested they might not understand educators' reasons for keeping their children in ESL classes.

For Hispanic parents, "it's a status symbol to be able to speak English," she said. "It's the language of power. It's like distancing themselves from their past."

Dora Sanchez ran into the ESL problem when a bilingual teacher said her daughter, Arely Madrid, should go into regular fifth-grade classes.

Sanchez persisted even after a different staffer from the bilingual program visited her at home and said Arely would be more immersed in her culture and her Spanish would be better if she stayed in ESL.

On the first day of school, however, Sanchez was shocked to discover that Arely was back in ESL. Weeks passed before the dispute was settled and Arely was moved to English-speaking classes.

Although Arely started later than the other students, her grades were exemplary. This year, she'll be on the honor roll.

"Give me a whole room of Arelys," said her sixth-grade teacher, Susan DeWitt. "She's an outstanding student."

Sanchez was convinced she had made the right decision.

"Of course it is important that they learn their culture and their Spanish. What parent doesn't want their child to be prepared? That is why we are here," Sanchez said. "But if the bilingual program doesn't have the same quality as the English classes, we don't want them to go."

* * *

Anglo and Hispanic children in Beardstown's two kindergartens offered hope the town would be united in the future.

From the moment the first Hispanic child was enrolled in 1993, principal Pam DeSollar threw herself into the task of educating Beardstown's youngest residents.

At that age, the children were color-blind about their fellow classmates and eager to soak up a new language.

"We had to change the way we worked. We had to fight right to the state level to get the resources we think we're entitled to," said DeSollar, principal of Grand and Washington kindergartens. "We've been challenged. But am I sorry about that? No."

DeSollar, 60, who grew up in California's San Fernando Valley, moved to Beardstown after she married her husband, who is from an established local family. When she arrived in 1965, she

found a backwater town that seemed disconnected from the rest of the world. The local grocery store didn't stock the ingredients she needed to fix her favorite meals, so she ordered her refried beans and canned chilies by the case.

DeSollar saw the arrival of Hispanic families in small-town America as a natural progression of the wave of immigration that had started in California and other border states. "If Excel stays here, we will continue to see this growth," DeSollar said. "What I hope is that we don't become two communities. Our country is bilingual. And it's only going to become more bilingual in the future."

By the late 1990s, everybody in town seemed to understand the Hispanics were here to stay. The challenge facing Beardstown was to find a way for Anglos and Hispanics to grow together instead of growing apart.

Continued on Tuesday.

PART III

Part 3: Living with a lie;
Some immigrants sacrifice their identities to stay in America

BYLINE: S. LYNNE WALKER

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 2327 words

DATELINE: BEARDSTOW

Over the last 15 years, Beardstown has been transformed by the arrival of hundreds of Hispanics and others to work at the Excel Corp. pork plant. This is part 3 of our report.

As Beardstown residents struggled to find common ground with their new neighbors, one issue kept them apart: Many of the Hispanics working at Excel Corp.'s slaughterhouse were living illegally in the United States. By 1998, Excel's work force had grown to nearly 2,000 employees, about 30 percent of them Hispanic. Although the company denied it knowingly hired undocumented workers, it was an open secret that most of the Hispanics - perhaps as many as 80 percent - had purchased false IDs to get their jobs.

To protect themselves, the undocumented residents avoided the rest of the townspeople. They were wary of settling into small-town life, of going to ball games or being active in the PTA.

The Rev. Tomas Alvarez had been in town only a couple of months when he realized he would be ministering to people who had to lie about everything - even their own names - in order to be hired at Excel.

"It was very difficult for me to accept in the beginning," said Alvarez, who arrived in 1998 to lead the Spanish-speaking congregation at the Church of the Nazarene. "I cried a lot because I knew I was lying along with them. I began to talk with God. I said, 'God, they left their country to work as undocumented people. It is not my responsibility to judge. You must judge them. Let me help them.'"

The dual identities filled school records, health records, police records and voter registration lists with inaccuracies.

Excel employees working with false identities didn't want to use their real names - or their children's real names - on official documents. School officials repeatedly assured parents their records wouldn't be turned over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS (now called the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

"We are not the INS. We do not plan to be the INS," said School Superintendent Jim Lewis. "Our mission is not to turn people in, but to help the families."

Pregnant mothers were urged to give their real names when they arrived at hospitals to deliver their babies. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to prove they were the children's real mothers.

At the Cass County clerk's office, irregularities cropped up on voter registration lists. A single Social Security number was sometimes used by as many as four registered "voters."

Few voted, however. In Beardstown's April 2001 mayoral election, fewer than 20 of the town's 120 registered Hispanics cast ballots. Instead, they saw the voter registration card as another form of identification.

"They figure if they get the voter ID, it gives them some credibility in being here," said Cass County Clerk Michael Kirchner.

Beardstown's police also ran into dual-name problems. When they stopped Hispanics for traffic violations, some had several IDs with different names in their wallets. A few were mistakenly arrested because charges were filed against the people whose documents they had bought.

Like most of Beardstown's legal residents, Alvarez worked out his own way of dealing with the shadow world inhabited by many of the town's Hispanic residents.

"I went to the (former) chief of police and told him people have different names. He said, 'If I were in their shoes, I would probably do the same thing.'"

"I went to Excel and they told me, 'Pastor, we don't want to know anything. We are contracting American citizens.'"

Based on those conversations, Alvarez decided he would minister to the undocumented immigrants the same way he ministered to any other Beardstown resident. He wouldn't help them do anything illegal. But if their only crime was working without documents, he wouldn't report them to authorities.

Beardstown had become a town built partly on lies. There were lies that religious leaders had been forced to accept, lies that schoolteachers had to overlook and that police officials chose to ignore.

For Hispanic workers and their families, the lies created personal conflicts.

"We've made liars out of them. We've made cheats out of them," said the Rev. Eugene Weitzel, who presides over the St. Alexius Catholic Parish. "They've got to have two names. That's a lie. They carry papers that have another name on them. That's a lie.

"One of the reasons they don't come together more with the community is that they're embarrassed. They have a sense of insecurity."

Life in this small, quiet town had brought prosperity to Beardstown's immigrants. But their prosperity was built on lies as well. Their spending could continue only if immigration agents didn't show up in the town.

The new arrivals bought cars, big-screen TVs and satellite dishes that brought Mexican news programs, soap operas and soccer games into their living rooms. They bought homes with huge down payments and paid them off with five-year loans.

They delighted in knowing that when they went shopping, they had money in their pockets to buy almost anything they wanted. And they still had money left over to send to their families in Mexico.

"Economically, you live like a king here," said Alejandro Martinez, 35, who moved to Beardstown in 1994. "I have an account at the bank. I bought a car. We eat shrimp twice a week. We go to the store and if we spend \$200 or \$500, so what?"

Martinez and his wife used their Excel paychecks to buy a home and six rental properties.

"In Mexico, for people at our level, we would live like donkeys," Martinez said. "Here, everything that I have wanted, I have bought."

But Martinez is a legal resident of the United States and his wife is a naturalized American citizen.

Other Hispanics, working at Excel without legitimate documents, could never let their guard down. Fearful of being deported, they spent most of their off-work hours at home.

"I feel trapped," sighed a 49-year-old woman who left Acapulco in 1999 and crossed the border illegally.

"Every day I'm here, here, here," she said, sweeping her arm in the direction of the two-story home she and her husband bought. "We almost never go out. I feel very lonely."

As she remembered her home in Mexico's famous beach resort, she sighed again.

"Right now, our mango tree would be full of fruit. I miss the coconuts, the breeze from the sea," she said. "I tell my husband, 'Let's go back.' But he doesn't want to go back. My husband is happy here."

Her 49-year-old husband is now an American citizen. He's one of the lucky ones.

"Many of the people at Excel work with bought papers," she said. "It's easy to see who has papers and who doesn't. Those who don't have (legal) papers are afraid to speak."

Longtime resident Patricia Gyure sensed the Hispanic residents' reluctance to draw attention to themselves.

"They come here, they do their jobs, they're low-key. They don't bother anyone. They don't cause any problems," said Gyure, 60, who works at a nursing home. "They just blend in."

But her husband ticked off a litany of complaints.

The Hispanics didn't speak English. They celebrated their own Independence Day. And he believed they didn't pay their fair share of taxes.

"We're saying if you're going to be living in America, you're going to celebrate American Independence Day," said 64-year-old Eugene Gyure, who wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the American flag and the words, "These colors never run."

Gyure also didn't like being called Anglo.

"We are not Anglos," he said. "We are Americans."

Few Beardstown residents believed racism was at the heart of their feelings.

"I don't think there's any prejudice around here. I think it's resentment. A lot, lot of resentment. A lot of people feel that the immigrants are protected by our own laws more than we are," said a 53-year-old Beardstown native who asked not to be named.

"My husband wants to move. I say, 'But this is our home.' If I really left, I'd feel like they'd driven me out. And I want to go on my own.

"It's so unfair. The schools protect them. Public aid has holes in it. Excel protects them. I have a lot of resentment," she said. "I'm dealing with it, because it's wearing me out. It tires you when you're upset."

Excel has been silent about many of the issues surrounding its Beardstown operation. Repeated requests made over a seven-month period for a face-to-face interview with company officials were denied.

However, Excel said in a written response that "We make every effort to validate employment eligibility while protecting against discrimination. Despite what some might speculate (based on no facts), we are very good at verifying employment eligibility."

Alvarez agreed that Excel has gotten tougher in recent years

"Before, people without documents got into the plant easier," he said. "Now, the plant is verifying all kinds of documents, including the work history of the job candidate."

Alvarez's 24-year-old daughter, Elizabeth Burnside, was an interpreter in Excel's human relations department. It was her job to contact the Social Security Administration's Springfield office every week to check the numbers new employees had given.

"I'm the mean one," she said with an apologetic smile before she left the company. "I'm the one who has to tell them that their Social Security number doesn't match."

But many of the numbers are valid, because some Hispanic workers buy legitimate birth certificates and Social Security numbers from Americans - prisoners, U.S. soldiers stationed abroad or wanted criminals - who sell their identities through middlemen for as much as \$1,500.

One Hispanic woman told police she bought her documents from a man going door-to-door in Beardstown. Her husband told police he also bought identity documents, first to get an Illinois driver's license, then to apply for a job at Excel or at the company that contracts workers to clean blood and bones from the slaughterhouse machinery.

Excel's responsibility is to fill out a government-required I-9 form stating that job candidates have presented at least two documents - such as a driver's license and Social Security card - that prove they are eligible for work.

Employers are not required to verify Social Security numbers, nor are they responsible for investigating whether the person presenting documents bought them on the black market, said Cynthia O'Connell, interim chief of the Immigration and Custom Enforcement's identity and benefits fraud unit.

"We cannot expect them to be immigration officers," she said.

A Mexican woman said after she bought documents in 1999, she traced the original owner's signature over and over again, until she could produce an exact match of the six-letter name.

Now she signs easily. When someone calls her by the other woman's name, she instinctively turns and responds.

But it troubles her to deny who she is.

"I would like to have my papers," she said, "and present myself as I am."

The Hispanics who adapted most easily to life in Beardstown were people like Edmundo Bernal, who took advantage of a 1986 immigration law granting farm workers legal status in the United States.

Bernal tells his story like an adventure tale.

He struck out for the border in 1987, and 10 times he was detained by immigration agents in San Diego. Ten times, he crossed again. That year, he said, nearly 1,000 men from his town of Villa Guerrero headed for the United States.

When Bernal finally got across the border, he rode the trolley to downtown San Diego, caught a train to Anaheim and slept in a park for two weeks. He picked asparagus in Stockton, then harvested beets in Idaho. There, he ran into a Mexican man from a town near his, who offered him a ride to Chicago.

Bernal's timing changed his life, because like 1.2 million Hispanic farm workers, he was savvy enough to take advantage of the legalization program before it expired in 1988.

"A lot of people missed the opportunity. Now, they're sorry," said the 35-year-old Bernal. "After I got my documents, I began to live well."

He married his wife, Alicia, in their pueblo in 1990 and sneaked his bride across the border at Tijuana the next day.

Because he was documented, Alicia also became eligible for legal work papers, which she received in 1996. Their two sons, Jaime and Edmundo Jr. - also known as Jimmy and Eddie Jr. - were born in the United States, so they are American citizens.

In 1998, Bernal also became a citizen and moved his family from Chicago to Beardstown in search of affordable housing, a low crime rate and good wages.

Bernal immediately went to work for Excel. Alicia soon followed, getting a job cutting off pig's feet.

They bought a \$53,000 house and just two years later, they only owed \$18,000. They refinanced and used the money to open a tavern called Salon Azul. They also bought sound equipment that Bernal rented out under the name "Si Se Puede," a Spanish phrase meaning, "Yes, it can be done."

Like many Hispanics in Beardstown, Bernal had a dual identity. But in his case, it came from being bilingual and bicultural, not from living in the shadows.

"On that side of the river," he said, pointing to Mexico, "they call me Edmundo. On this side of the river, everybody just calls me Eddie."

As owner of Salon Azul, Eddie Bernal became one of the most visible Hispanics in town. He smiled and waved at everybody. He shouted greetings in English.

He had found the formula for getting along.

"You don't have to have a big conversation. But you can say, 'Hello,' and shake their hand," he said. "When you have good intentions, you don't have to talk too much."

Bernal's sons have already put down roots beside the Illinois River.

Nine-year-old Eddie Jr., a charismatic boy with bristly black hair, wants to become a police officer.

Twelve-year-old Jimmy, a robust kid with a penchant for Matchbox cars, has a more immediate goal.

"I'm going to be as tall as Abe Lincoln," he said.

PART IV

The State Journal-Register (Springfield, IL)

November 12, 2003 Wednesday

Part 4;
Dealing with change

BYLINE: S. Lynne Walker

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

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Over the last 15 years, Beardstown has been transformed by the arrival of hundreds of Hispanics and others to work at the Excel Corp. pork plant.

This is the final installment of our report. BEARDSTOWN - By autumn of 2003, Beardstown had once again settled into a comfortable rhythm. But the rhythm was different than before.

Beardstown was no longer a community of white faces, where people spoke only English and bragged about banning minorities. Instead, it was part of the new American Midwest, where brown faces and Spanish are woven into daily life.

In almost every U.S. county, the 2000 census showed the rise in Hispanics outstripping overall population growth. From Nantucket Island, Mass., to the rural Mississippi Delta, small communities were being changed by Hispanics settling in their towns. In Garden City, Kan., Hispanics now make up 44 percent of the population. In Conesville City, Iowa, they're the majority.

In the 16 years since Excel Corp. opened a pork slaughterhouse at the outskirts of Beardstown, the Hispanic population has reached 30 percent. With Excel hinting at increasing production and some longtime residents of this town of 7,000 moving out, many people believe Hispanics will become the majority here, too.

That bothers some of the town's Anglo residents, although their resentment has softened over the years. There is still racial prejudice. But it is muted by an acceptance, even an appreciation by many people, of the new ideas that cultural diversity has brought.

Bob Walters sensed the difference in the fall of 2000 when he knocked on the doors of each of the town's 1,799 residences during his campaign for another term as mayor. Walters had left Beardstown for a better job in 1991 after serving as mayor for five years. But the call of home - parents, brothers, a sister and kids - brought him back to Beardstown.

In his door-to-door campaign, he heard citizens complain about things that bother people everywhere - problems in the police department, unsightly garbage and the city's mismanaged budget.

Only a few griped about the growing number of Hispanics, but Walters stopped them short.

"The biggest problem with Beardstown people is that they think this is only happening in Beardstown," said Walters, who won the election with 60 percent of the vote. "They haven't got out and checked the real world yet. These people are all over the U.S. The facts are that it's the fastest-growing population in the United States."

One thing people didn't complain about was how the economy had rebounded since the Hispanics' arrival.

Per capita income in Cass County, home to Beardstown, shot up 70.5 percent between 1988 - the year after Excel opened its plant - and 1997. Two-income couples employed at Excel now earn about \$50,000 a year, a handsome sum in a town where monthly mortgage payments are as low as \$400.

Beardstown's sales tax revenues are growing about 3 percent a year, with Excel a major contributor to the town's economic well-being.

The crime rate remains low. Beardstown's last murder was in 1996, when a Mexican immigrant was accused of shooting an Anglo resident at a local bar. Drug cases increased 93 percent between 2001 and 2002, but even then the number of arrests was only 56.

Beardstown has become the town of the future, demographers say, an economic model for hundreds of small American towns that are slowly dying.

Hispanics have given the town what real estate agent Buffy Tillitt-Pratt calls a "youth boost." The 80-year-old high school is so crowded that it's being replaced with a \$20 million junior high and high school. At the beginning of this school year, one-third of the district's 1,400 students were Hispanic.

School Superintendent Jim Lewis foresees the day when his job will be held by a bilingual superintendent. "You need to hear those voices without relying on an interpreter to tell you what those voices are saying."

Clearly, the town has changed. And so has Walters, a Purple Heart veteran of the Vietnam War who admits he grew up a redneck in a sheltered world made up of people just like him. In Vietnam, his fellow soldiers hooted with laughter when he finally worked up the nerve to ask, "What the hell is a soul brother?"

"That shows you how naive you are when you come from a small, all-white area," the 58-year-old mayor said as he held a dying cigarette between his fingers.

The town, like Walters, has experienced an awakening.

People don't stare at Hispanics, like they did when the Excel workers first got here. Most Anglos choose their words carefully. Many preface any negative comments with, "I'm not a racist."

People don't like to bring up the subject of race because talking about it divides them again. But some of the racial barriers remain.

"You still hear people say, 'wetbacks,'" said the Rev. Tomas Alvarez, 46, who leads the Spanish-speaking congregation at the Church of the Nazarene. "In the Hispanic community, I still hear 'gabacho,'" a derogatory term for Anglos.

At his church, which he calls "Libertad," or freedom, Alvarez worked to reduce the barriers. Although he built the separate church with his own hands for Hispanic worshippers, Alvarez said they often join the Anglo congregation. "Many times we pray together."

But as more Hispanics moved into Beardstown, some longtime residents have moved out. Between 1990 and 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 776 people of German heritage moved away or died, along with 489 of Irish heritage.

Mike Haberman, who has lived in Beardstown all his life, put his \$140,000 house on the market in July and is moving his family to a place in the country.

"Beardstown's gotten too crowded with Mexicans," said Haberman, 34, as he and his wife worked in their front yard. "Before long, they'll be changing the street signs and putting them in Spanish."

Haberman cringes when he hears people from other towns laugh and call Beardstown a "little Mexico."

"I think more and more people are getting the same attitude I have. It's time to sell," he said. "If we're going to get our money out, we need to do it now."

At St. Alexius Catholic Church, the demographic changes can be seen in very human terms. The Rev. Eugene Weitzel baptized 12 Hispanic babies over the past two months and just one Anglo infant.

The Rev. Jim Edmiston, a Franciscan priest who offered Spanish-language Masses at St. Alexius in 1999 and 2000, said it's not hate but confusion that is making Anglos flee.

"We don't have in this country an education system or a social service system that helps people deal with that confusion," he said. "The pastors don't know what to do about it, either."

Even after all these years, there's a distance between Beardstown's Anglos and Hispanics.

"It's still like 'us' and 'them,'" Walters said. "Once we get past that and become 'us,' we're all going to be better off."

* * *

The mayor believes lack of community involvement is holding Hispanics back. When Walters was elected, roughly 2,000 people voted, but fewer than 20 were Hispanics.

"If they've failed in any one area, it's a lack of showing leadership in the community," he said. "I've tried to work with them, but they don't ask for a lot. They don't call you at home. They don't go to city council meetings. I'm sure they feel like outsiders, which they are in a way."

"It would help their cause if they'd get involved in the community to show people that they're not just a bunch of people who swam across the river last night looking for jobs."

Hispanics who've migrated to the United States have a single focus: earning enough money to support themselves and their families in Mexico. The money chase leaves them little time for community activities. Their lives are often restricted to work, home, sleep, work and dreams of one day returning to Mexico.

"A lot of people become citizens, but they don't feel like they're a part of here," said Edmundo Bernal, who works at Excel and owns Salon Azul, a bar. "Once they are citizens, they think that's the end of the process."

Bernal, 35, speaks English and has an easy laugh that helps him bridge the two cultures. He is an American citizen and a Beardstown citizen, a Hispanic who has decided to make Beardstown his home.

For him, the process of being a citizen has only begun.

Bernal reached out to Walters, even though he was irritated that the mayor opposed his application for a liquor license for Salon Azul.

Walters, in turn, worried that the bar, which had a bad reputation under the previous owner, would continue to be a magnet for drug peddlers and other unsavory elements.

So Walters watched Bernal run the bar for several months, even stopping by for a beer every now and then. He caught himself laughing when he drank Coronas and saw the Mexican customers drinking Bud Light.

"I wish I had 6,000 people like him in Beardstown, with his attitude, the way he approaches things," Walters said. "He wants to be part of the community."

Bernal sees the mayor as an example, too.

"Little by little, I think he had realized that I am not the person he thought I was," Bernal said. "And I have realized that he is not the person I thought he was."

Sometimes, Bernal daydreams about running for elected office. It is something he could never have achieved in Mexico, where political candidates are often chosen through a patronage system.

Bernal isn't sure he'll ever make it to city government. But with the Hispanic population continuing to grow, there's not much doubt in anybody's mind that Beardstown will one day have a Hispanic mayor.

* * *

"Mexican town" is the way some people in nearby communities now describe Beardstown.

At a Beardstown High School basketball game last season, about 20 fans of Brown County High School in Mount Sterling showed up wearing sombreros.

As Beardstown players ran down court, the Brown County fans yelled, "We want tacos," said Tomas Alvarez, a high school senior who was at the game.

"People were mad. They really care about the image of Beardstown. That wasn't just against an ethnic group. It was against the whole town."

Tomas shook off the incident.

"A lot of people say this is becoming a Mexican town. They don't really know what's going on," he said. "I think it may become an international town."

That international flavor already permeates every block in Beardstown.

Hispanics live next door to Anglos. And both are adjusting to new neighbors like Tidiane Soumare from the country of Senegal.

When Soumare arrived in Beardstown a year ago, he was one of only 20 African workers at Excel. Now dozens of his countrymen have moved to Beardstown.

As he looks up and down the production line at Excel, where he earns \$11.95 an hour cutting pork, Soumare sees whites, Hispanics, Africans and a Vietnamese named Than.

In this new melting pot on the Illinois River, Soumare has found a quiet life and decent people.

He practices his Muslim religion here, praying five times a day. On weekends, he shoots pool with his Mexican friends.

Soumare was offended when a woman in the nearby city of Jacksonville said, "You're living in that Mexican town."

"She said the Mexican people, they are bad," said Soumare, a tall, lanky 28-year-old who speaks English, French and three African languages. "I told her, 'I don't have no problem with them. I work with them. They are nice.'"

Mamadou Dhioubou, a 30-year-old from Senegal, was the first Excel worker of African heritage to arrive in Beardstown. When he found that jobs were plentiful, he passed the word to his friends.

"I see Africans like Mexican people," said Dhioubou. "We didn't come to mess up America. We're working here. I've been a citizen for 15 years. I want the best for America. God bless America," he said.

* * *

Many longtime residents of Beardstown welcome the diversity.

"We would never have heard Mexican music 10 years ago. Now it is commonplace to hear different ethnic music," said Wyatt Sager, 48, a lifelong Beardstown resident who is the Cass County death examiner. "Beardstown has a much greater world scope now than it did 10 years ago."

Sager and his wife, Trish, own the town's largest funeral home, so their most personal encounters with Hispanic families have been during moments of profound sadness.

They still remember the first Hispanic parents who asked them to ship their child's body home. Their 17-year-old boy had died of cancer. "He had come up here hoping our medicine could save him, but it couldn't," Sager said.

He and his wife drove the body to Chicago themselves, and they got transit permits in English and Spanish stamped by the Mexican consulate. They saw firsthand the anguish a Mexican family experiences and the arduous process they face in sending a body home.

Now, they understand "that horrible hurt and how separated they must feel from their cultural background."

It bothers the Sagers when their friends in Jacksonville and Rushville tell them "you've just become a little Mexico down there."

"I've heard it so much. The quiet criticism of them as people," said Sager. "No one has the right to criticize someone for who they are. It should almost be taken as a compliment that people chose our community as the bright spot in their lives. That's what I tell people when they say that."

* * *

Even people in Beardstown who've come to care about their Hispanic neighbors are bothered by the fact that they're violating U.S. immigration laws. American residents are uncomfortable with the laws that force people into a shadow world and they are uncomfortable with the people who live there.

The problem came into sharp focus in June, when dozens of federal agents swept into Beardstown and arrested 12 Hispanics for selling birth certificates and Social Security numbers to Excel workers. Charges were dropped against four of the people, but five others have pleaded guilty. Three more are awaiting trial on the charges, which carry a maximum penalty of five years to 15 years in prison.

Walters said his "hope is that the arrests will not only send a message to illegals who come here but to Excel about its hiring practices. They play in the gray area. They don't violate the law, but they sure don't play by the book, either."

Excel refused repeated requests over the past seven months for a face-to-face interview with a company official. But the company said in a written statement that, "like other businesses, we follow the government's I-9 requirements for verifying employment eligibility."

The mayor said he has repeatedly asked immigration officials to check the plant for undocumented workers. Longtime Excel employees said agents haven't questioned workers at the plant for immigration violations since 1995.

"We've invited them to come down here several times. They told us they don't have the resources. Beardstown doesn't seem to warrant a lot of attention," Walters said. "The truth of the

matter is that they could come down here on any given day and put up a roadblock and Excel would have trouble operating the plant."

Six immigration agents are responsible for a vast area that stretches the length of Illinois, from Rockford at northern border to the tiny town of Cairo at the state's southern tip, Beardstown Police Chief Tom Schlueter said. "That spreads them kind of thin."

Greg Archambeault, resident agent in charge of the Springfield office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, declined to comment on the number of agents in the area, but he denied that limited resources are forcing the agency to overlook some employers.

"We're interested in any case that comes across our desk. We do have the resources that we need and we do investigate any violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

"Of course," he said, "our main focus is anti-terrorism and apprehending the most dangerous criminals that might be in the country."

From where Walters sits, the United States has an immigration policy that is disconnected from reality. The laws on the books no longer seem to apply to a nation that depends on immigrant laborers to do its toughest and most dangerous jobs.

Immigration officials estimate that 7 million undocumented workers lived in the United States in the year 2000. The states with the largest increases were California, Arizona, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina and Illinois.

"Personally, I have no problem with Hispanics being here as long as they're legal," Walters said. "The Hispanics are trying to make a better living for themselves and their families. You can't fault them for that. And I don't. But let's do it the right way."

As long as the current immigration laws are on the books, the fear of being sent back home will always be present.

After the June raid, some undocumented workers moved away. The ones who stayed are worried that patrols by immigration agents will become a regular occurrence in Beardstown, like they are in other meatpacking towns.

For a decade, Beardstown "has been a small corner of refuge.

"People felt secure here," said the Rev. Alvarez.

Now, he's concerned that too much attention has been drawn to this isolated town.

"At any moment the INS could show up," he said. "I expect them to come again."

* * *

There is stability in Beardstown now, but it is a fragile stability propped up by one large employer, a partially undocumented work force and uneasy residents.

Excel is likely to increase its production over the next five years, bringing hundreds of new Hispanic workers to town. But Beardstown residents also worry Excel could close after 20 years of operation - just like Oscar Mayer did - destroying the gains this community has made.

Not too long ago, the mayor of a town in downstate Illinois asked Walters for advice. Hispanics were beginning to move into her town and she didn't know how to confront the challenges that lay ahead.

But Walters said most mayors of all-white towns are avoiding the issue. The matter wasn't even on the agenda at a recent Illinois Municipal League conference in Chicago.

"They always believe it'll happen every place but in their hometown," Walters said. "It's probably the same mentality that we had at one time."

Walters believes America's heartland will have to find ways to deal with the new cultures, lifestyles and beliefs because the change is irreversible.

"If a genie would jump out of a bottle and ask me if I'd like to have it the same way as 15 years ago, damn right I would," Walters said. "But that's not reality."

APPENDIX FOUR

MIAMI HERALD AND OTHER STORIES

Primary texts are from the Miami Herald. A series of ten stories that all ran on April 23, 2000. The series won the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news reporting in 2001. The citation said the series won “for its balanced and gripping on-the-scene coverage of the pre-dawn raid by federal agents that took the Cuban boy Elian Gonzalez from his Miami relatives and reunited him with his Cuban father.”

<http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/2001-Breaking-News-Reporting>

Secondary texts are:

The Washington Post, “Raid Reunites Elian and Father; U.S. Agents Seize Boy From Relatives and Fly Him Here; Protests Erupt in Miami,” April 23, 2000, (Sunday, Final Edition, by Karen DeYoung, Section A, Page A01)

The Washington Post, “Moment at Gunpoint Yields Searing Image,” by David A. Vise. (April 23, 2000, Sunday, Final Edition. Section A. Page A01)

The New York Times. “The Elian Gonzalez Case: The Scene; Police Fire Tear Gas as Hundreds of Angry Protesters Take to the Streets in Miami.” BY Juan Forero and Felicity Barringer (April 23, 2000. Sunday. Late Edition – Final. Section 1, Page 17. Column 1. National Desk.)

The New York Times. “The Elian Gonzalez Case: The Overview; Cuban Boy Seized by U.S. Agents Reunited with his Father.” By Rick Bragg. (April 23, 2000. Sunday. Late Edition – Final. Section 1. Page 1. Column 6. National Desk)

The New York Times. “The Elian Gonzalez Case: The Community; Little Havana Ponders Life without Cuban Boy Cast in its Anti-Castro Drama.” By Juan Ferero. Cuban Boy Seized by U.S. Agents Reunited with his Father.” By Rick Bragg. (April 24, 2000. Monday. Late Edition – Final. Section A. Page 22. Column 1. National Desk)