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Sticks and Stones Can Break My Bones,
but Words Can Mold My Society:

How metaphors influence the immigration debate in Spain

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Honors Senior Project
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INTRODUCTION

Two different worlds converge on the Strait of Gibraltar, that of two continents and that of two religions. Yet despite the strait's relatively short distance of only 14 kilometers, the cultural proximity between Spain and Morocco seems even closer as thousands of immigrants arrive in southern Spain each year from North Africa. Many come from Sub-Saharan Africa and have spent years waiting in Tangiers or outside Ceuta and Melilla to cross the border; if they are lucky, they will "jump" the fences and enter Spain through the Moroccan enclaves. Others, however, save enough money to hire a guide to ferry them across the strait in *pateras*. These boats are usually filled to more than double their capacity, however, and often travel in bad weather when getting caught by officials is less likely. It is all-too-common to read about African bodies washing ashore along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. Yet the hardships that these immigrants face is often overlooked because Spaniards are becoming more protective of their jobs, homes, and homogeneous culture.

I became personally interested with the relationship between immigrants and Spaniards in the fall of 2004 when I moved to Cádiz, in south-west Spain to study Spanish for a year. Within the first month, a local friend casually mentioned how 15 dead immigrants had washed up on a beach several miles south of Cádiz the previous spring. This concept was exceedingly difficult for me to understand, yet for most Spaniards it is common news. People were risking their lives in front of my very eyes and this was something I could not ignore.

From that day forward, I took a keen interest in learning about the lives of these immigrants who left their families, their countries, and risked everything for the possibility of a better life. Why did they leave? What must their journey have been like? What did they encounter when they arrived in Spain, if they arrived at all? I began to open my eyes to the Nigerians selling illegal copies of pop CD's in the narrow streets. Their toil in the underground economy was cruelly contrasted with the tourist atmosphere of southern Spain. I became aware of the masses of European exchange students who bought the illegal CD's the Nigerian men sold in the streets. They, like me, would return home after a year of bar-hopping and sun-bathing. Yet these *estudiantes gracious* were affectionately called *guiris*, never immigrants. And even though many African immigrants also returned home, usually after several years, they were always referred to as immigrants, a difference that reflected the general distinction that many Spaniards made between Europeans and non-Europeans.

Outraged at these injustices, I began my search for organizations that helped immigrants. They had to exist, I told myself, because I read about them in the newspapers. But the phonebook spoke nothing of them and my neighbors and professors knew even less. Finally, after several weeks of questioning, and a month volunteering with OXFAM International, I was directed to a local, grassroots organization that provided resources to immigrants and educational workshops in the local schools. They helped immigrants find work, locate housing, learn Spanish, and legally contest the abuse of their rights. Like many other *ACOGÉ* organizations in southern Spain, this small NGO, run by a Brazilian immigrant married to a Spaniard, was funded by the Spanish government.

More than happy to add me to their modest team, CEAIN (Centro de Acogida de Inmigrantes) asked me to join a group that was doing multicultural education workshops in the local elementary schools. Later, I was asked to tutor a Polish immigrant who spoke no Spanish and very little English. Over the next several months, I was delighted to see his Spanish improve because it helped him cope with the changes and challenges he had been presented with. During the spring, I began to accumulate the stories of many kinds of immigrants, not just those from Africa, but from Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe, as well. After traveling to Morocco myself in February and August and witnessing the injustices of the third world, my interest in helping protect the rights of immigrants grew and changed.

I began to question how Spaniards and European "foreigners" could live in the midst of immigrants struggling to survive with hardly a second thought to their suffering. They saw these people in the streets, in their neighborhoods, in the *panaderías*, but it was as if they were invisible. Despite the "real live" immigrants before their very eyes, Spaniards all around me used words that painted an image of immigrants that was inhuman. Just as I was shocked by the fact that I was called a *guiro* and my Chilean friend Fresia was always an *inmigrante*, I was compelled to understand what imagery dominated modern discourse surrounding immigration. I began to investigate how words influenced Spanish beliefs about the immigrants that arrived in increasing proportions. Not surprisingly, I have found that the words and images that help to perpetuate fear toward and exclusion of immigrants formed the large majority of that discourse.

In this paper, I make special reference to the use of metaphor in simplifying one's understanding of the complexities of immigration. The most common kinds of metaphor used in discourse related to immigration help to create fear, drastically simplify a complex issue, or dehumanize immigrants. Talking of immigrant invasions and avalanches, Spain as the policeman protecting the portal to Europe, or immigrants as merchandise are some examples. To understand the metaphors, however, I must first mention those key pieces of Spanish history that relate to immigration today and how they play a role in the use of language.

HISTORY IS REVEALING

Present-day Spain has been a *crisol de culturas* for centuries. Beginning with the Iberians, Celts, and Carthaginians, as early as 1000 BC followed by the Romans in the third century, the demographics and languages of Spain have been influenced by "invasions" of immigrants. The Romans, however, are never referred to in the text books as invaders; they are the people who brought an advanced legal system, sophisticated architecture, Christianity, and the language base from which Spanish, Portuguese, Catalán and Gallego are derived. The migrations of Germanic tribes and Moorish people from North Africa, on the other hand, ARE referred to as invasions. The *Reconquista*, or re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula on the part of the Christian kingdoms in response to the *invasión de los moros* began in 718 and ended in 1492 with the expulsion of *los moros* from Granada and the formation of a single Christian kingdom. The ideology of the Reconquista is old, however, but not distant. In fact, the *Reconquista* is in many ways present in modern thought, especially in the rhetoric of

the right. The migration of North Africans, for example, is still called the *invasión de los moros*.

MEMORY OF BEING A "PUEBLO DE EMIGRANTES"

After the *Reconquista*, the "discovery" of the "new" world, the grand empire "en que nunca se ponía el sol," and the eventual decline of this empire, Spaniards began to leave the peninsula. The fact that Spain has a history of being "un pueblo emigrante", however, helps us understand the friction surrounding immigration in Spain today (Ismael Serrano). In the 18th century, Spaniards immigrated to American colonies, especially Argentina and Cuba and continued to emigrate from Spain in the 20th century because of the civil war (1936-1939) and the fascist dictatorship under Francisco Franco (1939-1975). During this period, artists, intellectuals, and politicians emigrated for both political and economic reasons creating the *España en exilio*, Spanish communities in Latin America, the United States, and Northern Europe. There is a "memoria agradecida" that has created a feeling of indebtedness for those family members who were welcomed abroad during times of political and economic hardship (Buezas 1995: 139). This "deuda histórica con los países americanos... [la] segunda patria" may continue to influence feelings toward Latin-American immigrants versus North African immigrants, for example (Buezas 1995: 139).

ECONOMIC GROWTH: THE RISING TIDE OF IMMIGRANTS

Since the late 60's, though, Spain has converted itself from *un pueblo emigrante* to the destination of foreign immigrants. Not only have the Spanish *comunidades en exilio* begun to return, but there are now inflows from both the "first" and "third world." This is

especially due to Spain's recent economic growth which has occurred in three phases in the late 20th century. The first happened during the dictatorship itself in the early 1970's when the regime decided to end its isolationist policies by opening its borders to tourism and foreign investment. Following Franco's death between 1976 and 1985, Spain's economy "desarrolló una dinámica de crisis" (Angel 2002), but experienced a second economic boom between 1986 and 1991. This was in large part caused by joining the European Union in 1986 when Spain became the "largest net recipient of EU aid;" this obviously provided Spain with an important monetary impulse to jumpstart its economy (Crawford, 2004). Despite a period of economic downturn in the early 1990's, Spain's economy began "un nuevo ciclo expansivo" (Angel 2002) in 1994 which has continued to the present day. This economic *despliegue* combined with an aging population and record low birthrates are "calling" immigrants to work in Spain. They mainly settle where there is work: in the industrial areas of Madrid and Cataluña (with a combined total of 47% of the immigrants) and the agricultural centers of Andalucía and la Comunidad Valenciana (with 22% of the immigrants) (Angel 2004: 33).

IMMIGRANT DEMOGRAPHICS

On the other hand, northern Europeans who search for *el sol español* for vacation and retirement purposes are mostly found in *las Islas Baleares, las Islas Canarias, la Comunidad Valenciana, and Andalucía*. Even though the Northern Europeans, "europeos jubilados" (Angel 2002) initially composed the largest category of immigrants to Spain, this is no longer the case. With increasing numbers of immigrants from impoverished nations, it is

important to distinguish between those immigrants who come to Spain as *inmigrantes de lujo, del norte* and those that come from *el sur* with the intention of working. During the 1980's, the economy "demandaba masivamente mano de obra para la industria y los servicios" (Angel 2002),) and consequently "la inmigración del Sur despegaba a partir de 1985" (Angel 2002). In any case, despite "un crecimiento exponencial" (Angel 2002), it is not until 1997 that "los inmigrantes del «Sur» se convirtieron en mayoritarios" (Angel 2002) of the population of immigrants. Today, "las nacionalidades más numerosas son Ecuador y Marruecos" (Angel 2004: 40). But, because "el fenómeno migratorio es, casi por definición, cambiante", the demographics of immigrants are constantly changing (Angel 2002). Illegal immigrants are rising in number, arriving to Spain through the North African enclaves Ceuta and Melilla, by crossing the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco, or leaving from the African coast for the Canary Islands in *patera*. Additionally, since the inclusion of the 10 new members in 2004 to the European Union, the number of Eastern European immigrants is also beginning to rise; they now represent 21.2% of the total immigrants in Spain (Angel 2004: 40).

This varied and ever-changing *flujo* of immigrants makes the immigrant "problem" a complex issue. The white immigrants from Northern and Eastern Europe encounter fewer problems in the way they are treated and become assimilated. Latin Americans have the next "easiest time" because they do not pose as much as a "social problem" as those from Africa; they already speak the language (barring Brazilians) and come from the Catholic tradition. Immigrants from Islamic North Africa (especially Morocco) and Sub-Saharan Africa

encounter the biggest obstacles because of the starker differences in their appearance, language, religion and culture.

SPAIN'S TOLERANCE

Despite the increasing numbers of immigrants from all origins, however, Spain has remained one of the most tolerant countries in Europe, after Switzerland, Denmark, Finland and Norway (Angel 2005: 8). Similarly, Spain has successfully managed to avoid the emergence of anti-immigrant political parties. This may be attributed to the democratic transition, since which political ideologies that resemble fascism (i.e. intolerant attitudes toward immigrants) are socially unacceptable. There has been a "preocupación mostrada por el Parlamento Europeo...sobre el avance del fascismo y el racismo en Europa" (Angel 2005, 7), especially in Spain given its not-so-distant dictatorship. In any case, increasing numbers of *sinpapeles* from North and Sub-Saharan Africa are beginning to foment social tension.

PROOF OF SOCIAL TENSIONS

This tension has manifested itself in the form of political legislation and social unrest. For example, *La Ley de Extranjería* ratified in 2000 "trata de regular los derechos y obligaciones de los extranjeros...y distingue entre sin papeles e inmigrantes" (El País). In effect, however, the new legislation complicates the process that illegal immigrants must go through in order to acquire legal work papers, "limita los derechos de los inmigrantes...y les impide el ejercicio de los derechos sociales como la asociación, la sindicación y la huelga" (Amnesty Internacional). Social unrest is visible through discrimination, even violence. In early 2000 in the southern agricultural town of El Ejido, the police arrested a Moroccan for

"presuntamente" killing a 26 year old Spanish woman. Hundreds of Spaniards reacted in revenge, "quemando vehículos y carnicerías pertenecientes a los inmigrantes y dañando una mezquita" (Termina). In this case, the media played a crucial role in fanning the coals into a roaring bonfire by emphasizing the assassin's immigrant identity, referring to the murder as being the fault of an immigrant, "asesinada...por un inmigrante" instead of a person with a name (Grupos 2000). Because the media only identified him as a faceless immigrant, the Spaniards directed their revenge at the entire immigrant population of El Ejido. With respect to social unrest, the use of certain words plays an important role in igniting "disturbios raciales" against immigrants (Termina).

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORDS

Yet we often fail to recognize how important words really are. The childhood rhyme *sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me* articulates how little importance we place on words as a society. Actions may speak louder than words but it is through words that we understand our world and in turn are understood. We are able to do this because words simplify an otherwise infinitely complex world into a much simpler schema of metaphors. These metaphors are the basis of language and of understanding. In this paper, I refer to George Lakoff's contemporary theory of conceptual metaphor which explains metaphors to be a simpler representation of a similar phenomenon. For example, life is often represented metaphorically as a journey because it has a beginning, an end, the road is tough, we are on a path, etc. Another metaphor may compare the United States to *one* heroic "good guy" fighting tyrannical Iraq, represented by one "evil" villain, Saddam

Hussein. The problem with metaphors, however, is that they naturally cannot embody the full complexity of the concepts they represent. Obviously using the representation of the evil villain Saddam Hussein for Iraq hides the intricacies of US-Iraqi-Middle East relations. The truth of the matter, however, is that such a simple representation of the complex reality allows people not to think; they use the metaphor without realizing that it does not represent the whole issue. According to Lakoff, metaphors are "something that most people read but never notice" and most times use without conscious effort (Powell 2003). Many times, metaphors aid in a rapid exchange of ideas. But other times, it can be unsettling to know that people hear and use metaphors without realizing the complexity they hide, especially in the case of politics or immigration.

For example, in the case of Spanish immigration, it is common to read about the *waves* of immigrants which threaten to inundate Spain. Here, the wave metaphor represents the concept of human migration through a set of water-related images. This representation, however, obviously does not represent the *whole* reality of immigration, a phenomenon which includes such complexities as international legislation, economic and political forces, a history of colonialism, and the individual goals and experiences of each immigrant and Spaniard. Nevertheless, it is clearly easier to understand migrations of immigrants through a metaphor than by trying to comprehend all of the intertwined complexities.

The media and politicians take advantage of broad and poorly representative metaphors in their discourse. Often they use metaphors, such as inundations or invasions of immigrants to provoke fear which helps to sell their media or further a political agenda. In

turn, metaphors which provoke fear many times are adopted by those people who live closest to the immigrants and perhaps *do* feel threatened by their presence. The closer the "native" population is to the immigrant population, the greater the fear, the greater the racism, and the faster these fear-provoking metaphors are spread. With deep curiosity, it is of these metaphors, fear-provoking as well as dehumanizing, that I have completed my research.

THE METAPHORS THEMSELVES

In my own investigations of the use of language surrounding Spanish immigration, I have used primary sources from the Spanish media and secondary sources written by anthropologists and sociologists, as well as immigrants and Spanish citizens themselves. I have noticed that current discourse uses negative, fear-provoking metaphors as well as positive metaphors which seek to bring about solidarity, understanding, and equal rights for immigrants. Unfortunately, however, it is also true that because negative metaphors spread faster and more effectively, they are more commonly used. In my research, I created five categories of metaphors, beginning with broader forces and then narrowing to more specific aspects associated with immigration. These categories are: the act of immigration, immigrant integration and solutions to immigration, the global causes of immigration, Spain's role as an immigrant receiver, and the immigrants themselves.

IMMIGRATION as a concept: THE BIG PICTURE

To begin, I will discuss the general concept of immigration which is most often compared to images of water. In the majority of newspaper articles, the movement of immigrants as people is referred to as the *flujo*. Similarly a *tide* of immigrants gives us the

negative impression that masses of immigrants are arriving all at once. For example, because the numbers of immigrants in the Canary Islands are increasing in an exponential fashion, we read about how waves of immigrants "hit the canaries." This invokes the image of a massive, destructive, and violent arrival of many people at once. With respect to labor, it is common to read that "immigrants are channeled" into jobs, as if they were water. In a similar way, the use of *avalancha* or *penetración incontrolada* gives us the sense that masses of immigrants inundate Spain all at once (Ángel 2005: 20). These metaphors compare immigrants to a homogeneous group of water molecules which creates fear and also dehumanizes each individual immigrant.

Different metaphors demonize the migrations of people into Spain. Perhaps linked with the invasion of *los moros* in the eighth century, immigration especially from North Africa is characterized as a massive invasion. The portrayal of Spain as a victim that is unable to control the forced arrival of unwanted invaders is a poor representation of the complex situation. Not only is Spain's economy based on immigrant labor, but the idea of a massive violent invasion is not happening now, nor is it likely to happen in the future. For example, they talked about a massive invasion from Eastern Europe with "la caída del muro Berlin, y nunca pasó" (Pérez). Nor has an Eastern European "invasion" happened since the EU expansion in 2004. Similarly, political rhetoric often links immigrants with terrorism, especially since 9/11 in New York and 3/11 in Madrid. These demonizing metaphors cause Spaniards to fear increased immigration, especially from North Africa and other Islamic nations, and perhaps make them feel that they need to protect themselves from evil invaders.

In a similar fashion, newspapers evoke a sense of a violent, forceful, and unwanted entry by using the metaphor of a battle. Spain needs to "[fight] illegal immigration" because immigrants are assaulting the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Trevelyan 2006). This use of language provokes images of unwanted entry, penetration, invasion, and war. Adjectives like *massive* promote even more fear because they bring to mind enormous, uncontrollable quantities of immigrants.

Yet even though Spaniards may fear a demographic invasion, some also dread a cultural invasion. On a cultural level, some see that "la cultura occidental es [también] amenazada por la inmigración" (Crisol, 44). Some people from the right believe that their culture is threatened by new immigrant cultures because los "nuevos bárbaros...no respeten [su] cultura" (Ángel 2005: 26). Spain, like other European countries, is becoming more protective of its cultural homogeneity. Northern countries like Spain are described as being "homogéneamente rico" while southern countries are "homogéneamente pobre" (Pérez). For some, the threatening arrival of new cultures upsets their precariously balanced homogenous culture in a negative way.

Similarly, some Spaniards see that new and different cultures are difficult to integrate into the larger Spanish matrix. It may be, however, that integration is not easily achieved because the definition of what it means to be integrated is particularly vague. As more immigrants arrive and the number of second generation immigrants grows, it becomes "cada vez más difícil definir qué es integrarse exactamente" (Pérez). Even though integration is an

ambiguous goal that seems impossible to achieve, it is compared metaphorically to an immigrant's simple insertion into society.

In reality, however, integration is not so simple. There are many levels of integration which range from the complete adoption of the host culture to the complete rejection of the host culture and everything in between. When we read that an immigrant is inserted into society, we perhaps compare society or the working world to a book in which the immigrant, the page of the book, is inserted. It may imply that the page, the immigrant, must also look like the other pages of the book, Spain. An immigrant, however, is most likely never going to become a carbon copy of a Spaniard because he will conserve his physical appearance and many cultural beliefs, practices and language. Such an oversimplified metaphor for the complex process of integration may leave the receiving population feeling frustrated that immigrants will never become integrated into Spanish society.

Implying the impossibility of integration, there is the metaphor of a *choque cultural*, the physically brusque meeting of two different cultures. This negative image of coexistence even implies failure. From cultural clash and confrontation to cultural tension, the idea of cultural *mestizaje* is portrayed as "un gran desafío," even "una gangrena fatal" (Sánchez 2005, 44). Integration is even seen as impossible in some cases. Some cultures are "mutuamente incompatibles;" it would be like mixing water and oil (Angel 2005: 22). For many Spaniards, cultural incompatibility has to do with one's religion, especially with respect to Islam. For example, many see Islam to be a "radical religion," even dangerous to their Catholic tradition. Given that the percentage of Muslim immigrants is growing, it is more

difficult for some Spaniards to imagine successful integration. Many see an integrated immigrant as someone who has completely denounced Islam and converted to a western, Christian lifestyle. Yet because this is an unlikely prospect for the majority of immigrants, many Spaniards are left feeling frustrated and doubtful. On a positive note, however, there is increasing tolerance for multiculturalism, especially on the part of the youth. Fortunately, the goal of multiculturalism can be achieved much easier than the ambiguous goal of integration.

Other solutions in to the "immigrant problem" are sometimes compared to "recetas" (Vilaseró). This representation is unfortunately over-simplified because it implies that by combing a list of ingredients and by following the directions, one will solve the immigrant problem. We know that no such recipe exists, or will ever exist. Another metaphor uses the idea of *antídotos* to cure Spain of its immigrant illness, implying that immigration is a sickness; this may create fear (Vilaseró). These metaphors oversimplify possible solutions to the challenges that immigration poses. In summary, we see that in large part, the metaphors concerning the act of immigration, integration and solutions to the "immigrant problem," commonly provoke fear and consequently hinder the adoption of positive images associated with immigration.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The media and politicians use metaphors that emphasize the differences between receiving and "sending" countries when they talk about immigration on a global scale. With little thought, the average person also uses phrases like *el tercer mundo* or *el mundo*

subdesarrollado, subtly implying the huge physical distance – worlds in fact – that lies between the rich countries that receive immigrants and the “undeveloped” countries that send them. Apart from conjuring an image of enormous physical distance, however, *subdesarrollado* also quietly implies the “superioridad de la modernidad occidental” (Ángel 2005: 21). The countries with extreme political and economic hardships suffer from a “desierto improductivo” (la revuelta). In some small way, these words may give us the feeling that these countries, and their people, are *menos desarrollados*. This attitude of cultural and economic superiority creates psychological distance between Spaniards and immigrants.

The media also emphasizes the demographic differences that cause immigration: the push and pull factors. Specifically, rising demographic levels in ‘the third world’ propel immigrants northward. We read about the mushrooming populations, demographic pressure, and demographic saturation. The violent and stressful image of the *bomba demográfica* creates fear because of the possibility that the source that seems to be sending immigrants *sin fin*, may eventually explode. Spain on the other hand, as well as most other European countries, is compared to an *anciano*. Its regressing fertility rates and increasing numbers of elders implies a lack of fertility and productivity that must be satisfied by young and fertile immigrant populations.

This demographic crisis in Spain coupled with the favorable economic situation that has left gaps in undesirable economic sectors has created the “the pull effect” (Newbold 2002: 89). It acts like a magnet that attracts immigrants who are searching for a better life

in the "modern" world. Additionally, the media paints an unrealistic picture of what life will be like in Spain. This *efecto llamado* implies that Spain is actively petitioning immigrants to come to Spain by emphasizing and idealizing the economic prosperity that awaits them there.

Unfortunately, the idealized life that is promised to many immigrants is not what they actually encounter in Spain. This is largely because an immigrant may never himself feel Spanish. The concept of Spanish national identity is complex and the metaphors associated with national borders create further segregation between Spaniards and immigrants within Spain itself. For example, Spain is often compared to a closed container or a box in an egocentric way; they protect *their* space and do not mix with the outside. When considering Spain's complicated history of colonialism, however, it makes no sense to think of Spain as an isolated identity with no connection to other nations; it has caused many of the problems leading to Latin America's social unrest for example. Liberal viewpoints talk of opening Spain's "box" in a need for "sociedades abiertas" in our ever-globalizing world (Sánchez 2005: 49). Positive or negative, however, the metaphor of the box too easily divides a complex and interconnected world and dispels the subtle connections Spain shares with other nations. Additionally, this metaphor, like so many others, creates fear that the walls that protect Spain, the walls of the box, will be penetrated by unsolicited immigration.

SPAIN: EURO-COP

As a character in the European melodrama of immigration, Spain plays a particularly important metaphorical role. Because of its geographic proximity to North Africa, Spain has been "cast in the role of 'police man of Southern Europe'" (Cornelius). The country is a

watchman who keeps an "uneasy watch on the poor populations of North Africa" (Newbold 2002: 116) and the imminent explosion of the demographic bomb that will send uncontrollable tidal waves of immigrants to the shores of Andalucía: what a melodrama! Spain's role is important in its "empeño por poner fronteras a los inmigrantes" to protect the country, and the EU, from the criminal-like invaders: the immigrants (Pérez). It is clear that this portrayal does not embody all the complex factors of immigration. Similarly, it is not fair to represent an entire country with one figure because Spanish political opinion is not unified in this way.

From another point of view, Spain is also conceived as the door to Europe which is represented by a house that has finite space and is already overcrowded. Portrayed as the *gateway to Europe*, however, the doors are either open or closed but never left half ajar (Newbold 2002: 91). This creates a black and white image to immigration policies; there is not just one "door" or entry into Spain, nor is the door just open or closed to all immigrants. Immigration policies are much more complicated than this. Many immigrants find the door flung open to them while others find it slammed in their faces. Others still find that it takes years to pass through the portal. In any case, the metaphor poorly represents immigration policies and may mislead people into thinking that such legislation is so simple. And in closing, we see that the metaphors associated with Spain's role in the immigration phenomenon, namely the euro-cop and door images do not represent the complexities of Spanish politics and legislation.

INMIGRANTES: Olé or get away???

As we continue to narrow our focus, the metaphors that refer to the *población autóctona* and its views of immigrants come into focus. There are both positive and negative images that represent Spanish public opinion, although the negative ones are what are most often heard. While the positive images are generally a product of nongovernmental organizations or universities, the negative images “se nutra[n] por varios ingredientes... [entre ellos] los medios de comunicación” (Ángel 2005: 2). The “problem” of immigration falls slightly below unemployment and terrorism, taking third place as a national worry (*El Mundo: La inmigración preocupa* 2005).

Yet through all this discourse, the biggest problem may be that the immigrant identity is poorly defined. Who is considered an immigrant? Whereas a retired German living in Mallorca is just as much an immigrant as a Nigerian working in Madrid, Spaniards will most likely still refer to the German as an *extranjero* or *guiiri* because he is an “inmigrante de lujo” (Sánchez 2005: 42). On the other hand, anyone with darker skin and non-European roots is referred to as an *inmigrante*, even if he is a Moroccan who is much richer than a European university exchange student. On the other hand, if an immigrant coming from the “third world” has something valuable to contribute to Spanish society, like athletic prowess or exotic music, he may cease to be labeled as a nameless immigrant. For those famous athletes and musicians, the term immigrant is not applied; “nadie llama inmigrante a Ronaldo” (Para). For the rest, however, they may forever be labeled the faceless *inmigrante*, even if they were born in Europe to immigrant parents. Often nationality is based one’s parents’ identity, and not one’s birthplace (Loucky 2006: 7).

Being labeled *inmigrante* brings with it a plethora of other connotations. The receiving population often demonizes immigrants with claims that they are job thieves, idle, lazy, uneducated, and use up social funds (Newbold 2002: 115). In general, however, these accusations are ungrounded. For example, "por cada euro que los inmigrantes reciben de la seguridad social, ingresan 2.5" (*El Mundo: "La inmigración no supone"* 2003). What is more, many immigrants are also highly educated, some of the finest intellectuals from their countries of origin. The negative images associated with an immigrant's lack of work ethic and education help to perpetuate prejudices toward immigrants.

Perhaps the most problematic of immigrant perceptions, however, is the idea that they are aggressive criminals. It comes from the politicians, especially the conservative political parties like *El Partido Popular* (Ángel 2005: 28) which tend to link immigration with crime, social conflict, and poverty (Cornelius). Both Mariano Rajoy and José María Aznar from *El Partido Popular* have linked immigration with increased crime (Ángel 2005: 12). Additionally, mass media also portrays the immigrant as a social delinquent. When they talk about criminals, "los medios de comunicación destacan la raza" or the fact that they are immigrants (Buezas 1990: 14). It is common to read that *un suramericano* or *un joven marroquí* committed a certain crime, although there may be no reference to his identity apart from being an immigrant. This image has convinced Spaniards; "60% de los españoles relacionan la inmigración con la delincuencia" (*El Mundo: "El 60%"* 2002) and "39% de los universitarios dice que hay un vínculo entre la inmigración y la delincuencia" (*El Mundo: "Un 39%"* 2001).

Luckily, there are outspoken individuals, especially from universities, who try to dispel the metaphor of the immigrant as the criminal. It is true that perhaps the percentage of immigrants who commit small crimes is higher than in the receiving population, but “la delincuencia trata del clasicismo” porque “los segmentos más bajos están abocados a transgredir ciertas reglas” (Pérez). Crime is more commonly linked to one’s social class, not one’s origins. Yet in the public sphere, politicians and the media look for *el culpable*, the scapegoat. In this way, the immigrant becomes the easy explanation for crime in society, scaring the receiving population into voting for more conservative legislation that maintains distance between immigrants and Spaniards.

But does the existence of conservative legislation mean that Spaniards are racist? Not necessarily, although there are some that say that the greatest racism in Spain is directed at gypsies, followed by Arabs, sub-Saharan black Africans, black Latin Americans, Latin American Indians, etc. (Buezas 1995: 543). The obstacle here, as we have already seen with the ambiguous terms *integration* and *immigrant*, is that racism is difficult to define. According to Tomás Calvo Buezas, a social anthropologist at La Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spaniards bring to mind the atrocities of Nazi concentration camps or African American lynching when they define racism, arriving at the conclusion that “son los otros que son racistas, no lo somos nosotros.” Genocide and lynching are obviously outlying extremes of racism on a continuum of racism, however. But there is no good metaphor that represents the varying grades of racism that exist in every society. In Spain, the grades of racism range from someone who would not marry one of the “undesirable races” to another

person who would expel the "intruders" from Spain. It is true that "no es lo mismo hablar mal de los gitanos que llevarles por miles a los hornos crematorios," but both are forms of racism (Buezas 1995: 97). Buezas suggests a metaphor which compares racism to stairs, each step being a different degree of racism (Buezas 1995: 97- 98). Because there we lack a GOOD metaphor to refer to the varying grades of racism, however, Spaniards sometimes consider their behavior to be tolerant and acceptable, when perhaps it may not be.

People can be racist because they dehumanize immigrants by using language that creates distance from the suffering and inhumane conditions that many immigrants face. It is consequently easier for Spaniards to read about poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and even rape with little emotional investment. For example, one metaphor relates immigrants to merchandise. In this metaphor, the "first" world is compared to an immigrant importer of "stocks of illegal foreign workers" (Cornelius). They are compared to a *mano de obra* and as being *superfluous*, implying that there will always be more "hands of labor" to import if current resources become exhausted (Beck 2005). Immigrants themselves feel this dehumanization: "Sólo somos mercancía...con la que todos ganan dinero" (Mercancía). The word *sinpapeles* emphasizes the illegal nature of many immigrants' situation in Spain (Cornelius). They are not human beings, they are *illegal, clandestino*. Because these terms dehumanize immigrants by referring to them as merchandise, illegal, and clandestine, Spaniards can more easily distance themselves from the otherwise appalling conditions that immigrants endure in their countries of origin, on their path of migration, and often within Spain's borders.

Another obstacle that immigrants face reflects the ambiguity of what it means to be Spanish. Some Spaniards still debate whether *gypsies* "son españoles o no," and they arrived in Spain in the 15th century (Buezas 1995: 99). A second generation immigrant's birth in Spain does not actually guarantee him the same opportunities as a white middle-class Spaniard, especially if he has Islamic Moroccan or Nigerian parents. With respect to the riots in France in the fall of 2005, "se habla de los inmigrantes pero se olvidan de que son franceses" (Beck 2005). There "is semantic confusion over 1st and 2nd generation immigrant" (Solé: 316); "sería relevante hablar de los inmigrantes como ciudadanos" ("El 60% de los españoles 2002) but unfortunately, one's nationality in practice may not depend on where he is born. What is worse, and often not considered, is the identity of those children who are born on *el camino*. Many women become pregnant while migrating from Sub-Saharan Africa to Morocco and finally to Spain, sometimes a journey of several years. These children, apart from facing poverty and homelessness, have no national identity. But for nearly every immigrant as he begins to mix and blend old and new customs, the question of national identity is confusing. And because Spanish national identity is defined in such an ambiguous and exclusive way, immigrants feel more unsettled.

On a positive note, though, there are people who use metaphors that expose the injustices that immigrants face. As far as working conditions are concerned, one reads of "la economía sumergida" that resembles semi-slavery (Torres 2005: 13). This metaphor gives us the impression of a secret, inaccessible environment that has been hidden from the eye of government regulation and other "protections" that fit with our modern paradigm of

democracy: justice, law, and worker's rights. Humanitarians also frame the issue of immigrant rights as a *batalla*; one has to "luchar para" or "defender" the rights of immigrants (ATIME 2005). They talk of *derechos universales* for all people, not just *los autóctanos* (Angel 2005: 24). In any case, despite the help of immigrant allies, the large majority of metaphors used to talk about immigrants and immigration evoke fear-provoking imagery which consequently excludes immigrants from society.

CONCLUSIONS

Although there is room for progressive rhetoric in talk of immigration, it is all but absent. Those ideas that provoke fear are more "virulent;" they spread faster because they are catchier. Just as news of a terrorist attack would spread faster than the news of a local charity's donation, those images that "strikes fear in its host" spread faster and "infect" more people (Lynch 1996: 5). Fear triggers proselytizing and mass-propagation of an idea within a given population (5).

As we have seen, many of the fear-inspiring ideas are products of discourse from the conservative right that seeks to push its xenophobic agendas. In the United State, for example, conservatives have invested large amounts of money into think tanks that fine tune their ideas to be "catchier." Liberal, philanthropic organizations, on the other hand, prefer to not to use their money "for administration, communication, infrastructure, or career development" because all of the money has to "[go] to the cause" (Powell 2004). Even though there is room for progressive "frames" about immigration, it is difficult to "inject

humanitarian concerns based in compassion and empathy in to the [conservative] debate” (Lakoff 2006).

It is increasingly important, in both Europe and the United States, to notice that dominant conservative rhetoric takes only one point of view and consequently cannot represent other aspects of the immigration debate. How would it be possible to add other metaphorical frames? We have seen the humanitarian frame definitely exists. It seeks to uncover the injustices that immigrants face or the causes of immigration as a result of Spanish, as well as European and American colonialism. It would be beneficial for philanthropic and progressive organizations to invest resources into finding way to create progressive images surrounding immigration that are catchier. These could in turn be “injected” into the subjective rhetorical frame of metaphors that compare immigrants to a problem, criminals, and a drain of social resources. I daresay that an investment in creating catchier language for other progressive causes is necessary as well so that as a society we are not convinced that our “knight in shining armor” metaphor for foreign politics is justified and righteous.

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