THE PHYSICAL AND SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS OF THE U.S.-MEXICAN BORDER WALL

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ABSTRACT

The Physical and Symbolic Functions of the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall

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Nation-states across the world continuously construct thick barriers, wire fences, and inventive fortifications along their borders due to a variety of reasons. In response to this global trend, Reece Jones answers this question in his article "Why Do States Build Walls?" by offering three main reasons states build border walls: the establishment of national sovereignty, the protection of national wealth, and the protection of national culture. This thesis responds to the article by analyzing two distinct functions of modern border walls, the physical and the symbolic functions. I examine each of these functions within the context of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall using existing research by political theorists and political geographers. When discussing the establishment of national sovereignty through the construction of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, I find that the wall does physically and symbolically divide the two states of Mexico and the

United States, yet cannot successfully control migration across the border. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall struggles to control smuggling through its physical function. However, it symbolically protects national wealth by creating a distinction between the global north (United States) and the global south (Mexico). The solely symbolic function of the border wall in protecting the national wealth is intentional as the U.S. economy actually depends on migrant works in order to be successful. Finally, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is able to protect the national culture where it divides sister cities physically, but symbolically it defines who is included and excluded in American culture. Overall, I find that while the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall expresses both functions, neither function is substantial enough to warrant the cost of construction and upkeep of the border wall.

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INTRODUCTION

Nation-states across the world continuously construct thick barriers, wire fences, and inventive fortifications along their borders. In response to this phenomenon, this thesis asks the question: how does the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall function physically and symbolically? This paper is divided into three sections to answer this question, exploring both the physical and symbolic perspectives. The first section provides an analysis of the establishment/ re-establishment of national sovereignty. The second section presents an analysis of the protection of national wealth. The third section is an analysis of the protection of national culture. This paper will specifically identify each of these analyses within the context of the U.S.- Mexico Border Wall construction.

In 2016, President Donald Trump ran his presidential campaign on a promise to build a wall along the United States southern border. As mentioned above in this thesis, he emphasized the importance of national safety against criminal Mexicans. He stressed the need for a more robust, more durable, and longer border wall. While the southern border wall is a highly-debated issue, as of January 4th, 2020, the Trump Administration has successfully designated 15 billion dollars towards constructing the border wall. Only about one-third of this funding was approved by Congress, with the rest diverted from the Department of Defense. While he promised to build a wall along the entire length of the border, in reality, he rebuilt around 400 miles of the border and added 47 new miles to the border. In addition to the $15 billion in spending on constructing the wall along the southern border, in 2017, the Department of Homeland Security spent $274 million on maintaining the existing border wall. Given the cost of building the physical wall and the symbolic cost of increased xenophobia and racism due to the physical wall and rhetoric

surrounding it, it begs to ask the question of whether building the wall is worth it. The way that border walls are viewed changes how the nation-state exercises power at and around the border. The way we perceive and understand border walls is essential to study. As walls are increasingly constructed along borders, it is crucial to understand the impact of border walls on the nation-states themselves.

Literature Review

Since walls were built in response to different real or perceived threats, it is first necessary to distinguish between historical walls and the current walls. Walls function to divide spaces in various settings; for example, the protective walls of gated-communities or separating rooms in a house. For this paper, I will be using the term "wall" to describe political walls used to mark the borders of territories where one state possesses a monopoly of the legitimate use of power. The U.S.-Mexican Border Wall is not the only modern border structure; instead, it is among dozens of structures, fencings, and walls currently being built globally. The conventional understanding of a wall is a stone or concrete immovable barrier like the Great Wall or the Berlin Wall; however, modern walling is not necessarily constructed as such. While some walls are massive and thick concrete barriers, some are simple iron poles in the ground, some are chain-linked fence, and some include miles of barbed wire or desert on either side of the physical barrier; regardless, these all function as barriers and therefore fall under the category of "border wall." In this analysis, it is important to mark the distinction between original border walls' function versus the modern border walls' function because they all serve as barriers. However, the actual significance of the barrier function changed according to the historical-political contexts. A border wall's function is the specific action or goal the border wall is intended to accomplish.

In David Frye's 2018 book "Walls," covering the history and development of border walls, he gives a historical account of the origin and progression of border walls' construction. The first dated record of walls being built is the Wall of the Land in Ur some 4,000 years ago. Since then, walls have been built across civilizations, timelines, and continents. Pharaoh Amenemhat I built the Wall of Ruler circa 1900 B.C., Greeks built the Athenian wall circa 450 BC, in the 100s CE Hadrian's Wall was built, and in the 1400s C.E., the Great Wall of China began construction (Frye xi-xii). All of these walls span space and time, yet all are common in function. The first political walls were built as protective political boundaries to keep people out. In the pre-Westphalian order, borders were not internationally recognized, and states built the first walls to mark the end of the territory they were willing to defend. States, therefore, built border walls for the physical purpose of stopping intruders and marking the extent to which a territories' power extends.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, a significant global increase in the production of walls led a new wave of scholars to question, research, analyze and critique their construction and meaning. For this research, I predominately review the work of political theorists and political geographers. The border wall deals with sovereignty, borders, and building; these topics are typically discussed within the realm of political theorists and political geographers. In particular, they study and discuss border walls as they border political spaces and divide geographies. To organize the existing research concerning border walls, it is important to first look at the research concerning the borders on which these walls are built. In the 2002 book Politics and the Other Scene, Étienne Balibar, a contemporary French philosopher, suggests that the meaning of the word "border" is changing. It is no longer limited to where "politics ends because the community ends" (E. Balibar 92) but is dispersed inside the given territory wherever "the movement of

information people and things is happening and is controlled" (Balibar and Williams 71). He theorizes that borders are no longer the limits of the political but rather objects of the political. He explains that while the border's function is to preserve the state's sovereignty, this is no longer happening at the limit of the territory. Instead, the preservation function of the border is happening wherever there is movement of information or people. In response to this new notion about borders, scholars increasingly studied the change in the topological functions borders.

Mathew Coleman, a political geographer, coins the idea of a 'proxy geography' in his 2007 article A geopolitics of engagement: Neoliberalism, the war on terrorism, and the reconfiguration of U.S. immigration enforcement. He defines 'proxy geography' as a situation where immigration services and the government can stretch their power away from the border by the mutation and displacement of borders as well as building and combining them (Coleman 627). Coleman uses the example of the U.S.-Mexico Border to show his idea of "proxy government," which reaches into 'local' American cities and outward to 'regional' spaces like Mexico. He argues that this shift from border control at the border to 'proxy government' is due to "Washington's growing awareness of the 'security/economy nexus' at the Mexico-US Border" (Coleman 609). Coleman's argument is important because it highlights the construction of the U.S.-Mexico Border as a reaction to both the economy and security.

In the seventh chapter of the 2016 book Topographies of Power, John Allen, a geographer who studies the relationship between geography and power, expands on Coleman's argument to answer the question, "how does the sovereign authority of the state play out across such a vacillation and multiplication of borders, to draw upon Balibar's description of events?" (J. Allen 128). He claims the border "reproduces itself differently: not only within different spatial arrangements but also with varying degrees of intensity and presence" (J. Allen 129). In

response to Coleman, he argues that the 'proxy government' does not simply stretch from up high but rather in an "intensive exercise of power and authority" (J. Allen 130). Allen suggests that much of what is defined as being included vs. excluded no longer happens at the state border. The blurring of the separation from inside and outside a border is no longer exclusive but instead has "prompted topological description" through an intensive exercise of power (J. Allen 128). Allen uses the metaphor of the Möbius Strip and Klein Bottle to illustrate how today, the powers of inclusion and exclusion are reproduced away from the border through different (combined, indirect, and mediated) systems of authority/ ways to exercise authority. In Placing the Border in Everyday Life, published in 2014, Reese Jones and Corey Johnson approach the idea of bordering away from the border by looking at the practice of everyday bordering in the minds and lives of citizens. Their compiled anthology demonstrates that borders are reinforced away from the border both by state and non-state actors in everyday citizens' lives. While Jones theorizes in this book about borders and bordering practices, he focuses on walls and wall building in other works.

Scholars studying walls can be divided roughly into two areas of research: those studying walls who identify the purpose as controlling the flows of people and goods, and on the other hand, those studying walls who identify the purpose as a response to a global phenomenon other than controlling the flows of people and goods. In the first group, theorists like Ron Hassner, Jason Wittenberg, Reese Jones, Stéphane Rosière, and Carter and Post identify walls as a tool of border security to control the flow of people and goods specifically in response to the economy.

Ron Hassner and Jason Wittenberg, two professors of political science, analyze why states build "fortified boundaries" (which include the construction of walls) in their paper Barriers to Entry: Who builds fortified boundaries and why? They argue that fortified

boundaries, similar to that of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, are built by wealthy states to keep migrants out. They define fortified boundaries as "asymmetrical, physical barriers placed along borders" (Hassner and Wittenberg 158). They argue that some fortified boundaries may lead to a "blowback effect" on the building state but, in general, limit the flow of migrants by raising the cost of entrance across the border (Hassner and Wittenberg 183).

Reece Jones and Stéphane Rosière approach the topic of border walls as a response to global economic inequality stemming from state instability. In Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalization Through the Role of Walls and Fences, published in 2012, Reece Jones and Stéphane Rosière consider the trend toward the hardening of borders through the construction of border structures. They establish the emergence of "teichopolitics," the politics behind building barriers on borders for security reasons, as a new phenomenon in response to border walls' changing purpose. While states originally intended for border walls to stop imposing armies and make the line that those armies could not cross, this practice changed in a globalized world. States did not build original walls in any systematic formal way to divide nation-states, but rather as individual territories' products to mark their own space from other spaces. States mutually recognized international borders as part of establishing the United Nations and its charter, thus leaving the former purpose of walls insignificant (Rosière and Jones 220-222). The establishment of the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods System gave rise to relative stability within the state system and a rise in global economic inequality. In response, states saw a global increase in migration as migrants traveled to states with higher wealth than their home states. Due to this global movement, states increased border controls, like walling, to protect their state's privilege and prevent people's movement into their state. Jones and Rosière propose that this shift in border purpose led to the emergence of teichopolitics. They juxtapose

teichopolitics as the antithesis to the borderless world created by globalization. They do not limit the definition of teichopolitics just to walling but also including any measures used by the state to limit the movement of people and goods by the state, including fences, walls, fronts, and closed straits.

Scholars David Carter and Paul Post notice that many scholars, including Jones and Rosière, theorize about the construction of walls but do not scientifically test their theories. While Jones and Rosière and Carter and Post come to the same conclusion that border walls are built for economic reasons, they come to this conclusion through different methodological approaches. Jones and Rosière map out the locations of different hardened borders in order to argue the economic reasons behind building border structures, while Carter and Post use original data in order to show how economic disparities between two states have a significant impact on the construction of a border wall.

In Why Do States Build Walls? Political Economy, Security, and Border Stability, published in 2012, Carter and Post argue similarly that the construction of border walls is in response to economic disparities. They specifically test "how changes across time in neighbor's relations" are correlated to the construction of border walls. They look at the change in income, civil war, and territorial disputes related to the emergence of border walls. They found that on borders with countries with different levels of economic development, there is a higher likeliness of instability which can lead to border wall construction (Carter and Post 263-264). Carter and Post found that over 50% of border walls built in the past two centuries were constructed post-Cold War. They conclude that cross-border inequality is the most significant predictor of the construction of a border wall due to an effort to limit migration and illegal trade.

In the second group, Reese Jones approaches the study of border walls from a variety of methods. While in Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalization Through the Role of Walls and Fences, he argues the economic reasons for wall building; in other words, he argues wall building as a response to terrorism. In Jones's work Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel, he theorizes walls as a reaction to terror. Within the context of the United States, he views the increased building of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall as a reaction to heightened tensions due to the terror attack on 9/11. Jones later addresses the modern border wall in the article "Why Build a Border Wall?", arguing three specific reasons for building modern border walls: establishment of national sovereignty, protection of the wealth of the state and nation, and protection of cultural practices within the state. I am using these three reasons as a framework for evaluating the physical vs. symbolic success of border walls within this thesis.

While Jones analyzes the increase in wall building in response to terrorism, Wendy Brown theorizes walls as a response to the perceived threat to national sovereignty due to globalization. Brown argues that the proliferation of walls and fences is in response to waning sovereignty, which she identifies as the new global political order in which states are no longer the primary actors. She theorizes that states build walls as a symbol of strength and sovereignty in response to this loss. She continues by looking at sovereignty and how it interacts with a territory. She highlights the Schmittian definition of sovereignty as "decisionist state power" vs. the Lockean or Rousseauian definition of "popular legislative power" (Brown 60). She explores the relationship between border walls and the people of a nation-state, arguing that people perceive their nation-state as a projection of themselves, and therefore they desire to protect borders as they desire to protect themselves. Additionally, she proposes walls are constructed as

a defense mechanism to assert the appearance of national sovereignty, not actual national sovereignty. She argues that people project problems internal to the nation-state onto external foreigners or countries with the wall symbolizing the division of an "us" vs. "them.

I focus heavily on Reese Jones and Wendy Brown's works because each of their respective works provides clear examples of two different approaches to the question of the primary function of the border wall: one focusing on its physical function and one on its symbolic function. This thesis will expand on the previous literature by evaluating the physical vs. symbolic function of the border wall in order to argue the necessity for both considerations when evaluating the effectiveness of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall. I evaluate the physical vs. symbolic function of the border wall within the context of Jones's three reasons for building a border wall: establishment of national sovereignty, protection of the wealth of the state and population, and protection of cultural practices within the state. Section 1 will focus on the first reason: the establishment of national sovereignty. I will discuss national sovereignty and the control of migration across walled borders. Section 2 will focus on the protection of national wealth, the second reason for border walls. Specifically, I will discuss smuggling and the symbolic difference between the global north and global south. Finally, section 3 will discuss the protection of cultural practices, specifically looking at sister cities and rhetoric surrounding Mexico.

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

In his article "Why Do States Build Walls?", Jones established three reasons states construct walls on their borders. The first reason is the establishment of sovereignty, specifically over unruly or ungoverned lands. Sovereignty is defined and theorized by many different scholars. In 1922, German political theorist Carl Schmitt defined sovereign as "he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 5). This is important as Schmitt notes that sovereign exists within an established order but is able to decide when to transcend that established order due to an exception. This definition of sovereignty is the reigning and most prominent definition used today. Modern theorists, like Wendy Brown, use this definition as the basis of their work when writing on sovereignty.

In looking at the physicality of the border wall concerning political power, power is limited to the extent of the border wall. In 1918, Max Weber famously stated that the modern political state should successfully "claim(s) the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within a given territory" (Weber 1). This monopoly is the primary manifestation of state sovereignty, which is exercised with the territory whose limits are what the border wall marks. The state asserts itself as claiming this monopoly through the production of a border wall. It marks the limit of its power as extending up to a specific border and marks the beginning of its power for those seeking entrance to the territory. In the context of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, the United States government asserts its power through its ability to control its borders. While there is a line on a map that marks the distinction between the United States and Mexico before their border wall, there was no way to make that distinction when actually on the border, with the exception of the Rio Grande River. The distinction between the two territories was imagined, and

the state's construction of the border wall is a way to create a substantial distinction between the two territories. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall materializes the distinction between the two states both physically and symbolically.

1.1 The Physical Establishment of Sovereignty

Jones's first reason for building a physical wall is to establish sovereignty over unruly or ungoverned lands. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall was born out of the suspension of American laws. In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act which approved the extension of the U.S.-Mexico barrier. The extension included adding a secondary layer of fencing and imposed criminal penalties for several activities involving the smuggling or aiding illegal immigrants. The 2005 Real ID Act and the 2006 Secure Fence Act, which authorized "the waiver of all legal impediments to the construction of the barrier," resolved any legal challenges to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (Brown 36). The Real ID Act of 2005 established security standards for identification licenses, and the 2006 Secure Fence Act established additional funding for border security, including increased fencing, vehicles, and technologies. According to Brown, 36 laws have been suspended to construct the border barrier. The state's suspension of these laws for building the border wall reinforces the state's sovereignty by giving the state unlimited and unrestrained power to create and build without answering to citizens or other global actors. Through this, the state "decided on the exception" and exercised the Schmittian definition of sovereignty. In this way, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall successfully fulfills Jones's function of establishing sovereignty along unruly or ungoverned lands.

While the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall somewhat successfully enforces its sovereignty through its physical construction because the state was able to assert itself as the exception to the

law, we can also look at its enforcement of sovereignty through control of migration. John Torpey, a contemporary sociologist, and historian argues in his 1998 paper, Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate "Means of Movement" that modern states have monopolized the authority to control the movement of people. Torpey discusses two ways states conduct border control: the territorial access, which is concerned with the state's ability to identify citizens versus non-citizens and regulate their movement, and establishment, which is concerned with the state's ability to exclude non-citizens from society once they have entered the state's territory. He theorizes that the monopolization of the authority to regulate movement is dependent on a few mutually reinforcing aspects: the definition of states as "national", the codification of immigration laws which establish who can move within or across borders, the development of bureaucracies, and the creation of legal norms designed to judge which people can enter specific spaces (Torpey 239-242). Modern nation-states, who exert sovereignty within that given area, retain the monopoly on the right to authorize movement across its borders. The state asserts sovereignty over its territory and people through the power to regulate its borders through mechanisms like border walls.

A border wall is a mechanism used to exercise the state's monopoly over the right to regulate movement. To effectively do this, a wall must control the movement of people across its structure and border. In Esteban Flores's 2017 article Walls of Separation: An Analysis of Three 'Successful' Border Walls, he demonstrates the success of multiple walls at controlling the movement of people across state borders, including Israel's southern walls. Israel built this particular wall on the state's southern border to limit the flow of African migrants from states like Eritrea and Sudan. Israel broke ground in 2010 and completed the border wall in 2013. The 'wall' is made of steel and barbed wire, costing the Israeli people $400 million U.S. dollars.

While complete elimination of migration is virtually impossible, the Israeli Wall significantly decreased migration. According to a report from Israel's Ministry of the Interior, 17,000 migrants crossed the southern border in 2011 compared to 43 in 2013 after completing the wall. This is a 99.7% decrease in illegal migration on the southern border in three short years (Flores 10-12). This drastic decrease in illegal migration shows the strength of the control the state of Israel has over its border and the sovereignty it has established through that control. While there are dozens of border walls whose goal is to limit migration, the Israeli Wall successfully achieves this goal.

In their 2019 working paper for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, Border Walls, Treb Allen, Cauê Dobbin, and Melanie Morten study the migration patterns of Mexican migrants finding that the wall affected migrant's choice of route and destination, yet not their choice to migrate. In their working paper, they present a model to analyze migration where an individual "chooses whether or not to migrate, where to migrate to, and which route to get to their destination" (Allen, Dobbin and Morten 3). Their model identifies four mechanisms through which a border wall is able to limit migration:1) a detour effect, 2) a diversion effect, 3) a deterrence effect, and 4) a general equilibrium effect. The detour effect limits migration because migrants are forced to interact with a physical barrier. The diversion effect limits migration by moving the flow of migrants away from the bordered area and to destinations less affected by the wall or its continued expansion. The deterrence effect encourages migrants to stay in their original destination, and the general equilibrium effect limited the wages in the target destination in response to migration (Allen, Dobbin, and Morten 3). The Israeli Wall effectively established the detour effect by building the Israeli Wall in the middle of a desert so that migrants are forced to traverse the extreme climate to get to the wall and then are forced to

get around, above, or below the physical wall, thus deterring migrants. Similarly, the Israeli Wall uses the deterrence effect to encourage migrants to stay in their original destination, given the wall's length (152 mi) and the lack of porous points that would be easier to cross. Israel's southern wall successfully reinforces the state's sovereignty by allowing the state to control who enters its southern border. This is important because it shows that it is possible for a state to effectively control migration through its border utilizing a border wall.

The United States, which has a high immigrant population, was not concerned with controlling its southern border until the latter half of the 20th century. Starting in 1952, Congress began to pass comprehensive immigration legislation. In 1996 Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), establishing additional immigration reform and providing 12 million in funding for a border wall in San Diego, California, and heading inward. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the border's securitization became a national concern, and immigration and border policing increased drastically. In October 2006, President Bush signed the Secure Fence Act of 2006, whose goal was to increase border control through an additional 700 miles of fencing along the southern border (Saddiki 89).

While Israel successfully controls its southern border through its border wall, the United States has not seen the same success with the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall. Using their four mechanisms for how a border wall affects migration, Allen, Dobbin, and Morten find that migrants on U.S.-Mexican Border Wall declined from 1.5 million in 2005 to 400,000 in 2015. Alle, Dobbin, and Morten do not attribute this significant decline to the expansion of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall but suggest it was due to other factors. One of these factors could be the decrease in job availability due to the Great Recession, as noted by Julia Preston in her New York Times article, Mexican Data Showing Migration Decline. Using the cost estimate of

different routes, Allen, Dobbin, and Morten prove that the detour and diversion effects are present at the Mexican-American Border. They conclude that while the presence of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall does affect migration patterns along the border, it is limited to changing migration routes rather than limiting migration in general.

Overall, the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall is not sufficient to establish national sovereignty over its borders when viewed from a physical perspective. The physical wall was built out of the suspension of the laws, which according to Schmitt, is the mark of sovereignty, but the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is limited in its ability to control immigration. If the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall as a physical construct cannot significantly control migration, then it cannot be used effectively as a tool of the state in its monopolization of the power to regulate movement.

1.2 Symbolic Establishment of Sovereignty

To view walls from a symbolic perspective means to view how the function of the wall changes within different historical periods, contexts, and viewpoints depending on the side of the wall (Brown 27). Simply put, the physical function of the wall is what it does, and the symbolic function of the wall is what it means. In this way, the border wall is a physical construction with a physical purpose, but it is the context under which it is built that defines its symbolic function. Hence, the Israeli Wall function is different from the Berlin Wall and is different from the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall because they were all built in different contexts. Symbolically, we can look at the building of border walls as a response to increased economic displacement due to the forces of globalization. Globalization includes the increased flow of migration, internationalization of economies, and heightened exchange of goods and ideas. These transnational movements of increased economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnectedness leading to a condition of globality alters and remarkably diminishes the

significance of borders. In response, states began to build walls to signify their control over the state, the state's actions, and the state's borders.

Wendy Brown, the author of Walled States, Waning Sovereignty, theorizes that border walls are built in response to a loss of state sovereignty. The key characteristics of sovereignty are moving away from the state and towards capital and God-sanctioned political violence (Brown 35). States perceive a threat to national sovereignty and build walls as symbols of former times where states were the world's sole power holders. In her first chapter, Brown discusses the loss of sovereignty to globalization and neoliberal rationality to show that global movements of capital are challenging national sovereignty.

Nation-state sovereignty has been undercut by neoliberal rationality, which recognizes no sovereign apart from entrepreneurial decision-makers (large and small). It also displaces legal and political principles (especially liberal commitments to universal inclusion, equality, liberty, and the rule of law) with market criteria, and it demotes the political sovereign to managerial status. Nation-state sovereignty has also been eroded by the steady growth and importance of international economic and governance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization (Brown 34).

The rise of international financial institutions and the increased interconnectedness of global trade undercuts the sovereignty of the nation-state, and, according to Brown, this leads states to build border walls as the iconography of state control. In reaction to the loss of economic sovereignty, states project their desire for international efficacy as border walls. She expands, "Walls signify, inter alia, desires for containment and security, responding especially to the powers that declining political sovereignty has unleashed, those of capital and religiously legitimated violence" (Brown 83). Brown theorizes that the wall does not actually reestablish

national sovereignty but rather symbolizes the state's desire to regain its former national sovereignty. We can see this in the way that walls are built. States build walls to stop the migration of people, goods, and cultures, not to control other state actors. The new walls project an image of sovereign power and the monopoly of the rights to regulate movement. However, they do not assert sovereign power nor the monopoly of the right to regulate movement.

According to Brown, the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall was "born out of tension between the needs of North American capital and popular antagonism toward the migration incited by those needs, especially their effect on wages, employment, and the demographics and cultures composing and in some eyes decomposing the nation" (48). These tensions stem from the effects of neoliberalism as North American producers became increasingly unprotected with the increase of globally produced cheap goods and services that relied heavily on immigration (Brown 36). Brown contradicts herself in that she declares the wall to create power independent of the material aspects of the wall, yet she also argues that the wall does not increase national sovereignty. Instead, she states border walls reflect the decline of national sovereignty with the production of walls (Brown 38). She is arguing that if states were comfortable with their national sovereignty, they would not feel the need to produce walls; the very building of the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall signifies the United States' own inability to regulate its border and enforce its sovereignty. Therefore, the production of the wall is an assertion of the state's right to control its borders and an attempt to reinforce national sovereignty on the border.

In the analysis of both the physical function of walls and the symbolic function of walls in establishing sovereignty on the border, we see that there are successes and limitations to both. On the one hand, the physical border establishes national sovereignty through its construction and the suspension of laws used to build it but does not effectively control the movement of

people across its border. On the other hand, symbolically, the wall asserts the material difference between the two territories of the United States and Mexico. It is imperative to include both perspectives when analyzing the role of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall in establishing national sovereignty because neither one is sufficient alone. In both perspectives, the border wall is limited and cannot achieve its purpose, yet when viewed together, we can see the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall somewhat establishing sovereignty along the border.

2. PROTECTION OF NATIONAL WEALTH

The second intended function of a physical wall, as theorized by Jones, is to protect the wealth of a state and population. Jones expands further that walls are typically built on borders where there is a more impoverished country on one side and a wealthier one on the other (Jones 71). As state sovereignty over a territorial boundary developed over the 20th century, so did state stability. This stability, in turn, produced substantial global wealth inequality leading people to migrate to new territories in search of a better life. While, arguably, people have always migrated in search of a better life, modern migration is primarily a consequence of globalization. In response to transnational actors, like corporations and the World Trade Organization, which promote global trade and interconnectedness, Jones and Rosière establish a hierarchy of flows in their 2012 essay Teichopolitics: Re-considering Globalization Through the Role of Walls and Fences. They establish that not all flows of people and goods are valued through their hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy are financial and raw material flows, which are welcome as they bring wealth to a state. Next in the hierarchy are products and select humans, which are unevenly welcome depending on competition with state products and the qualifications and skill of a person. Finally, and least welcome, are unskilled workers. Jones and Rosière argue that the barriers of teichopolitics are constructed to gain control over the unwanted and unregulated movement of people like the unskilled worker (Rosière and Jones 229). This hierarchy establishes who and what brings what amount of wealth to the state. The top of the hierarchy brings wealth, while the bottom unskilled workers are viewed as removing wealth from the state and taking jobs away from that territory's own unskilled workers.

In the context of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, we can see Jones and Rosière's hierarchy clearly in the rhetoric surrounding the wall. In President Trump's 2019 State of the Union Address, he justifies his plans to expand the southern border wall by saying, "working-class Americans are left to pay the price for mass illegal migration — reduced jobs, lower wages, overburdened schools and hospitals, increased crime, and a depleted social safety net" (Trump). He continues by depicting sexual assault, human trafficking, and drug smuggling committed by migrants to sway the American public to support his plan for expanding the southern wall. As President of the United States, he attributes the need for the construction and expansion of the border wall to protect jobs and, therefore, wealth. We can judge border walls and specifically the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall by its ability to protect the United States' wealth.

2.1 Physical Protection of the Wealth of the State

The control of migration is used to protect the wealth of a country in the global north. If migration cannot be controlled to protect the wealth, the wall must protect the wealth by controlling smuggling and the unregulated movement of workers. In David Carter and Paul Poasts' study, Why Do States Build Walls? Political Economy, Security, and Border Stability, they provide an economic argument for states building walls, claiming that border walls are typically built between two states: the builder state representing the global north and another the state, against which the border is built, representing the global south. In this model, one state is considered "richer" than the other, thus causing border instability. The incentive of border crossing from one state to the other is the laborer's hope for higher wages in the global north's country and smuggler's hope to gain a profit (Carter and Poast 244). States build border walls to counteract these incentives by attempting to control the migration of laborers, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, and to halt the movement of goods through smuggling.

These economic reasons for wall building answer the question, "why are walls built on some borders and not others?" Within the context of the United States, in the media, there is comprehensive rhetoric on policing, wall building, and securitization on the southern border with Mexico but not on the northern border with Canada. There is no border wall with Canada because Canada has a similar economy, wealth, and standard of living to the United States, thus eliminating the incentive for migrants to emigrate and smuggle goods to the United States from Canada (Carter and Poast 244).

Similar to what the United States is trying to achieve with the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, the Egyptian Wall, built-in 2009 along the Egypt-Gaza border, is an excellent example of a modern border wall that successfully controls the movement of goods. The Egyptian government built the wall, also known as the Wall of Separation, in reaction to the instability between Egypt and Gaza. Egypt built the wall to mitigate the effects of smuggling into its territory. Hamas smugglers were illegally bringing in weapons, explosives, and goods to the Palestinians. To get around the new barricade, the smugglers developed a system of tunnels under the wall to continue in their pursuits. To counteract this, the government secretly expanded the wall underground to stop higher-level underground tunnel systems (Flores 11). While this expansion has not entirely eliminated smuggling, it has deterred migrants with the deterrence effect. The wall forces smugglers to dig considerably deeper, thus making the smuggling more dangerous and expensive. The Egyptian Border Wall successfully controls the smuggling of goods through its physical construction. It effectively limits the smuggling of goods, allowing the state to retain its sovereignty in a similar manner to the control of migration.

The Egyptian Wall is an example of a border wall built to exclude (smuggled) goods from entering its border, however, in a context where such a purpose was associated more with

security than economic concerns. Specifically, the state constructed the wall to control the movement of weapons, which were smuggled to people attempting to undermine the Egyptian/Israeli peace accords. In comparison, the United States and Mexico have different economies and, therefore, greater border instability than countries with similar economies. The United States' economy is generally more developed than Mexico's, and Americans enjoy a higher standard of living. This economic difference increases the incentives for migrants to cross the border from Mexico. In addition, the demand for drugs in the United States coupled with the high prices Americans are willing to pay for these illegal drugs encourages illegal smugglers and drug cartels to seek ways to move their products across the border (Carter and Post 244). Like Hamas smugglers, Mexican smugglers learned to go under the wall to get across the border. Unlike the Egyptian government, the American government has not built nor released plans to build underground components of a border wall (Flores 11), thus limiting the deterrence effect and the physical wall's overall effectiveness.

Given these limitations of the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall, smugglers will continue to find ways through and around the wall, some of which might lead to increased violence. In Border Fences and the Mexican Drug War, Benjamin Laughlin theorizes that increased walling of the border does not deter smugglers from crossing the border but alters their route to unwalled areas. This rerouting leads cartels to infringe upon previous agreements about the allocation of territories and routes. While the new violence surrounding the smuggling of goods is not consistent along the entire border, it is present in small pockets in the new sites of alternative smuggling routes (Laughlin 30-31). In contrast to the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall's intended purpose, smuggling and migration were not eliminated altogether but only diverted to different areas actively contributing to further problems along the border. This is similar to the findings of

the Allen, Dobbin, and Morten discussion in the first section concerning the establishment of national sovereignty. Their work found that the detour and diversion effects were successful in dissuading migrants from crossing the border at spots where the wall was present but did not stop people altogether from migrating (Allen, Dobbin and Morten 3).

When considering the physical function of the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall in its ability to limit smuggling, it is not sufficient to protect national wealth. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the symbolic function of the border wall.

2.2 Symbolic Protection of the Wealth of the State

When looking at Jones's second reason for building a border wall, the protection of wealth, the border wall can be seen as a symbolic response to the increase of globalization. In Arjun Appadurai's 1990 famous article titled Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy, he argues that we can no longer view the global cultural economy in center-periphery models but instead as a "disjunctive order" (Appadurai 296). He proposes we look at the new global cultural economy through five non-isomorphic "scapes". These scapes are the building blocks of our imagined worlds and the framework to analyze complex cultural flows. Further in the article, he says that the disjuncture between these scapes has driven a more significant change in the relationship between cultural and economic global levels. He argues that there is a continuous fluid exchange between production and consumption, resulting in two fetishisms: the fetishism of the producer and the fetishism of the consumer.

Appadurai defines production fetishism as "an illusion created by contemporary transnational production loci that mask translocal capital, transnational earning flows, global management, and often faraway workers in the idiom and spectacle of local control, national productivity, and territorial sovereignty" (Appadurai 306). In other words, the production of

fetishism is the illusion of local production to mask the real transnational forces behind the production of goods. The production fetishism is the deception a border wall attempts to reinforce; it is an illusion that in the modern world, a product can be produced solely in that nation without transnational production flows and supply chains. The value, characteristics, and quality placed on a product is dependent on the perceived location a product is produced in. A sweater sold in Ohio may say "made in Ohio" because that is where the last step of its manufacturing process took place. However, it does not account for where the cotton the sweater is made out of originally comes from, where the laborers who harvested the cotton come from, the location and transnational actions of the company that is selling the sweater, and so on. When a consumer purchases that sweater, perceived to be produced in Ohio, they ascribe to it the value, characteristics, and quality of an American product, therefore making it more desirable to the American consumer. It creates a degree of separation between the nation and the global economic, political, and cultural flows beyond the nation's control.

The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolically marked the opening of global markets and a new era of global mobility. However, in response to this increased global mobility and neoliberal capitalism, states are building walls faster than ever. In his 2007 book, In Praise of Barbarians: Essays Against Empires, Mike Davis terms these walls "The Great Wall of Capital," whose goal is to symbolically separate the global north from the global south. "The Great Wall of Capital," says Davis, does not only exist on the border of the U.S. and Mexico, but also on borders in Turkey, Greece, and Spain. In contrast to traditional border barriers, built-in areas of conflict, modern barriers, including the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, are built on quiet barriers, where there is no conflict. According to Jones, countries that built walls post-1989 had an annual GDP per capita of 14,067 USD while the average GDP of countries with walls built against them was

2,801 USD (Jones 71-72). Walls are being built in response to globalization to protect global northern countries' symbolic wealth. The wall functions to separate the two countries and symbolically distinguish between the economies of each country.

This concept of the "Great Wall of Capital" applies to the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall as the U.S. attempts to symbolically separate its economy from that of Mexico. In symbolic terms, the wall is built on the southern border because Mexico is considered part of the global south while Canada is considered part of the global north. Jones notes that the USA's GDP per capita in 2010 was 47 thousand USD while the 2010 GDP per capita of Mexico was a meager 14 thousand USD. There is no need for a Canadian-American border wall because both countries are part of the global north, and symbolically, the United States takes no offense to being compared economically to Canada. In comparison, the United States views Mexico as part of the global south and therefore wants to distinguish between the two countries and economies.

The United States built the southern border wall to give the appearance of separate economies, although, in reality, the United States economy actually depends on the labor of migrant workers from Mexico in order to function. This is an example of production fetishism, as mentioned above. In Joseph Nevins chapter, The Remaking of the California-Mexico Boundary in the Age of NAFTA, in the early 2000s anthology Walls Around the West, he explores the relationship between the simultaneous "opening" of the border and strengthening of immigration and border patrol services in the San Diego/ Tijuana area. He uses this data to show the transboundary economic dependency of the area. Currently, around 300,000 Mexican workers cross the border on a weekly/daily basis for work. Many border cities and towns rely on transnational economies between the United States and Mexico to function with an annual transboundary transaction totaling over $6 billion (Nevins 99). Immigration actually fuels the

economy through a phenomenon called the "immigration surplus" where as immigrants' income increases as they enter the U.S. labor force, so does Americans' income. Immigrants will typically fill the need in labor markets where bottlenecks or shortages are damaging growth rates (Orrenius). This dependence hints at the idea that the border wall does not intend to control migration due to the protection of wealth; it only symbolizes the intention to control migration because the American economy depends on this migration.

Additionally, symbolically controlling migration but not controlling it keeps wages among immigrants suppressed, thereby adding to middle-class wealth. In the analysis of the physical function of border walls and the symbolic function of border walls in protecting and expanding state and population wealth, we see there are successes and limitations to both. The physical border does somewhat control smuggling through its presence, though it only is able to control it in the same way it controls migration. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall achieves wealth protection and expansion through its symbolic function. Symbolically, it creates a distinction between the United States (global north) and Mexico (global south) and adds to the illusion of production fetishism.

3. PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL CULTURE

In his 1983 book Nations and Nationalism, Ernest Gellner, a philosopher, and social anthropologist, defined nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1). He describes nationalism as a theory founding the legitimacy of a given state upon the coincidence/alignment of political boundaries with the boundaries of an ethnic/cultural community. From this definition, he establishes ways in which nationalism is violated. Through the systematic killing, expelling, or assimilating of non-nationals, the territorially bound political unit can become ethnically homogeneous and therefore can satisfy Gellner's theory of nationalism. Gellner defines states, the political unit of nationalism, as "that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order" (Gellner 4) that must exist within a territorial boundary. As a response to Weber's definition of the state, the agency with a monopoly over legitimate violence, Gellner states that some states do not monopolize legitimate violence and instead use other means to make the nation and state congruent. Gellner argues that nations can only be defined in the age of nationalism. He attributes the formation of a national unit to the social conditions that make a standardized, homogenous culture, and people willingly identify as members of that nation. Culture is, thus, where political legitimacy is located. When there is a nation, and it is congruent with that of a state, then there is nationalism because the national unit is unified under a standardized and homogenous culture and is willing to associate with that given state. The homogenization of culture is crucial to the forming of the nation. While Gellner coined this definition in 1983, it is still relevant today and is useful when discussing border walls.

The modern states' desire for legitimacy (and stability) based on Gellner's definition of nationalism, which is still the primary model in today's world, implies a cultural homogeneity that needs to be 'cultivated.' To emphasize and promote cultural homogeneity, nation-states build border walls meant to represent both concrete and symbolic distinction between their culture and others. The final reason a state builds a border wall is the protection of this homogenous culture. The border wall marks the limit to which a culture extends and binds it within that political and physical territory. Building walls on borders is a modern tool used to establish a homogenous culture both practically and symbolically.

3.1 Physical Protection of Culture

The final function of a wall is to protect the nation's cultural practices from other value systems. The very nature of building a physical wall separates those who are included in a territory, space, nation or group from those who are not. It defines what is included in culture and which groups of people may contribute to that culture. These walls shape the identity of both the collective and the individual. For a wall to truly be successful, it must clearly define who is included within its territory and exclude those cultures and ideas that are not defined as within. Drawing from Gellner's theory of nationalism, the border wall defines what is included inside a given nationalized territory to reinforce the homogenization of culture and create the social conditions under which people willingly identify as part of that homogenized culture.

Gloria Anzaldúa, a modern feminist and Latin American scholar and author, writes in her 1987 book Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza, about her experiences growing up in a small town on the American side of the border. In her book, Anzaldúa describes her life, her culture, and the history of the land through a series of poems and short essays in a combination of English, Spanish, and Chicano Spanish. She describes a mestiza of culture, unique to the

borderlands that is both Mexican and American yet not belonging to either. It is the blending of the old and new, of the traditional and the modern, of the indigenous American, Mexican, and Anglo on a territory belonging to each group at different periods. She portrays this land as "es una herida abierta (an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (Alzandua 25). She argues that such bleeding causes the creation of a new culture, a border culture. This blending of cultures unique to La Frontera is the very mingling the United States is trying to suspend with the building of the border wall. This blended culture is usually seen in "Sister Cities." on either side of the border, which share histories and culture. These include San Diego and Tijuana, San Luis and San Luis Río Colorado, El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, Del Rio and Ciudad Acuna, Brownsville and Matamoros, and Ambos Nogales.

When looking at the practical function of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall in creating a separation of culture and community, there is no better case study than that of Ambos Nogales. Ambos Nogales is one city split into two nations. It consists of Nogales, Arizona on the American side of the border, and Nogales, Sonora, on the border's Mexican side. In her research on archeology in northern Sonora, Randall H. McGuire writes on the effects of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall in the 2013 article Steel Walls and Picket Fences: Rematerializing the U.S.-Mexican Border in Ambos Nogales. She describes a city divided by a border but joined in a community. While the border drawn on a map divided the two cities, there was no materialized marker of the difference until 1855 with the construction of the Boundary Monument 26. Since then, additional markers were built over the years, including telephone lines, metal obelisk border markers, and small gates.

In 1929, the U.S. government built a 6th high chain link fence that Ambos Nogales residents affectionately called the "picket fence between neighbors." For 65 years, this simple

chain-link fence marked the divide between the two nations without limiting interaction, community, or culture. In the post-World War II era, Ambos Nogales depended on each other economically as each brought in tourism and trade that boosted the local economy. In 1963, the border fence was refashioned to promote and facilitate increased interconnectedness between the two parts of the city. In 1996, the U.S. government rebuilt the border barrier once again, this time as eight-foot-high steel posts linked with military surplus landing mats, thus creating a solid wall between the two cities. The cities on both sides opposed the construction of this wall and their community's separation, as crossing the border became more difficult due to the wall's presence. The solid wall soon became a canvas for artistic expression and social change. Artists on the Mexican side used the border wall to illustrate their culture and share it with the American side. However, the border patrol would not let the American side express themselves on their side of the wall. Now, there stands a new border wall consisting of 6in square metal tubes filled with concrete and standing 23-30 ft. tall (McGuire 466-475). The new wall entirely separates the two cities. It limits the cultural exchange between the two by hindering the movement of people across the border. The physical wall separates families who live on either side, separates romantic partners who date across nations, separates friends from each other, and separates one part of the community from another. The border wall functions in protecting national culture by creating a physical separation between these two border cities that once identified as one. The United States views the joint culture created between the two cities as going against the cultural homogeneity it is trying to create within its borders. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall attempts to defy the existing culture that exists in Ambos Nogales.

The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, as seen in Ambos Nogales, materializes the border distinction between the two nations. It separates the nations on the two sides of the border from

each other physically and defines who is American by excluding those who are not American. The wall creates social conditions where people living in border communities feel pressure to identify with one or the other side of the border and wall, reinforcing the homogenized culture. In an effort to justify the increased need for a border wall, President Donald Trump says, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Trump, Donald J. Trump 2015 Campaign Launch). Through this claim, President Trump is attempting to rally support for his border wall extension plan by depicting a culture of drugs, crime, and rapists in Mexico to justify a border wall. This wall's function would be to physically exclude the "drugs, crime and rapists" culture ascribed to Mexicans by President Trump. In this way, he attempts to define the "us," the "best" from the "them," the bad people, and to limit them physically. This rhetoric suggests that the wall is used to protect the American value system and culture from that of Mexico's "bad" culture and value system. The border symbolizes vulnerability to American culture and the way of life, while the wall represents the elimination of that vulnerability.

While the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall serves a practical function in protecting national culture by separating cities to form a more homogenous national culture and separate the cultural "good" from the cultural "bad," the border wall also serves a symbolic function.

3.2 Symbolic Protection of National Culture

The third function of a border wall, as proposed by Jones, is the protection of cultural values. The border wall does this in a multitude of symbolic ways, including establishing and reinforcing the nation-state's identity. In Walled States, Waning Sovereignty, Wendy Brown argues pre-Westphalian barriers were not only intended to establish authority and control but

also to define who is included within the wall and who is excluded. Through their construction, the barriers created an identity for the people inside the walls and established who was included in that identity (Brown 52-53). The modern border wall creates a divide between two states and excludes "others" from the given nation-state. A border wall projects the identity of one side's identity and culture vs. the other side, which simultaneously designates one side as desirable and the other as undesirable. This creates a culture of xenophobia and parochialism through the act of excluding (Brown). Xenophobia is the fear/ dislike of people from other countries/ cultures, which is aided by parochialism or narrow-minded outlooks on people outside of your own nation. With the creation of two separate identities, the global northern one looking upon the global southern one as inferior creates a culture of xenophobia in the global northern country. In the context of the U.S.- Mexican Border Wall, culture and people are similar on either side of the border. The "borderlands" are characterized by both Mexican and American culture. The border towns involve aspects of both Mexican and American culture. Yet, the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall defines what America wants to be included on the northern side of the wall, such as American territory, people, and culture. The wall is attempting to exclude Mexican territory, people, and culture.

In the United States, we can see this xenophobia not only as a direct reaction to Mexican culture but also through heightened desire for wall building and border security following the 9/11 attack. 9/11 created a culture of insecurity in the United States and marked the beginning of the War on Terror. In reaction to the increased feelings of insecurity, the United States passed several laws, as mentioned above, to expand security and, in doing so, was able to justify the expansion of the physical U.S.-Mexico Border Wall and security along with it (Jones, Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel 8, 23-24). This

expansion was a direct reaction to 9/11, where the United States reacted with xenophobic tendencies across all borders. The wall symbolized the United States' ability to regulate its borders against a known "other," regardless of the fact that a plane, like the ones in 9/11, could fly over a wall. The U.S.-Mexican Border Wall does not actually secure our borders, as shown previously in the paper, but creates the illusion that they are secure. The protection of culture through symbolism happens by defining what is included in a culture, what is excluded from a culture, and creating fear or disdain for those excluded.

In the analysis of the physical function of border walls and the symbolic function of border walls in protecting national culture, we see that there are both successes and limitations. The physical border divides land into two separate territories in an attempt to homogenize the culture on either side of the border. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall achieves this cultural protection through its symbolic function by defining who is included and excluded in the nation. Symbolically, it creates a distinction between the United States and Mexico and the culture and nation each possesses. It is limited in that it only physically creates this distinction in places where the actual wall is built. The border wall's presence cannot completely protect the American culture because modern technology like the internet and mass media transcend a physical wall.

CONCLUSION

When considering the physical functions of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall, it is clear that it is not truly successful. To establish national sovereignty, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall was physically built and expanded due to exceptions made to national laws like the Real ID Act of 2005 and the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The United States desired to build a wall along its southern border. It was able to because of its claim to national sovereignty, regardless of the existing laws preventing a wall from being constructed. This strengthened the idea of national sovereignty in the Schmittian sense as it reinforced the U.S. government as "he who decided the exception." Further, the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall's goal was to monopolize the movement of people within and across its borders to establish or reestablish national sovereignty. While it was somewhat successful, researchers found that the border wall was more successful in changing the routes migrants take rather than actually deterring them from migrating in general.

To protect national wealth, the U.S.-Mexican Border Wall functions as a physical separation between the two countries and to deter migrants and smugglers. However, while there is some success, it is again limited to changing the routes smugglers and migrants take rather than stopping smuggling altogether. To protect the national culture, the wall physically marks the distinction between two separate nations and establishes what is included in the homogenized national culture. It also attempts to keep the labeled "bad" culture out of the labeled "good" culture. The biggest challenge to the U.S.- Mexican Border Wall's physical function is that it only has the potential to be successful where it is physically built. The United States and Mexico share 1,954 miles of border, of which only 452 miles are marked with the construction of a border wall. However, the number of miles of the border wall is changing as each president and

congress decides to build or not to build additional barriers. The physical wall has no impact on the remainder of the unwalled border; however, the symbolic function of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is continuously felt.

Regardless of where someone is on the border, the symbolic function of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is significant. It can still assert its national sovereignty as a symbol of control of the United States' border. Even in locations without the border wall, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall serves as a symbol between two different economies, separating products appearing to be "Made in America" vs. "Hecho en México." While the United States depends economically on the migration of laborers from Mexico, the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall gives the appearance that the United States does not want migrants crossing our borders or taking our jobs. The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is used to "other" people outside of the United States and declare to the world that it does not want those "other" people, specifically immigrants from the global south like Mexico, coming into its borders.

The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is used to create a homogenized society by symbolically defining who is included and excluded in U.S. culture. However, this process also creates negative stigmas about people not included within the border wall and ultimately increases xenophobia and racism within the United States. The function of the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall through symbolism is more significant than the border wall's physical function. Regardless, neither function is enough to justify the construction and upkeep of the border wall when considering the extensive border control programming and policies in place by the United States.

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