

Firstname Lastname

Joseph Johnson

English 101.A01

6 December 2013

Exploratory Synthesis

Immigration policies and philosophies can be complicated, especially when concerning *illegal* immigration. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, there were 11.2 million illegal immigrants living in the United States in March of 2010. Eight million of these immigrants were employed in the American work force (Cohn). These illegal immigrants are the subject of an on-going debate. The main argument, especially during an economic downturn, is that illegal immigrants take jobs from legal worker without contributing to the American economy. This is the perspective of R. Cort Kirkwood, a politics and culture writer for *The New American*. In his article, “Illegal Aliens: Economic Consequences,” Kirwood argues that “[i]llegal aliens are not only weakening the country financially,” but also exploiting government social welfare programs (18). However, some indicators suggest that illegal immigrants play a vital role in balancing job markets and keeping prices low for American consumers. This situation has prompted policy makers to ask whether allowing more guest workers—through a “guest worker” program—would benefit the United States’ economy and whether documenting more workers would ensure taxes are paid into the system.

Although Kirkwood has little to say about a guest worker program, his perspective toward illegal immigrant workers is clear. He begins his article by focusing on Maywood, a California town in which nearly half its population is illegal immigrants (Kirkwood 18). Kirkwood argues that this population is bankrupting Maywood and costing citizens jobs (18).

With the national unemployment rate around nine percent in 2010 (Kirkwood 19), Kirkwood may have a legitimate concern about jobs being lost to undocumented workers. However, in his article, “Illegal Immigration: A Positive Economic Contribution to the United States,” Ramanujan Nadadur, an Oxford Master’s candidate in Forced Migration, argues that illegal immigrants usually work the jobs most citizens will not work (1041). Gordon H. Hanson, Professor of Economics at the University of California, agrees with Nadadur. In his book, *The Economic Logic of Illegal Immigration*, Hanson explains that from 1960 to 2000 the percentage of native-born citizens who did not finish high school fell from fifty percent to twelve percent (23). He argues that the more educated a person is, the more likely he or she will find higher paying jobs or only work in low paying jobs temporarily (Hanson 24). This trend explains a decrease in the supply of unskilled workers among citizens. This decrease may allow for illegal immigrants to fill low paying jobs.

Low paying jobs such as seasonal farm work, housecleaning, childcare, food preparation, and construction depend on large numbers of unskilled workers willing to work for low hourly pay. Hanson states that a person living in Mexico with nine years of education would expect to make about \$2.30 per hour, but in the United States that person could make \$8.50 an hour, making minimum wage more acceptable to illegal immigrants (23). Nadadur summarizes the actual contribution of illegal immigrant workers, stating that “while only 4.3 percent of workers in the entire labor force are undocumented, 20 percent of farming occupations, 17 percent of cleaning occupations, 12 percent of construction and 11 percent of food preparation occupations are held by undocumented workers” (1043). These statistics show that illegal immigrants make up a large percentage of low or unskilled workers.

Illegal immigrants may do more than fill jobs more educated or skilled workers usually will not work. According to journalist Jordan McPelt in his article, “How Illegal Immigration Affects the Economy,” the willingness of undocumented workers to accept lower wages creates lower prices for goods and services. For example, illegal immigrants occupied 20 percent of farming jobs in 2005, leading to American consumers paying less for food than consumers in any other industrialized country (Nadadur 1045). This is one way that illegal immigrants have a major impact on the economy of the United States. This same advantage is apparent in various service and construction markets.

Another common perception about illegal immigrants is that immigrants put a strain on state and federal governments without paying taxes. Kirkwood states, “Illegals contribute virtually nothing to offset this astronomical expense” (22). However, Travis Loller, writing for *USA Today*, in his article “Many Illegal Immigrants Pay Up at Tax Time,” claims that income, Social Security, and Medicare taxes are deducted from undocumented workers’ pay checks with little or no chance of them filing a tax return or claiming social security benefits. Loller also explains that seven to nine billion dollars of social security taxes are paid annually by illegal immigrants. Many times these taxes are paid under a fake name or through an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (Loller). Though Loller acknowledges that the amount of social security taxes paid by illegal immigrants is only approximately 1.5% of the annual budget, he also writes, “the impact on Social Security is significant, though, because most of that money is never claimed by the people who pay it but instead helps cover retirement checks to legal workers.” In other words, illegal immigrants, unlike many documented workers, may pay more into the system than they take out.

Not only do many illegal immigrants pay into taxes; many are excluded from participating in many government programs. Orn Bodvarsson, Interim Dean, School of Public Affairs at St. Cloud State University, and Hendrik Van den Berg, professor of economics at University of Nebraska, Lincoln—in their book *The Economics of Immigration*—detail a study the United States Department of Health and Human Services conducted in 2005. This study considered the impacts of illegal immigration on the Texas state budget and economy. The results revealed that education, healthcare, and incarceration costs incurred by illegal immigrants totaled \$1,156.4 million dollars; however, state revenue and school property taxes received from illegal immigrants totaled \$1, 581.1 million dollars, giving a surplus of \$425 million dollars (Bodvarsson and Van den Berg 308). This study provides one case against Kirkwood's belief that illegal immigrants take more from the government than they contribute. However, even though some illegal immigrants pay into the tax system, documenting these workers may have greater benefits.

With evidence that these undocumented workers are needed to balance the job markets and offer benefits to the economy of the United States, some experts want to legalize their presence. One suggestion is that an improved guest worker program would be an efficient way to accomplish this. The current temporary visa programs for immigrants are aimed toward skilled and educated workers. According to James Louch, et al., in *Immigration in America Today*, sixty-eight percent of guest worker applications that were approved in 2000 were for immigrants with higher education who would not fill low-skilled jobs, therefore, not benefitting America in the same way many illegal immigrants do (164). A better guest worker program that would help to legalize current workers who work in needed occupations could be a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, despite Kirkwood's example of Maywood, California and his claim that "as Maywood goes, so goes the country" (22), illegal immigrant workers in the United States may supply the demand for unskilled workers that will work for low wages. Furthermore, these workers generally reduce production costs and enable companies to offer products and services at lower prices. If given the right to work in the United States, these workers might allow American businesses to have an ample supply of workers. Also, legalizing their presence may improve tax bases and help cover costs incurred by guest workers that receive benefits from state governments. Although R. Cort Kirkwood has several reasons to be skeptical of an influx of illegal immigrants, there appears a possible benefit from implementing a guest worker program that would allow current workers to stay and maintain the balance to the economy that they offer.

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Lastname 1

Firstname Lastname

Joseph Johnson

English 101.021

25 November 2013

Exploratory Synthesis

In today's society, women experience pressure that specifically targets their physical body image, which also negatively affects their self-esteem. In the chapter "Pornography: What Is Sexuality For?" of his book *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, Robert Jensen explores the issue of pornography and explains how it has negative consequences, especially for women. Jensen explains how pornography influences men and their imaginations, causing them to analyze women and focus on "what kind of bodies and body parts they like and what specific sex acts they enjoy" (158). Pornography and its influence on men, however, is not the only factor that affects women. The media, including the fashion industry and television, contributes to the pressure women feel about their self-image.

The world of pornography is more than just sexually explicit videos designed to give men a chance to see all their desires displayed on screen. Aside from creating a film that is designed to "deliver [an] orgasm with the most intensity" (Jensen 159), other factors need to be accounted for, such as "the costs to the people who make pornography, the politics of the images, or the harms that may result from the industry" (Jensen 159). The women that are featured in these films are hurt the most. Sascha Cohen explains in her article, "Flesh and Bones," the dark side of pornography and how it "dehumanizes women" (35). Cohen describes the types of women that are featured in these films, anywhere from the "girl next door" to a "surgically reconstructed porn actress [that] exists as a fantasy...with a smooth, hairless body and manufactured curves"

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Comment [1]: sometimes phrases such as "today's society" seem a bit cliché

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Comment [2]: Good text intro

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Comment [3]: Great attributive tags

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Comment [4]: Good citation

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Comment [5]: Beautiful transition

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Comment [6]: Thesis: An exploration of the way the fashion industry and television contribute to this pressure on women.

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Comment [7]: Great expansion and explanation

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Comment [9]: Great attribution and summation

(36). By seeing these manufactured women involved in these explicit acts, men's view on women becomes altered.

Pornography opens up a whole new world for men. They can choose to watch any type of woman they want, of any demographic or body type. For men, pornography becomes the "process by which men turn women into their body parts" (Jensen 158). Cohen states, "The message, then, is that Every Woman can (or should) be treated like a 'cum-slurping slut.' That is, the baby-sitter, your lab partner, the girl at the grocery store, your sister, your boss" (36). By being able to see whichever type of woman, doing whichever type of sexual act and playing out your ultimate fantasies, this alters men's views on women in every day life. However, pornography's influence on men is not the only issue that affects women.

The fashion industry is just as guilty for making women feel inadequate about themselves. Cohen also explains in her article the role that the fashion industry plays on women's self-esteem and body image. She describes Fashion magazines that display spreads of women in which the "bones are showing [and] the markers of womanhood are so devalued that they must be erased entirely" (Cohen 36). These same magazines also show images of women being pictured at levels below men, such as with "a male perpetrator standing above the woman" (Cohen 36), while she is beaten with "handprints and bruises" covering her body (Cohen 36). It's clear that these magazines affect women, especially those of the younger generation. According to Cohen, female college students base their writings on fashion magazine articles (36). By seeing these photos being displayed, it gives "normal" women the idea of what the "perfect" woman should look like according to the fashion world and they are "taught to hate their gender, to stave and vomit away" (Cohen 36). These images of women who appear less than human exposing nothing but flesh and bones is not the only way that the fashion industry targets women.

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Comment [10]: A little unclear. I'm not sure if this is a transition into the next paragraph or a claim that needs greater support before moving on (it feels more like an unexplored/unsubstantiated claim).

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Comment [11]: Probably better to use an attributive tag.

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Comment [12]: Your most problematic sentence.

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Comment [13]: pronoun: 2nd person? (aimed at your reader)?

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Comment [14]: Another great transition

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Comment [15]: comparison. Understood, but for proper structure, you should state what you're comparing the fashion industry to.

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Comment [16]: good clarification

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Comment [17]: In academic writing, avoid contractions: "It is"

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Comment [18]: This is the second time I've seen this problematic sentence structure. Check your HE on Mixed Constructions, pp 89-90.

The industry also targets women through the advertisements of magical beauty products designed to enhance the physical features of women. In her article “The Truth About Beauty” featured in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Virginia Postrel discusses Dove’s attempt at exposing “real beauty” to women. Through the use of their products, Dove shows through many different forms of advertising, such as billboards and the Internet, that women can be naturally beautiful without the use of plastic surgery (Postrel pg#). However, they also show through one of their videos that they limit themselves by featuring women that are “all young, with symmetrical faces, feminine features, great skin, white teeth, and hourglass shapes” (Postrel 126). Clearly, Dove did not choose women at random but rather went for women that all had similar features. Even though Dove claims they are trying to bring out the natural beauty in all women, they show through this example that they are still targeting women and showing their own ideas on what is beautiful.

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Comment [19]: Not a big issue, but technically “Dove” is singular, so this should be “it.”

The fashion and beauty industries are not the only targets of women in the media; television shows target women as well by promoting the image of the ideal woman. Out of all the shows and movies out there to be viewed, very rarely is it that you see women who would be considered overweight or exposing any cellulite or fat rolls on their bodies. Viren Swami and Joanna-Marie Smith explain a controlled-study that was conducted on women who watched reality television in their article “How Not To Feel Good Naked? The Effects of Television Programs That Use ‘Real Women’ on Female Viewers’ Body Image and Mood” that was featured in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. This article shows how television has a negative effect on women and their self-esteem. After watching certain episodes of reality television, including a show that is based on models, a show that is “aimed at promoting positive body image” (151), and a nature-show, naturally the women who viewed the shows based on

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Comment [20]: wording is a little clumsy. Also, try to keep within the borders of your thesis: TV shows (not movies)

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Comment [21]: Another direct address of your reader. This should be avoided (unless that’s your specific intent).

other women “reported more negative body-focused anxiety and body weight dissatisfaction” than prior to viewing these episodes (Swami and Smith 151). This shows how the media targets its female viewers by displaying the “ideal women” with perfect bodies and features.

In conclusion, pornography and the media both contribute to women and their negative feelings about their body image and self-esteem. Sexually explicit films show men images of “othered” women that alter their imaginations and views of the women around them (Cohen 36). The fashion and beauty industry shows women their idea of the “perfect woman” and takes advantage of women’s vulnerability and their physical flaws. Television networks also show images of the ideal woman that causes women to have negative feelings about themselves.

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Comment [22]: very broad word. Since your thesis was specific about a certain medium (TV), don't get overly broad by using the plural, *media*.

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Comment [23]: Citations are always placed near the closest punctuation mark.

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