

Chapter One: Understanding Chicano-Mexican relations

1.1 Theoretical framework

Chicano- Mexican relations are just as complicated as the relation between the countries from which they originate. In order to explain the formation of perceptions that Chicanos and Mexicans have of each other, especially since each group is on a different side of the U.S.-Mexico border, Tamotsu Shibutani's interactionist approach to social psychology is applied in order to explain the Chicano-Mexican relationship. While social interactionism is usually linked with Herbet Blumer of the Chicago school of sociology, Shibutani's approach was chosen because as a variation of Blumer's interactionist approach, it best explains the relationship between people who may have limited contact within the realm of social psychology. The approach varies in three ways: first, Shibutani postulates that the scientific method can and should be applied to interactionist studies, which was done here through a questionnaire aimed at each group in order to ascertain the origins of perceptions and define them for each one. Secondly, his approach differs in that it focuses on macro-society and insists that it can be applied to macro-level phenomena. Thirdly, those within Blumer's school of symbolic interactionism tend to stress interactionism over the symbolic, but Shibutani looks closely at both. To illustrate this important aspect, he states that "the same person may mean different things to different observers, and imaginary personifications are sometimes more important than real people."¹ For Chicanos and Mexicans, direct interaction is limited, especially for Mexicans in central Mexico where the border is a distant image, and their relationship

¹ Tamotsu Shibutani, *Society and Personality: An Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*, (Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1961; reprint, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1987), 375 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

cannot be based solely on their interaction; but their perceptions, sometimes departing far from reality, should be taken into account to understand the relationship as well.

It will be argued in this study that although joint action in the United States on the part of Chicanos and Mexicans to push through a common goal sounds feasible, such successful moves will be few and very sporadic because these groups hold skewed perceptions of each other and their agendas are very different, mainly because they are based on their needs in their present location, thus eliminating their shared cultural commonalities as the *only* reason for working together. As will be discussed later in Chapter Two, Chicanos *do* have contact with Mexicans, albeit limited to trips to visit family in Mexico, but it is not with Mexicans of the middle and upper class. For those that do not travel as frequently to Mexico, the majority of the contact is with Mexican migrants with whom they interact on a regular basis in their home towns. To clarify, Mexican immigration to the United States from Mexico is understood here as “a process of social interactions between people from the two countries as they move across the U.S.-Mexico border or are located in a country different than that of his or her counterpart in a labor relation.”² As was explained in the introduction, while perceptions of Mexican migrants were excluded, neither the Mexicans surveyed nor Chicanos were able to perceive each other without taking the image of the migrant into account, which will be discussed ahead in further detail.

The main hypothesis and methodological approach are based on the idea that in order for Chicanos and Mexicans to have an informed understanding of each other, there

² Jorge A. Bustamante, “Some Thoughts on Perceptions and Policies Mexico- United States Labor Migration Flows: Some Theoretical and Methodological Innovations and Research Findings,” in *Migration Between Mexico and the United States: Binational Study*, ed. Binational Study on Migration (Mexico City: Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Washington, D.C. : U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, 1998), 829. Accessed online < <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/binpapers/v2b-7bustamante.pdf>>

must be some level of interaction and a channel of communication. As Shibutani explains: “what characterizes the interactionist approach is the contention that *human nature and the social order are products of communication.*”³ Chicanos grow up in the United States and have an understanding of Mexico largely through family and the arriving migrants, a world entirely apart from the middle and upper class Mexicans that live in Central Mexico, the focus group of this study.

By virtue of their birthplace, Chicanos and Mexicans develop a huge gap in their relationship- “a man’s personality- those distinctive behavior patterns that characterize a given individual- *is regarded as developing and being reaffirmed from day to day in his interaction with his associates.*”⁴ If neither group has much social contact with the other, they will not take each other into account in the formation of their reality. This is further cemented by Shibutani’s understanding of social interaction:

If the motivation of behavior, the formation of personality, and the evolution of group structure all occur in social interaction, it follows logically that attention should be focused upon the interchanges that go on among human beings as they come into contact with one another.⁵

One of the main ideas that guide the interaction of Chicanos and Mexicans is that of social distance, which is categorized into primary and secondary relations. Primary relations are characterized by intimate, face-to-face contacts such as that between husband and wife, teachers and students. It must be noted that while a strong communication channel is necessary for the creation of a primary relation, it is not expected that it will reach the degree where one person knows everything about the other. Secondary relations are generally lumped as those which are not characterized by the

³ Shibutani, 22. Emphasis in original.

⁴ Shibutani, 23. Emphasis in original.

⁵ Shibutani, 23. Emphasis in original.

contact experienced in primary relations. Because the definition of primary and secondary relations is so vague, Shibutani prefers to consider them as extremes of each other.

Social distance- and this is especially important in the relation between Chicanos and Mexicans of central Mexico- does not refer to geographical distance, but instead focuses on “psychological closeness.”⁶ For example, it is possible for neighbors who have an open communication channel to be considered closer to the primary relations pole, while neighbors that don’t speak nor interact may be considered closer to the secondary relations extreme. Shibutani clarifies that social distance is concerned with the psychological barriers which “facilitate or deter easy, spontaneous interaction.”⁷ Thus, geographical distance is not taken into account when deciding when a relationship is at either pole.

In order to determine where a particular relationship falls on the social distance continuum, one must analyze the type of knowledge the participants have of one another because “men interact in terms of the conceptions they form of one another rather than in terms of their actual attributes” making it “an interchange of personifications rather than one of persons.”⁸ Because Chicanos and Mexicans are separated by an international border, “knowledge of the other party is highly specialized and categorical. In such impersonal contacts people approach one another as instances of socially defined categories” so that “men are classified, and the expectations in terms of which social interaction proceeds are derived from the presumed characteristics of each category.”⁹

⁶ Shibutani, 375.

⁷ Shibutani, 375.

⁸ Shibutani, 375.

⁹ Shibutani, 376.

One of the clearest examples is the characterization of Jewish people as penny pinchers and their treatment by others as such, even though individual differences that contradict this expectation do exist. Characterizations of the other play a large role in the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans, as will be seen in future chapters.

Shibutani believes that because men live in a symbolic environment in which objects have to be classified and labeled, they are able to interact effectively even with total strangers by simply placing them in their respective category. While people assign individuals to categories, they can just as well assign groups of people to categories as well. This is the case between Chicanos and Mexicans and is illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page. While the example is based on an individual Chicano, it could just as well be applied to Mexicans. The poles go from secondary to primary relations, and the varying degrees of knowledge about people are what designate where we fall on the social distance continuum. For example, those Chicanos who have more contact with Mexicans, be it through travel or some other significant contact, will have a better understanding of the Mexican reality. On the other hand, a Chicano of fourth generation with few links to Mexican people will be more likely to hold skewed perceptions of them.

The basic premise of the theoretical framework proposed here for the study of Chicano- Mexican relations is that this relationship occurs within a context of interaction processes between people of two different countries and within a space which encompasses the two sides of the international border. While the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans is mainly understood here through Shibutani's interactionist approach to social psychology, the ethnic identity of Chicanos must also be understood within the realm of U.S. society.

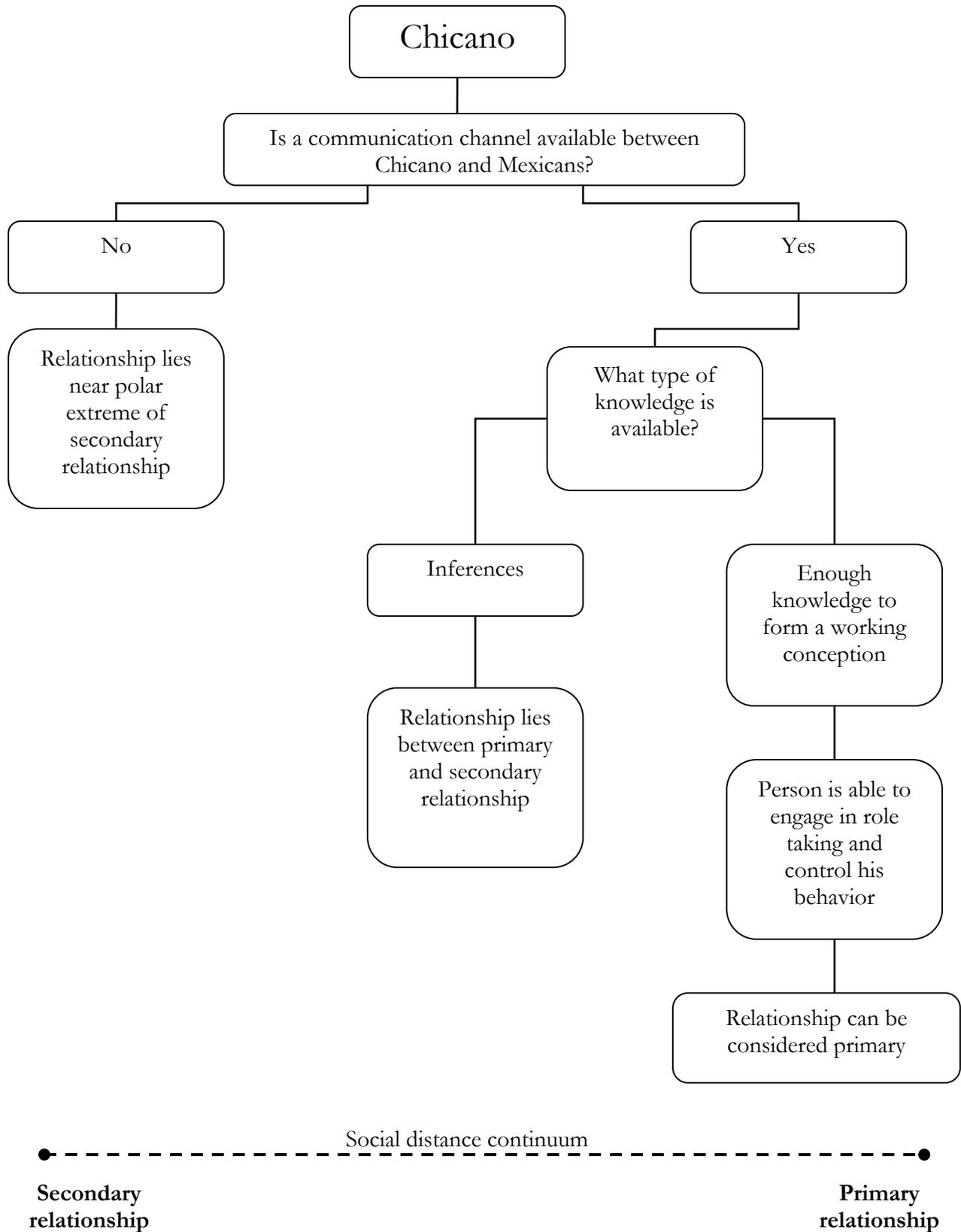


Figure 1. Application of Shibutani’s interactionist approach to Chicano- Mexican relationship. Created by author.

1.2 Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is one of the most important pieces of the Chicano-Mexican relationship. The side which will receive the most attention is that of Chicanos, because it is on their end in which a heated debate arises as to who fits the Chicano label and where this minority group fits in the U.S. societal scheme. It must also be noted that when we speak of Chicanos, we are referring to 6.5% of the U.S. population, or 18.4 million people, and part of the sixth largest reported ancestries in 2000.¹⁰ In Chicano studies, issues dealing with ethnic identity are ubiquitous. As a group, Chicanos are highly aware of being a border people, whether born in San Diego or Chicago, Houston or Portland. While some Chicanos have their border identity deeply embedded and constantly question it, others are more indifferent towards being considered “*ni de aquí, ni de allá.*” As Mexican migrants keep streaming across the U.S. - Mexico border and having their children in the United States, more will become a part of this population.

In order for individuals to understand how others see them, they must first have a conception of the self, as George H. Mead first proposed.¹¹ In Mead’s point of view, the concept of self as emerges from the social interaction of humans in which the individual takes on the role of the “other” and internalizes the attitudes he perceives in both real and imagined others. Self conceptions can only be formed and reaffirmed from day to day via interaction with others. In essence, each man locates himself as an object within his symbolic environment.¹² In other words, the concept of self is developed through interaction with others and may change as one tries to adjust to others; others may accept

¹⁰ Angela Brittingham and G. Patricia de la Cruz, “Ancestry 2000: Census 2000 Brief,” June 2004. Accessed online: <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/c2kbr-35.pdf>>

¹¹ George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, Charles W. Morris, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934.

¹² Shibutani, 221.

and thus reinforce one's self concept or reject it, forcing the individual to shift the concept of self until she sees fit.

A discussion of ethnicity thus does not only encompass how we understand it, but the role it takes in the life of Chicanos and Mexicans. As will be seen further ahead, both groups self-identified with various terms, such as "Latino," and Mead's conception of self helps us understand why both of these groups would find it fit to develop several working selves, changing from one to another according to the context. In a U.S. context, the choice to be labeled Chicano or Mexican American is a voluntary affiliation. Because of the fluidity across time and social contexts, as well as the situational understanding of identity, individuals have a hybrid character of modern ethnicity.¹³ This fluidity allows "the cultural traits of an ethnic group to respond to ecological circumstances; therefore, forms of institutionalized behavior emerge that represent reactions to the environment as much as they reflect a cultural orientation."¹⁴ Lopez and many others feel that "self-identification is, in important regards, situational: It depends in part on who is speaking to whom, under what circumstances, and for what purposes."¹⁵ Thus, self-designating terms mark varying degrees of inclusion.

While an outsider may place a label on an individual, it must be noted that it is always in the hands of that individual to reject or accept it into her self concept. Fox argues that "physical appearance, accent, or some other ineradicable mark may set a person apart and cause him or her to be labeled as Latino or whatever, but the label does not become an identity until it is embraced by the holder." This is exemplified by an

¹³ Jim Sanders, "Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 328.

¹⁴ Sanders, 328.

¹⁵ Gerald Lopez, "Learning About Latinos," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 394.

attempt on the part of the U.S. government to find a label for those of Mexican heritage. It was only when this group finally embraced a label that it became a part of their identity. Such failed labels include: “other nonwhite,” “persons of Spanish mother tongue,” “white persons of Spanish surname,” and “persons of both Spanish surname and Spanish mother tongue.”¹⁶ To illustrate, for lack of a better label at the time, the Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics identified me as “Caucasian” on my birth certificate even though it was acknowledged on the same document that both of my parents were born in Mexico. I’ve never self identified as Caucasian.

We now focus on an understanding of ethnic identity. Psychologists have conceptualized and measured ethnic identity in a wide variety of ways, and overall, there can be two theoretically based elements to ethnic identity: a group membership component and a developmental component. The first component is termed ethnic affirmation and belonging, which is based on social identity theory; and as an aspect of one's social identity, ethnic identity can be thought of as “a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings and attitudes that accompany this sense of group membership.”¹⁷ When speaking of group membership, note that there is no mention as to a limitation of groups of which we may form a part. As we can see here, ethnic and social identities are both carefully intertwined. Social identity is defined as:

The individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership, where a social group is two or more individuals who share a

¹⁶ Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 27.

¹⁷Jean S. Phinney, Irma Romero Monica Nava, & Dan Huang, “The Role of Language, Parents, and Peers in Ethnic Identity Among Adolescents in Immigrant Families,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 30 (April 2001): 137.

common social identification of themselves, or, which is nearly the same thing, perceive themselves to be members of the same social category.¹⁸

According to social identity theory, Phinney et al. explain that this sense of belonging is implicated in the psychological well-being of ethnic group members. Since people “attribute value to the groups they belong to and derive self-esteem from their sense of belonging, ethnic affirmation plays an important role in their self-concept.”¹⁹ As will be seen in Chapter Two, Chicanos who identify as “Mexican,” but are contradicted by those who believe the term can only be used by those born in the country, find these episodes particularly hurtful because it questions their self concept. Hogg and Abrams would agree that the hurt feelings stem from a belongingness which “is psychological, it is not merely knowledge of a group’s attributes” and “has important self-evaluative consequences.”²⁰ Consequently, within a U.S. context, the social identity approach is appropriate because “it maintains that society comprises social categories which stand in power and status relations to one another.”²¹

One’s ethnic identity is created as soon as one develops a self concept according to Mead’s theory of the self. According to Phinney et al., the creation of ethnic identity is centered in one’s adolescence. With the onset of adolescence, as “part of the larger task of ego identity formation, most minority youths explore the meaning of being a member of an ethnic group within a larger society.”²² The process of ethnic identity exploration entails learning about the history and traditions of their group as well as confronting issues of discrimination and prejudice. Ideally the process culminates in an achieved

¹⁸ Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*, New York City: Routledge, 1998: 7.

¹⁹ Phinney et al., 137.

²⁰ Hogg and Abrams, 7.

²¹ Hogg and Abrams, 14.

²² Phinney et al., 140.

ethnic identity, which is characterized “by clarity about oneself as an ethnic group member.”²³ In summary, using sociological and psychological basis, the first step entails the development of a concept of self.

This process begins beyond a person’s childhood and through social interaction. The creation of an ethnic identity takes root in adolescence where social interaction takes a paramount role. Once created, an individual’s ethnic identity may shift and create various working selves, shifting to suit the context of the person’s environment. Thus, a Chicano is able to self identify as “Mexican” when surrounded by family, as “Chicano” during a MEChA²⁴ meeting, and “Latino” when trying to fit in a group which includes people of Latin American heritage. Not only do these group memberships help the individual form a self concept, but furthermore, “calling oneself a Latino, Hispanic, Chicano, Boricua, or whatever is a statement of affiliation, of loyalty to and solidarity with that group’s rules and codes.”²⁵ Oboler would agree and argue that “the way in which people with ties to Latin America... choose to identify themselves in this country is less a cultural imperative than a reflection of their direct experiences and their needs at a given conjuncture in their lives.”²⁶ Although it is not the intention to get too far ahead for what will be discussed in great detail in Chapter Two, one Chicana participant’s response to the questionnaire is included to demonstrate how this idea presents itself today:

- I tell people who are outside of the Latino population that I’m Mexican and sometimes Mexican American. Among Mexicans, I

²³ Phinney et al., 143.

²⁴ Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán. Chicano student organization to be further discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁵ Fox, 229.

²⁶ Suzanne Oboler, “The Politics of Labeling: Latino/a Cultural Identities of Self and Others,” *Latin American Perspectives* 19 (Autumn 1992): 29.

claim to be Mexican American but among those people who are my age I tell them that I'm Chicana.

Ethnic identity plays a large role in the lives of Chicanos as will be seen in Chapter Two, and the discussion of how it is defined and understood is important in their study. By creating labels, which is especially evident in the United States, we not only construct a perception of how we fit into our particular environment, but it also helps to erect walls between people. The current literature refers to this border as a boundary- one that was created between Chicanos and Mexicans upon the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

Studies about boundaries have created two understandings of the term: symbolic and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality.”²⁷ Chicano's identity is greatly impacted by symbolic boundaries. To feel the effects of the border, Chicanos do not need to be within the proximity of the border.

García further elucidates:

In a fascinating departure from almost all other ethnic experiences in this country, second-and-third generation U.S. born Mexicans of varying class positions continue to coexist with thousands of recent arrivals from Mexico. Consequently, different states of consciousness also coexist: an immigrant consciousness steeped in *Mexicano* ethnic and cultural nationalism plus an abiding attachment to Mexico; a Mexican-American consciousness centered on integration and acculturation; and a Chicano consciousness stressing ethnic revival.²⁸

²⁷ Michèle Lamont, and Virág Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 168, 167-195.

²⁸ Mario T. García, “*La Frontera*: The Border as Symbol and reality in Mexican-American Thought,” In *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, (Chicago: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 112-113.

By examining boundaries, we can “capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications.”²⁹ The creation of a boundary defines who belongs and who doesn't, carrying large repercussions upon those who are in and out.

The second understanding of boundaries is encompassed within a social sphere. Social boundaries are “objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities.”³⁰ Chicanos are all too familiar with this facet of boundaries. Nativist and anti-affirmative action advocates have tried to curtail the opportunities of minorities, including, of course, Chicanos. However, it is only “when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways.”³¹ A side effect of the discrimination that Chicanos feel is a degree of resentment which they may feel when confused with Mexican migrants, a group that currently endures a great deal of antagonism. In essence, social boundaries are the elements which can also make distinctions amongst who belongs and who doesn't more acrimonious.

Taking all of this into account, the importance of a boundary is not its physical properties, but what it represents. “Borders are not only created by the construction of fences, walls and floodlights, but also through discourses that mark immigrant bodies and the places with which they are associated as separate, marginal and different.”³² At a time when countries are no longer governed solely by their respective governments, but also

²⁹ Lamont & Molnár, 168.

³⁰ Fox, 28.

³¹ Lamont & Molnár, 168.

³² Mains, 151.

by regional factions created by free trade agreements, etc., the insistence of countries to define their borders is a weak attempt at maintaining control over how they define themselves. In a global context, emphasizing borders and defending them is a last resort attempt at maintaining power in a world that comes together more and more every day. Along the U.S. - Mexico border, fences and crossing points mark where one country begins and where the other ends.

In a post September 11th era, the U.S.- Mexico border sets boundaries that cannot be escaped without legalization. Bustamante considers the border “a place of contrast between two cultures and economies” and it is also a place “where people worked out everyday accommodations between those cultures.”³³ After the signing of NAFTA, it is clear that both countries are every day becoming more and more intertwined economically and culturally. As Bustamante has frequently held, the border is one of the best places to study the complex relationship between the United States and Mexico because the border is a place “where ideologues impose their prejudices.”³⁴ One example of this is the heightened militarization of the border at the onset of the war on drugs which in the eyes of many was a weak attempt at controlling both immigration and the flow of narcotics. Bustamante interprets such moves by the United States as “a symbolic gesture that makes sense to people motivated by prejudice against another culture.”³⁵ It is paradoxical that while the southern border of the United States, with the exception of San Diego, is one of the poorest areas of the country, the northern border states of Mexico represents one of most developed areas of the country. In this context, the border not only

³³Jorge A Bustamante, “Demystifying the United States- Mexico Border,” *The Journal of American History* 79 (Sept. 1992): 485.

³⁴ Bustamante, 486.

³⁵ Bustamante, 486.

symbolizes where one country begins and another ends, but it also represents the economic reality of the two.

The most obvious legal boundary between the United States and Mexico is that of citizenship. Boundaries provide “most individuals with a concrete, local, and powerful experience of the state, for this is the site where citizenship is strongly enforced (through passport checks, for instance).”³⁶ Chicanos and Mexicanos primarily distinguish themselves by their citizenship. We must also take into account the creation of the United States’ national identity as well as Mexico’s briefly. The U.S. has not relied on distinguishing itself from Mexico in order to find a national identity, but has instead relied on its history to create what many consider an American identity. Those who consider themselves a part of the United States rely heavily upon the history of the founding of the nation as a way to identify with the struggle and success of the country. Paradoxically, a facet of the national identity also depends upon the immigrants who came to the country and made it what it is today. Most U.S. citizens also believe in the American Dream, also criticized as a myth, which is a belief that if you work hard enough, you will be successful and able to reach your goals in the country. On the other hand, Mexican national identity has been heavily built on distinguishing itself from the United States. Throughout history, the Mexican government has hinted to its citizens that the United States is suspect, and it has relayed the story of U.S. Mexico relations in such a way as to create a negative connotation of the U.S. for Mexicans.³⁷ As a border people, Chicanos are caught in the middle of two neighboring countries that are not only economically integrated, but also have entwined national identities.

³⁶ Lamont & Molnár, 183.

³⁷ Robert A. Pastor and Jorge Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship: The United States and Mexico*, New York: A.A. Knopf, 1988.

This section has covered the main theoretical foundations which include Shibutani's symbolic interactionism, ethnic identity theory, Latino critical race theory, and the creation of boundaries. The overarching theme of this section is that Chicanos and Mexicans are two very distinct groups. How well each one understands the other depends on many factors, some of which are imposed by the sharing of the longest border between a developed and underdeveloped country. The boundaries between the United States and Mexico, whether social or symbolic, will continue to be a part of the creation of identity and an important issue in the study of Chicano-Mexicano relations. Thus, how we label ourselves has much larger implications.

1.3 Politics of Identity

Without a doubt, how we choose to label ourselves has a heavy impact, and more importantly, a politically charged one in the Chicano experience. One of the biggest challenges to writing about the experience of those of Mexican heritage is deciding which labels to use. Meier and Ribera elucidate the problem:

First and foremost, not all persons of Mexican descent agree on a name; second, historically the names they applied to themselves varied by class and region and also changed over time. Additionally, U.S. agencies, especially the Bureau of the Census, have used various identifiers over the years- e.g., country of birth, mother tongue, Spanish surname- making their information not precisely comparable and thereby adding to the difficulties of providing an accurate historical picture of the Mexican American.³⁸

Chicano literature embodies the preoccupation and struggle with identity and the implications of making such a choice. How one chooses to label oneself has a great amount of power, especially in the political arena. It was noted in the first section of this

³⁸ Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera. *Mexican Americans- American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos*, new and rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993): 6.

chapter that these categories are necessary for the individual to understand her role within society and without making these differences, the world would be too complex to understand, or so Shibutani and other sociologists contend. The following excerpt demonstrates only one of many efforts to voice the frustrations of determining who fits where and whether labels should even exist:

We are confronted with the daunting task of deconstructing the term "Latinas," which itself comprises a very diverse social group. This diversity arises, minimally, from such factors as culture and family dynamics, color, class, and racial diversity, language differences, citizenship and/or resident status, education, sexuality and life occupation. To speak of the Latina is to know that we are undocumented immigrants, peasants, borderland women, housewives and housemaids, wage-earners in pink-collar ghettos, in garment industries, in the blue-collar trades, on the streets as sex workers, cops and gang members, middle-class careerists, and professionals. Latinas include assimilated and non-assimilated Mexicanas or Puerto Riqueñas or Dominicanas, or Cubanans; from those who don't know Spanish, to those who use it and other dialects or cultural habits to preserve their identity and their racial/ethnic pride. While we are different, however, many of us do share a common value system, one which can be the source of a proud identity as well as the source of our perceived and self-constructed limitations.³⁹

One of the most sweeping moves on the part of the U.S. government to create labels for individuals came in 1970. In November 1970, the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity convened the Interagency Committee on Uniform Civil Rights Policies and Practices. The committee created the Racial Data Collection Subcommittee, which by 1971 concluded that the Federal government should develop uniform racial/ethnic data categories. The development of uniform federal ethnic categories moved forward when in April 1973 the Subcommittee on Minority Education of the Federal Interagency Commission on Education "issued an unpublished report on higher education for

³⁹ Elvia Arriola, "Symposium: Difference, Solidarity and law: Building Latina/o Communities through Latino Critical Theory," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 20-21.

Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and American Indians with a recommendation for common definitions for racial and ethnic groups.”⁴⁰ By 1978, the Subcommittee created five basic and racial and ethnic categories: 1. American Indian or Alaskan Native 2. Asian or Pacific Islander 3. Black 4. Hispanic and 5. White. Within these categories, Hispanic was defined as “A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central, or South America or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.”⁴¹ Since then, the term became a permanent part of racial rhetoric in the United States.

Choosing a label, or having one chose for oneself, is highly complicated. The history of the terminology used to identify oneself is revealing of the struggle to identify with an ethnic group. The term “Chicano” has evolved greatly through the years, and the roots of its origin are murky. While its origin has been suggested to stem from various points in history, there is yet a single answer. Some linguists believe that the term comes from the Nahuatl pronunciation of "Mexican," which suggests that in the sixteenth century the word was pronounced as "Me-chi-ca-no."⁴² The term “Chicano” appeared in print for the first time in 1892 in a novel about the Mexican American community, *El Hijo de la Tempestad* by Eugenio Chacón.⁴³ As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the first Chicano novel, *Las Aventuras de Don Chipote o Cuando los Pericos Mamen* by Daniel Venegas, used the term “Chicano” solely to identify Mexican migrants in the early

⁴⁰ Jack D. Forbes, “The Hispanic Spin: Party Politics and Governmental Manipulation of Ethnic Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 19 (Autumn 1992): 61.

⁴¹ Forbes, 62.

⁴² Annie O. Eysturoy and Jose Antonio Gurpegui. “Chicano Literature: Introduction and Bibliography.” *American Studies International* 28 (April 1990): 48.

⁴³ Eduardo Santa Cruz, “Chicano Literature: Mediator of Discordant Borders,” *Voices of Mexico* 70 (January- March 2005), 118.

1900s.⁴⁴ Most Chicano historians would agree that the term began losing its migrant connotation after World War II. The generations of the 1930s and 1940s,

nearly all born in the United States and stressing their Americanism, began thinking of themselves as (Mexicans) Americans. After World War II a new generation of youthful activists, insisting on self-definition and seeking cultural roots, preferred the name Chicano, short for Mexicano. The term dates back to the beginning of this century and originally had pejorative connotations, but was taken in the postwar years by many young Americans of Mexican descent as a prideful identification. Made popular by militants of the Movimiento, Chicanos is used after 1940 in this history as a simple alternative to Mexican American. It has the virtue of being short and simple and shunning any implication of divided loyalties.⁴⁵

Furthermore, with the rise of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s, young Chicanos chose to adopt the term as a defiant stance of self-assertion. Those who became known as radical Chicanos took propriety over the term and used it as a form of cultural self-affirmation. While younger generations are apt to begin self-identifying as Chicano, “older, more conservative Mexican Americans find it distasteful because of earlier derogatory implications and more recent connotations of aggressive activism.”⁴⁶ Its radical roots from the 1960s have thus become an obstacle for certain generations to accept or use it.

However, an outstanding question is why the government and other institutions insist on the creation of labels. Fox argues that “one reason is to make it easier for government agencies by grouping people into the categories that are written into the

⁴⁴ Daniel Venegas, *Las Aventuras de Don Chipote o Cuando los Péricos Mamen*, (Los Angeles: Heraldo de México, 1928. Reprint, Mexico City: Secretaria de Educación Pública: Centro de Estudios Fronterizos del Norte de México, 1984).

⁴⁵ Meier and Ribera, 7.

⁴⁶ Meier and Ribera, 6.

law.”⁴⁷ Being labeled and written into the law has political implications, ranging from whom to give the most attention during political campaigns to local re-districting. His second reason is strictly “for the convenience of social scientists who need consistent categories in order to compare findings on the same population at different times.”⁴⁸ While Fox sees labeling as a pragmatic issue, others have a different viewpoint.

Lamont and Molnár contend that the process of differentiating between one group and another is aimed at maintaining and achieving superiority over an out group on some dimension.⁴⁹ Thus, efforts on the part of anti-affirmative action groups to emphasize differences between Chicanos, as well as other minorities, and themselves are done to demonstrate their superiority in a specific environment.

A 1990s study established that the Spanish speaking community in the United States has embraced a label. The Latino National Political Survey, conducted in 1992 by Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Louis DeSipio revealed some interesting findings when participants were asked to choose between national origin labels (Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban) and pan-ethnic labels (Latino, Hispanic, American).⁵⁰ The Latino National Political Survey, as critiqued by Lopez, “seemed determined to answer, once and for all, a much debated question: Which name do those we sometimes call Latinos prefer to call themselves?”⁵¹ The Survey revealed that participants ranked their own respective national origin labels first and pan-ethnic labels second.⁵² Lopez argues that

⁴⁷ Fox, 26.

⁴⁸ Fox, 26.

⁴⁹ Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 170.

⁵⁰ Gerald Lopez, “Learning About Latinos,” *Chicano- Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 392.

⁵¹ Lopez, 392.

⁵² Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Louis DeSipio, F. Chris Garcia, John Garcia, & Angelo Falcon, *Latino Voices: Mexican, Puerto Rican, & Cuban Perspectives on American Politics* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992).

while the Survey's leadership allowed the media to distort the findings to implying that "Latinos" did not accept such a label, how we identify ourselves is "both plural and overlapping."⁵³ Furthermore, the findings of the survey further support the earlier argument that "one may have multiple affiliations, which become active in different situations."⁵⁴ Although the pan-ethnic labels were ranked second, the Survey's replies demonstrate that the community chooses and accepts that label.

In regards to the prospects of an emergence of a collective Latino identity in the United States, Spencer suggests that we should be focused on the "circumstances and commonalities that might lead to such a transformation."⁵⁵ These commonalities include strong links, such as language and a similar religious background. It is a well known fact that Latinos have become the largest minority in some states, especially California and Texas. Of these Latinos, the majority is of Mexican descent, Mexican American or Chicanos. Some, such as Spencer, have argued that the immense change in demographics that Mexican migrants have brought about must be evaluated in terms of the dynamics of identity politics. However, Spencer is an optimist when it comes down to predicting whether Latinos will be able to one day identify themselves as a collective whole. He feels these prospects "look promising, although this by no means guarantees that the transformation from the old national identities of Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, etc., to a collective identity of Latino, or Hispanic will inevitably occur."⁵⁶ While Spencer is an optimist, some, such as Rodolfo O de la Garza, do not share his viewpoint.

⁵³ Lopez, 394.

⁵⁴ Fox, 229.

⁵⁵ Martin E. Spencer, "Multiculturalism, 'Political Correctness,' and the Politics of Identity," *Sociological Forum* 9, no. 4 (1994): 558, 547-567.

⁵⁶ Spencer, 558.

While it is evident that the focus and main argument are centered on cultural differences between Chicanos and Mexicans, it cannot be denied that other factors, such as class and gender, also act as barriers to the creation of an amalgamation between different groups. As more Chicanos slowly make their way into the middle and even upper classes of American society, the issue of class becomes more salient and “one of the most divisive issues in the community and in scholarship.”⁵⁷ Examples of class division abound- the Chicano high school drop-out will not fare well in comparison to the Chicano who graduates from MIT and swiftly moves into the middle class. Ask each one what they think of the other, and rhetoric embodying solidarity will probably not arise. Some even fear that “unless employment training and adjustment programs are in place, NAFTA may contribute to growing class divisions within the Mexican American population”⁵⁸ Class differences also manifest themselves between ethnic groups- it is a well known fact that Cubans have fared better economically than other groups and has been a source of discord with other ethnic groups. Furthermore, gender could also have been another line of analysis. Racial vs. gender loyalty has been favored⁵⁹ in discussions of women’s roles in social movements, lack of representation in academia, and leaving the “women’s side” to be told by women. Their role has also been left out in dialogue about the creation of a pan-ethnic label. Culture, class, and gender were all available lines of analysis for this research. However, based on the present objectives, the analysis presented here is based on cultural differences because if we “want to study and analyze

⁵⁷ Maria E. Montoya, “Beyond Internal Colonialism: Class, Gender, and Culture as Challenges to Chicano Identity,” in *Voices of a New Chicano/a History*, ed. Refugio I. Rochin and Dennis Valdes (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 187.

⁵⁸ David Montejano, “On the Future of Anglo-Mexican Relations in the United States,” in *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. David Montejano (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1999), 251.

⁵⁹ Montoya, 188.

Chicano ethnicity and the role it plays in American society, then we must treat it simply as one category of interest.”⁶⁰

Coming together for Chicanos and Mexicanos will be a challenge because differences exist even at the inter-group level. An example of the discord at the inter-group level is obvious: Mexican migrants and Chicanos have usually been in accord with most issues, but there are several points of friction. In essence, “national origin allegiances, linked to the country of origin of Latino immigrants or their ancestors, at times have hindered the building of a pan-Latino identity”⁶¹ (Johnson, 198). A neophyte challenger to the construction of pan-ethnic labels is Latino Critical Theory. Its founders consider it “an infant discourse that responds primarily to the long historical presence and general socio-legal invisibility of Latinas/os in the lands now known as the United States.”⁶² One of the most criticized areas is the failing by many to recognize the diversity within those categorized as Latino and Hispanic and thus, its founders call for an analysis of the “construction of group identity.”⁶³ Not only are a highly diverse people categorized into the Latino and Hispanic label, but furthermore, they continue to be identified with their immigrant roots, despite the fact that many have been in the country for generations.

Rhetoric surrounding race reveals a great deal about the feeling and underlying sentiments. Johnson sets as an example signs with racially charged language which were posted outside a restaurant.

⁶⁰ Montoya, 189.

⁶¹ Kevin R. Johnson, “Immigration and Latino Identity,” *Chicano Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 198.

⁶² Francisco Valdez, “Theorizing ‘OutCrit’ Theories: Coalitional Method and Comparative Jurisprudential Experience - RaceCrits, QueerCrits and LatCrits,” *University of Miami Law Review* 53 (July 1999): 1266.

⁶³ Kevin R. Johnson, “Immigration and Latino Identity,” *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 197.

The formation of a group identity is affected by the putative group's treatment by dominant society. The signs said 'No Mexicans Served,' not 'No Undocumented Mexicans Served' or 'No Mexican Immigrants' served. Put differently... dominant Anglo society has imposed an identity on both Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants as outsiders to the national community.⁶⁴

Moreover, Johnson believes it is the "common mistreatment may forge group cohesion among Latinos so that they may fight a common enemy and agitate for group rights."⁶⁵ Spencer highlights that "never before has America received a stream of immigration from a single linguistic and religious group, as homogenous in these respects as is the present Latino immigration to the United States."⁶⁶ Mexican migration to the United States is not new, and the effect it has had on the identity creation for Chicanos is significant. Thus, Chicanos further our understanding of the politics of identity: as descendants of Mexican migrants and for the proximity of the border, they keep these issues alive in our minds. Without their constant flow, perhaps the creation of a collective Latino identity in the United States would have one less category of self identification to worry about. The larger task is to define the factors that separate Chicanos and Mexicanos from forming a collective identity, even if to form a coalition for immigrant rights per se. In upcoming chapters, the intricacies of the Chicano-Mexicano relationship will be revealed, a discussion will ensue as to the possibility for Chicanos and Mexicanos to coalesce. However, because Chicanos, or Mexican American, is a term "devoid of

⁶⁴ Kevin R. Johnson, "Immigration and Latino Identity," *Chicano Latino Law Review* 19 (Spring 1998): 210.

⁶⁵ Johnson, 210.

⁶⁶ Spencer, 564.

meaning before 1848,”⁶⁷ a brief overview of the history of Chicanos and Mexicans is necessary.

1.4 Brief history of the creation of interdependence and Mexican settlement

In order to understand relations between Chicanos and Mexicans, we must first understand their history to better comprehend the perceptions that each group has of the other. The history of both of these groups is highly intricate and a full account of their history would require more space than available, and needless to mention, various accounts of it already exist. In short: “The history of Mexican Americans is a tale of a frontier people whose land was taken by conquest, whose culture was pushed aside by Anglo conquerors, and who were overwhelmed in this century by Mexican kin who followed in their footsteps.”⁶⁸ If one takes a look at the history of Chicanos and Mexicans, it is clear that one must not only focus on important events such as the Texas struggle for independence, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Mexican Revolution, the first major Mexican migration wave, the Chicano Movement, the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and so on. Relations between these two groups reach far into history. Meier and Ribera believe their history can be divided into five sections:

The first period must consider both their Indian and Spanish backgrounds. It covers... the development of Indian civilizations in Mesoamerica, their defeat by Spanish conquistadors, and the blending of Indian and Spanish cultures. The second period begins in 1810 with the *Grito de Dolores* as a mark point for independent Mexico and culminates with war with the United States ending in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The

⁶⁷ Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999): 9.

⁶⁸ Matt Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans- American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993): 4.

third period, from 1848 to the end of the nineteenth century, is notable for the effects of the change from Mexican to American rule: Anglo migration to the Southwest, investment there of eastern and European capital in railroads, mines, lumbering, cattle, and agriculture; preliminary integration of the Southwest into the larger U.S. economy; and the relegation of *la raza* to a minority position of second class citizenship in what had once been its own land. A rapidly rising rate of migration from Mexico introduces the fourth period. Finally, World War II marks the beginning of the contemporary period, characterized by renewed heavy migration to the United States; by the Movimiento a process of self-identification and heightened awareness of Mexican cultural values; by some improvement in the social and economic conditions of Mexican Americans; by greater acculturation as barriers weakened; and by energetic movements for maximum participation in America life through insistence on better education, full civil rights, and equality of economic opportunity.⁶⁹

Chicano historians today concur that to understand Chicano history, we cannot begin with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Instead, as Meier and Ribera do, the history must go back many more centuries. The first period that Meier and Ribera mention encompasses relations that go back a further than we usually imagine. The interdependence between the United States and Mexico dates to pre-Columbian times as the Gran Chichimeca fostered the establishment of trading centers “through which items were channeled, swapped, bartered, and exchanged between nomadic bands living on the basins, ranges, and plains of the Gran Chichimeca and the highly developed urban centers of Mesoamerica.”⁷⁰ In the period between A.D. 900 and 1250, the Toltecs ruled Tula, and thus, a large system of trading was established. It can be said that this system of trading began the interdependence. The Toltecs had separated themselves from the Chichimec, and at the height of their power, the Aztecs became a part of their reality.

The concept of Aztlán is a vital fragment in Chicano’s past. From historical studies, it is clear that Aztlán “originated in Mexico, and since its introduction scholars

⁶⁹ Meier and Ribera, 4.

⁷⁰ Dirk Raat, *Mexico and the United States: Ambivalent Vistas*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992): 177.

have debated whether it is a myth, history, or mythologized history.”⁷¹ Interestingly, it was the Spanish who first became interested in learning about the Aztec’s understanding of Aztlán:

Spanish chroniclers, working with indigenous intellectuals in what is today Mexico City, interviewed hundreds of Aztecs and asked the intellectuals to record their history. Aztlán emerged as one of the most important historical concepts. When the Aztec transmitted their accounts of Aztlán, they conceived it as a reality and acknowledged it as their ancient past. They claimed that Aztlán was the place of their birth as a people. No one knew where Aztlán was located; they merely indicated to sixteenth century cartographers that it was to the north of the Valley of Mexico.⁷²

Chicano and Mexican versions of Aztlán are in accord in specific points. Both versions concur that Aztecs migrated south toward central Mexico incited by Huitzilopochtli’s expulsion from their homeland. However, digressions begin when any attempt is made to specify a location- “Mexican American scholars... disagree on whether Aztlán was located in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, or California” but “no version claims that Aztlán was located in Texas.”⁷³ As the shared story goes, the Aztecs continued moving southward until they saw the infamous eagle perched upon a cactus sprouting from a rock. We currently know the site as Mexico City and the story lives today as the center of the Mexican flag. Not only is this moment reflected in the Mexican flag, but it is also an element that is very much alive in Chicanos’ recollection of Mexico. It is also at this point where Chicano versions greatly diverge from Mexican accounts of these moments in history. Menchaca points out that in Chicano versions, the story continues “ending after Huitzilopochtli has destined them... to return to Aztlán and

⁷¹ Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001), 21.

⁷² Menchaca, 21.

⁷³ Menchaca, 23.

reclaim their homeland.”⁷⁴ It is particularly important to include Aztlán in Chicano history because the idea of reclaiming the homeland in part fueled the radicalism that surrounded the Chicano Movement. For example, the Brown Berets, “the most important of the militant barrio organizations,”⁷⁵ held that Chicanos should take it upon themselves to reclaim the land which had been taken from them in 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. And yet, for many Chicano scholars, “Aztlán has become a symbolic trope used to promote racial and cultural pride among college students taking courses on Mexican American studies.”⁷⁶ One of the clearest examples is the inclusion of “Aztlán” in the name of one of the oldest surviving Chicano student organizations, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán.

Upon the decline of trading centers and the arrival of Spaniards, many groups increasingly became dependent on products available only through Spaniards. For example, Navajos picked up the Spanish use of livestock, which had already been done by their Pueblo neighbors. This incorporation of Spanish traits also brought problems, such as the Apache’s incorporation of horses into their lifestyle, because Spanish missions were later raided for them. Eventually, “more trade goods translated into an expanded need for Spanish wares by Pueblos to meet the increasing demands,” and so, “the spiral of dependency had been started.”⁷⁷ By adopting and incorporating various elements of Spanish life into their own, these groups set up an economic interdependence between Mexico and the United States which has grown exponentially ever since.

⁷⁴ Menchaca, 23.

⁷⁵ Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 211.

⁷⁶ Menchaca, 24.

⁷⁷ Raat, 177.

This economic interdependence only became larger during the latter part of the Spanish period between 1780 and 1820. Upon the end of the Spanish period and the beginning of the Mexican period from 1820 to 1845, the area was no longer dependent on Mexico City, but instead “aligned its needs and development with the north.”⁷⁸ From this moment in time onwards, the Mexican government realized what would become an omnipresent source of frustration for them: “the influence of Mexico City was weak, which allowed the region to gradually become economically incorporated into the developing U.S. economy.”⁷⁹ A young Mexican government faced difficulties administrating the central part of Mexico, and in turn, the distance between them and the North only exacerbated the problem of trying to manage them as well. This disconnection between the government and its people would later lead to even bigger problems for Mexico.

The consequences of an increased economic exchange were obvious- as more trade took place between the United States and northern Mexico, less trade would take place between northern and central Mexico. Cases of lost Mexican markets to the United States abound in this era. Much to Mexico’s chagrin, upon the end of the Mexican American War, “the northern half of Mexico was transformed into the vital expanding economy of the United States.”⁸⁰ The Texan struggle for independence led by Stephen F. Austin, as well as the already integrating economic markets, added to the tension between the United States and Mexico, “culminating in the Mexican-American War in 1846.”⁸¹ The development of a Chicano consciousness grew during this period because the people

⁷⁸ Gonzales, 7.

⁷⁹ Raat, 179.

⁸⁰ Raat, 180.

⁸¹ Annie O. Eysturoy and Jose Antonio Gurpegui, “Chicano Literature: Introduction and Bibliography,” *American Studies International*, 28 (April 1990): 49.

of the Southwest and California not only had to deal with their southern neighbor Mexico, but also a rapidly approaching United States to the east. Thus, the effects of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo cannot be emphasized enough in the history of Chicanos.

The Treaty extended the border of the United States “to include 80,000 people with a culture that was different not only from that of the United States but also from that of the traditional European migrant.”⁸² The cliché about the “border crossing us,” also a Chicano stronghold, arose from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo’s changing of the border. Soon after the signing of the treaty, the 1848 discovery of gold in California became grounds for racial feuds to arise. The confrontations escalated when Sonorans became successful gold miners and “acute competition for the better mine sites”⁸³ grew, only exacerbating existing hostility between the Spanish-speaking and whites. As had been the fate of Native Americans, indigenous people of the region suffered similarly with their trade coming to an end and their lives transferred onto reservations. The creation of a marked boundary soon followed, and Mexamerica, the meeting ground between the United States and Mexico, was born.

With the birth of Mexamerica also came the birth of the Chicano, even though as will be explained in Chapter Three, Mexicans did not use the term “Chicano” to identify those of Mexican heritage born in the United States. As a people trapped between two different countries, Chicanos “face the dilemma of living in a micro-society in which the political and economic forces are controlled by Anglos; but their cultural, religious, and spiritual life (not to mention the realities of their Native American past) bind them to

⁸² Meier and Ribera, 69.

⁸³ Meier and Ribera, 70.

Mexico.”⁸⁴ The birth of a border people came upon the end of the Mexican- American War, and their experience “has been one of being foreigners in their native land, where Anglos and Mexican Americans have clashed over property rights, religious freedom, and personal liberty, with the Mexican American, more often than not, coming out on the short end.”⁸⁵

Although the creation of interdependence is vital to the understanding of the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans, so is the settlement of the United States by Mexican migrants. In fact, the dominant theme of Chicano history in the twentieth century is immigration, because of its magnitude and impact. The historical movement of Mexican workers to the U.S. has been characterized by an ebb and flow which is “often calibrated by seasonal labor demands, economic recessions, and mass deportations.”⁸⁶ Historically, Mexican migration to the United States after the Mexican –American War was mainly due to responses to labor needs. “Employers did not absolutely command the movement of Mexican workers, but employer’s needs constructed a particular structure of opportunities that shaped migration.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, there were a variety of factors which drew these immigrants into the Southwest. First, “Mexican colonies were already established here and there throughout the region.”⁸⁸ However, without a doubt, the most significant attraction was the abundance of jobs. Soon after the end of the Mexican-

⁸⁴ Raat, 184-185.

⁸⁵ Raat, 185.

⁸⁶ Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*, Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1994: 20.

⁸⁷ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 20.

⁸⁸ Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 121.

American War, Mexicans began migrating to work in “three main industries: mining, railroad construction and maintenance, and agriculture.”⁸⁹

Structural changes in Mexico’s economy also had lasting effects upon migration. The consolidation of the hacienda system under Porfirio Diaz’s autocratic regime (1876-1911) “displaced a growing peasant population from a communal system of land tenure and transformed them into landless workers who lacked sources of employment.”⁹⁰ The economic situation in the United States, inflation and U.S. labor demands, led to a substantial increase in the U.S. Mexican population from 1900-1910. Without a doubt, Mexico’s revolution also created northward migration. “During the period the booming U.S. economy provided both urban and rural jobs for Mexican workers, and Mexican families settled into the already growing barrios of Los Angeles, El Paso, and San Antonio.”⁹¹ The first significant wave brought Mexicans mainly from central and eastern Mexican border states⁹² by 1914. Not only did the economic situation in the United States form an important determining factor in the size of migration, but world events also contributed. The availability of workers and their relatively low cost became an irresistible force for Mexican migration. By the 1920s, neither the mines nor the railroad lines “could compete with agriculture in attracting the Mexican immigrant.”⁹³ All of this changed upon the Great Depression.

⁸⁹ Gonzales, 121.

⁹⁰ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 21.

⁹¹ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 21.

⁹² Meier and Ribera, 119.

⁹³ Gonzales, 123.

Total Mexican-origin Population in the United States: 1900–1996

Year	Total Mexican-origin Population (in Thousands)	Percent of Total U.S. Population
1996	18,039 ¹	6.8
1990	13,393	5.4
1980	8,740	3.9
1970	4,532	2.2
1960	1,736 ²	1.0
1950	1,346	0.9
1940	1,077	0.8
1930	1,423	1.2
1920	740	0.7
1910	385	0.4

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part 1* (1975), U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 and 1990, and March Current Population Survey, 1995 and 1996.

¹ These figures are based on CPS data that are adjusted for undercount and thus are not comparable to census figures.

² Mexican-origin population calculated as a sum of the Mexican-born population and natives of Mexican parentage.

Figure 2. Total Mexican origin Population in the United States. Image Source: Jennifer E. Glick & Jennifer Van Hook, “The Mexican- origin population of the United States in the Twentieth Century,” in *Migration Between Mexico and the United States: Binational Study*, ed. Binational Study on Migration (Mexico City: Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, 1998), 573. Accessed online < <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/binpapers/v2a-3glick.pdf>>

The collapse of the economy in the 1930s had major effects for Mexican migrants: increased racial tensions, loss of jobs, and repatriation. Repatriations began in 1931 “when the federal government launched a massive deportation drive centered on southern California.”⁹⁴ Chicano historians consider this one of the worst times for Mexicans in the United States, but the situation would once again change with World War II.

World War II brought Mexican workers back to the U.S. when the U.S. government initiated the Bracero Program, a contract-labor program designed to meet

⁹⁴ Gonzales, 148.

wartime labor shortages in agriculture.”⁹⁵ While the period allowed Mexican migrants to restart the migration flow, it created an even bigger impact for Chicanos. The war was taken as an opportunity to enter the mainstream, and “between 250,000 and 500,000, both immigrants and native-born, engaged in active military service.”⁹⁶ As a part of the military, Chicanos “were one of the most highly decorated ethnic groups in the U.S. Armed Forces.”⁹⁷ Thus, the biggest impact of the war was on the Chicano middle class, which grew in size and influence.

The Bracero program ended in December 1964, with much opposition to its ending from the Mexican government. As we can see in both Figures 2 &3, Mexican migration continued growing at impressive rates. Many have argued that it was the end of the Bracero Program which began the wave of illegal immigration that we know today. Others blame the 1986 Immigrations Reform and Control Act for allowing the legalization of many others, since the legalization of one family member meant the migration of the remainder of the family to the United States. While previous migration was mainly as a direct response to programs and recruiting efforts, the end of the Bracero Program led to waves of Mexican migration unforeseen by the U.S. government. Hondagneu-Sotelo believes this new wave of Mexican migration is “characterized by greater representation of women and entire families, the establishment of permanent settlement communities in geographically dispersed areas, and more diversified uses of Mexican labor.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 22.

⁹⁶ Meier and Ribera, 178.

⁹⁷ Gonzales, 162.

⁹⁸ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 23.

Total Mexican-born Population in the United States: 1900–1996

Year	Mexican-born Population (in Thousands)	Percent of the Total Foreign-born	Percent of the Total Mexican-origin Population
1996	6,679 ¹	27.2	37.0
1990	4,298	21.7	32.1
1980	2,199	15.6	25.2
1970	759	7.9	16.7
1960	576 ²	5.9	33.2
1950	454	4.4	33.7
1940	377	3.2	35.0
1930	617	4.3	43.4
1920	486	3.5	65.7
1910	222	1.6	57.7
1900	103	1.0	

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part 1* 1975), U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1980 and 1990, and March Current Population Survey, 1995 and 1996.

¹ These figures are based on CPS data that are adjusted for undercount and thus are not comparable to census figures.

² Mexican-origin population calculated as a sum of the Mexican-born population and natives of Mexican parentage.

Figure 3. Total Mexican- born Population in the United States: 1900-1996. Image Source: Jennifer E. Glick & Jennifer Van Hook, “The Mexican- origin population of the United States in the Twentieth Century,” in *Migration Between Mexico and the United States: Binational Study*, ed. Binational Study on Migration (Mexico City: Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, 1998), 575. Accessed online <<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/uscir/binpapers/v2a-3glick.pdf>>

The numbers speak for themselves: By U.S. Census accounts in 2000, 9.17 million Mexican nationals were living in the United States.⁹⁹ Just after the Bracero Program ended in 1964 until 1980, it is estimated that “over 1 million Mexicans legally immigrated to the U.S., exceeding earlier numbers.”¹⁰⁰ The numbers have kept growing, making some feel cautious about the implications of having a group without suffrage rights become the largest minority in the United States.

⁹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations. Table FBP-1, “Profile of Selected Demographic and Social Characteristics: 2000.” Accessed online: <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/stp-159/STP-159-Mexico.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ Hondagneu-Sotelo, 23.

The goal of this section was to briefly review the creation of interdependence between the Mexico and the United States. While many of us associate economic interdependence with the North American Free Trade Agreement implemented in 1994, historians are well aware that relations between Mexicans and the United States go back for centuries. The influence of history can never be underestimated- would Mexican-Chicano relations be any different if these two countries did not start their relationship through animosity? We can only guess the answer to this question, but it does make it clear that history can tell us a great deal about changing perceptions between Chicanos and Mexicans. Within history, Mexican migration is also encompassed, and it tells us that as a continuing force, it will persist as another defining factor of the Chicano- Mexican relationship. We now pass onto the Chicano side of this relationship.