

Conclusion

Two years have passed since I left my home in Houston and found a new one in Puebla, Mexico. In that time, I have studied my own country from the perspective of its southern neighbor, traveled and seen the diversity of the country, but most importantly, shattered any misperceptions of the country and its people. I have only confirmed what many already know, but few are willing to try: the best way to rediscover one's "roots" is to study and live in that country. Furthermore, I confirmed Rodolfo O. de la Garza's belief that "Chicanos often go to Mexico expecting to find themselves but come away understanding that being Chicano is not being Mexicano."²³² He hit the mark and in turn inspired a thesis which analyzed the perceptions and misunderstandings that Chicanos and Mexicans have of each other.

In turn, this thesis re-engaged many of the issues which de la Garza first brought up in his 1980's article "Chicanos and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Future of Chicano-Mexican Relations."²³³ The first person to suggest that Chicanos and Mexicans establish a closer relationship was Jorge Bustamante in the late 1970s, and de la Garza's article was a response to Bustamante's suggestion. The present thesis sought to cover the issues which were left unresolved in his work. First and foremost, interviews were conducted to update de la Garza's findings since twenty five years have gone by and the U.S. - Mexico relationship has been fraught with a myriad of events. Secondly, while de la Garza based his opinion on work produced by academia, this thesis included first hand data by Chicanos and Mexicans, albeit from very specific samples, regarding the Chicano-Mexican relationship. Furthermore, while de la Garza heavily based his opinion on work

²³² Rodolfo O. de la Garza, "Chicanos and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Future of Chicano- Mexican Relations," *The Western Political Quarterly* 33 (December 1980): 575.

²³³ de la Garza, 571.

produced by the U.S. side, the present thesis included the perceptions of Mexican scholars as well. It was decided that the topic is still of high relevance because in order to understand the U.S.- Mexico relationship, one must not only look at the politics and economics that drive it, but also the social side, which includes studying the human dimension that comes with it. Mexican migration needs to be examined not only for the effects it implies for the United States, but for the meaning it has for the Chicano community which they encounter upon arriving in the United States, and for the understanding, or misunderstanding, it leaves for the Mexicans who remain behind.

After all the interviews were conducted, questionnaires analyzed, and literature review completed, it could only be concluded that the primary hypothesis had been supported: Because of differing agendas, Chicanos and Mexicans will not be able to work together towards a common agenda solely based on their cultural commonalities. It was also confirmed that Mexicans from Central Mexico have a large misunderstanding and to some degree indifference towards Chicanos, which has its own set of repercussions for the Chicano- Mexican relationship. Additionally, another confirmed sub-hypothesis was that Chicanos would describe a nostalgic view of Mexico when asked for their perception and that although they were asked to specifically exclude Mexican migrants from their responses, they would be unable to remove image of Mexican migrants from them.

The first chapter laid out the theoretical framework to understand the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans and how they interact despite being on different sides of the border. The theoretical framework used for this study rested on Shibutani's interactionist approach to social psychology, ethnic identity theory, and Latino critical theory. Furthermore, Chapter One included a brief review the history which established

the patterns and conditions through which this relationship has evolved, going back as far as to the establishment of economic interdependence and a succinct mention of Mexican settlement in the United States.

Chapter Two dealt with the history of the Chicano Movement as well as reviewed the existing literature on the perceptions that Chicanos have of Mexicans. Additionally, the questionnaire employed by the study was introduced and the results for the Chicano side presented. The main finding for the questionnaire revealed that Chicanos' perceptions of Mexicans is heavily influenced by their contact with Mexican migrants in the United States. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that the majority of Chicanos prefer to self-identify as "Mexican" while it was clear that the majority of the Mexican participants would not use such a term to identify the Chicano participants. It was concluded from the Chicano side of the questionnaires that while Chicanos were, for the majority, willing to work with the Mexican government or an NGO, very few of them understood the intricacies of their different agendas and where that would possibly lead them. Another captivating finding was that most Chicanos chose the self-identification of "Latino" over "Chicano." This leads us to conclude that while Chicanos involved in the Chicano Movement of the 60s and 70s stood by radical tenets, such as the politicized understanding of their self-identification, the Chicanos of today would probably not identify with them. Montoya explains this change in radicalism by mentioning that "fewer and fewer of our undergraduates want to fight the old battles of the 1960s and

1970s. They, moreover, face new and difficult challenges posed by the anti-immigrant movement and the affirmative action backlash.”²³⁴

In Chapter Three, a closer look at the evolution of the Mexican understanding of the term “Chicano” was included. It was found that the understanding of the term was first used as a reference to people who were Mexican migrants and evolved as Mexico came to terms with its economic situation which led to Mexican migration. Another great stride was made through the Chicano Movement of the 60s and 70s which finally made it clear to Mexico that Chicanos were their own ethnic group within the United States. The Mexican side of the questionnaire revealed that Mexicans from the central part of the country have many misconceptions about Chicanos as well. However, it seemed that their degree of knowledge about migration impacted their perception of Chicanos. Because these groups have very limited contact, it is believed that factor greatly influenced to what degree they understood the other. More importantly, it was made clear that should a coalition arise, Mexicans believed the deciding factor would be the will of Chicanos to create such a coalition. Taking into consideration the Mexican political system and realizing that the maximum effort their government has made recently to help migrants has been with the right to vote while living abroad, Mexican participants were realistic and expected an amalgam of efforts if an only if Chicanos were the ones willing to take the initiative.

It was concluded in Chapter Four that because of the misconceptions and misunderstanding that exist between Chicanos and Mexicans, joint efforts will only be sporadic, and for the most part will not arise simply based on their cultural

²³⁴ 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), 191.

commonalities. It was possible to arrive at this conclusion through the study's methodology. The interviews with scholars and government officials from Mexico and the United States gave us the bigger picture of the events and overall impression that those interviewed had of the evolution of the Chicano- Mexican relationship. To clear up any differences between academia and what Chicanos and Mexicans think of their relationship, questionnaire was used to obtain first hand opinions by Chicanos and Mexicans. While academia and government officials attempted to provide an unbiased view of this relationship, the replies included in the questionnaire revealed that Chicanos had used it as an opportunity to voice their concerns about their identity. The Mexican side was also enlightening in that the participants were very willing to write openly about their thoughts and even stereotypes held of Chicanos. Thus, the questionnaire served as an effective tool to gauge the actual state of the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans.

Consequently, the bigger picture shows us that while it would not be beneficial for Chicanos to have the aid of Mexicans, neither would Chicano aid be helpful for Mexicans. Even though Chicanos are the principal group openly defending the Mexican position on the issue of undocumented Mexican migrants, this may not be a sufficient reason for Mexico to seek closer ties with them. Mexico's rhetoric surrounding its sovereignty would also explain their caution in approaching Chicanos for aid. Thus, while the prospective for the creation of a coalition for the propagation of a common agenda, such as a joint effort for migration reform, between Chicanos and Mexican is dim, the only area where any future does lie is in the creation of educational and cultural opportunities. One of the organizations which has already taken the first step is

Fundacion Solidaridad Mexico Americana, A.C. in that they include a program for Chicano youth to learn about Mexico and its culture. Several U.S. universities, such as San Diego State University, also have created programs which encourage Chicanos to “rediscover” their roots by studying in the country for a summer.

Since Mexico’s needs have been brushed aside in light of the sequelae of September 11th; it is highly unlikely that Chicanos would greatly benefit from any aid from Mexico. This point couldn’t be evidenced more than by remembering NAFTA’s negotiations and Mexico’s effort to lobby with U.S. political leaders of Mexican heritage. While Mexico made an effort to work with these leaders to gain some ground, Chicano leader’s choice to side with President Clinton demonstrated both their integration into the United States and the fact that Mexico needed them more than they needed Mexico. Mexico's conflicting relationships with Mexican Americans have been closely linked to the general state of relations between the United States and Mexico, which to some extent “have been shaped by the Mexican Diaspora’s experience inside the United States.”²³⁵ Chicanos have already seen that the Mexican government has treated them according to their own needs- rejecting them in the early part of the 20th century, only acknowledging their status as a minority upon the events of the Chicano Movement, and very recently beginning to take proactive steps with the migrant community- so it is highly unlikely that they would want to create a solid coalition with hopes of making a difference for either their own needs or those of migrants.

With this in mind, four major conclusions arose from the study. Primarily, it was evident that the future of the Chicano- Mexican relationship is in Chicano’s hands. While the majority of the Chicano participants responded that they would be willing to work

²³⁵ Yossi Shain, “The Mexican Diaspora,” *Political Science Quarterly* 114 (Winter 99/2000): 670.

with the Mexican government or NGOs in order to promote the Chicano/Latino agenda in the United States, the majority of Mexican participants outright thought it was a bad idea and that the Mexican side should not be involved with Chicanos but instead focus its energies on its migrants. Secondly, while few of the Chicano and Mexican participants demonstrated an understanding of each other's reality- the economic, political, and heterogeneity of their social facets- their common link was the image of the Mexican migrant. For both groups, the image of the Mexican migrants is very much alive and mainly what keeps these two groups linked. Thirdly, it was also evident that a disjuncture existed between scholar's view of the relationship- Chicanos are generally held in a more positive light by Mexican society- and the opinions of Mexicans and Chicanos. While the academic world, everyone from historian Lorenzo Meyer to Ambassador Icaza, agree that Mexico has accepted and changed to an image of the Chicano in a more positive light throughout the years, this view mainly holds for those who have increased contact and an understanding through study or direct interaction with members of the other group. The fourth major finding revealed that Chicanos and the ever present waves of migration are challenging the Mexican conception of national identity. Mexican participants revealed through their free response questions that they believed that in order for a person to consider themselves Mexican, it was not necessary to be born in the country.

Although the results of the questionnaire are used to bolster many of the arguments presented herein, it must be acknowledged that it is only a first step in understanding the relationship between Mexicans and Chicanos. Much of the literature concerning relations between Chicanos and Mexicans only includes academia's perceptions, but first hand accounts are also necessary. In order to understand the breadth

of the perception that Mexicans have of Chicanos, it would be necessary to include participants from the different regions of Mexico: the border, the north, center, south, and the Yucatan peninsula. Furthermore, participants should be from different economic classes, education level, and connection to migration. Due to time and the resources needed to carry out such a large venture, the present study measured Chicanos and Mexican perceptions of each other from two very specific groups on both sides of the border- students in Puebla, Mexico and Massachusetts, United States. Needless to say, both sample groups are highly educated and generally of a specific social class within their respective countries.

In a future study, it would be recommended that different populations within Mexico be studied in order to gain a more representative view of the national perception of Chicanos. The Chicano side included here was composed of a highly educated group of Chicano students, mainly from the Southwest. The Mexican perspective also comes from a highly educated group, only this time from central Mexico. The degree of privilege which both groups have in their respective countries for being able to study at the institutions where they currently do so is without doubt. Furthermore, it would also be suggested that people of different generations be included, especially in the case of Chicanos, who because of the radical and political connotations of the term “Chicano,” have evolved so greatly throughout the years. Another suggested line of research would be to analyze the perceptions that those Mexicans of the middle class have of family members who have migrated to the United States for professional opportunities and now have children who were born in the United States. In this study, two such cases arose and their perceptions of their cousins and family were very particular and informed.

While every effort was made to keep the questionnaire condensed for the Mexican side, it was evident that the participants were not accustomed to questionnaires of the length presented to them. The length of the questionnaire was deemed apt to capture perceptions which are highly complex, and as such, it would be suggested that the free response methodology be the center of the study or eliminated altogether. Students were more apt to finish the short answer sections than the free response, and it was left unclear whether it was for the length of the questionnaire that the free response answers were markedly shorter than those of Chicanos, or whether there is a culturally different reaction to answering that type of question. One final Chicano participant is cited for how well she describes the Chicano- Mexican relationship:

- There are many differences between Chicano life and Mexican life. I think that one should NEVER, NEVER judge or look down on the other. An open mind is the healthiest approach towards friendship or partnership. It is up to the Chicano or Chicana to measure how much they identify. It is up to them to make the effort to connect. Chicanos are at a disadvantage because you have to make yourself stay connected (if you live in the U.S.). You cannot be sucked up by assimilation. Mexico is a pluralistic society. There are so many differences in the country that one cannot expect for every Mexican to be the same. Likewise the same should not be expected of Chicanos. Nationality is given too much importance. Being Mexican is in the heart. I am Mexican even though I was not born on Mexican soil. Who cares about where you born? I know some people who were born and raised on Mexican soil. We share the same history and blood but they do not know about Mexico as much as I do and are not as proud of Mexico as I am. Therefore, who is more Mexican?

In essence, this study is the first of what hopefully will be more studies aimed at bridging differences and misconceptions that Chicanos and Mexicans have of each other. Continued Mexican migration will increasingly affect both groups, and while it is highly unlikely that a coalition will arise between both groups, it does not mean that they should not learn about each other. Perhaps this study will allow readers to realize that the

perceptions that Mexicans and Chicanos have of each other is thoroughly enlightening for the understanding of the human side of the U.S.- Mexico relationship.