

## Introduction

The topic for this thesis arose from personal experience. As a self identified Chicana, many issues covered in this thesis became evident once I crossed the border between my homeland in Houston, Texas and entered the motherland, Puebla, Mexico, the birth state of both my parents. It did not take long before my suitemates and classmates began questioning my identity- was I a Mexican national that was now living in the United States? Was I a Mexican migrant who'd returned home? Why did I speak Spanish so well? And was I really a "*gringa*"?

All these questions made me think about my identity, as is the case at some point in the life of all Chicanos in the United States.<sup>1</sup> However, the questions I kept hearing made me realize that the relationship between Chicanos and Mexican nationals of the Mexican middle class with whom I was surrounded at the Universidad de las Américas, Puebla was being played out in front of me. There was curiosity about the experience as a child of migrants, yet few knew of the racism encountered by Chicanos, and the main focus was on the loss of "*identidad mexicana*" mainly for being born on the other side of the border. Aware of these issues, I decided to take my personal experience and examine the historical roots of the Chicano- Mexican relationship and analyze the implications that the state of the relationship has for the greater Chicano Movement in the United

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<sup>1</sup> A word on terminology is in order. The term "Chicano" will be employed to specify U.S. born persons of Mexican heritage. While the term Chicano has a more politicized connotation, it was chosen instead of "Mexican-American" because of the evolution that it has had both in the U.S. and Mexico. Current Chicano history trends show that "Chicano" and "Mexican-American" are widely interchanged, but for consistency, only "Chicano" will be used here. The use of "Latinos" will refer to Americans of Latin American descent, exclusive of Spaniards and their descendants. The term "Mexicans" will specify Mexican nationals who have *not* migrated, and in turn "Mexican migrants" specifies Mexican migrants who *have* migrated. The upcoming chapters will include a discussion of the terminology.

States and the advocacy organizations that have fought for so long to protect Chicano rights in the country.

One of the articles that most influenced this research is by Rodolfo O. de la Garza, “Chicanos and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Future of Chicano- Mexican Relations,” published in 1980.<sup>2</sup> In his article, de la Garza tried to answer whether it would be beneficial for Chicanos and Mexicans to forge a close alliance, an idea first brought up by the internationally known migration expert Jorge Bustamante in the late 1970s. The present thesis will retake many of the issues that de la Garza first brought up and have been kept alive by projects such as “Fronteras y Comunidad Latina en America del Norte” by the Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, which believes in the creation of stronger bonds of the Latino community, especially those of Mexican heritage, with Mexico in order to better understand the United States. The present study will take a historical look at the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans, will take into account the opinions of several leading scholars and government officials from both sides of the border, and will include a questionnaire aimed at understanding the perceptions that Chicanos have of Mexicans [excluding Mexican migrants] and vice versa. Scholars from the U.S. and Mexico have analyzed this relationship from a variety of perspectives, including analyses of actions by the consulates, work produced by intelligentsia, and film studies. However, what sets this study apart from the rest is that it is one of the first to include the opinions of self-identified Chicanos in the U.S. and Mexican nationals from the middle and upper class in Puebla, Mexico.

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<sup>2</sup> Rodolfo O. de la Garza, “Chicanos and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Future of Chicano- Mexican Relations,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 33 (Dec 1980): 571-582.

The reasons to study the relationship between these groups abound. Mexican migration since the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 has been one of the largest the United States has seen, and as the results of the questionnaire employed by this study reveal, Mexican nationals and Chicanos are still very much linked, but it is only through migrants that this link remains very much alive. The relationship between the United States and Mexico has been historically complex. If one considers the relationship between the two governments intricate, that degree is raised when the creation of a people, Chicanos, is added to the mixture. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, following the end of the Mexican American War, gave birth to Chicanos, those of Mexican ancestry born in the United States, and since then, the relationship between Mexicans and Chicanos has grown in complexity with the continuous arrival of Mexican migrants in the United States as one of the factors augmenting it.

In an era of globalization, where the only boundaries we see between countries are the ones that governments erect, questions of how we understand ourselves are bound to arise. The Mexican immigration wave keeps both of these groups connected, and it also affects the relationship between them. Migration regulations have grown tighter through the years in an effort to keep as many migrants out- with questionable success. If anything is clear from a study of Mexican migration, it is that no piece of U.S. legislation can limit migration as long as Mexico's economy cannot create the necessary jobs to absorb those who yearly enter the workforce.

The study that will be employed in this thesis is only a first step in understanding the relationship between Mexicans and Chicanos. 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 manpower necessary to carry out such a large endeavor, the present study will measure perceptions from two very specific groups on both sides of the border- students in Puebla, Mexico and Massachusetts, United States. Both participating groups on either side of the border are highly educated: UDLA-P is considered the top university in central Mexico, and certainly Harvard University, Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, Amherst College, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology among the most prestigious in the United States.

This research is important because Latinos, mainly composed of persons of Mexican heritage, have become the largest minority in the United States. They have become one of the most important groups not just because of sheer numbers, but for the implications of having such a large population within the United States, which ranges from those who recently entered the country illegally to those who are fourth generation and scarcely understand their Mexican heritage.

Furthermore, if growth in population for those of Mexican heritage keeps going, they will not only be the largest minority, but the weakest in terms of political power. Those without citizenship not only suffer from growing restrictions on the public services they receive and discrimination, but they do not have a political voice because they do not have the power to vote. Chicanos have gained some political power since the late 1960s, when they were recognized as a distinct minority in U.S. society, but their efforts

have failed to put their needs as a priority within the U.S.' political arena. The priority that security and terrorism have taken in the George W. Bush's administration since September 11<sup>th</sup> have sideswiped dreams of migration reform, and a vague Chicano political agenda does not help in the efforts to put their needs through on a national level.

Taking all of these factors into account, the purpose of this thesis is to support the following hypothesis: Chicanos and Mexicans will not be able to work together towards a common agenda solely based on their cultural commonalities. A common agenda refers to a plan of action, specifically in the political realm within the United States. A sub-hypothesis to be confirmed by the questionnaire employed in this study is that Mexicans in Central Mexico have a large misunderstanding and to some degree indifference towards Chicanos, thus leaving any bilateral action on the part of these groups in the hands of Chicanos. Additionally, the questionnaire will attempt to assess whether Chicanos have a nostalgic view of Mexico and if asked to specifically exclude Mexican migrants from their responses, they will be unable to remove the image of Mexican migrants from them.

In order to gain a full grasp of relations between Chicanos and Mexicans, a series of tools will be used, such as symbolic interactionism from social psychology, ethnic identity theory and Latino critical theory. In the first chapter, the theoretical framework will be laid to understand the politics of labeling on bigger issues, such as the impact it has on the creation of collaborative efforts between Chicanos and Mexicans. Most importantly, Shibutani's interactionist approach to social psychology, from which the relationship between Chicanos and Mexicans will be analyzed, will be discussed in full detail. The second chapter will put the Chicano experience into a historical context and

will review existing literature on the topic, adding to the perspective of scholars from the U.S. side, and will include the results of the Chicano side of the questionnaire. The third chapter will also review the literature from the Mexican side, will include the perspective of Mexican scholars, and will present the results of the Mexican side of the questionnaire. The fourth chapter will wrap up the questionnaire's findings and discuss the implications of the perceptions that Mexicans and Chicanos have of each other and what Chicanos in the United States can learn from the study. In summary, the fourth chapter will apply the theoretical approach laid out in the first chapter to the study's findings.

How Mexicans and Chicanos perceive each other is thoroughly enlightening for the understanding of the human side of the U.S. - Mexico relationship. Their relationship has had many facets and the development of a better understanding, albeit still limited, is valuable for understanding the dynamics that Mexican migration creates in both the receiving and sending countries. It is hoped that by the end, the reader will have an understanding of the obstacles the relationship faces.