# "LOS MEXICANOS DE MICHIGAN: CLAIMING SPACE AND CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH LEISURE AND LABOR, 1920-1970"

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of History

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Brett Thomas Olmsted

May 2017

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation chronicles how Mexicanos struggled to make a home in Michigan. From the time Mexicanos entered Michigan in the 1920s, they found themselves living and working within a racialized space that benefited from their labor in the fields and factories, but that sought to render them invisible in mainstream society. In the minds of most Anglos, Mexicanos were first-class laborers and second-class citizens. This degraded view of Mexicanos helped erect powerful figurative boundaries of social, economic, and political exclusion that led to their persistent marginalization. Economically, Mexicanos were relegated to fieldwork or the worst jobs in factories. In the community, segregation and racism existed in public spaces, housing, and education, precipitating additional affronts to their civil rights.

This study examines how Michigan Mexicanos actively negotiated, constructed, and molded the space around them, redefining how and where they belonged. It argues that because Michigan Mexicanos never constituted a numerically significant population in any one area, they pursued belonging via leisure spaces and labor unionism. By gathering together for activities such as celebrations, sports, movies, and music, Mexicanos claimed physical and social space within Michigan's cities and towns, connected with other Mexicano communities across the state, and constructed their own sense of identity and community. Within the labor arena, Mexicanos embraced interethnic union activism in the United Auto Workers (UAW), pushing it to address their needs when the union fell short in curtailing lingering racism in job placement and promotion.

This study also argues for the need to break the rural/urban divide when examining Mexicanos. There was often great fluidity between the two arenas. In gathering for leisure and cultural activities, Mexicanos cemented translocal, intrastate, and intraregional networks that strengthened communities and helped remake their cultural identities. Taking advantage of Michigan's dual economy, by participating in both industrial and farm work simultaneously, helped to subsidize the family income and maintain economic viability. In sum, Michigan Mexicanos adapted remarkably to their environment by finding which mode of leisure and/or labor worked the best, enabling them to demand inclusion and pass on a better standard of living to the next generation.

## Acknowledgments

I started with just trying to tell the history of Mexicanos in Michigan, but two important things changed. First, I moved from traditional archival research to an oral history project. With so many people entrusting the stories of their families to me, this altered my perspective on the subject, causing me to realize I needed to make this their story. The second thing that happened was the birth of my daughter – a new generation Mexican American. She caused this project to take on a whole new meaning. While she was not born in Michigan, she has roots there, her mother and I spending the first eight years of our marriage in the state. Therefore, this project needed to recover a history that would allow her someday to be proud of her historical roots.

This project would not have been possible without the support of countless people. Special thanks to all the participants who not only allowed me to interview them, but also shared with me personal material from their private collections. Thanks to archivists and librarians across the state of Michigan, especially Rose San Miguel of Saginaw Valley State University and Diana Rivera of Michigan State University. A heartfelt thanks to my committee members Dr. Monica Perales, Dr. Nancy Young, Dr. Raúl Ramos, and Dr. Steven Rosales who were exceedingly helpful with their comments, suggestions, and, most important, all their wonderful support. Thanks also to the history faculty at the University of Houston who constantly challenged me to become a better scholar. With a special acknowledgement, I would like to thank to Dr. Rosales and Dr. Maria Cotera for opening up their oral history collections early for my use.

No work is ever completed without the love, support, and kind patience of one's family and friends. Thanks to my parents Tom and Kathy Olmsted for all the love and

support over the years. Thanks to my sister Dawn Olmsted-Swanson for her assistance in research inquiries. The most heartfelt thanks, however, goes to my wife, Elsa, for her patience, endurance, unwavering support, constant encouragement, and, most of all, love that got me through all the trials and pitfalls of undertaking a project like this. I know I often put you to sleep discussing the project, but you were always there for me. Finally, thank you to my little Princesa Marisa, whose coming began just as I started working on this project. You helped me stay grounded and focused to endure to the end, as well as providing an exciting future wherever we may go.

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## Introduction

"Our culture unites and educates the family of La Raza toward liberation with one heart and one mind."[1] Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales spoke these words in 1969 at the First National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado, while unveiling his *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (Spiritual Plan of Aztlán) as a manifesto for the Chicano Movement, demanding self-determination for Chicanos. This was a seminal moment in Chicano consciousness as more than 1,500 Mexicanos and Mexicanas from throughout United States gathered to be connected and engaged in Chicano activism. Many participants returned home to start Brown Beret chapters in their cities.[2] A young Maria Guadiana would also form a Brown Beret chapter in Detroit, but she did not feel the same spirit of camaraderie with her fellow attendees: "It was kind of strange being from Midwest…We felt like outsiders. Because we were from Detroit, and not from Denver or the Southwest, we felt that we were looked at as not quite fitting in or not belonging, or not as militant, or not as Chicano. The thing that impressed us the most was how we did not fit in."[3] Although she felt very connected to the cause and issues raised at the conference, Guadiana struggled to reconcile her identity within a movement that often seemed geographically and historically distinct.

Rose San Miguel likewise experienced a struggle to fit in growing up in rural Gratiot County, Michigan in the 1960s. She was born in Alma, Michigan in 1951 to Mexican

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[1] Rodolfo Gonzales and Alberto Urista [Alaurista, pseud.], "El plan espiritual de Aztlan." *El Grito del Norte* II, no. 9 (July 6, 1969): 5.

[2] For examples of Brown Berets in various cities, see David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010) and Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[3] Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013. Also see Lupe Alviar interview by Steven Rosales, April 30, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession) and John Lopez interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

American parents who sought to instill a Mexican cultural heritage into their children.[4] As a young girl both she and her mother took great pride in Rose's dancing at the yearly Mexican Independence festivities held in nearby Saginaw. However, as a teenager, Rose began to push against the traditional mores of her parents. She cut her hair in order to look more like the other girls at school. Perceiving "strange looks" from people in town when she spoke Spanish, she became embarrassed at having to translate for her mother who spoke nearly no English (other than what she repeated from soap operas). She also began eschewing Spanish-language music, choosing to listen to the Beatles and Neil Diamond instead.[5] While she would later gain a greater appreciation for her cultural past during her post-collegiate years, this rebellion against Mexican culture caused Rose, and many others like her, to be in a constant negotiation with their own sense of identity, as they struggled to reconcile their cultural heritage with that of their peers.

While Guadiana and San Miguel experienced a sense of alienation from within, Gilbert Guevara encountered pressures from the outside community. Guevara grew up in Saginaw, Michigan's First Ward, a neighborhood consisting mostly of African Americans and Mexicanos, during the 1950s and 1960s. Discrimination did not really enter into the minds of youths like Guevara because both groups lived in relative isolation from Anglos. However, this changed as he entered high school. During the tenth grade, he found himself underperforming in science class following a poor dissection experiment. His teacher pulled him aside and asked him "how many in your family?" Guevara responded. Then his teacher continued to his main point: "'Did you ever think about working and helping your family out?' And I said 'yeah, after I finish school.' And he said, 'no, how about doing it right

[4] Her father was born in Texas while her mother naturalized during the 1960s.
[5] Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).

now. You are not doing well in this class, maybe you need to go to the plant and get a job and help your family out.'"[6] With this Guevara experienced an ingrained stereotype many Mexicanos faced; that because of their skin color Mexicanos were viewed as outcasts to mainstream society, suited to be second-class citizens fit only to fill labor needs. This narrative fit a pattern of discrimination felt all over the state, region, and country, something well documented within historical scholarship.

As these three oral accounts suggest, being a Mexicano from the Great Lakes Region and feeling like an outsider was a common experience, and lays the foundation for why this project is necessary.[7] These stories of Michigan life are only three of many, but illustrate how Mexicanos in the Great Lakes State (and region) lived their lives in relative invisibility, as they struggled to build vibrant and permanent communities in a place where their labor was desired, but their presence was not. Living some 1,700 miles from the geopolitical U.S.-Mexican line of demarcation, Mexicanos encountered numerous impediments to belonging, acceptance, and equality. Guadiana's experience in Denver described a Southwestern bias that placed her and other Midwestern Mexicanos at odds with southern and western Mexicanos who claimed authority when it came to possessing true and authentic "Mexicanness" or "Chicano-ness." San Miguel's growing shame of using Spanish while adopting U.S. popular culture illustrated how many Mexicanos, especially those in the second and third generation, lived on the periphery, both emotionally and culturally, as their

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[6] Gilbert Guevara interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

[7] I am using the terms "Mexicanos," "U.S. Mexicanos," "Midwestern Mexicanos," and "Michigan Mexicanos" in describing the people of Mexican descent living in the United States (with the prefixes "U.S," "Midwestern," and "Michigan" to denote their geographic place of residence). I will reserve the terms "Mexican" and "Mexican American" for when I need to specifically denote a person's national origin or citizenship status (also for use to denote how whites viewed them). I will employ the term "Chicano" when referencing the late twentieth century era of activism and for those who specifically self-described themselves as being such. The use of "Latino" will be reserved for use when referring to groups of Hispanics not necessarily from just Mexico, such as when referencing any joint Mexicano-Puerto Rican activities.

burgeoning identities often no longer fit within the old Mexican traditions of their parents. Finally, as Mexicanos like Guevara discovered, many Anglo neighbors in the Midwest looked down on them, often seeking to dissuade and prevent them from bettering themselves. This placed Mexicanos on ever-present social, cultural, economic, political, and even legal boundaries precipitating an atmosphere of constant struggle and negotiation for acceptance as equals.

These obstacles proved significant, requiring the adoption of different approaches to cross over into at least some modicum of acceptance. Michigan Mexicano residents were able to find methods that worked, allowing them to thrive in the state. They were able to negotiate their prescribed locus to create a home for themselves and to better their communities. In addition to founding a Detroit Brown Beret chapter, Guadiana later labored tirelessly on improving education for Detroit youth, which included the hiring of the first Latino principal in the Motor City. Rose San Miguel worked hard and earned a college degree. She became an archivist at Saginaw Valley State University promoting Mexicano culture in the community. Guevara proudly served his country in the Vietnam War. He then returned to Saginaw to become an activist in the Mexicano community, helping to get more Latinos hired into public positions and later serving on Saginaw's Mexican American Council. This dissertation is their story.

Through an analysis of both the rural and urban spheres, this dissertation examines Mexicano life in Michigan from the 1920s to the 1970s in order to assess how Michigan Mexicanos sought to transcend the social, cultural, economic, and political boundaries they faced. I argue that because Mexicanos in the Great Lakes State never achieved significant population saturation, direct activism proved less useful as a means to overcome the imposed

boundaries. Michigan Mexicanos instead negotiated for inclusion within the leisure, community, and labor spheres. Leisure and community spaces became active, foundational sites of resistance allowing residents of all classes to claim physical and social space from Anglo Michiganders, while simultaneously aiding the formation of new cultural identities. Applying these schemas as preliminary points of analysis illustrates the vibrancy of Mexicano culture in the Midwest (outside of the heavily populated Chicago), illuminates a much longer history of activism in Michigan than is generally considered, and allows for an examination of a greater number of people from within the Mexicano community, especially working class residents who often can be left out of scholarly work.

Labor also played a central role in the lives of working-class Mexicanos, illustrating the tremendous agency and adaptability of Mexicanos living in Michigan. Previous scholarship has tended to focus on Mexicanos as either farmworkers or factory workers. Doing so projects a false dichotomy between urban and rural Michigan Mexicanos that implies that Mexicano communities lived in isolation from one another. However, this was usually not the case. I contend that Michigan Mexicanos did not exist in a labor binary, relegated only to rural farm work or urban centers. In the face of discriminatory hiring practices, many Mexicano families maintained economic viability by performing both factory and farm work at the same time. Many reported that one family member (usually the father) held a job at a factory while the rest of the family engaged in seasonal farm work across the state, helping to subsidize the family income. This fluidity empowered Michigan Mexicanos by providing stability and by providing increased access to leisure and material culture. It demonstrated they were not merely commodities beholden to the factory owners or farmers. It also helped cement connective communal ties across the state, region, and

country, which broadened and strengthened leisure opportunities by bringing more Mexicanos in contact with one another. Further, participation in Michigan's largest union, the United Auto Workers (UAW), became a prime vehicle in the push for civil rights, as Mexicanos pressed the union to address lingering inequality. Together, union activity and leisure spaces helped to bridge the socio-economic boundaries and engage Mexicanos in organizational politics.

While the communal networks and yearly migration would aid in Mexican cultural retention, Michigan Mexicanos, through the processes of claiming space via leisure and labor activity, constructed new hybrid cultural identities distinctly rooted within the Michigan and Midwestern experience.[8] For instance, when Mexicanos participated in sports (playing or following), they formed an emotional connection to their "home" team, which rooted their identity at a local level. The teams gave them something to cheer for and belong to, even when the larger Anglo community looked upon them as outsiders. This identity construction was also never linear. Mexicanos certainly integrated U.S. and Michigan cultural norms into their own lives, however, this was not a one-way transmission thrust upon them. Rather, it was a negotiation of cultural retention, assimilation, and appropriation actively fostering the creation of the new cultural identities – identities that would change over time and among generations.

[8] This idea of the formation of a new cultural identity draws heavily from the idea that newcomers, in this case working class Michigan Mexicanos, acculturated to their new environments through a day-to-day process by which they overlapped their previous cultural knowledge with the appropriation of facets of the culture in which they now lived in order to understand, cope with, and overcome any displacement or non-belonging experienced. For more on this process of adaptation, see James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 996–1020; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

**Creating Identity**

The study of Michigan allows for the closer examination of how working class Mexicano identity is constructed so far from the U.S.-Mexican border in an area in which Mexicanos did not have a historical presence and were viewed as perpetual outsiders. The opening anecdotes showcased how Michigan Mexicanos faced socio-cultural and economic exclusion, but they faced legal marginalization as well. During the repatriation drives of the 1930s, Detroit became a central hub of rounding up Mexicanos to send them to Mexico, many who were legal citizens of the United States.[9] Rather than provide aid, it was common for social workers to deceptively tell Mexicanos they could return to Mexico, wait for the economy to right itself, and then reenter the United States. That proved false because Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) categorized repatriated Mexicanos as leaving due to paupery, making their reentry difficult at best.[10] This cast Mexicanos as undesirables. This stigmatization has extended into the new millennium as well. During the summer and fall of 2006, the E&L Supermercado, located in the Mexicantown neighborhood of Detroit, had a sign posted in its parking lot, on the entrance door, and at the cash registers stating unequivocally that "Immigration Rumors are False!!! Immigration has NOT been into E&L, or our parking lot. EVER."[11]

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[9] Historian Mae Ngai argued that because the U.S. Border Patrol has long had jurisdiction to round up suspected undocumented immigrants not only at the place of crossing, but also at their destination, this denotes the entire United States a potential borderlands arena. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[10] See Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006) for more on civic employees ignoring citizenship status. They also estimate that up to sixty percent of all repatriates were legal U.S. Citizens, many who were children born to Mexican-national parents while they were in the United States.

[11] Mexicantown is located near the Ambassador Bridge linking Michigan to Canada. The author witnessed these postings during a trip to Mexicantown in November 2006. This story also appeared in the newspaper in June 2006. Niraj Warikoo and Cecil Angel, "Rumors of Surveillance Scare Away Customers," *Detroit Free Press*, June 10, 2006.

In order for Mexicanos to create a home in Michigan they had to overcome the imposed figurative ethno-racial boundaries that sought to keep them relegated to the fringes of society. Examining Michigan within this context reveals how Mexicanos crafted regionally based cultural identities and also the methods they employed to claim space in the state and region. This framework is informed by the foundational work of literary scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. She contended that unique spaces are forged wherever two or more cultures, races, or classes come into contact with one another.[12] Within these spaces, Anzaldúa described the existence of cultural, social, geopolitical, geoeconomic, emotional, psychological, sexual, and spiritual constructs that produce hybrid-synthesized identities for individuals and communities. Historian Vicki Ruiz augmented this analysis, arguing that living in a peripheral status helped to cement a syncretic Mexican American identity fashioned as "immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms."[13] Michigan offers an opportunity to examining this non-linear process of identity construction in an area where co-ethnics did not constantly surround Mexicanos to reinforce Mexican culture, as was often the case in the Southwest.

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[12] Anzaldúa contended the space these groups came into contact constituted a borderlands environment. Though her work focused on the traditional U.S.-Mexican border space, this suggests that the borderlands model may apply to Michigan as well. However, further work on the topic is needed to extend the concept of a "Mexican" borderlands experience to the physical U.S.-Canadian border space of Michigan. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Press, 1987), Preface. For a sampling of works on border studies, see Pablo Vila, *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); José David Saldivar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989).

[13] Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 50. See also Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

The creation of dynamic social identities presented opportunities for multi-nodal immigrant agency in confronting discrimination while attempting to make a home in a new area. In Michigan, there were layers of social, cultural, legal, economic, spiritual, and psychological barriers that impeded the acceptance and advancement of Mexicanos no matter how hard they worked or how loyal to the United States they showed themselves to be.[14] Just because a person or group was able to overcome economic hindrances did not necessarily mean they would be socially accepted. Moreover, just because one method worked for Mexicanos in one area of the state, it did not mean it would work for Mexicanos in other areas. Accordingly, while the term used in the dissertation, "Michigan Mexicanos," is applied to reference any Mexicano in the state, in actuality, there was great diversity among Mexicanos in Michigan (or the Midwest). Each area, each group, and even each individual had a unique experience based on his/her skin tone, command of English, social and political engagement, attitude, prowess in athletics, generation, and/or many other individual or collective traits. Some overlapping generalities certainly existed, and this study illuminates the prominent leisure and labor approaches Mexicanos used to overcome the boundaries set against them. Doing so highlights individual and community agency among working class Mexicanos.

Using leisure and community as analytical spaces opens important lines of inquiry. Participation in leisure spaces such as cultural celebrations, athletic endeavors, and church asserted a cultural and participatory citizenship that had consequences far beyond the

[14] Indeed, many of the interviews consulted for this inquiry were war veterans who expressed being typecast based on their phenotype rather than their patriotic service rendered. For examples, see Alviar interview; Vincent Pardo interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, May 23, 2010, (in Rosales' possession); Francisco Vega interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, September 15, 2010, (in Rosales' possession).

immediacy of recreational outlet and community building.[15] As historian Matt García demonstrated, for most participants, "the political and social implications of these activities developed as a byproduct of their primary goal to participate" in activities available by virtue of their lives in the United States.[16] By pushing to gather together in public spaces not always welcoming to them, Mexicanos were asserting basic civil rights by defying segregationist tendencies and Anglo-prescribed tropes of being merely migrant laborers. Thus, as García and others have illustrated, pleasure-seeking activities constituted a counter-hegemonic consciousness wherein working-class Mexicanos spurned their ascribed spaces and roles, using leisure to demand access to community resources they should have had ready access to given their status as citizens and residents in Michigan. While the leisure activities were not political in and of themselves, the festival grounds, the athletic field, and the sanctuary formed an alternative space of resistance demanding full participation and equal access within social, political, and economic affairs.[17] Even the act of applying for

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[15] Cultural and/or participatory citizenship is based on notion that even if a person obtains legal status as a U.S. citizen that does not mean they will be accepted by mainstream society whereby they can participate freely and equally within U.S. society. Excluding factors include skin color, language, adornment, leisure practices, bodily comportment, sexual practices, alcoholic intake, hygiene, and food consumption, among others. These factors can be used to dismiss ethno-racial groups from white society and to erect boundaries that posit minority groups within a borderlands environment. Consequently, asserting "first class" citizenship rights by demanding and receiving equal access to public spaces – ball fields, churches, streets to hold parades, etc. – suggested a form of activism that not only brought immediate recreational outlet to participants, but also laid the groundwork to seeking acceptance within society (failure to receive access denotes non-acceptance). See William B. Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space and Rights* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997); Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home: Latinos in Twentieth-Century Lorain, Ohio," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[16] Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 8.

[17] For example, see Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); García, *A World of Its Own*. For the importance of sports on a regional and national level, see Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Ignacio M. García, *When Mexicans Could Play Ball: Basketball, Race, and Identity in San Antonio, 1928-1945* (Austin: University

permission or permits to hold activities was itself an act of asserting rights as first-class citizens.[18] These methods often proved far more effective than traditional means of protest, which were more easily ignored by local and state Anglo leaders due in part to Michigan's significantly smaller Mexicano population.

Finally, participation in popular culture and leisure also created opportunities to project a positive image of Mexicanos. This not only cemented some degree of acceptance among Anglo Michigander society, but simultaneously provided a foundation for future organizational efforts. English language newspaper articles often focused only negative attention on Mexicanos or only wrote concerning their role as filling labor needs. Mexicanos were most often left out of the society, sports, and announcement sections of the newspapers, denoting them invisible outcasts within mainstream cultural society. Acceptance can be documented by the prose, placement, and type of articles in local newspapers, as demonstrated by scholars like historian Pablo Mitchell.[19] For Michigan Mexicanos, early newspaper articles containing affirmation came only by way of vibrant and peaceful celebrations (most often celebrating Mexican Independence Day) and through prowess on the athletic field. This allowed Mexicanos to claim social space, in addition to the physical space where the gatherings were held. Tracking this change in the media elucidates how leisure spaces became early sites of activism.

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of Texas Press, 2014); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

[18] For more on this see Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrios*; Juan Javier Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa! Mexican/Chicano Soccer Associations and Transnational/Translocal Communities, 1967-2002," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2004): 352-376.

[19] See Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*; Mitchell and Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home."

**The Significance of Michigan**

An in-depth analysis of Mexicanos in Michigan will greatly expand the Mexican American historiography by extending concepts into new areas and by bringing visibility to members of the working class who have largely remained invisible to many scholars and Michigan residents. Historians have provided tremendous research, but, more often than not, work concerning Mexicano community building, identity formation, and resistance has been located in the American Southwest. Scholars have thoroughly demonstrated how Mexicanos used businesses, popular culture, and leisure – celebrations, dancing, fashion, movies, music, and sports – to form new identities and to utilize community spaces as sites of resistance.[20] It was within these arenas that Mexican Americans gained the networking and leadership skills needed to engage in grassroots activism from which they negotiated for belonging. At the same time, labor activism also became a prominent method utilized to cross socio-cultural and economic boundaries. Despite contemporary stereotypes of Mexicans only being strikebreakers, Mexicanos embraced unionism and other forms of labor activity to better their circumstances. Mexicano unionists pushed the labor movement to address issues of citizenship, race, and economic inequality that it may have ignored otherwise.[21] While very

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[20] See, Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, Jose Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, García, *A World of Its Own*; David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Perales, *Smeltertown*; Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For more on Southwestern Mexicano leisure and popular culture see Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

[21] Vargas's work, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, does address a few strikes taking place in the Midwest. Notably, Vargas opens his work with a brief account of Mexicano participation in the 1937 Little Steel Strike, citing that little is actually known of the Mexicano efforts. However, most all of his analysis focuses on unionism, strikes, and organization efforts in the Southwest. While many of Vargas's other works have focused on the Midwest, his *Labor Rights* monograph, written expressly to focus on workers, was primarily a

illustrative, many of these efforts were greatly aided by the ability to be in close proximity to large numbers of co-ethnics for support and by having a historical presence in the region.

There has been quality research regarding community formation and resistance in the Midwest, but most has been focused on the Chicago area, or on Detroit during the interwar era. From the period of the 1920s through the 1940s, Midwestern Mexicanos formed *mutualistas* and utilized gathering spaces such as Mexican-owned pool halls, celebrations, and sports to claim physical and social space within the urban centers.[22] In the post-1945 period, Chicago Mexicanos and other Latinos embraced protest politics to better their neighborhoods and schools.[23] Within the rural arena, historians have illustrated only isolated incidents of leisure and resistance in Michigan fields – a few 1920s Mexican Independence celebrations, a 1935 Blissfield beet strike, and a 1946 march by a small group of braceros from mid-Michigan to the Mexican Consul in Detroit – as most of the analysis focused on the horrific working conditions and structural changes within the sugar beet industry.[24] Even

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Southwestern work. For this reason, I have included him in Southwestern scholarship. See Vicki Ruíz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Ruíz, *From out of the Shadows*; Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). For other works on Southwestern Mexicano labor more generally, see Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and the American Dream: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), Perales, *Smeltertown*; Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold;* Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 2000); Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

[22] Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*. Steven Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican': An Oral History of the Mexican-American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920-1980," *Michigan Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 33-62; Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[23] Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*.

[24] Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

less has been written on union activity in the region whether in farm work or industrial work.[25] Only more recently has there been an examination on the long, complicated process of identity formation in Michigan, as Mexicanos and Puerto Ricans in Grand Rapids, Michigan developed a pan-ethnic Latino identity as a result of the shared bonds of religion, leisure activities, intermarriage, language, and pressures of police targeting.[26] Though each study illuminated an important facet of Mexicano life in the region, Michigan has a number of additional research avenues available that will create a deeper understanding of the Mexican American experience.

Previous scholarship has largely been characterized by an analysis of either the urban or the rural environment. Mexicanos, however, claimed space in both simultaneously, even as Anglos typecast and generally lumped all Mexicanos together as racially other. Consequently, breaking down the rural/urban divide is critical and Michigan offers an important opportunity to explore the crossover and fluidity between the two arenas. Beginning in the 1920s, Michigan drew tens of thousands of migrant farmworkers annually, leading the Michigan sugar beet production to at one time being ranked second nationally.[27]

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[25] The labor movement in Chicago has had some research. Gabriela Arredondo, Dennis Nodín Valdés, and Zaragosa Vargas have noted some labor activity. Arredondo noted workers walked off their jobs in protest to discriminatory hardships and shared badges with co-ethnics, but stated Mexicans did not join unions for fear of deportation. Valdés highlighted increased Mexican participation in unions in the Chicago-Calumet area, but provided only a few paragraphs of information on the subject. Vargas provided good detail concerning the increase in the number of Mexicanos obtaining factory work throughout the Midwest, including Chicago, though most of his work focused on Detroit. He noted that by 1928 Ford Motor Company was the number one employer of Mexicanos in the Motor City. However, as his research period stopped in 1933, he did not examine Mexicanos in unions other than brief notations, such as noting there was a Mexicano in the 1937 GM-UAW Sit Down Strike. See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*; Vargas, *Proletarians*; Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*. There is one Midwestern work that focuses exclusively on labor. Marc Rodriguez describes how Mexicanos sought to organize the Wisconsin fieldworkers and how this activist push stemmed from knowledge gained in protest politics in Crystal City, Texas. His has been the first work to try to reconnect the Midwest with the Southwest. See Marc S. Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism & Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[26] Delia Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2015, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370.

[27] During the 1920s, Colorado ranked first. See F. A. Stilgenbauer, "The Michigan Sugar Beet Industry," *Economic Geography* 3, (October 1927): 494; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Immigration from*

The Great Lakes State had many other crops as well, becoming a leading producer of cherries, blueberries, plums, tomatoes, beans, and apples.[28] Within the same timeframe, Michigan became the leader in automobile manufacturing. While Detroit is known as the Motor City, factory towns boomed in Flint, Saginaw, and Lansing, while other smaller cities also participated by becoming parts suppliers to the Big Three Auto Makers.[29] Studies that solely focus on Detroit urban life or just on rural farm life suggest an artificial divide between industrial and agricultural labor, giving the impression that Mexicanos were beholden to one type of work. However, work life was not an either/or proposition. Rather, Mexicanos adapted to their environment by participating in both labor arenas in order supplement their income and maintain economic stability.

Additionally, treating the rural and urban spaces as separate suggests that the Mexicano communities lived in relative isolation from one another. This was simply not the case. Due to having a smaller number of co-ethnics living in close proximity and the lack of historical presence in the region, Mexicanos in the Midwest needed to be in contact with one another for support, community construction, cultural retention, and identity formation. It was common for Michigan Mexicanos to travel to nearby cities and towns for celebrations, athletic competition, entertainment, cultural food and spices, and/or for job opportunities. As a result, some Michigan Mexicano communities became hubs of cultural and economic exchange. Examining Michigan as a whole illustrates how Mexicanos, despite living in seemingly isolated pockets across the state, connected to each other through leisure and

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*Countries of the Western Hemisphere*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1928), 430 [hereafter *Immigration*, 1928].

[28] State of Michigan, Study Commission on Migratory Labor, *Migrants in Michigan: A Handbook on Migratory, Seasonal, Agricultural Workers in Michigan*, Lansing, 1954.

[29] The Big Three are Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors. For most of the twentieth century they were the leaders in American automobile sales and each was headquartered in Michigan: Chrysler in Auburn Hills, Ford in Detroit, and General Motors having divisions in a few cities (Flint was home to Buick and Chevrolet, Saginaw also had Chevrolet, and Lansing had many Oldsmobile and Pontiac plants).

community activities. Addressing this crossover shows how Mexicanos took charge of their own lives. It suggests that Mexicanos made their own recreational and occupational choices, and causes the emphasis to be on working class individuals.

By pushing past the World War II period, Michigan also offers the chance to explore the relationship between Mexicanos and the UAW, something that has received very little previous scholarly attention.[30] The study of labor is critical to understanding working class Mexicano life, because the prospect of higher paying jobs was most often the main reason Mexicanos traveled to Michigan in the first place. Further, employment opportunities were one of the leading factors in the decision to remain in the state and frequently dictated what leisure opportunities were accessible to them, based on location or cost associated. By 1943, the UAW was the largest labor union in the United States and thousands of Michigan Mexicanos were union members.[31] For many, the UAW became a primary vehicle to push for civil rights and socio-economic equality. Mexicanos were participants in the union's first major victory during the 1937 Sit Down Strike and became more actively involved in the union in the decades following. They pushed the union to address lingering ethno-racial discrimination in job placement and utilized the union to draw attention to the issues facing Mexicano farmworkers. This helped improve income inequality, and drew many working class Mexicanos into the political process. Union membership also represented a new social circle as co-workers became extended family members, and the local union hall became an

[30] Within the historiography there is very little concerning Mexicanos in the UAW, and even less regarding Michigan. The greatest detail comes from Elizabeth Escobedo regarding Mexicanas in California. For references see Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*; Steven Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican,'" 52-53; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*, 169; Vargas *Proletarians*, 196-197,199.
[31] "UAW: Through the Decades," *UAW*, https://uaw.org/members/uaw-through-the-decades, accessed February 17, 2017.

inter-ethnic gathering space. Consequently, UAW membership greatly affected Mexicano identity formation.

A study of Mexicanos in the Great Lakes State also allows for a broader discussion of the formation of interregional networks. Historian Marc Rodriguez has illustrated translocal networks in the Midwest, demonstrating how the yearly migrations from Crystal City, Texas to the farms of Wisconsin allowed Mexicanos to transplant organizing and activism techniques from Texas to the north to aid them in their struggles to better their working conditions.[32] This dissertation will expand this conception by including the development of fictive familial networks that facilitated the travel north. These networks empowered Mexicanos by providing information on new job opportunities, rather than relying on Anglo recruiters, and allowed them to take on more jobs once in the Midwest, whether on farms or in factories. Moreover, this dissertation moves beyond just the work sphere to include an examination of these networks in relation to celebrations, sports, and popular culture. Doing so elucidates how these connections became intra-regional and intra-state as well. The localized networks buttressed the regional chains to create complex webs of cultural exchange that led to new cultural identities. In theory, the yearly influx of Mexicano migrant workers from the Southwest reinforced cultural Mexicanidad, which helped Michigan Mexicanos retain culturally Mexican traits.[33] However, many migrant groups traveled in insular bubbles, moving within their own sphere of cultural influence, leaving those who resided permanently in Michigan to connect with each other to forge hybrid identities rooted within the Michigan and Midwestern experience. Studying Mexicano fictive familial

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[32] Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*.

[33] Mexicanidad references a traditional ethnic Mexican culture that many Mexicanos in the United States strove to nurture and protect. It was often an enhanced, more idyllic vision of Mexico than actually existed, but was something collectively imagined to bring all classes together. For more on this in the Midwest, see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, chapter 6.

networks suggests that Mexican American identity was not monolithic from the Southwest to the Midwest, helping to illuminate why Michigan Mexicanos were often thought of "no longer Mexican enough, not Chicano enough."[34]

Michigan also offers the opportunity to study Mexicanos in an area in which they never had a comparatively high concentration of co-ethnics within cities or towns, unlike in the Southwest. In traditional Southwestern research areas, Mexicanos often could live in an insular "bubble," surrounded by large communities of co-ethnics wherein they really never had to abandon the use of the Spanish language (often even finding work with a foreman who also spoke Spanish).[35] In Michigan, that was generally not the case. The Great Lakes State presents a chance to explore how people of Mexicano descent constructed their identities outside this bubble through a process of negotiation between socio-cultural adaptation, assimilation, and retention. This analysis treats Mexicanos in a similar manner to how scholars examine European or Asian ethnics, something historians have argued is vital to the future of Mexican American studies.[36] An approach that focuses on the incremental changes that occurred over time allows for an examination of generational differences among the

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[34] This is a composite quote based on the responses of interviewees. For examples, see Guadiana interview; Lopez interview.

[35] "Bubble" was a term used by interviewees when speaking of the difference between living and working in the Texas versus Michigan. This is not to minimize the struggles of life in the Southwest, but to suggest that having fewer people around with similar cultural traits causes different choices to be made regarding culture, identity formation, and patterns of resistance. Some respondents, such as Efrain Gutierrez, even spoke of traveling in a migrant "bubble" as his group went north for the harvest. He noted how they were able to look to each other insularly, rather than really having to go out into the Anglo world in Indiana. He contrasted this with when he and a smaller familial subset left their base in Indiana to contract work in Saginaw and Traverse City, Michigan. In those latter locales, he encountered far more inter-ethnic contact and discrimination because he was not able to stay within his ethnic bubble. Efrain Gutierrez interview by Brett Olmsted, August 6, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).

[36] Chad Berry, review of *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* by Dennis Nodín Valdés, *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (Dec., 2001): 1816-1817; F. Arturo Rosales, review of *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century*, by Dennis Nodín Valdés, *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (December 2001): 1133-1134; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*.

methods that working class Mexicanos used to reshape and construct their lives within the Anglo-dominated society.

Finally, Michigan offers the chance to examine clear generational transformations among Mexicanos. While they are far from definitive and overlap certainly occurred, the rounds of migrations created three distinct generations. The first generation began with migration from Texas during the 1920s. This phase would last until the mid-1940s (with a respite during the Depression) and had a couple of defining characteristics. First, most were long time Tejanos or Mexicans who traveled north for sugar beet work (or some for factory work). They often traveled back and forth between Texas and Michigan for many years before finally settling down in the north. Second, because they were adults who had grown up in culturally Mexican communities, they tended to retain their cultural roots within their new home. Often they spoke little or broken English and were strong advocates of participating in activities that promoted Mexicanidad, including Catholic Church events and Mexican cultural celebrations. Their main concern tended to be promoting Mexican culture to their children, leading them to be termed the "Mexican" generation.[37]

The second era was the Mexican generation's children. This group began in the late 1930s and continued into the 1950s, referred to as the Mexican American generation.[38] This generation most often had U.S. citizenship by birthright and were either very young when their parents began migrating or were born in the north. They spent most of their lives in the north, spoke very good English, and were educated in Michigan public schools. Due in part

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[37] This designation is also based on how interviewees spoke of their parents' generation. See, for instance, Guadiana interview; Emily Martinez interview by Brett Olmsted, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); San Miguel interview.

[38] Mario García was one of the first to articulate the concept of these generational distinctions in his work on the Southwest. See Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology and Identity, 1930-60* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Mario T. García, *The Latino Generation: Voices of the New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

to this education they tended to assert more rights as citizens and embrace the opportunities open to them by virtue of growing up in the United States. This included playing new sports and embracing popular culture that was distinctly American. They also were the generation to often spurn their Mexican cultural heritage in their teenage years as they sought to fit in with those around them. They often had experience working in the fields in their youth, but were able to obtain urban jobs given their education, proficiency in English, and citizenship status.

The third generation overlapped with the Mexican American generation. Their era ran from the 1950s to the 1970s and they were most often born in the north. Their defining characteristics were that they were second or third generation U.S. citizens, were educated, often had much more opportunity to attend college, and, most importantly, they came of age during the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements. This "Chicano Generation" was more far more politically active, as they got directly involved in protest politics to fight for civil rights, equal education, bilingual education, migrant rights, and for equal job opportunities for Latinos.[39] Examining the crossover and divergences of how each generation adapted to local and regional circumstances in Michigan offers a much more nuanced historical analysis and depicts how the methods of challenging marginalization changed and evolved for each

[39] These generational terms are derived from previous literature as well as what I have observed from interviews. These are generalized terms and there are obviously many exceptions to each generational era. I have utilized the term "Mexican Generation" not because of their citizenship designation, but because of their stronger adherence for a traditional Mexican cultural heritage. The "Mexican American" generation is a generally accepted term among scholars not only designating ethnic-citizenship status, but also in their melding of American and Mexican cultures into their own lives. Finally, the "Chicano Generation" could be the most problematic in terms of its designation, as some Mexicanos do not prefer the title of Chicano, some associating it with lawlessness or other non-comely behavior that brought negative attention. It also excludes cross-ethnic coalitions of other Latino groups, but is used here because of a majority of interviewees self-identified as Chicano/a and because of the broad acceptance of those who came of age in this activist era. For other scholarship references to these generations see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

generation. Ultimately, the study of Michigan recovers the voice and history of a group often treated as second class by Anglos and, at times, their own co-ethnics.

**Sources and Methodology**

In order to tell a Michigan Mexicano-centered story, I will be utilizing numerous archival sources from Michigan to Texas to California. The collections include sociological studies, short interviews, government publications, public outreach programs, labor union documents, sports memorabilia, activist publications, and *mutualista* meeting minutes, among others.[40] These sources provide a detailed overview of everyday Mexicano life in Michigan, including living and working conditions. A great deal of this work, however, hinges on a careful reading and interpretation of both English language and Spanish language newspapers, from urban centers and rural locales. The English language sources not only provide facts about the Mexicano population, but also indicate how local whites felt about the incoming Mexicanos. Spanish language sources are also essential. The most widely circulated Spanish language newspaper, *La Prensa* (San Antonio, Texas), often provided extended coverage of news concerning Michigan and Michigan Mexicanos. What the newspaper chose to cover illuminated many things, including details on Mexicano life that the white press ignored, the ways Mexico City sought to reach into the United States (such as

[40] Paul S. Taylor was a noted sociologist at the University of California-Berkeley from the 1920s to the 1960s. While he surveyed and studied many ethnic groups during his academic career, he spent considerable time researching Mexicans and Mexican Americans. He published many articles and books based on this research. Though much of his focus was on the Southwest, he conducted some research on the Midwest and also became the recipient of the George T. Edson papers. The U.S. Government commissioned Edson in the late 1920s to conduct interviews, take surveys, and provide statistics concerning U.S. Mexicans. He traveled the Midwest and provided a tremendous wealth of information regarding Mexicanos in Michigan, among other places. The Paul S. Taylor Papers are held in the Bancroft Library at the University of California-Berkeley. Archives in Michigan include the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University Library, the Walter Reuther Archive at Wayne State University, the Thompson Library at the University of Michigan-Flint, and the State of Michigan Library.

during celebrations), and what topics were of great interest to the U.S./Michigan Mexicanos. Additionally, the few remaining Michigan Spanish-language newspapers and pamphlets provide great insight into community events and local Mexicano-owned businesses that chose to advertise in them.

In addition to newspapers, this work relies heavily on oral histories in order to provide a more authentic voice of the people who actually lived within this environment. More than one hundred interviews have been sourced for this project. Some of the interviews came from previous oral history projects held in university libraries.[41] While previous scholars have utilized some of these archived projects, I am including nearly fifty interviews recorded within the last decade. These include oral histories I conducted and those recorded by historian Steven Rosales (University of Arkansas), who recorded an oral history of Mexicanos in Saginaw for his forthcoming project. Also included are interviews from a recently launched online archive titled *Chicana por mi Raza* organized by women's historian Maria Cotera of the University of Michigan. The use of these oral histories will bring a fresh historical account to Midwestern life, as most all of them were unavailable to previous scholarly works.

Utilizing the oral histories will give residents their voice and demonstrate their active and creative role in resisting stereotypes of them as transient workers not fit for U.S. citizenship. Their stories will put a face and a name to Michigan Mexicano history that has been sorely lacking. While the oral histories are not the sole source of information, they provide an integral thread woven into the narrative to demonstrate the many ways the

[41] These include the University of Michigan, the G. Roberts Vincent Voice Library at Michigan State University, Western Michigan University, and the online Voces Oral History Project from the University of Texas-Austin.

Mexicano community has always been active and vibrant, as it has interlaced itself into the fabric of Michigan life.

**Chapters and Organization**

In order to portray the integral role of leisure and labor space, this dissertation will be organized thematically. Each chapter will focus on a particular method Mexicanos used to overcome the boundaries set against them as they challenged marginalization and invisibility. Each of these methods were part of the normal fabric of Mexicano life and their examination will provide a more nuanced look at Michigan Mexicano history. Concurrently, the chapters will collectively illustrate how living in Michigan's segregated environment impacted individual and community identity formation, as Mexicanos constructed and redefined culturally who they were. The result of this will place working class Mexicanos at the forefront of the narrative, elucidating their agency and negotiation for inclusion.

Chapter one examines "why" and "how" Mexicanos arrived in Michigan. It outlines the push and pull factors leading Mexicanos to travel north while simultaneously illuminating the important development of fictive familial kinships that resulted in interregional networks being formed between Texas and the Great Lakes State. This process of going north is essential in connecting the Southwest to the Midwest and for placing the power of choice within the hands of the Mexicanos, rather than on recruiter whims. It designates Mexicanos as active participants rather than passive recipients merely trudging along on the lofty, often false, claims of employment advertisement. Moreover, this chapter describes the racialized environment that existed in Michigan and highlights the many figurative boundaries constructed in the north. This includes an analysis of the conditions faced in the factory and

on the farm, discrimination in housing, lack of access to public education, where Mexicanos fit within the black-white racial binary, and the formation of racial-social differences epitomized by the othering of Mexicanos in newspapers.

Chapter two focuses on celebrations and other similar gatherings. Commencing in Michigan during the early 1920s, the most prominent event was the yearly *dieciséis de septiembre* (September 16) fiesta to herald Father Miguel Hidalgo's declaration of Mexican independence from Spain. For these prominent galas, Mexicanos came together in cities across the Michigan (and Midwestern) landscape, transforming small towns into what local Anglos referred to as temporary "Mexican villages."[42] Seeking to profit from the events, Anglo politicians and local businessmen often sought to control and redefine the Mexicano events for their own needs, which is the subject of first part of this chapter. The conversation will then turn to focus on how Mexicanos viewed the leisure gatherings. Whether coming together for large jubilant fiestas or other smaller gatherings, the events became a prime method for claiming physical space in Michigan. This chapter shows how the sites of celebrations and gatherings became a quintessential space in the Midwest where Mexicanos negotiated for belonging. Moreover, this chapter discusses how their view of the events changed over time, illustrating the formation of a distinct Mexican American cultural identity even while heralding Mexican holidays.

Continuing the discussion of leisure spaces, chapter three turns to how sports and recreation became another crucial space within which Michigan Mexicanos claimed a sense of Midwestern identity and belonging. This chapter examines the role of sports in Michigan and its evolution from the 1920s to the 1970s illuminating how athletics afforded Michigan

[42] For a description of this see U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1926), 273. See also Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*, chapter six.

Mexicanos a vital method of overcoming the boundaries set against them. While Mexicanos readily participated in sports such as baseball and boxing, which had antecedents in Mexico, they also embraced new sports, such as football, basketball, and cheerleading, more open to them by virtue of their life in the north. Together, the sports forged intrastate and intra-regional communal ties, allowed Mexicanos to contest their imputed position as weak and passive sojourners, helped Mexicanos defy segregation by claiming access to public spaces, and provided avenues to bridge social and economic boundaries. Choosing to participate in sports, and what sport to participate in and follow, also demonstrated the creation of distinct Michigan-centric (and Midwestern-centric) Mexican American identities. Thus, the diamond, the ring, the gridiron, and the court became a negotiated arena for belonging and identity formation.

While both celebrations and sports had an important lasting impact, they were also only temporary (though regular) instances of gathering. Chapter four turns to examine neighborhood formation. When most Mexicano farmworkers arrived in Michigan they often resided in makeshift homes, converted barns, or in tract housing. Many factory workers had to take up residence in transient rental properties and boarding houses in cities. In either situation, conditions were horrid, causing whites to view Mexicanos as only tertiary to society at best and disease ridden at worst. Through the process of purchasing homes, erecting Spanish-speaking churches, and establishing businesses and organizations, Mexicanos were able to create permanence, defy segregation, create better access to education, and established themselves as Michiganders. These permanent establishments enabled Mexicanos to claim physical and social space, strengthened intra-state communal ties, and created a foundation for launching civil rights initiatives. Moreover, the

development and exchange of food and popular culture within and between the communities fostered the creation of intrastate communal ties and illustrated the evolution of identity construction from generation to generation.

Because employment played a pivotal role in overcoming socio-economic marginalization, chapter five focuses on the impact of the nation's largest union, the UAW. Mexicanos served in the 1937 Sit Down Strike and continued to be proud union members in the subsequent decades, but there has been nearly nothing written on the Mexicano-UAW relationship. As was the case with leisure activities and communities, chapter five argues the UAW became a primary vehicle utilized by Mexicanos to create a place and space for themselves in Michigan. Participation in the UAW enabled many Mexicanos to remove their families from the cycle of involvement in farm labor. The UAW also assisted in drawing the attention of the larger Michigan population to the issues facing farmworkers, helping to bridge the urban/rural divide. However, the UAW was often slow to address lingering inequality on the shop floor. To combat this, Mexicanos engaged in simultaneous factory and farm work in order to achieve a more stable economic footing, and actively pushed the union for change from within, getting Mexicanos involved in the political process. While labor was certainly not the only part of their lives, work life and labor activism was a vital method in overcoming barriers, providing economic means to participate in leisure activities, and helping to provide an organizational foundation for greater forms of activism.

The epilogue of this work offers insights into the changes and advancements made by Mexicanos in the 1970s and beyond as they transitioned to more direct political activism. For much of the period from the 1920s to the 1970s, the leisure and labor arenas were the best avenues to negotiate for acceptance and equality due to the more sparsely populated

Michigan Mexicano population. As the Mexican and Mexican American generations claimed a greater sense of belonging in local communities and in the workplace, they established a foundation and organizational framework needed to effect change. This highlights advances made in bilingual education, migrant workers' rights, and instances of civil rights progress. At the same time, this epilogue also illuminates some instances of progress erosion faced by Michigan Mexicanos at the present. Finally, I will offer suggestions and questions for further research.

In sum, this work will explicate the various methods utilized by Michigan Mexicanos to negotiate for social, economic, political, and civic equality. This is the story of how Mexicanos made a home in the Great Lakes State and, ultimately, it is their story.

## Chapter 1: The Journey to Michigan

During the late 1930s, Rose San Miguel's family began a yearly trek back and forth between Texas and Michigan, joining the migratory Mexicano labor force that traveled north from early spring into fall. Traveling with siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and fictive kin, they traveled to Michigan to pick sugar beets and other crops in order to provide for their families given the lack of quality employment in Texas.[1] However, one early-1940s night in rural Gratiot County changed this yearly routine, altering the San Miguel family forever. The house they were staying in caught on fire. San Miguel's father and older bothers each received third degree burns on their bodies as they rushed to pull all the children out. Despite the burns, all were walking and talking in the nighttime darkness, not knowing the full extent of their injuries. San Miguel grimly described the following morning: "It wasn't until they woke up that they noticed the one brother wasn't breathing. I guess he died of smoke inhalation. They took [the other brother] to the hospital because he started pulling skin off of his body; that's how badly burned he was…By the time he was admitted he had passed away as well…the one [brother] was seven and the other was fourteen."[2] As her father prepared to travel back to Texas that fall, her mother halted the plans. She told her husband, "Absolutely not, my sons are buried here, and I am staying here."[3] With that statement, the San Miguels left the migrant stream and settled in the Great Lakes State with extended family members who had previously settled in Michigan. The rest of the family's

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[1] San Miguel's family entered the migrant stream first for sugar beets. Most migrants arrived to Michigan between April 15 and May 1, beginning work after the farmer had planted the sugar beet crop. Their job was to block, hoe, thin, and weed, to ensure each beet mound was clean and had optimal room for growth. During downtimes migrants could hire out to work other crops as well. By the end of September and into November, *betabeleros* returned to harvest and top the beets, loading them for transportation to the factories.
[2] Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).
[3] San Miguel interview.

children, including Rose (born in 1951), would be born as Michiganders as the family set out to make Michigan their new home.

While the preceding account represents only one of hundreds of thousands, it illuminated how the process of going and settling in *el norte* was hardly ever direct and rarely simple, diverging from the more simplistic traditional linear description of Mexicanos migrating to and settling in the north. Presently, there are two common historical narratives that depict how and why Mexicanos got to Michigan. The first is based on the stereotypical job Mexicanos performed – farm labor. According to this account, beginning in the 1920s, tens of thousands of Mexicanos made their way to the Great Lakes Region finding work in the sugar beet industry. Each spring, the sugar companies placed paid advertisements in San Antonio's Spanish language newspapers, enticing entire families to journey *al norte*, promising set wages and often free round-trip transportation.[4] The result was that from April into November the sugar beet growing areas of Michigan swelled with migrant workhands, leading Michigan to being ranked second in U.S. beet production by 1925.[5] This account has definite validity. That was how the family of longtime Saginaw resident George Castañeda made its way to Michigan: "They [sugar companies] would give you transportation…. You

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[4] See Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, Press, 1976); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

[5] Colorado ranked first in production. Michigan had fifteen sugar factories including Michigan Sugar, Columbia Sugar, Holland-St. Louis Sugar, West Bay City Sugar, Continental Sugar, Menominee River Sugar, and Mt. Clemens Sugar. Michigan Sugar Company operating mainly in Bay City, Caro, Alma, Owosso, Lansing, Sebewaing, Carrollton, and Croswell; the Columbia Sugar Company in Bay City and Mt. Pleasant, the Holland-St. Louis Sugar Company in Holland and St. Louis; the Continental Sugar Company in Blissfield; the West Bay City Sugar Company in West Bay City; the Menominee River Sugar Company in Menominee; and the Mt. Clemens Sugar Company in Mt. Clemens. See F. A. Stilgenbauer, "The Michigan Sugar Beet Industry," *Economic Geography* 3, no. 4 (1927): 494. See also Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Brett Olmsted, "Mexican Fiestas in Central Michigan: Celebrations and Identity Formation, 1920-1930," *Michigan Historical Review* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 33-57; Valdés, *Al Norte*; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Immigration from Countries of the Western Hemisphere*. 70th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1928), 430 [hereafter *Immigration*, 1928].

signed up with . . .sugar companies . . . [like] Michigan Sugar Company of Saginaw…. We came with a [family] friend of ours."[6] So at age 13, Castañeda and his family began a seven-year stretch of going back and forth to Michigan before finally settling in the state permanently.[7]

(EMPLEOS (Varios) EMPLEOS (Varios) (EMPLEOS (Varios)

MICHIGAN SUGAR COMPANY.
Saginaw, Michigan.
SE SOLICITAN BETABELEROS PARA MICHIGAN.

No olvide que la Michigan Sugar Company tiene bastantes campos betabeleros para usted y sus familias para toda esta temporada. El precio es $18.00 el acre y viaje de ida y vuelta, o $23.00 el acre y su pasaje de Texas a Michigan.

La Michigan Sugar Company facilitará casas gratis, para vivir, agua, camas, estufas, mesas y bancos. La Compañía tomará cuidado de que a las personas que no tengan utensilios de cocina, les sean facilitados a precios sumamente módicos.

Cuando Ud. y su familia trabajan con la Michigan Sugar Company, de Saginaw, Michigan, usted puede estar seguro que están con la más grande Compañía de Azúcar de Betabel que existe en el estado de Michigan. Venga y firme su contrato, pues principiaremos a trabajar muy temprano este año. Traiga a toda su familia y amigos para que trabajen con la antigua Compañía. Nosotros preferimos trabajadores de Texas.

La compañía o Agencias no cobrarán comisión. Las plantaciones betaleras están localizadas en la mejor sección agrícola de Michigan.

Después del despaje, los trabajadores pueden conseguir trabajo cultivando cebollas, papas o cosechando trigo, paja de heno u otras muchas cosas. Venga y firme su contrato con una de las agencias mencionadas abajo. La oficina de Chicago se abrirá en South Halstead Street, un poco más tarde en la temporada para que los trabajadores puedan también firmar contratos en Chicago. Para más información diríjase o escriba a una de las oficinas aquí mencionadas.

Texas Employment Service. 1102 McKinney Ave., Dallas, Texas.
Michigan Labor Agency. 1610 Jones St., Fort Worth, Texas.
Burbank Employment Agency., 1210 W. Houston St., San Antonio, Texas.
Eagle Employment Agency., 1919 Congress Ave., Houston, Texas.
Detroit Labor Agency. 448 Jones Street. Detroit, Mich.
Chicago Labor Agency. 40 So. Halsted Street Chicago, Ill.

MICHIGAN SUGAR CO.
M. L. Gillespie, Traffic Mgr., 1102 McKinney Ave. Dallas, Texas.

BETABELEROS MEXICANOS.
Todos los Betabeleros Mexicanos que no han regresado a Texas, y que deseen trabajar con los Rancheros de la COLUMBIA SUGAR CO. en Mt. Pleasant, o Bay City, Michigan este año escriban en seguida para que aseguren buenos lugares.
COLUMBIA SUGAR CO.
LABOR DEPARTAMENT.
Bay City, Michigan.

MISCELANEA
GRANDES FIESTAS EN SASPAMCO, TEXAS
para los días 5, 6 y 7 de Mayo de 1928 en el SASPAMCO AMUSEMENT PARK.
Ocurrid a Distraerse
Para conocer sitios para puestos diríjase al Sr. Dámaso Sandoval: P. O. Box 96. Saspamco, Texas. (ch-9-1)

EMPLEOS EMPLEOS

PARA MICHIGAN
FORTH WORTH TEXAS.
TENEMOS EL PLACER DE INFORMAR A TODOS NUESTROS AMIGOS BETABELEROS VIEJOS FAMILIARES RESIDENTES EN ESTA CIUDAD Y PUEBLOS INMEDIATOS QUE YA LA MICHIGAN LABOR AGENCY ABRIO SUS OFICINAS EN LA CALLE DE CALHOUN 1310 1-2 Y PUEDEN PASAR A HACER SUS ARREGLOS PARA IR A MICHIGAN ESTE AÑO.
MICHIGAN LABOR AGENCY.
JUAN R. NIX. GERENTE. (16)

PARA MICHIGAN
HOUSTON, TEXAS.
TENEMOS EL PLACER DE INFORMAR A TODOS NUESTROS AMIGOS BETABELEROS VIEJOS FAMILIARES RESIDENTES EN ESTA CIUDAD Y PUEBLOS INMEDIATOS QUE YA LA MICHIGAN LABOR AGENCY ABRIO SUS OFICINAS EN LA CALLE DE MLAM 406 1-2 Y PUEDEN PASAR A HACER SUS ARREGLOS PARA IR A MICHIGAN ESTE AÑO.
MICHIGAN LABOR AGENCY.
E. P. LEAL, GERENTE (16)

BETABELEROS PARA MICHIGAN
RECUERDE que MICHIGAN es el Estado del Betabel de Azúcar RECUERDE que no es prudente llevar a su familia sin asegurar el pasaje de ida y vuelta. RECUERDE que la COLOMBIA y la HOLLAND son las compañías escogidas por betabeleros de Experiencia.
Estas Compañías les darán muebles nuevos y cuando Ud. llegue al campo del betabel encontrará en su casa suficientes provisiones para alimentar a su familia. Venga pronto y arregle su contrato.
SAN ANTONIO LABOR AGENCY,
M. L. Osborn (el Colorado)
1225 W. Commerce St. P. O. Box 81, Sta. "A".
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS. (16)

BETABELEROS PARA IOWA.
$25.00 POR ACRE Y BONOS.
Necesitamos 150 familias inmediatamente pueden pasar a firmar sus contratos para los Campos de Betabel de LA IOWA VALLEY OPERATING, INC., BELMOND, IOWA.
ATENCION: Esta Compañía paga $25.00 por acre y también BONOS de 75 centavos por acre cada tonelada que exceda el promedio de 8.1 tonelada por acre.
Esta Compañía dará mejores proposiciones por su trabajo y buen tratamiento. No pierda tiempo; escríbanos hoy, no espere para mañana; le contestaremos a vuelta de correo.
INTERNATIONAL LABOR BUREAU.
L. H. Frazer y M. Toscano, Gerentes.
1417 W. Commerce St. P. O. Box 21. y Sta. A.
San Antonio, Texas. (15)

Fig. 1.1 Sample Sugar Beet Company Advertisements. Each spring sugar companies in the Midwest placed advertisements in the Texas Spanish language newspapers to recruit Mexicano laborers. Most often they would promise free round trip transportation, though that often proved to be false. "Michigan Sugar Company," *La Prensa*, April 15, 1928, 10; "Para Michigan," *La Prensa*, March 3, 1924, 8.

The second narrative involved the more generic way Mexicanos made their way into Midwestern factory work – in the automobile industry in Detroit, or in the steel mills of Chicago and the Calumet region. Workers traveled the rail lines to get to the urban centers or migrated there during the beet offseason rather than go back to Texas. Mexicano men then stood outside the factories until a foreman chose them to be hired. This been well documented by Midwestern urban historians.[8] It was the also the manner in which Frank

[6] George Castañeda interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

[7] While Castañeda did not recollect having to repay the train fare, many families noted the sugar companies deducting the money from their wages after arriving in Michigan. See John Lopez interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). Also Valdés, *Al Norte*.

[8] Recruitment outside of factories was also the place where many historians have noted that Mexicanos experienced racism while in urban centers. Having a foreman pick workers from a crowd set the stage for inherent racist biases during the selection process. Having a darker skin color or lack of English could cause issues for Mexicano job seekers. See Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-*

Gonzales's father made his way to Saginaw, Michigan in the late 1920s. His father joined a group of laborers hitching a free train ride from Colorado to Michigan in search of factory work.[9] While both of these historical narratives did occur, they put too much control in the hands of the employers and present a much too simplified version of a complicated situation that witnessed Mexicanos moving in very non-linear patterns. In actuality, Mexicanos displayed great agency in this process by taking command of their own economic lives and forging extra-familial networks, demonstrating they were far more than mere mono-dimensional laborers.

While Michigan companies certainly did their part to lure Mexicanos north with advertisements, I argue that it was the formation of interregional familial and fictive kinship networks that were of greater importance in causing Mexicanos to decide to change their space of existence in search of better economic opportunities. Such networks are not new. In his study of Mexicanos in Wisconsin, historian Marc Rodriguez described how Mexicanos embraced the existence of translocal networks, demonstrating how Mexicano farmworkers utilized organizational politics and protest activism strategies honed in Crystal City, Texas in their attempt to unionize the northern fields.[10] Moreover, it was the connections to both the South and West that brought new information and ideas to the Wisconsin farmworkers as their struggles continued. Illustrating the transferal of people and ideas between the two regions not only helped to reconnect the Midwestern and Southwestern Mexicano

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*39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[9] Frank Gonzales interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). Also see Valdés, *Al Norte.*

[10] Marc S. Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism & Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

experience, but also placed working class Mexicanos as the primary protagonists in their own story.[11]

Expanding on the concept of inter-locality, I argue that the networks operated beyond the labor sphere to encompass all aspects of Mexicano life. The formation and importance of interregional networks were fully evident beginning with the decision-making process of going to Michigan. Thus, the networks did more than just transmit ideas for protesting labor struggles. They consisted of people and culture, were a source of obtaining new employment to better the lives of families, and were at the very heart of Mexicano life in the United States. At the most basic level, the networks, which stretched some 1,700 miles across the country, carried information between family members. Perhaps a brother or a father ventured north and then, after securing a job, sent for the rest of his family. However, what made the interregional networks effective was their ability to link Mexicanos together beyond just the ties of blood. Extended family also counted, as uncles, aunts, and cousins spoke of opportunity in the north. Close friends, and friends of friends, also passed the word along or entered the Texas cotton fields as recruiters enticing entire families to make the choice to venture north. The result of these efforts was the formation of new kinship groups, initially created by the necessity of economics, that revolutionized Mexicano life across the United States by creating new communities.

The networks helped facilitate travel to the Midwest. Once there, Mexicanos encountered a somewhat familiar racialized environment. Though never reaching the racist levels experienced in Texas, Mexicanos found themselves in a place and space that enjoyed

[11] This concept of examining two locales to explore how the transferal of people and ideas inform the construction of new lives in both spaces is not limited to just Rodriguez. See also Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof for his work on Dominicans moving between Santo Domingo and New York City; Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

the benefits of their labor, but that also marginalized them and/or attempted to render them invisible. This situation stemmed from a number of factors. Anglo Michiganders held preconceived racist tropes concerning Mexicanos formed prior to their arrival in the Midwest. Newspaper coverage of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) had portrayed Mexicanos as dangerous and violent. The negative media coverage continued long after Mexicano arrival to the region, with headlines and articles linking Mexicanos to filth, disease, and exotic socially nonwhite behavior. Add to this the view of Mexicanos as being only racially fit to fill low-wage labor needs and Anglos were quick to impose social, economic, and political boundaries designed to exploit Mexicano labor while simultaneously keeping them in a perpetual state of otherness. In other words, to Anglos, Mexicanos were accepted as first class laborers but were second-class citizens. Though I also argue the interregional networks evolved into intraregional and intrastate familial and fictive kinship networks that would aid Mexicanos in overcoming the barriers imposed against them in the Great Lakes State, this chapter focuses on establishing the unequal, segregated world Mexicanos confronted in Michigan.

In order to illustrate the formation and use of the interregional familial and fictive kinship networks, this chapter first will examine the process of going north to show how Mexicanos claimed a measure of agency in choosing to cross the country for themselves, on their terms. The discussion will then turn to illuminate the Anglo imposed boundaries found in Michigan. It will explicate both Anglo racist views of the newcomers as well as the hardships faced from a Mexicano perspective. This will set the stage for the rest of this dissertation by elucidating the racialized situation and barriers that needed to be overcome.

**Life in Texas**

While war and economic upheaval in Mexico pushed many Mexicans into Texas in the first decades of the 20th century, it was a lack of access to upward job mobility that pushed many Mexicanos to the Midwest in search of a way to better their lives.[12] In Texas, whether newly arrived from Mexico or having lived in the state for generations, Mexicanos were often able to surround themselves with fellow co-ethnics. The insularity of Texas Mexicano communities facilitated a strong retention of Mexican culture, especially the Spanish language. Despite these seemingly positive advantages, life in the Lone Star State was wrought with a lack of economic and social mobility in the face of harsh racial discrimination and Jim Crow-like segregation that posited Mexicanos as second-class persons. Bigotry and segregation existed at work, at school, and in the social sphere.[13] As a

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[12] Fleeing the Mexican Revolution was a common tale among many respondents. Living in Mexico in the early 20th century was fraught with peril stemming from the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the later Cristero War (1926-1929). These wars caused social, political, cultural, and economic upheaval in a country that had already had endured years of mass poverty under the Porfiriato. The parents and grandparents of numerous Michigan Mexicanos fled Mexico during this era. For example, the grandparents of Rose San Miguel, whose story started this chapter, braved crossing the border with a six-month-old (Rose's mother) to escape the violence. Longtime Flint residents, brothers Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa, painted a vivid picture of the dire situation in Mexico. Their *abuelos* crossed into Texas because Pancho Villa was recruiting all the young men in northern Mexico. According to them, "If you weren't part of the revolution you were part of the government. And the government looked at it as if you weren't going to join the government soldiers you were part of the revolution. So you couldn't win." It was literally a life or death situation for many in Mexico. Likewise, both parents of Saginaw resident Frank Gonzales crossed due to the dangers of living in wartime Mexico during the Cristero Wars. See Gonzales interview; San Miguel interview; Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 26, 2015, Burton, MI, digital file (in author's possession); Lopez interview; Guadalupe Ortega interview by Steven Rosales, May 29, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

[13] Many Southwestern Mexicano historians have examined the severity of life in Texas. See Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1991); John McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848–1942* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993); Emilio Zamora. *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008);

result, access to quality jobs did not come easy for Mexicanos, whom many Anglo Texans viewed only as fit to serve as laborers on the farm.[14]

Racial discrimination permeated all aspects of Texas Mexicano life. Perhaps doing the most damage was the segregationist attitude that prevailed in public schools and public social spaces, as this severely limited Mexicano access to quality employment. For instance, whether officially segregated or not, school life was far from equal for Mexicanos. Separate Mexicano schools, unequal access to non-segregated schools, lack of transportation, and substandard and under-staffed facilities created obstructions for Mexicanos in completing their education. At the same time, darker complexions and use of the Spanish language on school grounds often triggered strict disciplinary action and corporal punishment from often-racist teachers.[15] It was these types of conditions that caused future Saginaw resident Ignacio Guerrero to be unable to finish his education on time: "I had to quit [school] because I had to walk four miles; they didn't pick Mexicans up on the bus. Everybody else [white children] rode the bus except us."[16] His wife Antonia shared a similar story from her own experience:

> We lived on a farm and we had to walk four miles, rain or shine. There was a bus for the white kids and they would tease us as they drove by. We had only

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[14] See, for example, Foley, *The White Scourge*; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas.*

[15] During the 1940s, many areas of Texas had segregated schools. In Lockhart, Texas (east of San Antonio) Ignacio Guerrero recalled the existence of three separate schools: one for Mexicanos, one for whites, and one for African Americans. This was a wide spread issue throughout the state noted by many scholars. The use of Spanish language in schools was also cause for unequal and harsh treatment in public schools. Henrietta Lopez Rivas knew her multiplication tables and was able to read by the time she started school. However, she found the school system uncaring, ultimately failing the first grade because her proficiency was in Spanish and she did not know English. Francisco Vega was singled out for punishment for uttering Spanish words while conversing with friends. His principal put a bar of soap in his mouth saying to young Vega, "you should never say that again." See Ignacio Guerrero interview by Juan Martinez, Saginaw, Michigan, Voces Oral History Project, University of Texas at Austin, October 19, 2002, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/, accessed May 6, 2015; Henrietta Lopez Rivas interview by Veronica Flores, San Antonio, Texas, Voces Oral History Project, University of Texas at Austin, June 12, 1999, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/, accessed May 6, 2015; Francisco Vega interview by Steven Rosales, September 15, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). Other scholars have elucidated the troubles and trials of Texas for Mexicanos. See Foley, *The White Scourge*; García, *Mexican Americans*; Mckiernan-González, *Fevered Measures*; Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker.*

[16] Guerrero interview.

> one teacher, who taught kindergarten through 12th grade. She would teach the 11th- and 12th-grade [students] first and then they would help with the younger kids.[17]

Though they both later earned their high school degrees as adults, the long walks to and from school, combined with the financial needs of their families, caused them both to drop out of school to work in the fields

Making it to, and staying in, school did little to quell racist tropes, as Mexicanos endured de facto segregation from faculty. Alejandra Zuñiga, a community service activist involved in the Saginaw G.I. Forum, remembered loving to sing as a child.[18] One year at school a teacher who had overheard her voice, asked her to sing in the school play. She practiced singing the song (in English), but just before the play began, the teacher asked her to stand behind the curtain to perform her part. During the play, the audience saw a little white girl front and center, while Zuñiga was hidden from view.[19] It was this idea of hiding Mexicanos while steering them into a sector of society beneath their Anglo counterparts that often prevailed in the Texas school system. As U.S. Navy Veteran Raul Mosqueda explained, it was that whites were expected to go into professional jobs while Hispanics were pushed into manual labor. Consequently, educators did not provide much encouragement to

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[17] Guerrero interview.

[18] In 2011, Zuñiga received the Maria Zavala Award for her lifetime achievements serving the Hispanic community. She also served as a volunteer translator for Spanish-speaking patients as a surgical technician in the 1950s at the former Osteopathic Hospital and is the founder of Project Pride, a tutoring program in the Saginaw Public Schools helping as many as 80 students in the 1980s. See "Saginaw Township Advocate for Hispanic Issues Wins Statewide Honor," *Saginaw News*, March 21, 2011, http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2011/03/saginaw_township_advocate_for.html, accessed September 16, 2015.

[19] Alejandra Zuñiga interview by Raul García, Jr., Saginaw, Michigan, Voces Oral History Project, University of Texas at Austin, October 19, 2002, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/voces/, accessed May 6, 2015.

Mexicanos to stay in school. This lack of support from the educational system effectively funneled many Mexicanos into farm/migrant work, other menial labor, and/or gangs.[20]

Social relations were no better in public establishments in the cities and towns of Texas, where whites often placed Mexicanos into the non-white category within the traditional black-white racial system. It was a common sight for restaurants in San Antonio and elsewhere to post signs stating "No dogs and No Mexicans [Allowed]."[21] In Dallas, Mexicanos were not allowed to drink out of the same drinking fountains as whites.[22] Saginaw resident Martin Morales provided a poignant example of the disparaging attitude Texas Anglos had toward Mexicanos. Born in 1928, he recalled having to ride in the back of the bus with African Americans in addition to having to go to separate movie theaters and restaurants. As a young child living in Depression-era Texas, he would stand with his family in a long line waiting for handouts of food from the local relief agencies. Many weeks, the man in charge demonstrated his racist views of Mexicanos. When it was a Mexicano's turn to receive food, the agent would refuse to give it to them and "send them to the back of the line." Years later, while on leave from the Air Force, in full uniform, Morales was denied service at a restaurant. The owner told him that he was not permitted to eat in the dining area, and that if he wanted food, he had to order at the counter and eat in the kitchen.[23]

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[20] "Hispanics" was the term Mosqueda used in his interview, which is why it is used here. He described how many of his peers dropped out due to lack of encouragement by teachers and due to pressure to work. He stated that a university degree was "not really conceivable" during those the 1950s and 1960s in Texas. Despite this, Mosqueda went on to earn his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from Indiana University School of Dentistry. Raul Mosqueda interview by Steven Rosales, June 13, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

[21] Vega interview. See also *Immigration*, 1928, 611, 614. Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American-Mexican Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934); Foley, *The White Scourge*; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*.

[22] Castañeda interview.

[23] Martin Morales interview by Steven Rosales, October 5, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

Discrimination faced in the education and social spheres reflected whites' view of Mexicanos and had the effect of severely limiting job opportunities and access to social inclusion into mainstream society. While some Mexicanos certainly were able to acquire factory work, most found they had to perform farm work in one of three ways: as contract or hired labor whereby groups of Mexicanos worked for a single farm or group of farms year after year often living on the farmer's property (this included Braceros as well); as migrant laborers who followed the crops seasonally moving from farm to farm (moving with the crop seasons in Texas or from state to state); or as sharecroppers.[24] While all made upward economic mobility very difficult, the latter was most despised, in large part because workers had to give the landowners fifty percent of the profits.[25] With the exception of Braceros, all three categories of farm work, especially for the lowest economic levels of society, became a family affair. Poor Mexicano families, extended families, and multi-generational kinship groups labored together under the hot Texas sun trying to scrape out a living. Many Michigan Mexicanos recalled very matter-of-factly why their families began to travel to the Midwest: "There were no jobs in Texas other than picking cotton."[26]

Not only did this contemptible situation create significant push factors for Mexicanos to seek employment elsewhere, but also facilitated the beginnings of the translocal familial and fictive kinship networks that would see Mexicanos spread to new areas of the country. As extended families and members of separate families toiled together, they forged bonds

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[24] For examples of Mexicanos in factory work in Texas see Perales, *Smeltertown*; Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century* America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). For examples of farm life in Texas see Foley, *The White Scourge*; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*.

[25] Castañeda interview. For more on sharecropping and farm labor see Foley, *The White Scourge*.

[26] This is a composite quote from numerous respondents. For example, see Morales interview; Lopez interview; Arturo and Art Reyes interview by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession).

that created kinship work and familial groups ready to respond to news of job availability in the north.[27] Shared struggle joined them together. Thus, as information regarding new job prospects emerged, many Texas Mexicanos were ready to make the decision to go north in search of a better way to provide for their families, even if it was just seasonally. Many Mexicanos, after a few years of crisscrossing the country following the crops, chose to settle in the Midwest (as the family of Rose San Miguel did), finding steadier work and a more welcoming racial climate. In either case, the journey north for most commenced due to participation in translocal networks, though the process would prove far from direct.

**The Journey North: Farmworker Networks**

The combination of difficult living conditions in Texas along with news of new opportunities in the Midwest precipitated a large northward Mexicano migration in the early twentieth century. The Mexicano population of Michigan (and the Midwest) began increasing dramatically due to the burgeoning sugar beet industry during the 1920s. According to the U.S. Census, Michigan only had 1,333 persons of Mexican descent in 1920, growing to nearly 10,000 by 1930, more than 16,000 by 1950, and to 31,000 by 1970 (the Mexicano population of the Midwest as a whole grew from approximately 30,000 to 226,000

[27] See Gilbert Guevara interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Efrain Gutierrez interview by Brett Olmsted, August 6, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession). Forming fictive kinship groups among poor laborers has long been a pattern embraced to help better conditions and for survival. For example, see James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 2001). For more on the conditions and arrangements of farm work in Texas see Foley, *The White Scourge*; Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*; and Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*.

during that span).[28] While these numbers are impressive they do not take into account the sheer volume of migrant workers who yearly entered the fields. For instance, in 1926 a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated there were at least 6,720 Mexicans contracted to work in just the sugar beet fields during that season alone.[29] The number of farmworkers increased exponentially in the following decades.[30]

These numbers, however, do not do justice to the motives and personal stories of people choosing to leave their homes. The decision to go to north, and possibly remain there, was not a simple one; rather, it was a complex process that elucidated Mexicano agency and produced a diasporic web of Mexicanos spread across the country. For those who ended up settling in Michigan, or anywhere else in the Midwest, the trip most often began in Texas. While certainly many Texas Mexicanos, especially initially, did respond to the efforts of Midwestern sugar companies promising higher paying jobs, most traveled north as part of

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[28] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1850-1930*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1932); Gilbert Cardenas, "Los Desarraigados: Chicanos in the Midwestern Region of the United States," *Aztlán* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 153–186.

[29] Scholars have estimated that Detroit may have had a Mexicano population of 15,000 by 1930. The discrepancies stem first from the number of migrant workers who floated back and forth (or stayed in the cities during the off-season). A second issue was that, in theory, the census count of Mexicans did not include Mexican Americans who were also in Michigan at the time. While the Census tabulation of Mexicans should not have included Mexican Americans who were also in Michigan at the time, there is some debate concerning this given that census takers could have marked some U.S. citizens as Mexican based on phenotype rather than legal status. A darker skin tone and/or use of Spanish were markers that designated a separate racial category of "Mexican," a term appearing on the 1930 U.S. Census. There was a language barrier and an inherent mistrust of government officials leading some to not respond to the census takers. In addition to suspicion, census takers often knocked on doors during the day while the men were at work. The women often were fearful of answering honestly and/or had even more of a language issue than the men. Moreover, in Detroit and other urban settings, women often operated boarding houses for numerous *solos*, rather than family dwellings and therefore could not or would not provide the counts for all the men living there, given constant turnover. See Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006). For more on the population discrepancies, see U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, *Agricultural Labor Supply*, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1930) [hereafter *Agricultural Labor Supply*]; *Immigration*, 1928, 454; Rudolph Alvarado and Sonya Alvarado, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Valdés, *Al Norte;* Vargas, *Proletarians*.

[30] While 1926 reported 6,720 migrants, this number increased yearly, other than during the Great Depression, from the 1920s through the 1960s, when the Bracero Program ended and mechanization began to push more and more migrant workers from the fields. Valdés, *Al Norte*

interregional familial and fictive kinship networks that carried news of new opportunity.[31] It was these connections that allowed Mexicanos the choice to enter into either the migrant streams and/or factory work as a means of improving their economic prospects. Further, it was never an all or nothing proposition. It frequently was merely a temporary migration in order to achieve short-term gain that may or may not result in a permanent change of residence. In either case, though, hundreds of thousands of Mexicanos, *familias* and *solos*, became a part of "the migration" wherein Mexicanos left the Southwest in search of better work and higher pay.[32]

Though he never permanently settled in the Midwest himself (members of his family did), the story of Chicano filmmaker Efrain Gutierrez represented not only the process of going north, but also how the familial networks functioned over space and time. While his was only one story of many, it exemplifies many of the nuances of the typical journey including the impact on multiple generations. Oftentimes, while Mexicanos were working under the hot Texas sun, a foreman, on behalf of Midwestern farmers, went out into the fields to recruit a cohort of Mexicanos to go north. However, that foreman may or may not have been Anglo. Frequently, the recruiter was a real or fictive Mexicano family member. In this case, one of Efrain's cousins had previously gone north to Indiana to work in tomatoes. The cousin's boss informed him that he needed more workers and told him to recruit a group of Mexicanos to work in his fields. Efrain's cousin knew immediately he would go to his family and friends in San Antonio, fulfilling the role of foreman, recruiter, and, subsequently,

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[31] Beginning in the early 1920s sugar beet companies from the Midwest began publishing advertisements in local Texas newspapers and sending recruiting agents into the fields to entice Mexicanos north. They often promised free transportation to and from, but money to cover transit was often taken from Mexicanos wages after arrival. For examples of these advertisements, see Fig. 1.1. Also see Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brown*; Valdés, *Al Norte*.

[32] John Sanchez interview by Steven Rosales, November 5, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

contract negotiator. It was this effort that convinced Efrain's father, having failed to find a steady job in San Antonio, to make the decision to go north as migrant workers. This singular interregional connection resulted in "an entire neighborhood" migrating from Texas to points all across the Great Lakes region, forever altering the landscape of two regions.[33]

The decision to migrate had a profound effect on all generations of Texas Mexicanos, not just those who made the choice to travel. For the Gutierrez family, the new year started with schooling. From January through April (or May depending on the year), all the school-aged children attended school in San Antonio. This included Efrain, who began migrating yearly at age two, and continued into high school. In May, he, his brothers and sisters, his cousins, and his *cuñados* (translated "brother-in-law" but in this context, fictive kin) were pulled out of school. Efrain recalled many of the kids crying as the parents took them out. They desired to be in school and also were afraid that the teachers would be mad at them for leaving. Around the neighborhood, all the departing families closed up their houses for the long trip and say goodbye to the *padrinos* (godparents) who watched over their homes while they were away. While a few remained in San Antonio, entire neighborhoods became virtually abandoned. The families loaded into their trucks or rode with others, and set off from San Antonio north toward Round Rock, Texas, the caravan's first major stop. Having multiple families ride together in the back of a truck was a common tale among migrants, cementing the familial and fictive kinships that provided stability and economic viability in the north.[34]

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[33] Gutierrez interview. For other recruitment examples, see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Jim Norris, *North for the Harvest: Mexican Workers, Growers, and the Sugar Beet Industry* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009); Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*; Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*; Valdés, *Al Norte*.

[34] Gutierrez interview. See also Emily Martinez interview by Brett Olmsted, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*.

Previous scholarship has focused on the dangers of riding in the back of a truck while the driver recklessly drove across back roads, while others highlighted how the recruitment promised free transportation and subsequently forced Mexicanos to repay the fees.[35] These conditions existed, especially during the early recruitment years of the 1920s. However, by the late 1930s and 1940s, the formation of familial kinship groups and making the decision to travel together provided far more safeguards in the journey to the Midwest, though other dangers persisted. The Gutierrez story illuminated some of these new trials. While the rest of the caravan continued to Round Rock, Efrain's immediate family made a quick stop off in New Braunfels, Texas in order to see his *abuela*. After saying their goodbyes, his grandmother would pray a blessing over them, saying "*vaya con cuidado*" ("go with care"), asking God to watch over them as they traveled. She specifically prayed that God kept their whole caravan safe from breakdowns at least until they got out of Texas. Their route to the Midwest would take them northeast from Round Rock towards Texarkana, Arkansas through east Texas cities such as Marshall and Livingston. There was great fear in stopping for any reason during the night, whether for gas, food, bathrooms, or maintenance on their vehicles. If they had to break, they did so as a caravan and only two or three people went into town to get the supplies so as not to alarm locals with a "horde of Mexicans."[36] Even with that, they were often refused service by local whites. There were instances where they had to literally beg, plead, and offer to pay double for gas or supplies. Whether in the town or in a secluded area, they also feared local police. Being stopped caused long delays and often the police

[35] See Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Valdés, *Al Norte.*
[36] Gutierrez interview.

would issue a ticket or arrest them without cause. Far worse was the ever-present fear of the Klu Klux Klan, known to reside East Texas.[37]

It was this potential danger that precipitated Efrain's family to meet up with the larger caravan just north of Austin at a large filling station after leaving New Braunfels, arriving by six o'clock in the evening. There the convoy stocked up on extra gas, food, and some spare parts. As the children went to sleep, they set out for the overnight drive to Texarkana. Early the next morning, the caravan arrived in Arkansas and made their first big scheduled stop, assuming all went well. They would break at a wooded area on the side of the road. The children woke up as the women went to one side of the street, and the men to the other, utilizing the trees as a bathroom (there were no public rest areas welcoming of Mexicanos along the road during the 1940s). They then ate a quick snack based on whatever they had packed. After a short rest, the cavalcade continued a few more hours to just south of Little Rock, Arkansas. There they stopped and sent a few men to order food for the families from African American vendors who had set up barbeque stands along the side of the road. This was their second major pit stop and it demonstrated interracial networks that the Gutierrez clan knew would be available each year.[38] After a few hours rest, they continued on to Missouri for the next scheduled break. Then it was on their way to Auburn, Indiana where this group paused to weed tomatoes.

While Indiana was the Gutierrez family's primary source of employment, the established familial networks ensured they were not beholden to just a single farm in rural

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[37] Gutierrez interview.

[38] In historical scholarship, much has been made of the lack of camaraderie and even animosity between Latinos and African Americans in the fight for civil rights. However, while far more scholarship is needed on the subject, there were also definite times of assistance and overlap between the two ethno-racial groups. For more, see Neil Foley, *Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Indiana, as had often been the case in Texas. After a short stay in the Hoosier State, smaller subsets of the caravan traveled on to other destinations. This departure came as the group heard of newer, high paying job opportunities from friends and family who had previously ventured and/or settled in other areas of the Midwest. Some went to spots in Ohio, while Efrain's group went to Saginaw, Michigan to hoe sugar beets.[39] While historians have noted the use of "*el cortito*" during the 1920s (the short-handled hoe), in Efrain's experience its use was optional by the 1940s and 1950s.[40] Some men chose to use the backbreaking hoe as it was quicker, and since compensation was based on acreage, some chose to endure it, though they often collapsed at night after a long day of work. Whether using short-handled or long-handled tool, Efrain described hoeing in fields for ten hours a day as a "pain in the [butt]," and that "you put all your hard labor in sugar beets."[41] You could take breaks, but time was money. For their effort, though, they received approximately one dollar per hour per person. Consequently, his immediate family consisting of his parents and four older brothers (he was technically still too young to work at age twelve though he still helped in the fields) could earn sixty dollars a day in Saginaw. This was considered "major money," given that a person working in the kitchen in San Antonio would earn that in a week.[42]

For the Gutierrezes, most of the months of April and May were spent in the Saginaw beet fields. In early June, they traveled back to Auburn to quickly weed tomatoes and in late June return to Saginaw to finish weeding the beets. It was at this time the Gutierrezes

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[39] By that date, the planter had already planted the seeds but he had not spread the seeds very far apart. The Gutierrez family were contracted to hoe in between the tiny plants ensuring they were between twelve and sixteen inches apart so they would grow properly. Gutierrez interview. See also Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Valdés, *Al Norte*.

[40] Cesar Chavez also complained about *el cortito*, saying "I think growers use short-handled hoes because they don't give a [darn] about human beings. They look at human beings as implements…." See Valdés, *Al Norte*, 16.

[41] Gutierrez interview.

[42] Gutierrez interview.

received payment for their contract, as they would not be back until the following year (other Mexicano families returned in late September to harvest the beets). For his family, the time in Saginaw covered the cost of traveling back and forth from Texas to the Midwest. During July, Efrain's family unit traveled to Traverse City, Michigan, at the top of the Lower Peninsula, for the cherry harvest. The first two weeks they picked sweet cherries; the second two weeks they picked tart cherries. Efrain described this as a more relaxed time, as cherries allowed pickers to remain in an upright position, a sentiment echoed by many Mexicanos, and provided extra spending money (more on this in chapter five).[43] After this they returned to Auburn to harvest tomatoes until the October frost and then it was time to head back south. They stopped over in West Texas to pick cotton until Christmas before returning to San Antonio to start school again.

Facilitated by involvement in the intraregional networks, which helped provide new job opportunities and economic stability, the year was a whirlwind of travel for Mexicano migrant farmworkers.[44] While the preceding narrative certainly was the story of only one familial group, it was a common experience among migrants.[45] In fact, the only somewhat unique quality of the Gutierrez story was that they only worked part time in the beet fields,

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[43] Gutierrez interview; Marylou Olivarez Mason Oral History, "A Mexican American from Texas," in *The Sweetness of Freedom: Stories of Immigrants* by Stephen Garr Ostrander and Martha Aladjem Bloomfield (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010) [hereafter Olivarez Mason Oral History]; Zamarripa interview.

[44] The constant travel also produced another interesting paradigm. Procreation did not stop for the summer migrant work and having families with children born in two or more states, or countries, was a common tale among migrant workers. For example, longtime Saginaw resident Frank Ornelas had ten siblings, five brothers and five sisters. Of those, one was born in North Dakota, one in Oklahoma (in addition to Frank), four in Mexico, and the last four in Michigan. This occurred as his father began moving in search of work in the late 1920s going first to Oklahoma, where Frank was born, then back and forth to Mexico for a number of years, then to Texas, and then to North Dakota, all before finally settling in Pinconning, Michigan in 1939. Likewise, Emily Martinez told of having nine siblings, five born in Texas, five in Michigan. Raul Mosqueda, who was born in a small northeastern Ohio township while his six siblings were born in Texas before they settled in Michigan. Frank Ornelas interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Martinez interview; Mosqueda interview; Zamarripa interview.

[45] For example, see Martinez interview; Olivarez Mason Oral History; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Norris, *North for the Harvest;* Valdés, Al Norte.

tomatoes being their primary crop, since sugar beets constituted the largest primary employer in the area.[46] However, even if the main source of income was sugar beets the pattern of going to Michigan and then radiating out to engage in other crop work was still the same, demonstrating Mexicano resourcefulness by participating in multiple crops for multiple farmers. Many interviewees reported moving on to pickles in Breckenridge (where Efrain's uncle eventually set up shop), potatoes in Munger, apples or blueberries in South Haven, or traveling to northern Ohio or Indiana for tomatoes.[47] The other alternative would be if and when they made the decision to settle out of the migrant stream for more permanent work.[48] Most families, though, even after the father achieved a stable factory job still performed seasonal farm work during the summer (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter five). While Efrain never settled permanently in the Midwest, his cousin did marry and settle in Indiana, living there until his death.[49]

**The Journey North: Industrial Networks**

To this point, the discussion of interregional connections has shown expanded opportunities for migrant farm workers, but the familial networks also provided information of factory jobs that allowed Mexicanos to have more stable employment and exit the migrant streams. While Detroit came to have the largest concentration of Mexicanos in Michigan (with Ford the largest single employer in the region), other cities became landing spots for

[46] See Stilgenbauer, "The Michigan Sugar Beet Industry," 494; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Valdés, *Al Norte*.
[47] While cucumbers are the crop that is transformed into pickles, all interviewees recalled picking "pickle" crops. See Gutierrez interview; Las Damas interview by Brett Olmsted, June 29, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession); San Miguel interview, Zamarripa interview.
[48] Some, like Emily Martinez's family only did sugar beets, but most were quite diversified. Martinez interview.
[49] Gutierrez interview.

Mexicanos as well.[50] Saginaw was a prominent destination because the city, and its immediate environs, was home to sugar beets, sugar refineries, and automobile manufacturing. As a result, many Mexicanos had family and friends there who started in sugar beets and then moved into urban industry. That was the case with the family of long time Saginaw resident Arnif Nernio. His family started off in beets, but it was the familial networks that led him to Saginaw. Nernio was born in 1922 in San Antonio, but it was not long before his father responded to the lure of sugar and headed north to the Minnesota beet fields. His aunt had previously settled in Saginaw and told her brother (Arnif's father) of the need for factory laborers. So, in 1925, his father packed the family into the car and drove to Michigan. His aunt had provided important information that would benefit multiple generations, as it not only provided a job for Nernio's father, but later for him. Just before entering the service in 1942, Arnif was able to secure work as a grinder for General Motors and then return to it after this time in the military ended.[51]

The family of longtime Saginaw resident Vincent Pardo was another prime example of the vital importance and intricacies of interregional connections. Pardo's parents were both born in Mexico in separate towns. His mother crossed into Texas with her family to escape the Cristero War in 1927. Her parents had heard from close friends about farm work in Pigeon, Michigan and they, as a family unit, went north. Later that same year, Pardo's father visited some friends in Saginaw, where he first met his future wife. Two years later

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[50] Vargas, *Proletarians*.

[51] Nernio told an interesting story from the trip from Minnesota to Michigan. Along the route, they stopped for rest just outside Chicago. They were sleeping in the car when police came and knocked on the window. They told the family they had could not stay there as there was going to be "a lot of shootin' going on" because John Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson had sworn revenge on the police and were coming. The policeman asked the fire chief if the family could stay at the firehouse and they were allowed to rest there for the night but they could still hear the gunfire. That was the night Baby Face Nelson died. Arnif Nernio interview by Steven Rosales, May 29, 2010, Bay City, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). For other examples of passing along information to secure factory work see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrios*.

Pardo's father returned to Saginaw, as his friends were able to land him a job at the Chevrolet Foundry. Reunited, the couple got married and then had Vincent in 1931. Given the effects of the Great Depression, his family took the option of repatriating to Mexico, living there from 1932 to 1944. While many historians have noted the difficulty of re-entering the United States after repatriating, the Pardos were able to return primarily because Vincent's maternal grandparents had stayed in Saginaw during the Depression. They were able to secure visas and a job for Vincent's father at the Saginaw Foundry, since his grandfather worked there. It was the networks that caused both of his parents to go to Michigan in the first place, precipitated his parents meeting, and what allowed them to return to Saginaw permanently with a good paying job, despite being a part of the repatriation.[52]

Another prominent automotive destination was Flint, Michigan, which never had the number of Mexicanos of Saginaw or Detroit, but nonetheless developed an important enclave. Numerous families made their way to Flint via the information transmitted along familial networks.[53] The result was multiple generations working at General Motors (GM) plants in Vehicle City. For example, Rafael Arceo, an active participant in the 1937 Sit Down Strike, settled in Flint after hearing friends talk about job opportunities – first in Chicago, then in Flint. In 1926, while working construction, he helped build Fisher Body Plant No. 1. While he desired to move on to Pontiac, Michigan to build more plants, his friends counseled him to settle down. He had gotten married in Flint to Fermina, whom he

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[52] Vincent Pardo interview by Steven Rosales, May 23, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). For more on the decision and/or forced volunteered nature of repatriation, as well as the difficulty in returning once repatriated, see Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*.

[53] The cities of Saginaw and Flint were chosen to be featured due to their importance in the automobile industry and because Detroit has had much more attention. The larger city caused many Mexicanos to flow there in the agricultural off season seeking work and staying with friends and family. For information on Detroit see Vargas, *Proletarians*. The translocal networks also featured prominently in Chicago aiding Mexicanos in securing industrial jobs there. See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrios*.

met in the city after she settled out of the migrant stream. Arceo heard from friends that the Fisher Body Plant he helped construct was hiring. Arceo applied and was hired by GM in 1928. Later, his sons and grandsons gained employment at GM as well.[54] Similarly, Arturo Reyes moved from Seguin, Texas to Flint in 1948 in order to avoid the hard labor and poor returns of cotton picking in the Lone Star State. Reyes's friend had a brother in Michigan who informed him about higher paying factory jobs in the state. While he was heading for Detroit he stopped off in Flint to see other friends, found that Buick Motors was hiring, and never left.[55] His son and grandson later worked GM as well. Though it took a few years to convince him, Apolonio Zamarripa also made the trek to Flint after hearing about factory job openings for General Motors from his brothers. In 1950 he left for Michigan, with his wife and four children coming three years later. Five more children were born in Flint with many of his sons also taking jobs at GM when they came of age.[56]

Though only constituting a small sample within the larger landscape, the preceding stories were representative examples that elucidated the formation, usage, and importance of the interregional extra-familial networks that carried news of job opportunities within the U.S. Mexicano community. This connected Mexicanos together across the United States (even into Mexico), empowering them to choose what work to enter into, indicating they were not simply beholden to white farmers and foremen – in Texas or Michigan. Though many, like most of the Gutierrez family, ultimately did not permanently settle in Michigan or elsewhere in the Midwest, many others began a new life in the Great Lakes State with their

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[54] David Arceo interview by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession); David Elsila, *We Make Our Own History: A Portrait of the UAW* (Detroit, MI: International Union, UAW, 1986).
[55] Reyes interview.
[56] Zamarripa interview.

families. While work conditions, pay, and social relations proved far better in Michigan than in Texas, all things were definitely not equal in the north.

**Anglo Exclusion**

While the reasons for leaving Texas for Michigan were clear, settling in Michigan did not automatically mean a higher economic status and social equality. Rather, once in Michigan, Mexicanos found that, while the racial situation was nowhere near the level faced in Texas, there were a variety of figurative and structural limitations designed to keep them in a secondary social and economic position. Since Mexicanos were not native to the Midwest, Anglo Michiganders often prescribed social roles based on preconceived ideas of what "a Mexican" was.[57] Founded on racialized tropes, they associated specific attributes the "Mexican race" allegedly embodied, characterizing Mexicanos as poor migrant workers who lived in squalor, and who were naturally suited for the hottest and dirtiest work whether in the fields or factory. Thus, many whites forced Michigan Mexicanos into a nonwhite status within a black-white social structure, imputing inferiority based on a darker skin color and a non-English language. This social exclusion placed Mexicanos on the "wrong" side of new social, economic, and political boundaries in Michigan, allowing Anglos to take advantage of

[57] The phrase "a Mexican" has been found littered throughout the sources, most prevalently in the congressional transcripts regarding Mexican immigration during the 1920s. For examples, see U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers*, 66th Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1920); U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1926) [hereafter Seasonal Agricutlural Labroers]; *Immigration*, 1928; *Agricultural Labor Supply*. For more scholarship on this racial typecasting throughout the country, see Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

the smaller and more migratory Mexicano population as a cheap labor source, replacing Eastern Europeans.[58] Outlining these barriers illustrates how Anglos racialized the space in order to in order to assert control, to push Mexicanos to the periphery, and to render them invisible in society.

The racial stereotypes held by Anglos were often formed and buttressed by negative semantic signifiers and/or overall neglect within local English language newspapers.[59] From large urban centers to rural areas, local newspapers carried powerful weight in the construction of racial ideologies. In the decade that preceded the first major influx of Mexicanos to the Midwest, newspaper articles regarding anything to do with Mexicans most often portrayed a dangerous Mexican homeland, with pieces focused on the fierce nature of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the violent caricatures of figures like Pancho Villa. With headlines such as "American Army Invades Mexico: Fire Opened on Villa Forces," reports on the civil war cast Mexicanos as dangerous and lawless brigands.[60] Making matters

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[58] It has long been a practice for employers to utilize (and exploit) new immigrants/migrants to replace more established groups in attempts to keep wages low and keep employees from organizing. In Michigan, Mexicanos replaced Hungarians in the sugar beet fields and, most prominently in Detroit, Poles. Martinez interview; Marietta L. Baba and Malvina Hauk Abonyi, *Mexicans of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1979); David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Eduard Adam Skendzel, *Detroit's Pioneer Mexicans: A Historical Study of the Mexican Colony in Detroit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Littleshield Press, 1980); Valdés, *Al Norte*; Vargas, *Proletarians*. See also Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2007).

[59] Examining newspapers to analyze word choice, headlines, and article placement can illustrate how local whites felt about incoming immigrant and migrant groups. For example, prominent placement of articles focusing on crime, disease, etc., while having little-to-no positive mentions in the society section denotes social exclusion. Historians can also use this to track when ethnic groups begin to find social acceptance in their new homes. See Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*; Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home: Latinos in Twentieth-Century Lorain, Ohio," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[60] "American Army Invades Mexico," *Cass City Chronicle*, June 20, 1919, 12. For more on Michigan newspapers depicting war and lawlessness in Mexico see "Mrs. Selina Brown Writes from Texas," *Cass City Chronicle*, January 5, 1917, 8; "This Week's Doings," *Cass City Chronicle*, November 16, 1917, 4. Also see *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273. For other scholarship on the Midwest see García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 2. This was not limited to the north. Numerous scholars have also

worse was that in some areas, detailed visual accounts of the war were on display providing even more graphic evidence of the so-called violent "Mexican." In rural Cass City, Michigan, later home to thousands of migrant Mexicanos, the local newspaper promoted that a person could "see the weekly changes of Mexican war pictures in Crosby & Son's windows."[61] The *Cass City Chronicle* also featured advertisements for a "patriotic" film shown in town entitled "The Honor-System," which promised to show audiences a "thrilling battle scene between Mexican Bandit Raiders and Americans."[62] The decade of the 1910s had not one positive Mexicano article in the *Cass City Chronicle*, but ended with a rather scathing "joke" given during a local lecture concerning Mexico: "Rob said if he owned hell and Mexico and had to live in one of the two places, he would live in hell and rent Mexico."[63]

The newspaper connotations linking Mexicano migrants to danger was not limited to just the decade of the 1910s regarding war and banditry. Rather, articles focusing on pests and diseases associated with Mexico that threatened Michigan crops also correlated ideas of potential danger with Mexicano workers. One especially troubling and recurring vexation for Michigan farmers was the "Mexican" bean beetle, which damaged crops and profits. Numerous articles concerning the beetle highlighted its existence, its severity in any given year, and various methods of how to control it (such as with Rotenone and DDT). These references began appearing in the mid-1920s running though the 1970s and included headlines that named the Mexican bean beetle the "Chief Pest" of the United States.[64]

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illustrated the impact of this throughout the United States. See Perales, *Smeltertown*; Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*.

[61] "Local Items," *Cass City Chronicle*, May 29, 1914, 1; "Local Items," *Cass City Chronicle*, June 19, 1914, 5.

[62] "The Honor-System," *Cass City Chronicle*, March 29, 1918, 5.

[63] "Local Items," *Cass City Chronicle*, July 4, 1919, 7.

[64] See "Expect no Damage from Bean Beetle," *Cass City Chronicle*, May, 5, 1925, 8; "Bean Beetle Found on Michigan Farms," *Cass City Chronicle*, October 7, 1927, 1; "Mexican Bean Beetle Reported," *Cass City*

Likewise, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, foot-and-mouth disease reduced Mexican herds of cattle by as much as fifty percent. The result was a U.S. ban in the importation of all Mexican cattle for fear of diseased meat.[65] The linking of the terms "Mexican" to a nuisance plague or some tainted cattle from a specific country degraded the referent of a whole ethno-lingual-racial population.

The associations conflating disease with Mexicanos was a particularly long lasting and powerful stereotype that painted Mexicanos in a position of suspicion and otherness within both the urban and rural Anglo consciousness. During the late 1910s and again during the Bracero era the United States instituted a policy of delousing, chemical baths, and the invasive inspection of potential migrant workers, established under the guise of preventing the spread of disease.[66] Further, from 1939 to 1941, the state of Michigan initiated a joint policy with Texas to inspect potential migrants for venereal disease.[67] The result of these policies was the degradation of Mexicanos as disease carriers within the public mind. Consequently, when any occurrence of disease occurred in Michigan, newspapers and doctors were quick to overreact and exaggerate the dangers, which positioned Mexicanos further on the outskirts of accepted society. In the late summer of 1941, the *Saginaw News* reported on two outbreaks of disease tied to Mexicanos in the city. On August 12, fourteen

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*Chronicle*, August 16, 1940, 7; "Killing Bean Beetles," *Cass City Chronicle*, July 20, 1945, 5; "Effective Insecticide," *Cass City Chronicle*, December 20, 1946, 6; "Mexican Bean Beetle," *Cass City Chronicle*, October 7, 1949, 8; "Leafhopper Controlled," *Cass City Chronicle*, October 14, 1949, 8; "Chief Pest," *Cass City Chronicle*, June 20, 1952, 10; "How Spell Swell For Bugs, Beetles," *Cass City Chronicle*, July 30, 1953, 1; "Farm Chemical Sales," *Cass City Chronicle*, July 23, 1964, 6; "Mexican Bean Beetle Appearing in County Again," *Cass City Chronicle*, July 15, 1965, 10.

[65] See, for example, "Mexican Herds," *Cass City Chronicle*, October 14, 1949, 2; "Mexican Livestock Freed from Ban," *Cass City Chronicle*, January 23, 1953, 12.

[66] See Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); John McKiernan- Gonzales, *Fevered Measures*, and also U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, *National Defense Migration Hearings*, 77th Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1941), 7554, 7791-7796, [hereafter *National Defense Migration Hearings*].

[67] *National Defense Migration Hearings*, 7791-7796.

Mexicanos were hospitalized for diphtheria and two days later seven Mexicans were quarantined for typhoid. The headlines read "Development Taxes County's Facilities," using hyperbole to insinuate that the hospital was being overrun and overwhelmed by diseased Mexicanos.[68] The articles concluded it was a case of dysentery that was "discovered among relatives of the family living in the same neighborhood [that was] thought to be the original source of infection."[69]

What made this outbreak even more significant was its discussion within the Congressional transcripts. During a 1941 Defense Hearing regarding Detroit, numerous mentions of the Saginaw outbreak occurred. It also reported another epidemic of this kind was likely to occur again given the crowded living conditions of Mexicano families – in this case four families living in a single room house – and the fact they believed that Mexicano migratory workers were four or five times more likely than other groups to have tuberculosis. Doctors not only quarantined the sick at the hospital, but also put them in a storeroom deeming "this procedure wisest not only because of poor housing conditions, but also because it would have been impossible to break the contacts of these people with other groups of Mexicans who live nearby."[70] Not only did "experts" testify that it was right to treat Mexicanos as lower class by putting them in a closet, but doctors also linked the Saginaw outbreak to one that occurred in rural Blissfield around the same time, concluding it was highly "suggestive" that the diphtheria occurred among Mexicano migrants, again linking disease to a specific ethno-racial group. Both the doctors who testified and the newspapers covering the outbreaks highlighted the disease occurring due to overcrowded and

[68] "Typhoid Scare Hospitalizes 7," *The Saginaw News*, August 27, 1941, 1.
[69] "Hospital Releases 7 Typhoid Contacts," *The Saginaw News*, August 14, 1941, 1.
[70] *National Defense Migration Hearings*, 7554, 7791-7793.

squalid living conditions, but both seemed to insinuate it was by Mexicano choice, rather than forced necessity, further debasing Mexicanos as other.[71]

The diphtheria/typhoid outbreak was not the only instance of disease being tied to Mexicans. In 1957, the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* ran an article titled "Caught From Migrants," linking Mexicanos to the spread of a virus. The article went on to describe how an Anglo Michigander, Thomas Weese, contracted the Asiatic Flu "while driving a truck loaded with migrant Mexican workers."[72] This kind of yellow journalism implied it was because the people were "Mexican" and/or "migrants" that they were carriers of disease, fostering a fear to all who read it to be wary of coming into contact with those who performed most of the agricultural work up and down the west side of the state.

So pervasive was this label that many Anglos still held it into the 1980s and 1990s (and some still do). When a disease spreads via produce, consumers were quick to blame "dirty Mexican" laborers. For example, Rose San Miguel recounted that during the nationwide 1997 strawberry Hepatitis contamination a woman asked her a question one day at a Saginaw church: "Don't your people know how to wash their hands after they use the bathroom?" San Miguel responded by asking the woman if she ever saw any bathrooms or sinks for workers to wash their hands in the fields. Then she added, "Of course they know how to wash their hands," but that the farmers did not provide toilets out in the fields or running water to wash hands, and the little water available was for drinking to beat the heat.[73] In actuality, the outbreak was from frozen strawberries grown in Mexico, indicating the

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[71] For other scholarship on doctors and newspapers linking disease to specific immigrant groups see Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*; Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?;* Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[72] "Caught From Migrants," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, August 14, 1957, 7.
[73] San Miguel interview; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Hepatitis A Associated with Consumption of Frozen Strawberries—Michigan, March 1997," *MMWR Weekly* 46 (March 1997): 288–295, http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00047129.htm, accessed September 16, 2016.

woman was lumping the U.S born San Miguel with those from Mexico as being "your people." This also insinuated the woman feared the migrant workers entering Michigan as being carriers of disease. This stereotype was so long-ingrained that San Miguel remembered that her mother always carried a bag in the car. It was for trash because she did not want to ever be seen throwing trash out the window for fear of embodying the Anglo perception of being dirty.[74]

While perceived threats to health and safety prompted over-sensationalized headlines to the detriment of Mexicanos, even when Michigan newspapers covered seemingly positive Mexicano events, the language and imagery chosen often propagated negative stereotypes. This was clearly the case involving early coverage of Mexicano celebrations in the state. Beginning in the 1920s, Mexicano events such as the *dieciséis de septiembre* (September 16, Mexican Independence Day) dotted the rural and urban landscape, but local Michigan newspapers only offered sparse and sporadic information regarding the festivities.[75] A 1926 celebration of the *fiestas patrias* in Mt. Pleasant stood out from other celebrations because it received unprecedented coverage by the English language media. The *Mt. Pleasant Times* ran three consecutive weeks of front-page articles. It was the first time a Michigan newspaper reported on a Mexicano celebration preceding its occurrence, offered information

[74] San Miguel interview.
[75] Most often, if there was a mention of the events, it was only a one or two line notification stating an event had occurred, often citing if there were any instances of violence, projecting the presumption that a gathering of Mexicanos would incite violence (more on this in Chapter 2). For example, see "Michigan Happenings," *Cass City Chronicle*, September 28, 1923, 8; "Local Items," *Cass City Chronicle,* September 19, 1924, 4; "Mexicans Celebration National Holiday," *Pigeon Progress*, September 19, 1924; "Local," *Pigeon Progress,* September 18, 1925; "Mexican Celebration Well Attended," *Pigeon Progress,* September 24, 1926; "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday Here," *Pigeon Progress,* September 16, 1927; "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday in Pigeon," *Pigeon Progress*, September 20, 1929.

on multiple pages, or provided more than three paragraphs in total coverage.[76] The more extensive coverage, however, did not indicate acceptance by whites. Rather, it epitomized the attitude of many whites toward Mexicano migrants: that they were exotic others whose value was mainly as a means of profit.

On September 9, 1926, the week before the jubilee, the *Mt. Pleasant Times* headlined "Mexicans Will Hold Big Rally Here Sept. 15-17" on the front page. The article spanned four paragraphs on page one and another three paragraphs on page two. Page four included a near-full page advertisement heralding the event as featuring numerous "native" dances – referenced eight times – in order to link the celebrants to revelry, backwardness, otherness, and non-white bodily conduct (see Fig. 1.2).[77] The ad also included a program schedule, three caricatures, and a promise for onlookers to expect to witness something "peculiar." The two smaller pictorials focused on festive dancers in colorful costumes and masks invoking an atmosphere of mystery, intrigue, and possible debauchery.[78] It was certainly not the "proper" attire worn by a white person while attending a socially acceptable dance. It was not even the clothing worn by those Anglos who, in the 1920s, were pushing the boundaries of white acceptance by dancing the Charleston. Rather, the combination of the

[76] In September 1925, there was a small gathering of less than 500 people in Shepherd, Michigan, about 6 miles south of Mt. Pleasant in which the *Isabella Country Enterprise* offered three paragraphs of detail. See "Mexicans Make Merry Two Days," *Isabella Country Enterprise*, September 18, 1925, 1.
[77] For more on Mexicano bodily comportment being interpreted as non-white and non-becoming of white standards, as well attempts to negotiate those social spaces, see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Elizabeth Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Matt García, *A World of its Own*; Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
[78] "Big Mexican Celebration," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 9, 1926, 4.

outfits and dancing signified a bodily comportment unbecoming of white standards, thus situating Mexicanos as hierarchically inferior on the social and racial spectrum.[79]

However, the focal point of the advertisement featured a "*señorita*" fanning herself and wearing low-cut clothing. The woman's open, beckoning posture and revealing attire conjured images of an exotic, alluring, and possibly sexually immoral nature. This connotation assigned Mexicanas a status as objects of desire suitable for ogling by onlookers. Some may contend the dress on the woman made her appear more "Latinized." This would, in theory, make Mexicanas seem more European, and thus more "white" and possibly reputable. The accompanying text belied this notion, though, by proclaiming the "Big Mexican Celebration" would be a "very unusual opportunity for the people that have never seen anything of the kind to witness Mexicans celebrating as in their native country . . . [as] they forget their cares and work and everyone joins in this great yearly jubilee."[80] According to the headlines and verbiage, the event was to be a spectacle that superimposed Mexicanos' prescribed role as supposedly racially inferior laborers with an inscribed status as exotic others. The insinuation was that Mexicanos, when not working, partook in nonwhite amusement and that this was an opportunity to witness how "children" would act.[81]

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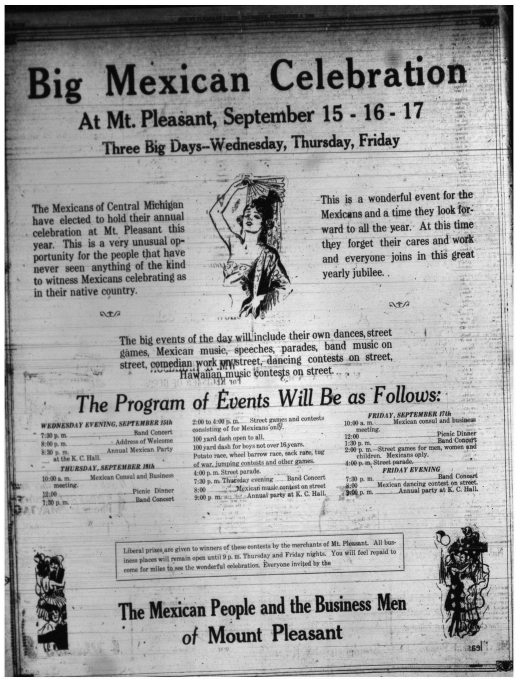
[79] The Charleston, having roots in African American dance rhythms, was looked down upon by dance professionals and many of the older generation of Anglos during the early 1920s as unbecoming, especially for the women who were dressing less modestly. That said, by 1926, flappers dancing the Charleston had become much more ingrained into mainstream white societal popular culture, appropriated by the younger Anglo generation as its own. This was evidenced due to its popularity and portrayal on both the large and small screen. See Melissa Blanco Borelli, *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Caroline Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status Property* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2013). For a comparative analysis of African American and Mexicano dress and dance compared to Anglos standard of whiteness during the 1920s to the 1940s, see Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot*; Matt García, *A World of its Own*; Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). See also Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angele*s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[80] "Big Mexican Celebration."

[81] There is a long legacy regarding Anglo treatment of nonwhites as "children," who were inferior to whites and treated as other (and possibly needing help to be raised up to a standard acceptable to whites). See Kay J.

Consequently, the woman (and by extension the men as well) inhabited a "native," outsider status displaying peculiar bodily comportment befitting of people of a lower sort in other parts of the world.



Big Mexican Celebration

At Mt. Pleasant, September 15 - 16 - 17

Three Big Days—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

The Mexicans of Central Michigan have elected to hold their annual celebration at Mt. Pleasant this year. This is a very unusual opportunity for the people that have never seen anything of the kind to witness Mexicans celebrating as in their native country.

This is a wonderful event for the Mexicans and a time they look forward to all the year. At this time they forget their cares and work and everyone joins in this great yearly jubilee.

The big events of the day will include their own dances, street games, Mexican music, speeches, parades, band music on street, comedian work on street, dancing contests on street, Hawaiian music contests on street.

The Program of Events Will Be as Follows:

WEDNESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15th
7:30 p. m. Band Concert
8:00 p. m. Address of Welcome
8:30 p. m. Annual Mexican Party at the K. C. Hall.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th
10:00 a. m. Mexican Consul and Business meeting.
12:00 Picnic Dinner
1:30 p. m. Band Concert
2:00 to 4:00 p. m. Street games and contests consisting of for Mexicans only.
100 yard dash open to all.
100 yard dash for boys not over 16 years.
Potato race, wheel barrow race, sack race, tug of war, jumping contests and other games.
4:00 p. m. Street parade.
7:30 p. m. Thursday evening Band Concert
8:00 Mexican music contest on street
9:00 p. m. Annual party at K. C. Hall.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th
10:00 a. m. Mexican consul and business meeting.
12:00 Picnic Dinner
1:30 p. m. Band Concert
2:00 p. m.—Street games for men, women and children. Mexicans only.
4:00 p. m. Street parade.

FRIDAY EVENING
7:30 p. m. Band Concert
8:00 Mexican dancing contest on street.
9:00 p. m. Annual party at K. C. Hall.

Liberal prizes are given to winners of these contests by the merchants of Mt. Pleasant. All business places will remain open until 9 p. m. Thursday and Friday nights. You will feel repaid to come for miles to see the wonderful celebration. Everyone invited by the

The Mexican People and the Business Men of Mount Pleasant

Fig. 1.2 Mt. Pleasant 1926 *dieciséis* Advertisement. The advertisement in the *Mount Pleasant Times* depicted imagery and words that did not reflect how Mexicanos celebrated. "Big Mexican Celebration," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 9, 1926, 4.

The paper promised all those who came would "feel repaid" for traveling many miles to witness the peculiar activities. The combination of illustrations and language depicted a bizarre exhibition indeed. It reported that the second day of festivities would feature Mexicanos observing a "Love Feast," a twenty-four-hour religious ceremony where "prayers will be said continuously and the Mexican high priest will sacrifice cattle and sheep as a part

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Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Eileen J. Suarez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

of a sacred religious ceremony."[82] This "Love Feast" was to culminate in yet another "dancing party" that night; to be sure, many onlookers were likely disappointed when those rituals were not performed – as they were certainly not part of any Mexicano program, but merely fantastical inventions by white organizers.[83] By utilizing misinformation, outlandish headlines, and stylized imagery to portray Mexicanos as exotic – and by summoning locals to come and behold them as they performed "unusual" rituals – Mount Pleasant's white businessmen and event organizers effectively cast the Mexicanos as other, placing them well outside of "proper" society. Mexicano celebrants were "entertainment" to be observed, not potential neighbors.[84]

This sensory imagery in local press coverage had one clear goal in mind: to disseminate the idea of a supposed bizarre and "backward" Mexican culture that had "to be seen to be believed." The exoticization of Mexicano migrants acted as a marketing tool that beckoned whites to attend the event and shop: as the paper noted, all businesses would be open late on festival nights. Graham's Clothing Store offered the most direct evidence of this motivation, placing an ad entitled "Mexican Celebration and real bargain days combined" with discounts on women's clothing and other items.[85] Given these advertisements appeared in the local English-language newspaper, businesses clearly targeted local whites to attend the festival and shop. Certainly, local white businesses (there were no Mexicano-owned businesses listed in the Mount Pleasant directory) profited from participating Mexicanos who

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[82] The twenty four-hour prayer was supposedly due to commence at 11:00 PM on September 15, the normal time for Mexicans to perform "*el Grito*." See "State Roundup of Mexicans in Mt. Pleasant: Observe 'Love Feast,'" *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 16, 1926, 2.

[83] The misrepresentation may have occurred from an overlap with stereotypical Native American practices. There was and is an Ojibwe population living in Mount Pleasant.

[84] Organizers were also careful to alleviate potential fears by explaining that "many Mexicans were so well educated" the speeches would be conducted in both "Mexican and English" (though later admitting Spanish was the exclusive language spoken). See "Mexicans Will Hold Big Rally Here Sept. 15-17," 1-2; "Mexicans Have an Interesting Fiesta in City," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 26, 1926, 1, 5.

[85] "Mexican Celebration and Real Bargain Days Combined," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 9, 1926, 5.

needed food, clothing, lodging, and supplies, but the main thrust of the advertising campaign was to conjure imaginations of Mexicanos as spectacles.[86] Consequently, the ads made white involvement of the event similar to utilizing the migrants for cheap labor.

In the Great Lakes Region, there were no other Mexicano gatherings that received as much attention by the English language newspapers. Rather, there was a severe paucity of acknowledgement that happenings occurred, even in large urban centers like Detroit and Chicago, which housed larger Mexicano populations. By 1928, Detroit had approximately 15,000 Mexicanos living within its limits, while Chicago had more than 21,000.[87] Combined, the two cities accounted for nearly half of the overall estimated 63,800 Mexicans in the region.[88] Despite the potential for thousands of Mexicanos congregating together to rejoice, the English language press largely denied the Mexicano presence through their silence.[89] For instance, the Mexicano colony held an independence celebration each year in the Motor City beginning in 1920, but the *Detroit Free Press* only recognized small assemblages in 1920 and in 1924.[90] In 1921, the *Free Press* documented that Mexicans commemorated 100 years of independence with rejoicing in Mexico City, but nothing from their own city. In the same 1921 column, the newspaper highlighted that Detroit had won a

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[86] There is no record of price-gauging Mexicanos, and certainly Mexicanos were welcomed to spend money at the businesses. However, the combination of the English language advertisements and the accompanying text suggests the focus was to attract white spectators. For a list of businesses see "City and County Directories" *MI Family History*, http://www.mifamilyhistory.org/isabella, accessed September 14, 2012; "Online Vital Statistics Isabella County," *MI Family History*, http://www.mifamilyhistory.org/isabella/cenvital.html, accessed September 14, 2012.
[87] Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[88] García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*, 238.
[89] For more on how silence in the media affects population groups see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995).
[90] See "Las Fiestas Patrias En Diferentes Lugares De E. Unidos En Pigeon, Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 23, 1925; "Los Mexicanos De Detroit, Mich. Organizan Las Fiestas Patrias," *La Prensa*, September 1, 1926, 9; "Suntuosidad De Las Fiestas Patrias En Detroit, Mich. El Cuadro Infantil Que Presentó La Escuela," *La Prensa*, September 16, 1930, 10; "Detroit Mexicans Fete Own 'Fourth,'" *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1920, 12. The *Free Press* noted it was held at a local Catholic school.

contest over Chicago and Milwaukee to host a meeting of Poles for the following year, indicating the Polish level of inclusion achieved as compared to the local Mexicano population.[91]

The lopsided coverage regarding Mexicanos did not change during the Great Depression, despite the Anglo press presenting positive coverage concerning other traditionally outsider ethnic groups. From 1930 through 1935 the United States initiated a coerced "voluntary" repatriation campaign to send many Spanish speakers back to Mexico rather than provide them with aid, often whether they were U.S. citizens or not.[92] Detroit and Chicago became central hubs for deportation. Urban whites, therefore, knew Mexicanos lived in the city, but only acknowledged them as a problem and drain on society. Throughout the 1930s, the Detroit newspapers continued to not publicize any Mexicano celebrations, despite events held each year.[93] In contrast, the *Free Press* offered write-ups about another Polish convention in 1933 and provided extensive articles in 1936, 1937, and 1939 regarding the commencement of the Jewish Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah.[94] The latter was interesting as historically Anglos viewed Jews as socially marginal at best. The United States refused

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[91] Vargas, *Proletarians*, 152; "Mexicans Celebrate 100 Years of Independence," *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1921, 12; "Poles to Gather in Detroit in 1922," *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1921, 12. Also see Mitchell and Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home."

[92] While official numbers have remained elusive, scholars estimate that nearly 1,000,000 people of Mexican descent were repatriated, nearly sixty percent of whom were U.S. citizens, U.S. born or naturalized. See Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1974).

[93] There were celebrations each year. The Spanish language press noted Detroit celebrations held in 1930, 1933, 1935, and 1937. See "Suntuosidad De Las Fiestas Patrias En Detroit, Mich.," *La Prensa*, September 16, 1930, 10; "La Celebracion Patriotica En Detroit, Mich.," *La Prensa*, September 23, 1933, 5; "Detroit, Michigan Actividades De Nuestra Colonia," *La Prensa*, September 21, 1935, 4; "La Celebracion Mexicana En Detroit, Mich.," *La Prensa*, September 24, 1937, 4.

[94] "Detroit Will Get Polish Convention," *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1933; "Jews Observe Ten Holy Days," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1936, 9; "Jews Mark Rite of Yom Kippur," *Detroit Free Press*, September 15, 1937, 9; "Jews Will Mark Most Holy Day," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1939, 9. The newspaper also ran articles concerning other parades in the city that took place during the time of Mexican celebration, including a three hour parade on September 16, 1935 to celebrate the widening of Woodward Avenue and a parade commemorating the widening of Michigan Avenue in 1938. See "3-Hour Parade to Open Street," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1935,7; "Parade Marks Widening Fete," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1938, 9.

Jewish-German refugees entrance into the country during the 1930s, but yet the Detroit Jews received positive attention in the newspaper, while it ignored the Mexicano populace.[95] The *Free Press* did not publish a single article concerning Mexican celebrations until 1940 when it afforded less than fifty words of coverage.[96]

The biased coverage concerning Mexicanos was similar in Chicago. Despite the Spanish language press noting the existence of Chicago *dieciséis de septiembre* celebrations in 1920, 1922, 1924 (in which at least 1000 Mexicans attended), 1926, and 1929, not to mention the ones that they reported on in the surrounding suburbs in 1921 (Joliet) and 1925 (Joliet, Blue Island, and Aurora), the *Chicago Tribune* only mentioned one occurrence in 1926.[97] The Depression years were no different. *La Prensa* cited the occurrence of festivities in each year during the 1930s, but the *Tribune* did not provide any acknowledgement until 1937. This was when Chicago finally began to accept the Mexicano presence, as their coverage became more extensive and, unlike the Mt. Pleasant event, far more accepting.[98] The 1937 *Tribune* image of ladies dancing was not a sexualized caricature,

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[95] For more on the Jewish exclusion during the 1930s, see Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 1 and 2.

[96] "Detroit Mexicans Mark Their Independence Day," *Detroit Free Press*, September 14, 1940, 2.

[97] They were held each year in Chicago. See "En Chicago, Illinois," *La Prensa*, September 22, 1920, 7; "Las Colonias Mejicanas De Los Ee. Uu. Celebraran Las Fiestas Patrias En Nueva York," *La Prensa*, September 15, 1922, 1; "Ecos De La Celebracion De Las Fiestas De La Independencia De Mexico, En Este Pais," *La Prensa*, September 20, 1924, 9; "Mexicans Here to Recall Independence from Spain," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 15, 1926, 33; "Chicago Seran Lucidas Las Fiestas Patrias," *La Prensa*, September 9, 1929, 7; "Fiestas Patrias En Joliet, Ill.," *La Epoca*, September 25, 1921, 6; "En Chicago, Illinois," *La Prensa*, September 23, 1925, 6. The 1,000 person attendance figure comes from historian Gabriela Arredondo. See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 144.

[98] *La Prensa* was a Spanish language newspaper originating out of San Antonio, Texas distributed across the nation. "So. Chicago, Ill Muy Lucidas Estuvieron Las Fiestas Patrias," *La Prensa*, September 26, 1930, 4; "Con Gran Entusiasmo Se Preparan Las Fiestas Patrias En Chicago," *La Prensa*, September 4, 1931, 8; "Seran Muy Lucidas Las Fiestas De Septiembre En La Ciudad De Chicago, Illinois," *La Prensa*, August 21 1932, 14; "Notas Sociales de Chicago, Ill. Seran Brillantes Las Fiestas de Septiembre," *La Prensa*, August 25, 1933, 8; "Las Fiestas Patrias en Nuestras Colonias," *La Prensa*, September 6, 1933, 4; "Los Festejos A La Patria En Chicago, Ill.," *La Prensa*, September 7, 1934, 8; "La Celebracion Mexicana En Chicago, Ill.," *La Prensa*, September 20, 1935, 5; "En Chicaogo, Ill. En El Ashland Auditorium Tendra Lugar La Gran Celebracion Popular," *La Prensa*, September 6, 1936, 4.

but simply an actual photograph of the women, perhaps signifying a greater level of respect.[99] Nonetheless, until 1937, the silence of the newspapers was deafening within large urban centers of the Great Lakes Region. Concealing the existence of Mexican fiestas represented an active process that denoted Mexicans as outsiders. While the urban process of exclusion was different from Mt. Pleasant, the result was the same, as Mexicans were non-white others, rendered invisible in socially acceptable society. While the large urban centers did eventually begin to cover Mexicano celebrations properly, the damage had largely been done within the public mind.

All this negativity surrounding Mexicanos in the English language press before and during the early years of migration strengthened racial tropes to cast Mexicanos as racially other. This created and reinforced a degraded view of Mexicanos, providing legitimization for farmers to keep Mexicanos as cheap laborers. It also caused many Anglo Michiganders to consider the incoming Mexicanos as "dangerous brigands," leaving some the desire to "double-bar the doors at night for fear of attacks before morning."[100] Another important consequence was that Mexicanos did not exist within the Anglo Michigander mind as a people with a rich culture because their social activities were ignored or distorted while most articles concerning them provided negative signifiers. This led to an enhanced racist mindset that cast Mexicanos as economically and socially inferior. Because the negative attention commenced just as Mexicanos were entering the state en masse, these stereotypes created a

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[99] "Mexican Colony To Mark 117th Yr. of Independence," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 15, 1937, 21; "Mexicans Mark Independence By A Chicago Fiesta," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1937, 10. In 1939, the paper ran articles on two different days. The first indicated the event was to be held the following day and the second was recap that included an image of the parade queen. The paper placed the picture of the queen next to the picture of the Greek queen, denoting at least some acceptance of both groups, rather than actively placing Mexicans below Grecians. See "Mexicans to Hail Independence at Big Fiesta Tonight," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 15, 1939, 22; "Greek and Mexican Queens Chosen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 17, 1939, 14.

[100] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers,* 178.

long legacy that needed to be overcome. While Michigan may not have had many large acts of racist violence, the discriminatory attitudes created many social and economic boundaries in both the rural and urban environments.

**Mexicano Life in the Midwest**

Living within a new racialized space in Michigan adversely impacted incoming Mexicanos whether in the factories, the fields, or at home. For most Mexicanos, by far the most difficult was laboring under the hot sun in the fields. In fact, parents who stopped working the fields and settled into urban factory life sent their children to the fields every once in a while, just as a reminder of how life could be.[101] This was meant as motivation to do well in school and to urge them to complete their education. Rose San Miguel recalled her stepfather taking her and her siblings to pick pickles and potatoes "if he felt we were getting too spoiled."[102] Civil Rights Activist and Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Inductee Marylou Olivarez Mason did similarly with her children, stating:

> I had a friend who was a farmer. I took my kids to work out in his field because I wanted them to see what it was like, what I had to go through and the kind of work that I did. I took them out there only so they could see how hard it was to work out in the fields, and that if they didn't stay in school, if they didn't get an education, this was the kind of work they were going to have to do. They hated it. I didn't have to worry about them not staying in school. My goal was for them to at least graduate from high school – if I could help them, go to college.[103]

[101] As will be discussed in chapter five, families often simultaneously performed factory and farm labor as a means of providing economic stability, but this reference is to families who had long since stopped working the fields.
[102] San Miguel interview.
[103] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 170.

She knew from experience that life on the farm was what another former beet worker described, "It was slave labor. Don't forget it."[104] Olivarez Mason provided more detail:

> It was hard work – sunup to sundown – all day long, out in the sun. I mean there were no trees or anything in the middle of the field. It was just open fields. We hated those fields. We hated those fields with the long, long rows. It seemed like you would never see the end of the row…. You'd sit in the middle of a row, and you'd look and you couldn't even see the end of it. That's how long the rows were! We had to take water. The person that we went with, they would bring cans or containers of water in the field for us. Of course, the water would be hot. There was no shade or trees around. I mean, the water was like soup. But at least it was water. That water kept us alive.[105]

From the endless rows to the beating sun, farm workers also faced significant health concerns. While some farms were obviously closer to housing than others, workers often were far away from towns and medical help. Olivarez Mason described being dropped off in the fields in the morning and "if anybody got sick, you'd have to just wait until the truck came around. Or hopefully you could walk to a farmhouse if it was close by and someone could come help you."[106] She recalled the most common issue was "sunstroke, because you were out there in the sun a lot…. And then of course, with babies…they'd sometimes start vomiting, they'd have diarrhea, and get dehydrated, and of course, we didn't know what was going on."[107] Workers had to cover up wearing pants and long sleeved shirts or blouses while laboring in order to help prevent sunstroke.[108] In addition to these ailments, workers also had to endure the health risks associated with pesticides. Farm workers were not told that the spray farmers put on the crops was harmful and that they needed to wash it off before eating anything. Olivarez Mason recalled, "We didn't know that all that stuff that was on the crops was harmful, that you should rinse them off before you ate them. I mean, we'd be

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[104] Lopez Rivas interview.
[105] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 155.
[106] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 156.
[107] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 156.
[108] Sunstroke is a medical condition that occurs when the body struggles to lower its temperature.

hungry and we'd eat a tomato. We ate the cherries right from the tree. We never cleaned them."[109] It was not as if they could rinse the produce since there was no running water in the fields and the limited water they had was for hydration. In addition, there were no laws that forbade farmers from spraying nearby crops while workers were in the fields.[110]

While the dangers were ever present in the fields, the hardships continued after workers returned home, if a proper domicile was even available. Olivarez Mason recounted a full gamut of living conditions that awaited her family and others that came to work:

> [One farmer] had a great big barn where they used to keep their animals. And they built another barn, because they had more cows and things. So the old one, we used that for housing, but it was just one big huge barn. We had to use blankets or sheets, or cardboard, then you kind of divided rooms. And then they had a couple stoves, so we all took turns using the stoves. But many times we lived under conditions where they didn't have housing and then we'd have to sleep in the cars and trucks. Then we'd go in the ditch and there'd be water and [we'd] just bathe that way…In Traverse City we were lucky because the lake was across from the farm. So we would just go across the road to bathe in the lake and do our laundry.[111]

If a barn was not available, her family had to sleep in their truck since they did not earn enough money to pay for a campsite or hotel room.

While not all living conditions were as bad as those Olivarez Mason endured, they were certainly not good either. In Blissfield, Michigan, former migrant worker Victoria

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[109] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 171.

[110] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 171. State of Michigan, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, *Pesticide Laws and Regulation*, *Michigan.gov*, http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1569_16988_35291---,00.html, accessed November 14, 2016; State of Michigan, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, "Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act: Act 451 of 1994," *Michigan.gov*, http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(bqurqzy4vjac0zmmiydzoduu))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-324-8316, accessed November 14, 2016. For other works documenting this situation, see Lisa J. Gold, *Pesticide Laws and Michigan's Migrant Farmworkers: Are They Protected*? JSRI Report No. 12, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing Michigan, (1996), http://www.jsri.msu.edu/upload/research-reports/rr12.pdf, accessed June 13, 2016; Lisa J. Gold, "The Farmworker Protection Standards Revisited," JSRI Report No. 34, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing Michigan, (May 2004), http://www.jsri.msu.edu/upload/research-reports/rr34.pdf, accessed June 13, 2016.

[111] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 154.

Ramos described rows of small buildings, with about two or three rooms each, with no plumbing or electricity, though wood for the stoves was provided in the winter months. She even remembered "one place [being] a barn converted into apartments."[112] Emily Martinez recalled not even being provided with stoves or beds in Blissfield.[113] Others experienced living in the "small tract housing" which became especially popular after the 1940s and the implementation of the Bracero Program.[114] Efrain Gutierrez recalled the small farm he contracted to as providing an old chicken coop for his family to sleep in. He also illuminated how varied the living quarters could be, even on the same farm. Gutierrez described how you could tell the nationality and status of farm workers based on where they were housed on the farm. During the 1950s, single Bracero men were held in barracks-like housing separate from the rest of the workers with locker room style showers. Mexicano families, indicating migrant and contract laborer status, had varied housing that ranged from multi-family dwellings to converted out buildings.[115] In either case, the rural living was dirty and arduous, perpetuating the negative stereotypes held by Anglo Michiganders. The separate low-standard living conditions represented an ascribed lower status, making economic mobility difficult and social mobility even more problematic.

Life as a farm worker was hard, but life in the urban sphere could be equally tough, despite offering better economic opportunities. While many Mexicanos were able to rent housing, often at a boarding house prior to earning enough money to rent or purchase a home, many others had to make do however they could. This included living in boxcars. In

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[112] Victoria Ramos Oral History in *Los Anos de Oro: Past and Present*, ed. Sharon M. Jones (Oral History Project, SER, Jobs for Progress 1980), 21.
[113] Emily Martinez was a longtime Blissfield resident who became a local educator and migrant aid worker. Martinez interview.
[114] Lopez interview. In the Adrian and Blissfield area, tract housing was erected on the local fairgrounds to house migrant families. For a description of other tract housing, see Valdés, *Al Norte*.
[115] Gutierrez interview.

1930, an investigation conducted by the Detroit-based Brotherhood of Maintenance Way Employees was filed into record during a U.S. Senatorial Hearing regarding Agricultural Labor Supply reporting the need to aid a "small Mexican colony" living dangerously close to the railroad tracks. Meatpacking companies surrounded the colony on all sides, including the Hygrade Products Corporation that was within 100 feet. It was said "the odor from these packing houses [was] frightfully offensive."[116] Additionally, the boxcar homes, in some instances, were within six feet of the tracks. A surveyor further noted that:

> In addition to the odor from meat-packing houses I noticed three filthy chicken cars standing alongside of the box-car homes, and by wading in the mud between the box-car home and the chicken cars you could easily touch both at the same time. Refuse and filth were scattered along the tracks. The toilets or privies used by these people are roughly thrown together shacks 4 or 5 feet square and are as close in some instances as 3 feet from the end of the car. There is no sewage or sanitary facilities attached to these toilets, and when filled they are picked up and moved a few feet, where another hole is dug in the ground and the former locations is filled up with dirt, but no lime or other disinfectant used.[117]

In addition to poor living conditions, quality jobs were often hard to come by for Mexicanos, a situation exacerbated by a lack of English proficiency.[118] On the farm, there were almost always others who spoke Spanish as well. However, in the city, not having a speaking, reading, or writing knowledge of English caused numerous hardships. A Mexican man in Detroit in 1928 complained to an interviewer that he felt confident he could learn a trade quickly, but that comprehension and use of English was much more difficult to acquire. He lamented that a "lack of knowledge of English makes it hard for me to even get a job at

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[116] *Agricultural Labor Supply*, 115.
[117] *Agricultural Labor Supply*, 115. For more on boxcar homes see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*.
[118] The report was from 1930, the early years of the Great Depression. This made life more difficult for all, especially newly arrived migrant and immigrant families, such as Mexicanos. The job situation, though, was hard no matter the year.

fifty cents an hour as a common labourer [sic]."[119] Others complained they were not able to even use the hiring agencies because they could not complete the forms or tests due to illiteracy and a lack of English comprehension.

Their troubles did not stop once they got a job. Factory promotions promised higher pay and better working conditions, but the language barrier also prevented many Mexicanos from advancing. Factory life was "muy duro" (very hard).[120] Conditions at many foundries, including those in Saginaw, were such that "only the strong men can stand it, and it kills them."[121] One Mexicano observer explained that:

> Young men go to work for the Gray Iron Foundry [in Saginaw] in the full bloom of health and within a year or two they fade and die. In the hot summer days the Mexican boys frequently faint at their task…. Tuberculosis results from inhaling the gas and from going out from the hot room into the cold air, sometimes with their clothing wet with sweat.[122]

While this description came during the 1920s, the poor conditions prevailed well into the 1950s and 1960s with many Mexicanos, along with African Americans, assigned the dirtiest and hardest jobs at the factories. While the compensation became better thanks to the United Auto Workers (UAW), job assignments were often based on the presupposition they were "used to working" the harder, hotter, more menial tasks.[123] Arturo Reyes, a longtime Flint native and former committeeman in the UAW, lamented that into the 1960s that General Motors would have all Latinos go in for physicals and often refuse to hire them because they were "thick between the shoulders."[124] If GM did hire them, it was for the worst jobs, while a lack of English proficiency caused many to be overlooked for advancement despite

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[119] Robert C. Jones, "Field Notes, Detroit, Mich.," Carton 11, Folder 71, Detroit Conversations, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley [hereafter PTP].
[120] George T. Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw Mich.," Carton 13, Folder 31, PTP Papers, 7.
[121] Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw," 7.
[122] Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw," 7.
[123] Zamarripa interview. See also Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[124] Reyes interview.

seniority status. This further entrenched the economic boundaries that needed to be overcome.[125] Ultimately, though, this was done on a plant-by-plant, city-by-city basis, as there was not an organized statewide or even company-wide racial initiative.

Racism in Michigan operated differently from what Mexicanos experienced in Texas. There was no "color line" that specifically denoted "No Mexicans Allowed," as there was not a historical population of Mexicanos in the region. This led to more a haphazard implementation of discrimination policies when it came to racializing Mexicanos in social spaces.[126] Darker complexioned Mexicanos experienced the harshest forms of discriminatory segregation. Saginaw resident and Korean War Veteran Vincent Pardo recalled that he occasionally was told he was not allowed at certain public places in the city such as on busses, at bathrooms, or at ice cream bars indicating he was "lumped with blacks."[127] Similarly, Rose San Miguel recalled a Saginaw cinema being segregated where she, as a child, had to attend the theater designated for Africans Americans. Some theaters played movies for Black audiences during the week and played films of Mexicano interest on

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[125] Noted by many including the Zamarripa and Reyes families, as well as Frank Gonzales. See. Zamarripa interview; Reyes interview; Gonzales interview.

[126] The overlap of race, skin complexion, and discrimination is subject well documented in the Midwest. See, for instance, Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press 2010); Andrew J. Diamond, *Mean Streets, Chicago Youth and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multicultural City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); James B. Lane and Edward J. Escobar, *Forging a Community: The Latino Experience in Northwest Indiana, 1919-1975* (Chicago: Cattails Press, 1987); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Mitchell and Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home;" Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*; Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Gina M. Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books Press, 2005); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[127] Pardo interview.

the weekends.[128] Other Saginaw residents recalled there being multiple theaters in town and others were not segregated.[129] Examples such as these corroborate the stories other Midwestern historians have cited regarding Mexicanos being grouped with African Americans within the black-white binary and being kept off of streetcars in Detroit or prevented from renting or buying houses in Chicago (or charged higher rents).[130]

However, while segregationist policies did exist, they never had the more institutionally structured and widespread use as they did in Texas.[131] Rather, Anglo Michiganders often seemed confused on whether to discriminate or not. This led to only isolated instances of overt racism and indicated that a line of demarcation separating Michigan Mexicanos and whites was often crooked and porous. This was clearly the case in Traverse City, Michigan. While the majority of Mexicanos were only there for four to six weeks in mid-Summer to pick cherries, each weekend the city became a "Mexican village" as workers entered town to shop, eat, and relax on the beach. An article in the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* demonstrated the uncertainty whites exhibited regarding "proper" racial interaction with the newcomers. A local restaurant owner wrote into the newspaper

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[128] San Miguel interview.
[129] Las Damas interview.
[130] See Vargas, *Proletarians*, for Detroit. For Chicago, see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrios*.
[131] While there never were "official" legal segregationist policies of Mexicanos in Texas, racist practices permeated all levels of society based on a number of factors including complexion, English-language mastery, and long-held stereotypes. Many of those instances, such as separate schools and signs that indicated "No Blacks, No Mexicans Allowed," noted earlier in this chapter were far more prevalent and widespread in their use compared with other areas of the country. Many scholars have illustrated this issue in the Southwest with some, such as Mae Ngai, arguing this treatment was legacy of the Mexican American War. See Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge*; Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); John McKiernan-Gonzales, *Fevered Measures*; Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Jennifer R. Nájara, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*; Monica Perales, *Smeltertown*; Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*; Zamora *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in* Texas.

commenting on a fellow owner asking if he heard about not serving Mexicanos. He replied he had not heard this and did not understand why he would not serve them. While the implication was that the fellow owner aligned Mexicanos racially with African Americans precipitating a need for segregation, the first owner went on to comment he had never had any issue with any Mexicano in the city, save one young man who fell asleep overnight and could not be awoken. Apparently, he was overly exhausted from picking cherries.[132] While racial boundaries were certainly implied, the ambiguity with which this interaction took place typified the unsystematic discrimination that existed in Michigan.

There were, however, a few notable, though isolated, instances of more extreme forms of racial discrimination. In Detroit 1925, a single Anglo woman, Louise Havers, received, over the space of a year, numerous anonymous letters threatening her life "if she continued going with Mexicans."[133] This was apparently in response to her friendship with the Mexican consul and vice consul in Detroit. In another instance, a couple of local Saginaw Catholic parishes did enforce segregationist policies against Mexicanos for a short time. This included Saint Joseph's Catholic Church in Saginaw's First Ward, which became predominantly Latino by the late 1950s.[134] However, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as Mexicanos began arriving into the city, many recalled humiliating discrimination. As a young girl, Ida Roche went to church with her grandmother and remembered always sitting on left hand side for Mass. She asked her *abuela* why they had to sit there and her grandmother replied, "this is our place." As Roche looked to the center and right sections of

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[132] "Voice of the People," *Traverse City Record Eagle*, August 7, 1954, 7. For similar articles see "The Observer," *Traverse City Record Eagle*, August 15, 1946, 1; "The Observer," *Traverse City Record Eagle*, August 3, 1960, 4.
[133] "Sent Poison in a Box of Candy," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, May 15, 1925, 1.
[134] In the early 1930s Saint Regis Catholic Church also refused to allow Mexicanos to attend church, though that changed within the decade.

pews she noticed all the people were white: "I remember all the pews had numbers on them. The founders of the new church building purchased the pews" and they were "their seats."[135] Similarly, others recalled Mexicanos not being allowed to even walk in the center door of the church but having to enter in at the side door.[136] Later, in the 1950s, Rose San Miguel stopped to eat at a Gratiot County Dairy Queen. Her party sat and ate while looking out the front window of the building. She described a man walking by who suddenly just "stopped and glared at us. He put his hand on his hip, and if that was not enough he [moved his arms in motion as to cock a shotgun] and [pretended] to pull the trigger."[137]

Likewise, in school, while there was never the segregation like in Texas, there was still a prejudice that placed Mexicanos below the white students. Gilbert Guevara said he did not learn discrimination until he was in junior high school when an Anglo friend told him bluntly that he was "second class." He recalled, "As I got to the ninth grade, I understood I was not as good as he was because he was white." Then, in the tenth grade, Guevara's science teacher pulled him aside and asked him, "Did you ever think about working and helping your family out? ...You are not doing well in this class, maybe you need to go to the [GM] plant and get a job and help your family out."[138] While this represented a more extreme case, most just recalled feeling like outcasts who did not belong. This included such things as being teased by fellow classmates who made fun of long hair on males or curly hair

[135] Ida Roche interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, January 16, 2013, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[136] Las Damas interview. In the Catholic Church, the center door is for meant for prestige and honor. For example, the center door at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy is only opened on special occasions. It would be demeaning to force a group of people to only use the side door.
[137] San Miguel interview.
[138] Guevara interview. The longer version of this exchange was the third opening anecdote in the introduction.

on females. Some teachers singled out Mexicanos because they spoke Spanish and there were also instances where Anglo students called some Mexicano students "wetbacks."[139]

Most often, though, on an everyday basis, racial discrimination was something Mexicanos could not "really put a finger to it, it was just a feeling."[140] Saginaw resident and Vietnam War Veteran Tony Moreno described being Mexicano in Saginaw society this way: "To speak Spanish was to admit you were inferior.... You just had that feeling…It was kind of embarrassing to talk Spanish."[141] Similarly, Rose San Miguel grew up having to translate for her mother who never spoke much English. By the time she was a teenager she resented having to do it "because of the looks I would get from people.... It was almost like a foul smell came into the room. [It was] that kind of look."[142] This feeling of being outside Anglo Michigan society also came from a lack of Mexicanos holding leadership positions, such as in education, on government councils, or on committees. Consequently, while there was "less outward discrimination in Michigan, it was still there."[143] The racism persisted in less overt manners, but functioned to keep Mexicanos in a position of social, economic, and political inferiority compared with their Anglo Michigander counterparts, positing Michigan Mexicanos on the periphery of society.

**Nonwhite Imposition of Social Exclusion**

Michigan Mexicanos faced discrimination not only from Anglo Michiganders, but from African Americans and other Mexicanos as well (though at a far lesser extent than from

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[139] Lopez interview. Also San Miguel interview.
[140] San Miguel interview; Las Damas interview.
[141] Tony Moreno interview by Steven Rosales, November 15, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[142] San Miguel interview
[143] Morales interview.

Anglos). Especially among teenagers in high school, there were many clashes between Mexicanos and African Americans. For example, Tony Moreno spoke of having a lot of physical altercations between the two ethno-racial groups growing up in Saginaw, because they grew up in the same neighborhood and played sports together. Some fights did turn violent when one group felt slighted, attacked, or disrespected by the other. In those situations, the boys went so far as to bring knives to the fight to defend their co-ethnics, though Moreno chalked it up largely to a "boys being boys" mentality.[144] Likewise, Cruz Zamarripa remembered having small outbreaks of conflict in Flint. Mexicanos sought to assert their presence on the playgrounds and schoolyards despite being so few in number compared with the African American population. However, Zamarripa said it never amounted to anything significant and was often quickly forgotten.[145]

More important than mere high school squabbles was the conflict that ensued at places of employment concerning political and economic matters. Though UAW shop politics will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5, one family story is worth briefly noting here. When Arturo Reyes announced his candidacy for UAW shop committeeman in the 1970s, African American coworkers complained he was attempting to steal "one of their positions," seats set aside on the committee for African American representation. At the same time, whites argued there was not a spot for him as a Mexicano who was neither white nor black (though he did ultimately win the election). The same was true of the Flint City Council, where Reyes's nephew, Paul Vasquez, ran for office in 1982. While there were no official seats carved out for African Americans, he campaigned in the district that had long voted for African American councilmen. During campaigning and after his victory, many

[144] Moreno interview.
[145] Zamarripa interview.

complained he was stealing seats from black representation.[146] Though there would be times of cross-ethnic alliances, even in Flint, this kind of conflict served to further denote Mexicanos as not belonging.[147]

Perhaps worse was the discrimination Michigan Mexicanos faced from Southwestern Mexicanos. After being drafted and stationed in Texas, Vietnam veteran Gilbert Guevara was made to feel "not as Mexican" compared with other Mexicanos in the service because he was born in Saginaw, Michigan while they were from Texas (though both of Guevara's parents were born in Mexico). The Tejanos thought he had an "Anglo accent" and were "surprised there were Mexicans in Michigan."[148] They looked down on him for saying his name without a Spanish accent and were "shocked" that he was able to understand the Spanish they were speaking while making fun of him.[149] Likewise, John Lopez said some of the worst discrimination he faced in the military was not from Anglos, but from Chicanos who made fun of a "white Mexican" who did not speak Spanish as well as they did, while other servicemen were made to feel "different" because they were not "Chicano" or "Mexican" like those from the Southwest.[150] Outside the military was a similar situation. As noted in the introduction, Maria Guadiana and fellow Midwestern Mexicanos were made to feel as "outsiders" who were "not as Chicano" and "not as active or militant" as the rest of

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[146] Reyes interview.
[147] For more on the lack of solidarity between African Americans and Mexicanos see Diamond, *Mean Streets*; Neil Foley, *Quest for Equality;* Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Frederick Douglass Opie, *Upsetting the Apple Cart: Black-Latino Coalitions in New York City from Protest to Public Office* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Nicolas C. Vaca, *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict between Blacks and Latinos and What It Means for America* (New York: Harper Collins Press, 2004); Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*.
[148] Guevara interview.
[149] Guevara interview.
[150] Lopez interview. Also see Lupe Alviar interview by Steven Rosales, April 30, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

the Chicano movement because they were not from the Southwest.[151] This latter situation transpired at the Corky Gonzalez conference that was intended to rally Chicanos to the cause of civil rights. All this occurred because Michigan Mexicanos were not from the Southwest, came from an area not traditionally associated with Mexicanos, and were far more removed from the cultural bastion of the U.S.-Mexican border.

Conflict between Michigan Mexicanos, African Americans, and Southwestern Mexicanos indicated Michigan Mexicanos had to fight imposed boundaries from more than just Anglos. Having to fight for social, political, or economic position with Africans Americans meant neither group could focus on fighting the real source of inequality. As Midwestern Mexicanos were considered "not as Mexican" or "not as Chicano" as their Southwestern counterparts, it was at the expense of creating a greater national Mexican American coalition that could have materialized. Moreover, because of the non-institutionalized policies of racial discrimination and the stereotypical idea that Mexicanos were only temporary sojourners in the state as migrant laborers, they faced a unique struggle to overcome their second-class status in Michigan. That is, it was harder to bring attention to the larger issues they faced when to most Anglo Michiganders there was not a big problem. Consequently, Mexicanos faced imposed boundaries and barriers in Michigan that kept them from equal opportunity for first class citizenship.

**Conclusion**

In Texas, Mexicanos faced constant discrimination and a lack of upward mobility, leading them to be in search for ways to better the lives of their families. The formation and

[151] Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013.

usage of interregional familial and fictive kinship networks provided news of new job opportunities in the north. Even after arriving in the Midwest, the networks continued to provide information regarding new employment opportunities, often in other nearby fields. For instance, Efrain Gutierrez went north initially for tomatoes, but also worked in sugar beets and cherries. This was a common tale among migrant Mexicanos. Participating in multiple crops across the region provided some autonomy and demonstrated Mexicano agency in making their own decisions; that they were not strictly beholden to farmers or foreman. The networks also assisted them if they decided to settle in the Midwest by helping families to secure factory employment.

Once in the Michigan, however, Mexicanos faced a somewhat familiar environment. As elsewhere, Anglos sought to demarcate "the Mexican" by imputing definitions that stereotyped Mexicanos as "simple minded peons," mono-dimensional laborers, and as social others.[152] That is, there was an ascribed pejorative definition of "being Mexican." These labels indicated Mexicanos were living and working within a new racialized environment. As a result, Michigan Mexicanos faced the imposition of ever-present boundaries that pushed them to the fringes of society, severely limiting their opportunities for social inclusion, economic equality, and civic advancement. However, from this space, whether performing field work or settling in urban spheres for factory work, Mexicanos constructed their own images of "Mexicanness," and, despite their relatively small population, began to gain acceptance through a process of gathering together, claiming physical space, obtaining education, union activism, and laying claim to their civil rights.

[152] See, for instance, Jones, "Field Notes, Detroit, Mich."

## Chapter 2: Contested Celebratory Leisure Spaces

Each May 5, Mexicantown in Detroit, Michigan comes "alive" as the residents proudly display their cultural heritage while commemorating Cinco de Mayo.[1] The streets overflow with people. Restaurants like El Zocalo have to add additional outside seating, while others, like Los Galanes, hire Mariachi bands to entertain patrons. At both La Gloria Bakery and Mexicantown Bakery customers are lined out the door waiting for tasty delicacies. Street vendors sell *elote* (corn), street tacos, and *helados* (ice cream) from small carts.[2] It is next to impossible to drive through the neighborhood because traffic is at a standstill, as cars slowly parade down the streets honking their horns, often with both Spanish and English language music blaring. Celebrants ardently wave both Mexican and American flags, and everyone seems to be having a spirited time, as they continue a near-century old tradition of feting Mexican holidays in the Motor City.[3] A deeper examination of cultural events like these reveals much about the current Michigan Mexicano population. The scale and vibrancy of the celebrations illustrates how they have claimed their own physical and social space in Michigan, while the waving of dual flags and the playing of bilingual music symbolizes the multiple cultural and ethnic identities of the residents. Historically, though, these events were spaces where Michigan Mexicano participants gathered to create identity and community, even as outside influences sought to exploit the occasions for their own gain.

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[1] Mexicantown is located in Southwest Detroit at the foot of the Ambassador Bridge (connecting the Motor City to Windsor, Canada). It has been the home of a large community of Detroit Mexican since the 1920s. *Cinco de Mayo* is a Mexican holiday celebrated on May 5 each year commemorating when Mexican soldiers in the city of Puebla repelled an attack of French soldiers attempting to make their way to Mexico City in 1862.

[2] *Elote*, translated as "corn on the cob," is a Mexican side dish in which an ear of corn is roasted, and then is rubbed with a type of mayonnaise, chili powder, and hot sauce. Other variations include shaving the ear of corn and mixing all ingredients in a cup.

[3] This account comes from the author's recollection of the 2007 *Cinco de Mayo* celebration. *Cinco de Mayo* and *dieciséis de septiembre* celebrations are part of the yearly U.S. Mexican event calendar.

Beginning in the 1920s, Mexicano fiestas yearly dotted both the rural and urban Midwestern landscape as Mexicanos came together to gather and celebrate. Though historians studying Michigan have long acknowledged the occurrence of Mexicano gatherings, the events have not figured prominently in the narrative in their full complex nature.[4] In contrast, historians have thoroughly documented the vital roles that the *fiestas patrias* (Mexican national holiday celebrations) and other gatherings have played in the lives of U.S. Mexicanos in the American Southwest, both for urbanites and rural farmworkers. These scholars have explicated how these leisure spaces provided Mexicanos a physical sphere to connect together while negotiating for belonging and their own identity construction.[5] Midwestern historians have likewise highlighted this vital site, but most research has been focused on the urban Chicago metroplex during the interwar period, though a recent work on the Grand Rapids area has shed light on the importance of celebratory leisure spaces in creating a pan-ethnic Latino identity.[6]

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[4] Dennis Valdés mentioned the occurrence of one independence fiesta in rural Shepherd, Michigan in 1925 and Zaragrosa Vargas cited the celebration of a 1926 Detroit gathering. Kathleen Mapes noted the celebrations allowed Mexicano farm workers to claim space in rural Michigan town during the three day events, though this information was only a smaller part of her work, as her main focus was on the imperial nature of the sugar industry. Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). More recently, articles have sought to recover the Midwest's and Michigan Latino history beyond just celebrations. See Delia Fernández, "Becoming Latino: Mexican and Puerto Rican Community Formation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1926–1964," *Michigan Historical Review* 39, no. 1 (April 2013): 71–100; Eduardo Moralez, "Settling Out and Fitting In: Family and Migration in the Ethnic Mexican Midwest During the Twentieth Century," *Michigan Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (October 2011): 29–51; Steven Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican'": An Oral History of the Mexican American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920–1980," *Michigan Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 33-62.

[5] See José Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); George J. S, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[6] Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press,

This chapter will expand this topic into both urban and rural Michigan to highlight how these temporary leisure activities became crucial contested spaces. Focusing on Michigan Mexicano festivities from the 1920s to the 1970s, I argue that these gathering spaces became one of the first major, and enduring, methods utilized by incoming Mexicanos to traverse the racialized environment and boundaries they faced in the Great Lakes State. Starting in the 1920s, both Mexicanos and Anglos sought to control the fiesta sites, defining and redefining the space according to their own desires. Each group used the gatherings to negotiate where Mexicanos fit into Michigan society. The celebrations represented an instrument U.S. whites used to racialize the Mexicano population, defining them as inferior nonwhite outsiders. At the same time, the Mexican government utilized the events as part of their own nation-state building project to foster a sense of belonging to Mexico. However, for Mexicanos, the gatherings provided a unique sphere of influence that enabled them to celebrate a collectively imagined transnational culture, construct a new cultural identity, create and maintain interregional and intraregional networks, claim physical and social space, and, ultimately, engage the political sphere. Consequently, Mexicanos found themselves living as actors on an international stage, even as they used the celebrations as a means of claiming civic inclusion locally in Michigan, thus laying an organizational foundation for future generations. To illustrate this important space, the chapter first will show how the U.S. and Mexican governments sought to co-opt and control early annual gatherings as a means of designating where they believed Michigan Mexicanos belonged. The conversation will then turn to examine how Mexicanos utilized and viewed the leisure gatherings,

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1996); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013; Delia Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2015, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370.

demonstrating how the events allowed Michigan Mexicanos to claim societal space and make their home in Michigan.

This chapter builds on several social theories. Sociologist Henri Lefebvre theorized that space is not inherited or found naturally in nature, but rather is socially and culturally constructed. People create the space in which they live through an intentional process that is shaped by competing factors – race, class, and experts, among others.[7] In historical analysis U.S. space has often been viewed in dyadic terms – white/non-white. Lefebvre, though, postulated a spatial trialectic, from which urban theorist Edward Soja constructed his "thirdspace" treatise, arguing scholars need to move beyond dualism when analyzing urban environments. Soja conceptualized this as a space created by social others from which to contest and renegotiate their prescribed boundaries and cultural identities.[8] Historians like Michael Innis-Jiménez have embraced this thought, arguing that leisure activities, such as celebrations and sports, became vital spheres of influence for Chicago Mexicanos to actively work against the effects of discrimination.[9] By occupying physical space and creating positive public awareness, Mexicanos utilized gatherings to carve out their own place in the state and redefine themselves in the face of being viewed by Anglos only as temporary, low wage workhands.

A close reading and interpretation of newspapers also frames this chapter. Political scientist Benedict Anderson theorized that nationalism was formed through a collectively imagined idea of belonging, and he contended that the media played an intrinsic role in the

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[7] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
[8] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 61.
[9] Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; see also Lorena García and Mérida R. Rúa, "Processing Latinidad: Mapping Latino Urban Landscapes through Chicago Ethnic Festivals," *Latino Studies Journal* 5, no. 3 (2007): 317-339; Juan Javier Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa! Mexican/Chicano Soccer Associations and Transnational/Translocal Communities, 1967-2002," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2004): 352-376.

process. By making conscious choices regarding subject matter, imagery, and language, newspapers (as well as radio, television, and the Internet) shaped the how members of a nation or ethnicity viewed national identity. That is, the concept of "nation" is a socially constructed, ever changing phenomenon that is in constant negotiation.[10] In the case of Michigan Mexicanos, the U.S.-based Spanish language press became a popular means to disseminate ideas regarding what it meant to be "Mexican" in an attempt to reinforce a Mexican national identity.

At the same time, the English language newspaper coverage of Mexicano events can provide much information regarding inclusion and exclusion. As anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued, "humans participate in history as both actors and narrators."[11] How the story is narrated has a tremendous impact on how people receive knowledge of an event, episode, or ethno-racial group – and silence can be just as telling. Choosing to not report on certain stories, or only telling one facet, can skew the perceptions of the audience. Building on this, historian Pablo Mitchell contended that the words and images used to depict an ethno-racial group, along with their placement within newspaper, could depict what level of acceptance the U.S. Mexicano population had within a given area. For instance, if most articles were found in the crime sections or if most stories only highlighted supposed non-white behavior, then Anglo readers were more apt to view Mexicanos as other. If, on the other hand, newspapers featured Mexicanos in sections regarding social activities, marriages, outings, or in a general, positive light, then they were more accepted (though not necessarily equal) within the areas they resided. Consequently, the ways in which whites portrayed

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[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).
[11] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

Mexicano gatherings can shed light on what level of acceptance the Mexicano population engendered within the white dominated spheres.[12]

**Anglo Appropriation of Mexicano Celebrations**

From local authorities in Michigan to the steps of Capitol Hill, Anglo officials sought for ways to define and categorize Mexicanos according to their own worldview. This included the appropriation and politicization of Mexicano gatherings. When any sizeable group of Mexicanos assembled to celebrate, Anglos were left to decide how to react, especially in a place like Michigan where there had not been a historic Mexicano presence. Anglos could decide to simply ignore the gatherings, which, as discussed in chapter one, placed Mexicanos on the fringes of society. On the other hand, despite frequent silence in newspapers, politicians often spoke at (or about) the jubilant Mexicano festivities, at times delivering a welcome address. This, in theory, could provide some sense of endorsement and legitimization to the activities and participants. However, Anglo intervention also opened up the possibility of misguided paternalism and provided another means of denoting Mexicanos as inferior others. In Michigan, this practice was common during the 1920s, just as the Mexicanos were arriving to the state.

The most illustrative case of celebration appropriation came at the federal level during the heavily debated 1920s immigration hearings. In the six years following the establishment of the 1924 National Origins Act, Congress deliberated several bills that

[12] Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005); Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home: Latinos in Twentieth-Century Lorain, Ohio," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/O America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 149-167.

sought to add Mexico, and possibly the entire Western Hemisphere, to the quota system.[13] Most notable were the Box bills, championed in the House of Representatives by ardent restrictionist John Box (D-Texas), who utilized eugenic arguments to preclude Mexicans from entering the United States, thereby "saving" the white race from "being overrun."[14] He pointed to data indicating the "Mexican problem" was spreading to more northern regions of the country, where increasing numbers chose to remain rather than return south. This refuted the argument made by agribusiness that migrants were only "birds of passage" who would eventually go "home."[15] In response, anti-restrictionists in Congress employed a two-pronged argument. First, they continued to insist that migrants would leave the farming areas at the end of the growing season and not seek local inclusion. Second, they attempted to demonstrate that Mexicanos were docile and amiable to local white populations, even in larger numbers.

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[13] The 1924 National Origins Act was the first comprehensive legislation to establish a numeric limit on immigration by nationality. Countries in the Western Hemisphere were not included, however, as these were considered neighbors and agribusiness lobbied for a continued cheap labor source. Lengthy congressional debates ensued both in 1926 and 1928. Discussions over a 1930 bill, however, only lasted one day covering 46 pages of transcripts, whereas the 1928 debate took place over a six-week period and generated more than 800 pages of testimony. By 1930 legislators refocused their efforts to legally repatriate Mexicans and preserve "true" (white) Americans' jobs. Repatriation involved sending Mexicans back to Mexico either voluntarily or by coercion. There were also joint bills in the Senate but the Box bills have drawn more attention because of his outspokenness regarding the restriction of Mexicans. See U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1926) [hereafter *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*]; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Immigration from Countries of the Western Hemisphere*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1928) [hereafter *Immigration*, 1928]; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Immigration from Countries of the Western Hemisphere*, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1930); U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, *Agricultural Labor Supply*, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1930). Regarding the repatriation efforts see Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression; Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).

[14] These are composite quoted ideas taken from the whole of the Congressional Hearings. For examples see *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 267, 273, 342; *Immigration*, 1928, 362.

[15] This insistence occurred on a nation-wide scale. For more on Mexicans as "homers" see Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

One representative appropriated a Mexicano celebration to corroborate this anti-restrictionist position. In a hearing before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Representative Roy Orchard Woodruff (R-Michigan) highlighted and embellished the town of Shepherd's 1925 *dieciséis de septiembre* to illustrate the peaceable nature of Mexicanos. Countering Box's arguments, Woodruff testified:

> . . . [W]e had, a year or so ago, a gathering of practically all the Mexicans in that section of the State. The occasion was some Mexican holiday. They met at a little town called Shepherd in my district, a town of 900 or 1,000 people. They were there for three days.[16]

When asked how many attended the meeting, Woodruff stated "something like 3,500" Mexicanos were present. Such a turnout would have given Shepherd a temporary Mexicano-to-white ratio of four to one, striking fear into the hearts of restrictionists. However, Woodruff elaborated:

> The sheriff of the county was there with his deputies all during that time. He will testify before this committee or anywhere else that during the three days there was not the slightest disturbance of any kind. He agrees that it was the most orderly and peaceful meeting of its kind he has ever seen.[17]

By using the gala to present Mexicanos as harmless, Woodruff countered many who thought a large Mexicano population engendered violence, a prevailing stereotype he himself admitted many Michiganders previously believed.[18] Yet despite testifying to their joyful and welcoming nature, he was not trying to assert that Mexicanos were social equals to be welcomed and assimilated into American society. Woodruff instead appropriated the

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[16] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273.
[17] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273. That so many people would attend such a rural location would have been astounding, as Shepherd is a small town 150 miles northwest of Detroit.
[18] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273-274. He testified that farmers were "led to believe" Mexicans were dangerous "brigands" who would harm their housewives. The stereotype stemmed from the decade-long Mexican Revolution that ended in 1920 and featured violence spilling across the US-Mexico border, racist accounts by General John Pershing, popular images of the "rebel" Pancho Villa, and the Cristero War (1926-1929). Many Americans thus viewed Mexicans as violent, especially those in the North who had less direct interaction with migrant workers, compared to whites in the Southwest who had a long history of employing migrant laborers.

celebration to parallel the orderly festivities with the supposedly "docile" nature of most Mexicano migrants. Responding to a follow-up question from the committee's chairman about whether Shepherd had become a "Mexican village" or if "these Mexicans in your district [were] inclined to remain to become reconciled to the surroundings," he explained that there were no Mexicanos living there: "I have never observed a single Mexican family around that section of the State in the winter time…. They may be there, but I do not know of it. However, if they were there in any great numbers I would have known it."[19] Woodruff sought to alleviate the restrictionist fears that Mexicanos remained in the North. His testimony that Mexicanos left the area implied they were only temporary "aliens" that locals should not consider assimilable equals.

Woodruff's testimony revealed the complex meaning of Mexicano celebrations, illustrating how the U.S. government could appropriate the gatherings for political gain while simultaneously defining where Mexicanos belonged within Anglo society.[20] While he did challenge prevailing stereotypes, ultimately, he invoked the Shepherd celebration for his own political and economic agenda. For instance, in 1928 he testified, "that every sugar factory in Michigan would stop unless this [Mexican] labor was available under present conditions."[21] Catastrophic statements like that indicated Woodruff's true loyalties, as he lobbied on behalf of Michigan's sugar companies. He represented Michigan's tenth district, which included the beet counties of Saginaw, Midland, Isabella, Clare, and Gratiot; counties that made up half the area of beet sugar production in the state and included many sugar factories. Prior to being elected to Congress for the first time in 1913 he practiced dentistry in Bay City from 1902 until serving as its mayor from 1911-1913. Bay City was home to the Columbia Sugar

[19] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273.
[20] *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers*, 273.
[21] *Immigration, 1928*, 623.

Company, which owned and operated three of the sixteen sugar factories in the state, including the largest producing plant.[22] Woodruff thus likely received much of his information from the principal business leaders of his district and used it to urge the continued flow of cheap labor for the sugar companies.

To make a more dramatic political argument Woodruff also embellished the Shepherd celebration. The attendance figure he provided was drastically high, especially because there were at least two other Michigan *dieciséis de septiembre* celebrations that year.[23] (There were also fiestas in nearby Indiana Harbor and Gary, Indiana, as well as throughout the Chicago area).[24] The Shepherd *reunión* (gathering) was therefore not a one-time "regional" gathering of unique proportions – as Woodruff insinuated – but rather a local assembling of area beet workers. Considering an event the following year in Mount Pleasant (ten miles north) only drew about five hundred people, the actual attendance number for Shepherd was likely a few hundred.[25] On the issue of Mexicano families remaining in the district, Woodruff's assertion that he had never seen a Mexicano family in the offseason suggested his politicized caricature of the demographics, designed to assuage the fears of the restrictionists. County records indicate at least three Mexicanos died during the winter of 1924 and at least three Mexicano couples married during the 1925 agricultural offseason. In addition, when the *Isabella Country Enterprise* named Francisco Vasquez the organizer of the 1925 Shepherd celebration, it noted that he had been a Mount Pleasant area resident for

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[22] John Arthur Brock, *The Story of Beet Sugar from the Seed to the Sack* (Saginaw, MI: Farmers and Manufacturers Beet Sugar Association, 1933), 7.
[23] "Las Fiestas Patrias En Diferentes Lugares De Estados Unidos En Carlsbad, N. M. En Detroit Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 26, 1925, 9; "Ecos De Las Fiestas Patrias En Diferentes Lugares De E. Unidos En Pigeon, Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 23, 1925, 5.
[24] "En Chicago, Illinois," *La Prensa*, September 23, 1925, 5.
[25] "Mexicans Have an Interesting Fiesta in City," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 23, 1926, 1. For the 1925 Shepherd event, the *Mount Pleasant Times* indicated "several hundred" celebrants. "Mexicans Hold Big Celebration at Shepherd," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 17, 1925, 1.

"some time" while employed by a sugar company. Under the Anglicized version of his name, "Frank," Vasquez also served as a witness in two of the 1925 marriages, suggesting he was a permanent resident.[26] Though the Isabella County Taxpayers Directory does not list any Mexicanos living in the county in 1925, these marriages and deaths indicate at least a small number lived in the area year round.[27] Woodruff either did not know these facts or chose not to acknowledge them, instead highlighting what benefited the sugar companies.

Woodruff thus testified glowingly about the peaceable conduct of Mexicano workers, seemingly offering some legitimization. However, he did so to reinforce their purported nature as a docile, migrant proletariat. By highlighting their congregating together at "*some* Mexican holiday," he simultaneously humanized them and excluded them with his flippant reference to the event and his assertion that they always left the region. To him they were celebrating a Mexican (non-US) festival and were temporary sojourners; outsiders who did not belong within Anglo society and who did not seek U.S. citizenship. Moreover, his testimony demonstrated how the U.S. government could appropriate a relatively small, innocuous Mexicano gathering and give it dramatic political implications beyond the bounds of Mexicano influence.

Woodruff's exploitation of the *dieciséis* fit a larger pattern of Anglo officials providing the assumed sanctioning of Mexicano events while simultaneously using the galas to cast the Mexicano population as racially subordinate outsiders in need of white patronage. Historically, Anglo leaders – farm owners, businessmen, and politicians – have often provided desirable commodities such as housing, medical care, schooling, company store

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[26] "Online Vital Statistics Isabella County," *MI Family History*, http://www.mifamilyhistory.org/isabella/cenvital.html, accessed September 14, 2012; "Mexicans Make Merry Two Days," *Isabella County Enterprise*, September 18, 1925, 1.
[27] "Online Vital Statistics." Mexicans may not have been listed as taxes were based on land ownership and most did not own land at this time.

credit, and/or recreation to workers in order to build worker loyalty, stave off unionism, and to reinforce a ethno-racial hierarchy.[28] While the tangible benefit of the offerings was real and significant to the workers, the motivations behind such "benevolence" regularly stemmed from an attitude of superiority and/or paternalism wherein working class ethno-racial groups were mere children to be manipulated, pacified, and controlled. In Michigan, the smaller, more migrant, Mexicano population did not prompt the same level of paternalism as it did in the factory towns or large farms of the Southwest (though companies in the Midwest like Ford did do this, it was on a wide scale, not directed at one ethnic group, especially one as small as Mexicanos). Instead, to curry goodwill among farmworkers, Anglos often aided Mexicanos in small gestures, such as in hosting celebrations like the *dieciséis*. Through a relatively small financial outlay, the offerings not only purposed to build loyalty, but also served a political function, as companies could hold up the event efforts as a badge of honor as to how well they treated their workers in the face of proposed legislation that might hinder their cheap labor supply.[29]

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[28] For examples see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, 25-30; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams*; Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Jennifer R. Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Jim Norris, *North for the Harvest: Mexican Workers, Growers, and the Sugar Beet Industry* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009); Perales, *Smeltertown*, chapter 2; Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Vicki Ruíz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Vicki Ruíz, *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Valdés, *Al Norte;* Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[29] For examples of restrictive regulations see Valdés, *Al Norte*, 21-2.

The 1926 Mount Pleasant *dieciséis*, as described in the previous chapter, showcased how local whites sought to control and categorize Mexicanos as subordinate. In addition to painting them as exotic others, the celebration also exposed paternalistic tendencies. For example, the *Mt. Pleasant Times* wrote that the "Mt. Pleasant Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in securing the roundup for this city by co-operating with the Mexican leaders [like] Frank Valdez of Mt. Pleasant, one of the chiefs in the Mexicans' state council."[30] This statement not only lauded the local government's principal role in the gathering, but also seemed to racialize Mexicanos as other alongside Native Americans.[31] The newspaper further announced that Mexicanos would be arriving at the event "in their own cars while transportation for others was furnished by trucks loaned by various Michigan sugar beet companies employing Mexican labor."[32] In a list of "thank you's [sic]" to all those "who made [the roundup] possible" the *Mt. Pleasant Times* thanked C.W. Barnhart who headed the "arrangements committee" of local businessmen and who was "himself largely instrumental in spurring this state meeting for Mt. Pleasant."[33] The newspaper went on to list numerous locals who contributed, including the "associated sugar beet companies [who] also donated special prizes" (in addition to the transportation), though none mentioned was Mexicano. This despite the fact it was a Mexicano, Francisco Vasquez, who organized the celebration the previous year for central Michigan.[34] Local Anglo officials (and businessmen), purportedly out of their good graces, attempted to wrest control, shape, and

[30] "Mexicans Will Hold Big Rally Here Sept. 15-17," *Mount Pleasant Times*, September 9, 1926, 1.
[31] The misrepresentation may have occurred from an overlap with stereotypical Native American practices; there was and is an Ojibwe population living in Mount Pleasant.
[32] "Mexicans Have an Interesting Fiesta in City," 1.
[33] "Mexicans Have an Interesting Fiesta in City," 5.
[34] "Mexicans Make Merry Two Days," 1.

take credit for the festivities, insinuating Mexicanos were not able to put on such a lavish celebration on their own accord, effectually casting Mexicanos as inferior.[35]

The Anglo patronage depicted at the Mount Pleasant event was witnessed at Mexicano gatherings across the state. The *Detroit News* reported "Mrs. A. Hall and other women of St. Leo's parish were in charge of the booths" for the Motor City celebration in 1920.[36] In Pigeon, the town hall's usage "was given by [village] President Murdoch" in 1924, while in 1925 Mayor Wind took charge in securing the building to hold the festival as Mexicanos presented flowers to President Murdoch to honor him for his help.[37] In contrast, the Spanish language press also reported on the 1925 Pigeon event and did mention Mayor Wind. However, *La Prensa* stated *el Comité Patriótico* organized the event and went to the mayor to secure the building, placing more control in Mexicano hands (more on this later).[38] In Port Huron, city officials often graced the celebrations with their presence and provided the invocation. The local foundry owner, who employed many Mexicanos in the area, also gave a welcome address.[39] In each of these 1920s instances, local political leaders received praise in area English language newspaper articles for their extended efforts to aid a small Mexicano population herald a foreign holiday. While local Mexicano groups assumed greater control in the following decades, Anglo interjection and intervention into early

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[35] It is certainly possible some local business owners participated in supporting the fiesta for altruistic reasons. They may well have thought they were doing their duty as citizens, even if the result proved misplaced or misguided. Even if this was the case, though, it still seemed to place Mexicanos as lower on the social ladder.
[36] "Detroit Mexicans Fete Own Fourth," *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1920, 12.
[37] "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday," *Pigeon Progress*, September 19, 1924, 9; "Notes," *Pigeon Progress*, September 18, 1925, 7.
[38] "Ecos de las Fiestas Patrias en Diferentes Lugares de E. Unidos," La Prensa, September 23, 1925, 5.
[39] "Mexicans Keep National Day," *Port Huron Times-Herald*, September 16, 1926, 12; "River District Mexicans Today Celebrate Mexico's July Fourth," *Port Huron Times-Herald*, September 16, 1927, 14. There were also further events where Anglos sought to provide Mexicano workers entertainment that would not only curry favor and loyalty, but would draw a crowd who would spend money, though more research is still needed. See "Fiesta Night for Mexicans," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, August 4, 1951, 2; "Service Clubs Plan to Repeat Fiesta in 1952," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, August 6, 1951, 1, 11.

Mexicano celebratory leisure gatherings illuminated how these events became contested spaces.

**Making "Mexicans": How the Mexican Government Utilized Celebrations**

While U.S. Anglos used the gatherings to illustrate how Mexicanos were only accepted in Michigan society as temporary, low wage laborers, the Mexican government sought to influence the celebrations to engender Mexican nationalism. The government utilized the holidays to promote the building of the Mexican nation-state by cultivating a sense of *lo Mexicano* (the Mexican essence). Moreover, the festivals allowed the government to exert some control over its people and direct a specific type of patriotism. Its hope was not only an emboldened sense of Mexican grandeur but also that Mexicans who entered the United States would acquire practical skills and technology and then return to their homeland to build a better future. Mexico City executed the program by creating a chain of command and by providing information and aid to U.S. Mexicanos through the Mexican Consuls, local Mexican *mutualistas*, and patriotic organizations. Meanwhile, the U.S. Spanish-language press buttressed the agenda with their coverage of the fetes. Thus, Michigan's *fiestas patrias* were also attempts to sustain ties between U.S. Mexicanos and *la Patria* (the Mexican homeland).[40]

That vision began when President Alvaro Obregón took office in 1920, enacting measures intended to stabilize the country after a decade of revolution. He established more Mexican Consuls in the United States to aid Mexican nationals and sponsored Mexican speakers who presented lectures throughout North America reasserting the people's

[40] For more on Mexican celebrations as nation-state building projects see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 144-145; Gilbert Gonzalez, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

"Mexicanness." The program's operational success was evident in the oversight Mexican Consuls had over the implementation of festival programs and schedules, making them consistent even when they took place in rural locales. That uniformity helped construct a collectively imagined national history, one designed to provoke pride in the celebrants' Mexican roots and promote Mexican nationalism.[41] The cohesion also established how the Mexican government utilized the events in order to place U.S. Mexicanos within a Mexican space of belonging.

Spanish-language newspapers in the United States helped promote this nationalistic vision of *lo Mexicano* through their coverage of important events and by providing a guide detailing the proper observance of the holidays.[42] While the newspapers were not published in the Midwest, they had wide distribution supplying news for both traveling migrant laborers as well as those who settled out of the stream.[43] Alongside other broadly distributed papers, like *El Heraldo* in Los Angeles, San Antonio-based *La Prensa* linked the Mexicano community in the States together and to the homeland by providing news from both countries. This included news specifically concerning the Midwest region. In turn, the

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[41] For more on Obregon's plan, as well as the celebrations and the idea of being "Mexican," see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 144-150. Also see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (eds), *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[42] This builds on Benedict Anderson's premise regarding the role of media in provoking nationalism. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[43] For example, *La Prensa* was long regarded as a well-respected publication both for Mexicanos throughout the United States and in Mexico. While the major base of circulation was in San Antonio (covering many migrants who made yearly trips north), the newspaper's popularity caused it to be shipped out of the city and out of state including at schools, clubs, and universities. The newspaper began publishing in 1913 and suspended operation in June 1963 (though it had a stoppage in 1957). See Richard A. García, "Class, Consciousness, and Ideology: The Mexican Community of San Antonio, Texas: 1930-1940," *Aztlan* 9 (Fall 1978): 23-70; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano: The Mexican Exile Publisher Who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles," *American Journalism* 21 (2004): 75-89; Nora E. Ríos McMillan, "La Prensa," *Texas State Historical Association,* http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eel03, accessed September 15, 2012. For more on the importance of newspapers, see Nicolás Kanellos, "A Brief History of Hispanic Periodicals in the United States" in *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography,* ed. Nicolas Kanellos and Helvetia Martell (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2000).

Mexican Consuls used the papers to promote Mexican nationalism. In 1920, the editors of *La Prensa, El Heraldo*, and *El Tucsonense* reprinted a telegram from Consul Eduardo Ruíz exhorting all Mexicans celebrating in the United States to always play "*el Himno Nacional Mexicano*" (the Mexican National Anthem) first to validate their "Mexicanness." The editors not only republished the appeal but also insisted it was their patriotic service, both to Mexico and Mexicans abroad, to reprint the instructions, demonstrating the cooperation between the Consuls and the U.S. Spanish press.[44] *El Heraldo* published not only the words to the anthem but the musical score as well, ensuring that any orchestra hired by the organizers would be able to play the song properly.[45]

That same year *La Patria* (El Paso, Texas) printed the program of an upcoming *dieciséis de septiembre* in Texcoco, Mexico, both connecting readers to Central Mexico and providing a model for U.S. Mexicanos to follow with their celebrations.[46] In 1922 *El Heraldo* urged Mexicanos to remember to pay homage to "*los héroes que nos logaron patria y libertad*" ("the heroes who bequeathed us our country and freedom"), arguing that even those who resided in the United States would always be Mexicans.[47] Starting in 1915, *La Prensa* ran an annual edition covering numerous Mexican Independence celebrations throughout the United States as part of its mission to express "patriotic fervor for the homeland."[48] During the 1920s it devoted considerable space each September to lengthy descriptions of various festivities in a section entitled "*Ecos de las Fiestas Patrias*" ("Echoes

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[44] "Como Debe Tocarse El Himno Nacl. En Los E. U.," *El Heraldo de Mexico*, September 14, 1920, 1; "Como Debe Tocarse El Himno Nacional Mexicano En Estados Unidos," *El Tucsonense*, September 16, 1920, 3. "De Interes Para Los Mexicanos Residentes en Los Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, September 18, 1920, 5.
[45] "Las Notas Y Las Letras Que Llegan Al Alma Del Mexicano Acta De La Independencia," *El Heraldo De Mexico*, September 16, 1920, 10.
[46] "Las Fiestas Patrias En Texcoco Mexico," *La Patria*, September 14, 1920, 3.
[47] "Poseidos De Justo Orgullo Y Santo Entusiasmo Patrio Los Mexicanos Celebramos Nuestras Fiestas Patrias," *El Heraldo De Mexico*, September 17, 1922, 1.
[48] McMillan, "La Prensa." During the 1920s one of the leading writers for the paper was Querido Moheno, the fervently patriotic former minister of commerce and industry in the cabinet of Victoriano Huerta.

of the National Holidays"). The reports, spanning fourteen states, reinforced a Mexican cultural belonging by unifying U.S. Mexicanos with Mexico and Mexican culture. This not only seemed to verify the restrictionist fears that Mexicans had spread throughout the country but also pointed to the influence of Spanish-language newspapers. Festival coverage represented one way in which the papers became avenues for the propagation of a unified, collectively imagined Mexican national identity.[49]

The homogeneity between the various *reuniones*, whether in Mexico or across the United States, reinforced the nationalist program. Those efforts were clearly evident in Michigan, revealing how far the Mexican government reached in its attempt to maintain control over the diaspora. While the Spanish-language press promoted and reported on the festivities, the true "on the ground" execution of *lo Mexicano* was in the hands of local and state Mexican leadership that simultaneously served the local Mexicano *colonias* and the Mexican government. To implement the patriotic vision, state Mexican Consuls encouraged various patriotic organizations and *mutualistas* to plan, organize, and host the fiestas with funding from both the organizations and the Consuls.[50] The Spanish press was careful to note which Mexican association was responsible for each festivity, in order to illustrate legitimacy. *El Circulo Mutualista*, *La Cruz Azul*, *El Comité Patriótico*, and *La Junta Patriótica* were associations active in Michigan that organized *dieciséis de septiembre* celebrations in Detroit, Port Huron, Pigeon, Owendale, Saginaw, and Bad Axe.[51] This direct

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[49] Some historians have noted the process was often hindered due to class distinctions among the U.S. Mexican residents. Many times, the wealthier class, which held leadership roles when hosting the events, excluded the working class, and sought to distance themselves from their "lower class" co-ethnics. Consequently, the actual, long-term effectiveness of the Mexican state's program has been the subject of debate. See García, *Mexicans in the Midwes*t.

[50] Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, 144-146, 165-168; Vargas, *Proletarians of the North,* 150-155; García, *A World of Its Own*, 123-127, 180-181.

[51] See "Mas Preparativos Para La Celebracion De Las Fiestas Patrias," *La Prensa*, August 8, 1924, 4; "Las Fiestas Patrias En Diferentes Lugares De Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, September 26, 1925, 9; "La Vida

control helped the Mexican government administer, promote, and sustain its vision of *Mexico Lindo* (Beautiful Mexico), a unifying concept of mutual self-defense and a rich nationalistic culture. It was likely for this reason the Detroit Mexican Consul visited Shepherd's festival in 1925, which did not have the sponsorship of any Mexican committee; the Consul's presence (despite a concurrent commemoration held in Detroit) perhaps provided authenticity and influenced the image of Mexicanness disseminated through the event, to ensure that Mexico City approved of it.[52] The result of these efforts helped cultivate a sense of patriotism and belonging to the Mexican homeland. However, no matter who planned and hosted them, Mexicanos themselves often viewed the *reuniones* as spaces from which to construct their own sense of belonging.

**Bridging Divides through Celebrations**

Aside from any exterior designs, celebrations and other leisure gatherings played an important role for Midwestern Mexicanos on a personal and community level. As in many other places, the two largest celebrations throughout the year were the *dieciséis de septiembre* and Cinco de Mayo. These two events constituted *fiestas patrias* and were nationally Mexico-centric, though Cinco de Mayo was not heavily celebrated in Michigan from the 1920s to the 1960s outside of more heavily populated urban centers of Detroit and Saginaw. In the rural areas, Mexican Independence was the most prominently heralded

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Mexicana En Los Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, October 21, 1929, 4; "Las Fiestas Patrias En Nuestras Colonias," *La Prensa*, September 9, 1933, 4; "Celebración De Las Fiestas Patrias En Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 28, 1938, 5.

[52] While there is no direct written evidence, Francisco Vasquez, the organizer of the event, may have requested the Consul's attendance to bring an authenticity to the festivities. "Mexicans Make Merry Two Days," 1. For more on celebrations and *Mexico Lindo*, see F. Arturo Rosales, *¡Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1996); F. Arturo Rosales, *Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization Among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

holiday, drawing Mexicanos from surrounding areas to celebrate together. In addition to the large national fiestas, Mexicanos gathered periodically for dances and concerts, as well as religious holidays, particularly during the Christmas season. Regardless of the occasion, celebrations and other leisure gatherings became essential gathering spaces. It was there Mexicanos connected with each other, further cementing inter- and intraregional networks, and where they negotiated ethnic identity, access to social space, and admission to the political sphere. An examination of this celebratory leisure space reveals the formation of a Mexican American identity within a multigenerational context and illustrates one vital method Midwestern Mexicanos utilized in order to contest the Anglo-imposed boundaries set against them.[53]

According to the standard narrative, the first generation settling in the Midwest during 1920s pushed Mexican cultural retention, often through the *fiestas patrias*. They did this because the trip to the north was viewed only as a temporary situation.[54] Their goal was to travel north, acquire money and skills, and then return to south Texas or Mexico (aligning with the Mexican government's plan).[55] The observance of Mexican national holidays promoted Mexican patriotism and represented a specific way of maintaining strong bonds with Mexico. This transnational connection also functioned to foster nationalism in the next

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[53] The use of celebrations and space as a method to claim social space and construct identity has become a common theme in historical inquires. See Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *A World of Its Own*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio;* Perales, *Smeltertown*; Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!;" Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American.*

[54] See Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013; Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *A World of its Own*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

[55] Gabriela Arredondo noted only a small percentage of Mexican workers applied for U.S. citizenship due to their longing to return home (many also realized that citizenship papers did not end discrimination towards them). The desire to acquire money and then return to one's home country was a common theme for immigrants from many countries, but historians have noted that proximity to Mexico and continued migration kept that dream alive for a longer duration in the case of Mexicanos. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Vargas, *Proletarians*, 88. Also see Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

generation (the Mexican generation's children), who exhibited more tenuous relations as they were either born in the north or moved there while they were still young. This was why one of the early foci of the Detroit-based *El Circulo mutualista* was to promote a historically rich Mexican culture through the organizing of the *fiestas patrias* and dances. According to Maria Guadiana, the daughter of one the *mutualista's* founders, the occasions were intended to understand, promote, uphold, and pass on of the ideals of the Mexican Revolution.[56] The Detroit Mexican Consul lauded these efforts, because they were a "formal expression of [Mexican] patriotism" and were "attended by everyone in the colony."[57] While this seemingly illustrated the unifying impact of the cultural celebrations for Michigan Mexicanos, a harmonious environment was not always the case.

The performance of Mexican national holidays did represent a specific way of maintaining cultural bonds with Mexico while also fostering nationalism in children. However, even during the formative years of the 1920s when most attention was on cultural retention, the continuity between the vision of the government and that of numerous Mexicanos began to diverge. By the second half of the decade, the gatherings began to depict the formation of alternate cultural identities. Michigan Mexicanos began to make new choices regarding their cultural affinities and began sending their monetary donations to places within the United States rather than to Mexico proper, demonstrating a shift from a Mexico-centered gaze to one that was U.S. Mexicano-centered. This signified that U.S.

[56] Guadiana interview.
[57] Norman Humphrey, "The Integration of the Detroit Mexican Colony," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 3, no. 2 (January 1944): 155.

Mexicanos across the United States began to construct their own sense of belonging, displaying the formation of a Mexican American cultural identity.[58]

While the Consul, seeking to promote *lo Mexicano,* stated everyone joyfully attended events such as the *fiestas patrias* that was not always the case. Rather, the preservation and construction of a culturally ethnic Mexican identity versus a nationalistic Mexican identity was something Michigan Mexicanos negotiated in their day-to-day lives. Consequently, when it came to large celebratory gatherings, divisions were clearly evident, even during the decade of the 1920s. The outbreak of the Cristero War in Mexico in 1926 precipitated an internal struggle for many U.S. Catholic Mexicanos.[59] In her work on a small community in El Paso, Texas, historian Monica Perales documented how some members of the local Catholic parish were removed from their positions in devotional societies because they chose to participate in Consul-sanctioned *fiestas patrias* and displays of national identity rather than demonstrate solidarity with their Catholic brethren being targeted by the Mexican government.[60] This struggled also played out 1,700 miles north. In 1927, there was much disagreement concerning participation in the Detroit *dieciséis.* The *Obreros Católicos* (Catholic Workers Union) refused to take part in the Consul-sanctioned festivities, declining an invitation stating, "Mexico is Calles, Calles is killing priests and we will not join in a fiesta to honor one who kills priests."[61] Similarly, that same year the *Obreros Libres* (Free

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[58] In historical study, obtaining the thoughts of migrant laborers can be difficult in the official written record. Therefore, activities in which Mexicans participated in the United States and ultimately where they sent their money can provide clues as to their true outlook on still being Mexican while also participating in U.S. culture.
[59] The Cristero War (1926-1929) occurred as Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles sought to curtail the power of the Catholic Church in Mexico. This prompted a popular rural uprising among the Mexican people. Many viewed the president's action as an attack on their faith. The result was three years of bloody guerrilla warfare. For more see David C. Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!: The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).
[60] Perales, *Smeltertown*, Chapter 4.
[61] Robert C. Jones, "Field Notes, Mexicans in Detroit, 1928," Carton 11, Folder 69, Detroit Conversations, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. [hereafter PTP].

Workers Union) did not join in heralding the *El Dia de la Raza* (on Columbus Day, translated "Race Day") in Detroit because they felt it was not an official Mexican holiday.[62] While neither of these situations indicated members of these groups were not proud to be of Mexican heritage, they did indicate they were viewing their identity at a personal, a class, and/or on a religious level rather than as nationalistic, which the Mexican government sought to promote. In other words, they were reconstructing their own sense of Mexicanness, patriotism, and cultural belonging, while being informed by the political and religious instability in Mexico, within the space they inhabited in the Motor City that offered the opportunity to protest the Mexican government's vision.

These were also not isolated instances demonstrating a divergence between Mexico City and the Motor City (or elsewhere in the United States), as an examination of fundraising campaigns linked to the *fiestas patrias* provides a more complete exposition of the ethno-patriotic loyalties of all classes of Michigan Mexicanos.[63] Monetary remittances are not new to the historical record. Historians have long noted the important role sending money to family abroad has played in shaping the immigrant experience for Mexicanos (and certainly other ethnic groups). Historian Mae Ngai noted that remittances grew to become the third largest form of revenue in Mexico.[64] Family remittances were common among Midwestern Mexicanos, whose main impetus in going north, as discussed in chapter one, was largely

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[62] Jones "Field Notes, Mexicans in Detroit," For other clashes over participation in Mexican celebratory events, whether religious or class dimensions, see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, Chapter 5;
García, *A World of its Own*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race*; Juan Javier Pescador, *Crossing Borders with the Santo Niño de Atocha* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Vargas, *Proletarians*; Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993).
[63] The Church could be viewed as an elite entity that may or may not represent the views of its working class parishioners.
[64] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), chapter 4.

economic.[65] Traditionally, though, this money was sent to directly aid family and kinship group members. However, during the 1920s, Mexicanos *afuera* also engaged in other contributive projects that were highly publicized at their holiday celebrations. Where Mexicanos sent their money to was a strong indicator of their cultural-communal focus, as much as the production of "*el Grito*" ("the Shout") and the playing of the Mexican National Anthem. Examining where this donated money went, and what it was used for, suggested where many U.S. Mexicanos sought to belong.

During the 1920s, *La Prensa* and its editor Ignacio Lozano became one of the foremost voices in promoting unity, a transnational devotion, and deep patriotism among U.S. Mexicanos. In addition to providing general news and rhetoric, Lozano became a leading voice for physical reconstruction in post-revolution Mexico, calling for the active participation of Mexicanos throughout the United States. In 1920, he praised the contributions of U.S. Mexicanos for their efforts in sending financial aid to Veracruz, Mexico following an earthquake. Seeing this as an opportunity, in 1921 Lozano spearheaded efforts for the construction of two schools in Dolores, Hidalgo, Guanajuato, a place known as the home of Mexican independence (it was where Father Hidalgo y Costilla famously issued *el grito*). *Las Escuelas del Centenario* were to be named after two leading figures of the independence movement, Hidalgo y Costilla and Josefa Oritz de Domínguez. Coinciding with the centennial independence celebration, Lozano mounted a highly publicized fundraising campaign that reached out to Mexicanos of all classes in the United States. His

[65] See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*.

goal was to utilize a patriotic sentimental attachment to the Mexican homeland in order to arouse giving.[66]

What made this effort unique was that the bulk of the donations came not from a few wealthy elites, but from average working class Mexicanos – male, female, and children – who, often out of penury, donated five or ten cents to the cause. Most of the donations ultimately came from the San Antonio area, but reports of donations came from all over the United States including many places in Michigan. While urban Detroiters gave often, many rural locales also participated, as Mexicanos in Merrill (seven donors), Midland (one), Shepherd (five), and Unionville (eight) all sent money for *la Patria*.[67] With headlines referencing the upcoming September festivities like "*El Mes De La Gloria De La Patria* [The Glorious Month of the Homeland]," the newspaper entwined the offerings to patriotism, the centennial independence celebration, and a national Mexican identity, which inspired additional giving.[68] Lozano called the campaign "the best proof of solidarity" and a "beautiful patriotic gesture" by U.S. Mexicanos.[69] While certainly not all Mexicanos were represented in the donation numbers, examining the donation lists does provide a nice cross section of the population, representing elites and the working class. The patriotic remittance of money for construction in Mexico – for buildings neither they nor their children would most likely never set foot in – suggested that many U.S. Mexicanos led transnational lives,

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[66] Emilio Zamora, "Las Escuelas del Centenario in Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato: Internationalizing Mexican History," in *Recovering the Hispanic History of Texas*, ed. Monica Perales and Raúl Ramos, (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2010).

[67] For a list of the various donors see "Lista De Loa Donativvos Para Las Escuelas De Dolores Hidalgo," *La Prensa*, August 27, 1921, 1; "Lista De Loa Donativvos Para Las Escuelas De Dolores Hidalgo," *La Prensa*, September, 15, 1921, 1; "Lista De Los Donativos Para Las Escuelas De Dolores Hidalgo Guanajuato," *La Prensa*, November 11, 1921, 1; "Lista De Los Donativos Para Las Escuelas De Dolores Hidalgo Guanajuato," *La Prensa*, November 29, 1921, 1; See also Zamora, "Las Escuelas."

[68] See, for example, "Entra Hoy, Compatriotas, El Mes De La Gloria De La Patria," *La Prensa*, September 1, 1921, 1 or "El Mes de la Promesa," *La Prensa*, August 26, 1921, 6.

[69] "La Construcción de las Escuelas va a Comenzar y la Colonia Mexicana debe estar Orgullos a del Homenaje," *La Prensa*, September 17, 1921, 1.

looking back to Mexico for their cultural and national identity. The 1921 gifts represented the Mexico-centric focus that U.S. Mexicanos maintained during the early 1920s, which seemingly also aligned with the vision of the Mexican government.

While certainly not all Mexicanos shifted their focus, by the second half of the decade, many began to focus on social and structural building in the United States, representing a transferal of emphasis from Mexico proper to the community of U.S. Mexicanos. Evidence of that altered mindset came in 1928 and 1929 when the *La Prensa* began reporting on another round of donations, this time for the construction of a Mexicano clinic in San Antonio, Texas. This construction was for the direct benefit of U.S.-based Mexicanos, for those who suffered indignation and maltreatment as second-class residents in Texas (which included many migrants who traveled to the Midwest as discussed in chapter one). That the donations were for a project in San Antonio demonstrated a mindset of greater permanence for Mexicanos in the United States and suggested Mexicanos were viewing their belonging north of the U.S.-Mexican border (as opposed to always looking back to Mexico proper). In doing so, this building project helped to cement a Mexican communal cultural identity rooted in the U.S. experience in a similar manner as the construction of Catholic Churches in Chicago and Detroit and the use of music, dance halls, and theaters in Los Angeles. That is, Mexicanos were looking to affect and shape their local environment, establishing roots and a sphere of influence, which, as numerous scholars have demonstrated, was key to the development of a Mexican American identity.[70] While the construction of

[70] See Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Press, 1987); Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; García, *A World of its Own*; David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966*–1981 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Eduardo Obregón

businesses and buildings was not unique for U.S. Mexicanos, the manner in which the funds were raised for the San Antonio venture was significant.

The San Antonio clinic project, beyond just providing much needed services to local Texas Mexicanos, suggested a changed mindset for the newspaper and those who donated. The 1928 campaign followed the same pattern as the 1921 campaign for schools in Guanajuato. *La Prensa* again publicized and provided headlines that indicated substantial sums of money were given. The contributions again came from all over the United States, and again featured the masses giving small sums of money, but this time, instead of going south of the border, the gifts stayed within the country. Additionally, the 1928 campaign was again tied to the *dieciséis de septiembre* celebration, which served as a launching point for the effort (to be repeated in 1929 as well). *La Prensa* intrinsically linked notions of ethno-cultural sentiment, patriotism, and duty to the donations by highlighting how *mutualistas* led the collection efforts during the sponsored *fiestas patrias* and by noting how gathering together to celebrate the holidays provided added motivation to give.

The donation of money for a U.S.-based Mexicano project at a Mexican national holiday highlights the complicated process of identity construction and suggests that U.S. Mexicanos were beginning to see themselves as belonging to more than just the Mexican nation state. Whereas the 1921 campaigned focused on unity with Mexico, the 1928 project signified permanence among the U.S. Mexicano population, and provided another example of the changing mindset when it came to identity construction. Michigan Mexicanos were very much a part of this transformation. The *mutualista Sociedad Anáhuac* led the collection

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Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.

efforts for the Detroit area as Mexicanos in the Great Lakes State donated early and often.[71] Places in Michigan from which people gave included Detroit (ninety individuals), Vassar (three), Mt. Pleasant (eleven), Pontiac (eighteen), Fordson (present day Dearborn, eight), Shepherd (one), Bad Axe (five), Owosso (eleven), Flint (twenty-four), Port Huron (fifteen), Merrill (twelve), Saginaw (five), and Trenton (ten).[72] Over half the cities listed represented sugar beet areas, suggesting that both rural and urban Mexicanos began to view themselves not solely as Mexicans connected to Mexico, but also as belonging to a larger transnational Mexicano community stretching across both sides of the Rio Grande.[73] The monetary remittances represented a communal gathering of money, patriotically given at culturally Mexican events, that embodied efforts to belong in the United States as a community of U.S. Mexicanos who still retained their Mexicanness (in addition to the fact many were likely from the San Antonio area and had family or friends there who could potentially use the clinic, possibly even themselves if they returned from Michigan).

Utilizing festive events as a promotional tool to collect money for local structural building projects continued long past the 1920s. During the 1940s and 1950s, Saginaw Mexicanos sold tickets to dances, vended foodstuffs, and elicited donations at the events as a means of building a hall in Saginaw to serve as a gathering space for the community. A large

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[71] "Nuevos Donativos Para El Fondo De La Clinica Mexicana De San Antonio," *La Prensa*, May 26, 1929, 1; "La Sociedad 'Hijos De America' Ofrecio Un Buen Donativo Para La Construccion De La Clinica," *La Prensa*, September 19, 1929, 1.

[72] The donations came in multiple rounds of giving whereby some individuals could have given more than once. See "Mas De Tres Cientos Dolares Recibidos Para La Clinica," *La Prensa*, December 4, 1928, 1; "Importante Remesa Para La Clinica Fue La Que Llegó Ayer De Diversas Pobladores De Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, November 22, 1928, 1; "Otra Hermosa Contribucion Más De 300 Dólares Entraron Nuevamente Para La Clínica Ayer," *La Prensa*, December 8, 1928, 1; "$8,319 Habia Ayer Para La Clinica," *La Prensa*, December 16, 1928, 1; "La Clinica Sera Un Hecho Con La Ayuda Oportuna De Toda La Gran Colonia," *La Prensa*, December 19, 1928, 1; "Nuevos Donativos Para El Fondo De La Clinica Mexicana De San Antonio," *La Prensa*, May 26, 1926, 1; "Obolos De Ayer Para La Clinica," *La Prensa*, August 26, 1929, 1; "La Sociedad 'Hijos De America' Ofrecio Un Buen Donativo Para La Construccion De La Clinica," 1, 4.

[73] For more on transnationalism among Latinos, see, for instance, Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; and Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

portion of the money came as a direct result of the two main Saginaw Mexicano annual events – the *dieciséis* and Cinco de Mayo. Though it ultimately took fifteen years to raise the needed funds of $15,000, in 1959 the Mexicano organization La Unión Cívica Mexicana purchased land at 2715 Wadsworth Avenue in Saginaw and built a hall. The collection efforts were again directly tied to the *fiestas patrias*, and the benefit went to the local Mexicano population, in this case a social meeting hall that would not only offer a space to gather, but also instruction in the English language, in filing U.S. tax forms, in legal advice, and in applying for U.S. citizenship.[74] Cultural celebrations like Cinco de Mayo became "breadwinning" events that generated social capital whereby organizations like La Unión Cívica were able to give back to the community and to reach into Anglo dominated spheres (more on La Unión Cívica later).[75]

In addition to where collected monies went, the methods and material objects the celebrants utilized to herald the culturally Mexican events further demonstrated they were constructing their own unique cultural identities that engaged multiple spaces of belonging. Beginning in the 1920s, even in Consul supported celebrations, all festivities included the displaying and waving of both Mexican and American flags as well as the playing both *el himno nacional* and the Star Spangled Banner. The Spanish language media instructed this practice. As noted earlier, in 1920, the editors of *La Prensa, El Heraldo*, and *El Tucsonense*, reprinted a telegram from Consul Eduardo Ruiz exhorting all Mexicanos celebrating in the United States to always play "*el Himno Nacional Mexicano*" properly to validate their

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[74] Larry Rodarte, Jr., "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 6-7.

[75] Many current Saginaw Mexicanos have lamented the loss of local control of some of these larger celebrations. For example, Cinco de Mayo has become highly commercialized in the United States, procuring large sponsorship from beer companies and celebrated at every local bar. This change causes money to leave the community rather than help those who celebrate it. See Larry Rodarte, Jr., "The Cívica, Dow, and the Soaring Eagle," *Mi Gente*, March 2011, 8.

"Mexicanness." The same articles also noted that the playing of the U.S. National Anthem was to be done "*por cortesía"* (as a courtesy) to the host country.[76] There were obvious international diplomatic-relational considerations for the reason this was done. However, the practice also instructed Mexicano participants, especially the younger generation, of the dual cultural identities of Mexicanos who lived and/or were born/raised in the United States but were equally proud of their Mexican heritage.

Further, the prominent displaying of both the U.S. and Mexican banners at culturally Mexican events suggested not only respect, but also the growth of dual identities.[77] This practice helped promote the mission of groups like La Unión Cívica Mexicana. The Saginaw group had two main goals in its founding: to promote a culturally rich Mexican heritage (the *fiestas patrias* being the most public and prominent method) and to "help Mexicans in Saginaw to understand the laws, life, and culture of the Americans;" in other words, to help Mexicanos navigate both cultural spheres.[78] In remembering his father Francisco Diaz (a founding member of La Unión Cívica), Joaquin Diaz stated "whenever [La Unión Cívica] had a celebration, Dad would always bring out the tortillas…My father made us aware of our culture and language and always said it was rich with so much to offer….He was always so proud to be a Mexican-American."[79] For people like Diaz, it was about honoring the past within his present situation; proud of proud rich culture, but equally proud of his current home. Alejandra Zuñiga, a tireless advocate for Mexicano civil rights as a member of the

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[76] "Como Debe Tocarse El Himno Nacl. En Los E. U.," 1; "Como Debe Tocarse El Himno Nacional Mexicano En Estados Unidos," 3; "De Interes Para Los Mexicanos Residentes en Los Estados Unidos."
[77] See, for instance, Adrian Burgos, Jr. and Frank A. Guridy, "Becoming Suspect in Usual Places: Latinos, Baseball, and Belonging in El Barrio del Bronx," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
[78] Rodarte, Jr., "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 28; Manuela Maymie Ontiveros, "Reflections on the Unión Cívica Mexicana," *Mi Gente*, May 2015, 8.
[79] Francisco Diaz was born in Saguayo, Michoacan, Mexico but would become a U.S. citizen. Rodarte, Jr., "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 16-17.

American G.I. Forum in Saginaw, rode in the 1961 Saginaw Cinco de Mayo parade waving proudly to the crowds in a Pontiac convertible covered in a banner for *El Club Norteño* while holding a U.S. Flag.[80]


Fig. 2.1 1961 Cinco de Mayo Parade, Saginaw, Michigan. Saginaw resident Alejandra Zuñiga rides in annual parade. *Photo courtesy of Larry Rodarte,* publisher/editor of *Mi Gente,* in Nancy Sajdak Manning, "Cinco de Mayo: Celebrating Mexican-American Unity and Pride in Saginaw, 1961," *Great Lakes Bay Magazine*, May 2013.

Likewise, in Flint, the Arceo family saw no contradiction between honoring their cultural Mexican past and lauding the U.S. flag. David Arceo, born in Michigan after his parents moved from Texas, recalled gathering together with other local Flint Mexicano families to herald the *dieciséis* and also going with their friends, the Jimenez family, "up to Bay City to celebrate Fourth of July at the lake."[81] In Detroit, Maria Guadiana spoke of growing up going to the *fiestas patrias* her father helped organize. Guadiana recalled that her father's generation was "primarily focused on patriotism" and all their activities were "culturally based" so as to reinforce Mexicanness and display a rich cultural history to the surrounding population. Growing up within that organizational environment, Guadiana

[80] See Fig. 2.1. Nancy Sajdak Manning, "Cinco de Mayo: Celebrating Mexican-American Unity and Pride in Saginaw, 1961," *Great Lakes Bay Magazine*, May 2013.
[81] David Arceo interview by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).

found that for "the next generation or two generations it was more [about] the social movement [activism]" in asserting their rights as U.S. citizens and residents.[82] It also was not uncommon for American cultural forms to be displayed during Mexican cultural events. During the 1940 *dieciséis* in Elkton, hundreds of Mexicanos were in attendance at the Opera House, fully decorated in red, white, and green, "dressed in the latest American styles."[83] While sports will be the subject of chapter three, having U.S originated sporting events was also common at the *fiestas patrias*, most notably baseball games.[84] In each case, there was no distinction or disagreement: their Mexican cultural roots were a part of their American identity and both were on display as they heralded the most Mexican of holidays.

Confronting this situation firmly placed Michigan Mexicanos within a negotiated environment, a space where, in the words of historian Vicki Ruiz, "immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms."[85] These celebrations allowed Mexicanos to navigate and negotiate their emerging syncretic American identity even while at Mexican cultural events. This process began during the 1920s with the first arrival of Mexicanos into the Great Lakes Region illustrating that even those in the Mexican generation embraced both nations. Even more so, for the second and third generations who grew up in the Midwest, practices such as these facilitated the growth of a Mexican American identity. Celebrations allowed all Michigan Mexicanos the choice to cement ties

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[82] Guadiana Interview.
[83] "Locals," *Cass City Chronicle*, September 27, 1940, 4.
[84] See "Fiestas Patrias en Detroit, Michigan," *La Prensa*, August 6, 1933, 8; "Celebracíon de las fiestas patrias en Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 25, 1838, 7. More research is needed regarding other cultural trademarks such as clothing and food choices at Mexican cultural events.
[85] Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 50.

to a rich cultural past while planting roots in their new home.[86] At the same time, though, ties were also forged to one another.

**Interregional and Intraregional Connections**

In addition to aiding Mexicanos to define their own identities, celebrations and other similar leisure gatherings illustrated the evolution of the familial and fictive kinship networks in the Midwest beyond just job acquisition. Beginning in the 1920s, leisure gatherings dotted both the rural and urban Midwestern landscape drawing together hundreds to thousands of participants from increasingly further distances. This process linked the seemingly disparate and diverse Michigan Mexicano communities together by bringing rural Mexicanos into contact with urbanites, migrant workers into contact with established residents, and ethnic Mexicans into contact with Mexican Americans. Thus, the assemblies represented important spaces that bridged the rural/urban divide, that cemented the Michigan Mexicano participation into both inter- and intra-regional networks, and that facilitated the transferal of people, ideas, and culture on a transnational level.

Despite religious and class conflict that certainly existed, for many, the Mexican Independence Day fiestas were a time to gather and connect. If their local city was not hosting a celebration, it was common for Mexicanos to travel to other nearby centers to celebrate with fellow co-ethnics. For example, in Michigan's rural Thumb Region,

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[86] For evidence of this, see, for instance, "Celebracíon de las fiestas patrias en Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 25, 1938, 7. Also see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *A World of its Own*; González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing*; David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995); Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio;* F. Arturo Rosales, "Shifting Self Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946," *Aztlán* 16 (1987): 71; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican Americans*; Roberto R. Trevino, *Becoming Mexican American: The Spanish-language Press and the Biculturation of Californio Elites, 1852-1870* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1989).

Mexicano farm workers gathered at a central location each year.[87] In 1923, they congregated in the small town of Croswell. From 1924 to the end of the decade they shifted to nearby Pigeon.[88] The Great Depression temporarily halted the Thumb celebrations in the early 1930s, but they resumed again by 1938. The 1938 *dieciséis* in Elkton was noted for drawing together the "various colonies of Mexicans" from Bad Axe, Ubly, Shabbona, Snover, Filion, Port Austin, Sebewaing, Pigeon, Cass City, Caro, Saginaw, and "*otras poblaciones que sería largo mencionar*" (other cities too numerous to mention).[89] The 1938 event also included a Saginaw baseball team venturing to Elkton to compete during the independence festivities.

This trend only accelerated after World War II when the prevalence of automobiles made transportation easier.[90] This change caused fewer independence celebrations to be held, but with higher attendance at each location. The yearly Saginaw independence celebration drew from urban Flint and Bay City, as well as from rural Gratiot County.[91] During the 1950s and 1960s Rose San Miguel fondly recalled her family traveling to Saginaw to watch the *dieciséis* parade down Genesee Street and afterward attend the dance at the Saginaw Civic Center because there were not any celebrations in rural Gratiot County. As a young girl, she even took part in the festivities by participating in the dance performances. Going to Saginaw and participating in the events made her feel as though she "fit in" with the larger Saginaw Mexicano community despite living on a rural farm in the

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[87] The Thumb region of Michigan is designated as the farmland area that is east of Flint and the Tri-Cities (Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland) and north of the Metro Detroit area. Because the lower peninsula of Michigan is roughly shaped like a mitten, the Thumb region on a map is the area that would be where the thumb on a hand would fit into a mitten.
[88] See *Pigeon Progress*, 1920-1930, Pigeon District Library, Pigeon, Michigan.
[89] "*Celebracíon de las fiestas patrias en Michigan*," *La Prensa*, September 25, 1938, 7.
[90] For more on Mexicanos purchasing automobiles, see Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[91] See Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession); Arturo and Art Reyes interview by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 26, 2015, Burton, MI, digital file (in author's possession).

next county.[92] In southern Michigan, Emily Martinez, who was quick to draw distinctions between the Blissfield and Adrian Mexicano communities (she proudly reaffirmed herself as being from Blissfield), stated her family not only "celebrated in Adrian," but got involved in helping to organize the events.[93] The Adrian festivities drew from nearby Blissfield as well as northern Ohio, as migrant Mexicanos made no distinction between state borders whether following the crops or for celebrating together.[94] In all cases, the outcome was the same – the celebrations brought the communities together, cemented relations, forged networks ties, and created a shared cultural affinity.

Non-independence day gatherings similarly united Mexicano communities. One of the highlights of the year for the Saginaw Mexicano community revolved around religion. Many in the community viewed the First Ward, historically the home to the most Mexicanos, as living "in the shadow of St. Joseph's [Catholic] Church."[95] Within the parish, the longest enduring organization has been the women's group known as Las Damas de Guadalupe (originally known as Hijas de María). While they performed many functions in the church and in the community (visiting the sick in hospitals, providing food for funerals and fundraisers, offering fervent prayers, among others activities), one of their principal efforts has been the hosting of La Novena, which Las Damas has been doing since 1929. This event commences on December 4 and continues nine nights. The holiday commemorates the date of the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Each night a rosary is prayed and Mass is held

[92] San Miguel interview.
[93] Martinez interview. See also Arceo interview; Zamarripa interview.
[94] Emily Martinez interview by Brett Olmsted, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Efrain Gutierrez interview by Brett Olmsted, August 6, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).
[95] Las Damas interview by Brett Olmsted, June 29, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).

while many Mexicana women dress in traditional Mexican cultural apparel. The event culminates on December 12, the day celebrated when La Virgen appeared to Juan Diego.[96]

Las Damas and La Novena have become fixtures at St. Joseph, inspiring parishioners and uniting the surrounding Mexicano communities. Former Damas president Beatriz Valle recalled La Novena as one of the main reasons she joined the women's group within a few months after arriving to Saginaw as a new bride. She viewed the program as an outreach "to keep the faith of our Lady of Guadalupe alive" within themselves and the Mexicano community in Saginaw.[97] Other felt similarly. On December 12, 1952, Teofilo "Jack" Romero sat in Mass at St. Joseph and "felt something in my heart, some sadness, as I saw only two-thirds of the seats were occupied. I looked toward Our Lady and perhaps I imagined that her face was very sad...So few people. I see we are losing our traditions."[98] Upon contemplation Romero went to speak with the Priest, prayed, and went to La Unión Cívica to announce a meeting that when asked what it was regarding, he responded he "was not at liberty to tell them" at that time.[99] That meeting was one of many that led to the formation of a formal planning committee to better advertise La Novena and to raise money to fashion a crown for the La Virgen statue, which they utilized in a ceremony to honor her. The result of their efforts was greater unity and devotion among the members while the increased awareness helped to expand the reach of the Novena program (with the coronation of La Virgen being reenacted each year on December 8). St. Joseph's La Novena drew congregants together from several surrounding parishes, including Saginaw, Bay City,

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[96] Las Damas interview; *Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe: 85th Anniversary*, Commemorative Booklet, (Saginaw, MI: St. Joseph's Catholic Church Hispanic Ministry, 2012).
[97] Beatriz Valle, "Memories from Beatriz Valle," *Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe: 85th Anniversary*; "A Message from our Pastor," *Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe: 85th Anniversary.*
[98] Teofilo (Jack) Romero, "Handwritten Account of the Events of 1952-1953 Culminating with the Coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe," in *Recuerdos Guadalupanos de Saginaw, Michigan* by Elena Ruiz Sánchez (Saginaw, MI: Elena Ruiz Sánchez, 2005), 37-9.
[99] Romero, "Handwritten Account," 39.

Midland, Gratiot, and Sanilac.[100] Like the *dieciséis*, this culturally Mexican Catholic celebration afforded a space of dialog and camaraderie for the local and surrounding Mexicano communities on the shared common ground of devotion to La Virgen.[101]

Other gatherings, such as concert and dances (whether religious or secular), were equally important in connecting Midwestern Mexicano communities. Throughout the Midwest, Mexicano musicians and groups were often recruited and hired to play at events. From the 1920s to the 1940s the musicians most often were plucked from the migrant workforce traveling north for the summer season. However, as the Michigan (and Midwestern) Mexicano population grew following World War II, they began to attract fulltime musicians and bands that performed shows across the Midwest, both in rural and urban areas. For instance, conjunto legend Ruben Vela played in Lansing, "The Godfather of Tejano" Tony de la Rosa and Isidro Lopez traveled to places like Saginaw, Toledo (OH), and Ft. Wayne (IN), while others played up and down the west coast of Michigan traveling from Grand Rapids north to Traverse City for the cherry festival.[102] Conjunto music featured accordion-fueled dance music, with Vela leading the trend. Lopez took the genre in a new direction, becoming known for mingling the conjunto style, most often preferred by Mexicano farmworkers, with the big-band tunes and waltzes preferred more by urban Mexicanos. Mixing traditional Mexican music with elements of pop, rock, and country, this

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[100] Las Damas interview; San Miguel interview. Also see "Parish Schedules," in *Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe: December 4-12, 2014*, Commemorative Booklet, (Saginaw, MI: St. Joseph's Catholic Church Hispanic Ministry, 2014). For more on Grand Rapids, see Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino."

[101] This sentiment comes from the totality of the interview with the members of Las Damas. There was a passion within them as they viewed La Novena as a spiritual time that brought them together with other parishes. See Las Damas interview.

[102] See San Miguel interview; Gutierrez interview; "Fiesta Night for Mexicans," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, August 4, 1951, 2; Bruce Lee Smith, "Conjunto legend Ruben Vela dead at 72," *The Monitor*, March 9, 2010, http://www.themonitor.com/conjunto-legend-ruben-vela-dead-at/article_0e7aab76-3563-5114-ba6f-94a56a037c2c.html, accessed September 15, 2016.

fusion style, known as Tejano music, paralleled the hybrid culture being developed by a generation Mexican Americans.[103]


Fig. 2.2 Ruben Vela Concert Flyer. Mexicano musicians often toured the Midwest during the summer months connecting Midwestern and Southwestern Mexicanos. Image courtesy of Rose San Miguel, reproduced with permission.

The music of Lopez, Vela, and others traveled north to the Midwest, with the dances and concerts they performed serving as a space to socially connect urban and rural Mexicano communities. These large gatherings also brought the Michigan Mexicano residents together with the incoming migrant workers illuminating the interregional connections that helped facilitate the formation of a broader Mexican American cultural identity. There, ideas, food, fashion, and bodily comportment were exchanged and negotiated. Growing up outside Saginaw, Rose San Miguel vividly recalled the first large dance of the season held just as the main force of migrant workers made their way to the urban centers. Held in the Saginaw

[103] Garth Cartwright, "Isidro Lopez: Legendary Populariser of Tejano Music," *The Guardian*, August 25, 2004, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2004/aug/25/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries, accessed September 15, 2016. For more on the importance of music among Mexicanos see García, *A World of its Own*; Anthony Macías, *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Catherine Ragland, *Musica Nortena: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation Between Nations* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

Civic Center, local Mexicanos mingled with Texas Mexicanos in a festive atmosphere. As San Miguel described it, she, along with many other local Michigan Mexicanos from the surrounding areas, eagerly looked forward to seeing the latest fashion trends, dance steps, and music that Southwestern Mexicanos brought north with them. San Miguel remembered this was how she and the local community would "acquire Mexican culture."[104] She likewise spoke fondly of traveling the seventy miles to see Ruben Vela perform live in Lansing in 1962. She has kept the signed poster that advertised the event with Vela's picture on it for nearly fifty years (see Fig. 2.2). Her attendance not only enabled her to experience Mexicano culture, but also connected her with fellow co-ethnics from across the state.[105] Embracing new rhythms, distinctly Mexicano, allowed Michigan (and Midwestern) Mexicanos to feel part of the broader Mexican American community while helping them to define themselves culturally in an area with so (proportionately) few co-ethnics.

Efrain Gutierrez provided additional detail on how gathering at concerts and similar large events created a space to remake identity. He smiled while recalling large weekend gatherings in Saginaw, Toledo (OH), Fort Wayne (IN), and Traverse City as legends like Tony La Rosa and Isidro Lopez played in front of hundreds of Mexicanos. According to Gutierrez, in his opinion, the largest and best dances and concerts were in Paulding, Defiance, and Toledo, Ohio since the legal drinking age was only eighteen years old compared with twenty-one in Michigan and Indiana. He, along with his neighbors, traveled from Auburn and Fort Wayne, Indiana to take part in the festivities. No matter the venue, though, Mexicanos packed the buildings or streets. Gutierrez described the scene saying, "it was like being in San Antonio at a dance," despite it being in the Midwest surrounded by

[104] San Miguel interview.
[105] San Miguel interview.

Mexicanos from Robstown, Corpus Christi, Houston, Laredo, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan.[106] While he remembered some fights occurring (usually over girls or town rivalries), the greatest benefit of these events, aside from some needed leisure respite, was the chance to connect with co-ethnics.

For Mexicanos like Gutierrez, these events in the 1950s and 1960s provided a space to air grievances, build solidarity, and construct a new identity in an attempt to counter the pejorative connotations the term "Mexican" became associated with in the minds of their Anglo neighbors.[107] He recalled it was within these spaces he first heard talk concerning Chicanismo.[108] While he later became far more active in the movement as an activist filmmaker, the early days at Midwestern gatherings helped him to reevaluate and redefine his sense of self. Beginning even in the 1950s while he attended school in Defiance, Ohio, Gutierrez realized the need to construct something new because he understood that even if he were to become a doctor, he would still be "Mexican" in the eyes of many Anglos. Consequently, while the 1950s were before the main thrust of the Chicano movement, it was at the concerts and events where he, and others, began to redefine his identity into what became Chicano in order to command respect, both for a rich cultural past and a home in the United States.[109]

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[106] Gutierrez interview.
[107] Gutierrez interview. For more on this see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; García, *A World of its Own*.
[108] The Chicano movement traditionally focuses on the late 1960s and 1970s, but a long historical view can see its antecedents within the post-World War II era as Mexicanos began to assert themselves, lay claim to citizenship rights, and to redefine their identities in countless examples including, but not limited to, the Zoot Suit Riots, the American G.I. Forum, and the United Farm Workers Union of Cesar Chavez. It was a pattern of growth wrought through experience and discourse that would culminate in the 1960s. See Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot*; García, Fr*om the Jaws of Victory*; Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*; Rosales, ¡*Chicano!*; Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).
[109] Gutierrez interview.

While this was true for Gutierrez and many like him, other Mexicanos did not embrace this growing ethnic consciousness, choosing instead to fight the negative connotation of the word "Mexican." In Blissfield, Emily Martinez refused to "identify with being a Chicano, but [instead] identifies as a Mexican American."[110] She was and is proud of her cultural past and did not want to give another name to it. Similarly, in Saginaw, despite hearing all the talk surrounding the growth of the Chicano movement, San Miguel did not join in. Her father discouraged it, impressing upon her his opinion that Chicanos such as the Brown Berets were "all punks" whose parents had lost control of them. Her mother also told her, "People who call themselves Hispanics [or Chicanos] didn't know where they are from. We know where we came from. And we are Mexican."[111] Maria Guadiana helped to explain why so many in the Midwest did not fully embrace Chicanismo (though she herself was heavily involved). Speaking of Detroit Mexicanos she posited, "We heard all the things going on [in the Southwest]. They were things we couldn't really relate to; they were so far removed from us. I think the best way I can describe it was that here in Detroit we were just focused on trying to bring awareness and pride, pride in our history and backgrounds."[112] Guadiana highlighted education and art alongside celebrations as some of the methods Detroiters utilized to enhance the image of Mexicano culture. Consequently, while Gutierrez, Martinez, and San Miguel all gathered for Mexicano cultural festivals, concerts, and dances, each used them to construct their identities as they saw fit. For Gutierrez, it was

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[110] Emily Martinez interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, November 15, 2013 [hereafter Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza].
[111] San Miguel interview.
[112] Guadiana interview; For more on the Chicano movement in the Midwest see Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Amalia Pallares and Nilda Flores-Gonzalez, *Marcha: Latino Chicago and the Immigrant Rights Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Leonard G. Ramírez, *Chicanas of 18th Street: Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Marc S. Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism & Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

to reinvent himself into what became Chicano, whereas Martinez and San Miguel sought to enhance their Mexican cultural roots. Perhaps this was due to the fact Gutierrez returned to Texas while Martinez and San Miguel grew up permanently in more rural areas of Michigan. In either case, gathering together with co-ethnics helped solidify their identities and illustrate how non-monolithic identity construction was.

Regardless of how Mexicanos ultimately viewed discourse on Chicanismo, the result of gathering together served to cement networks of inter- and intra-regional Mexicano communities and provided for the transferal of ideas across the United States. This served as a bridge between communities at the physical U.S.-Mexican border with the communities living within the Great Lakes region. The gatherings helped create new cultural identities, reinforced local community ties, and would provide a mechanism for claiming social space and entering the political sphere.

**Claiming Societal Space and Political Entrance**

While gatherings aided Mexicanos in cementing inter-/intra-local networks and helped augment discourse surrounding cultural identity, events also functioned to contest the boundaries that sought to render Mexicanos invisible. Beginning in the 1920s, as Mexicanos first entered the Midwest, Anglos collectively imagined and placed Mexicanos outside white societal space.[113] At the same time, however, Mexicanos acted on that space to seek inclusion and acceptance. Cultural leisure activities allowed Michigan (and Midwestern)

[113] For more on the racialization and production of space see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Nicholas De Genova, "Race, Space, and the Reinvention of Latin America in Mexican Chicago," *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 5, (September 1998): 87-116; Mitchell, *Coyote Nation;* Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?*: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*; Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Mexicanos to create a place for themselves by exhibiting a dynamic culture and by creating positive public awareness to a group often viewed solely as mono-dimensional laborers. By physically occupying public space that was often considered off limits, Mexicanos effectively transformed areas of the Great Lakes Region into temporary "Mexican villages," allowing them to engage the civic sphere and lay claim to citizenship rights.[114] Moreover, the act of gathering together to celebrate a "foreign" holiday demonstrated important organizational ability, representing an activist initiation into the political sphere that instructed future generations to push for greater inclusion and equal opportunities.

Celebrations provided distinct opportunities for hundreds to thousands of Mexicanos to occupy public spaces and display a rich culture, notwithstanding continued attempts by Anglos to disregard them. As noted in chapter one, the large urban centers of Detroit and Chicago largely ignored their Mexicano populations from 1920 until the end of the 1930s by concealing the existence of Mexicano events, as evidenced by the silence of the English language newspapers in covering the festivities. Despite this, the physical occupation of public space was important for Mexicanos. Taking part in parades, speeches, and lively entertainment created a Mexicanized sphere that, at least temporarily, was their space. For instance, when more than 1,000 Mexicanos came together to celebrate the 1926 Independence celebration in the Windy City, parading down the streets under green, white, and red and red, white and blue flags, they declared they were a proud people. When speakers stood up and reenacted Father Hidalgo's *el grito* for independence, Mexicanos declared they had an important history that deserved attention and respect.[115] Though the

[114] Juan Javier Pescador argued similarly, demonstrating how sports allowed Detroit and Chicago Mexicanos to engage politics (the subject for the next chapter). Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!" Also, Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; García, *A World of its Own*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*.
[115] For more on this celebration, see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, chapter 5.

*Chicago Tribune* did not report on this event, having 1,000 Mexicanos gather presented a vibrant historic Mexicano culture to the larger Anglo community that eventually local newspapers recognized.[116]

While still important, having 1,000 people gather in the midst of a 3.3 million person area (as in Chicago) could be more easily ignored (and was) and did not always have the same level of impact of claiming space as it did in smaller cities and towns where Mexicanos, during their gatherings, came to represent a large percentage of the population, even if for just a short time.[117] For instance, during the two to three day independence celebrations, small towns from mid-Michigan to the Thumb were transformed into temporary "Mexican villages."[118] The *dieciséis* held in Pigeon in 1924 boasted an attendance of at least 200 persons.[119] Despite being numerically smaller than Chicago or Detroit, the attendance in Pigeon was statistically more significant considering the city only had a population of fewer than 800 total people in the mid-1920s.[120] This meant that during the festivities, Mexicanos represented more than twenty percent of the overall population. Likewise, a 1925 *dieciséis* in Shepherd boasted an attendance of "several hundred" compared with a total population of fewer than 800, making Mexicanos account for between twenty to thirty percent of the overall population while celebrating a cultural Mexican event under dual national flags in the Spanish language.[121]

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[116] It was not until 1937 that the *Tribune* provided coverage of Mexicano events. For more details, see chapter one. "Mexican Colony To Mark 117th Yr. of Independence," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 15, 1937, 21.
[117] See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, chapter 5. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Census of Population*, 1931.
[118] For more on the discussion of Mexicano celebrations in the Thumb see Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*.
[119] "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday," 7.
[120] The U.S. Census indicates that 836 people lived in Pigeon in 1930. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1930) [hereafter *Fifteenth Census*].
[121] *Fifteenth Census*.

Though these events were only for a short timeframe, this temporary annual population anomaly illustrated a prime method as to how Mexicanos were able to carve out space for themselves at they pushed against the Anglo-prescribed boundaries. Physical occupation of space through attendance meant something. That they were able host and to continue events for multiple days in small towns illustrated at least a partial acceptance to their co-residency of the areas.[122] For instance, while all members of the community – Anglo or otherwise – were welcomed to attend the events, the celebrants danced, competed in sporting events, gave speeches, and sang patriotic songs most often completely in the Spanish language.[123] Reporting on the 1923 celebration in Croswell, the *Port Huron Times-Herald* stated that more than 200 "Americans" attended the *dieciséis* proceedings "despite the fact they were entirely in the Spanish language."[124] The article went on to describe the program as consisting "of patriotic addresses, songs and recitations, delivered in a fervent manner, which makes them almost understandable to the 'gringoes' [sic]…. On the common ground of patriotism and under mingled decorations of red and white and blue and red and white and green members of the two races mingled."[125] While an argument could be made that whites attended in some attempt to paternally control the proceedings, this did not seem to be the case. Rather, the use of Spanish illustrated Mexicanos sought to maintain control of their own event. The *Mt. Pleasant Times* likewise noted Spanish only being spoken during the 1925 Mt. Pleasant *dieciséis* despite it being a white-sponsored event.[126] In this way, Mexicanos shaped their landscape by displaying their vibrant cultural past (in celebration and

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[122] In small towns, newspapers tended to report on the events nearly as often as the Spanish language press. See Brett Olmsted, "Mexican Fiestas in Central Michigan: Celebrations and Identity Formation, 1920-1930," *Michigan Historical Review* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 33-57.
[123] See, for example, "Mexican Has Declaration of 1810, Not 1776, *Port Huron Times-Herald*, September 17, 1923, 3; "Mexicans Have an Interesting Fiesta in City," 5.
[124] "Mexican Has Declaration of 1810, Not 1776."
[125] "Mexican Has Declaration of 1810, Not 1776."
[126] "Mexicans Hold Big Celebration at Shepherd," 1.

in language). The use of Spanish and having a high population percentage of Mexicanos was common in many areas of the Southwest, but quite uncommon in the Midwest. Gathering in such large numbers, even only temporarily, "asserted basic rights of access to public space" as argued by numerous historians.[127] This was a necessary step in enlarging their sphere of influence, in claiming physical space for themselves as they made a home in Michigan, and in the goal of ending discrimination.

This situation was similar during another long enduring Michigan Mexicano celebratory tradition – the aforementioned La Novena. From the 1920s to 1944, strict segregationist practices existed at Saginaw's St. Joseph Catholic Church. Long time members such as Ida Roche recalled the parish adoption of "pew rental," whereby "families had to pay for the pews that they would sit in during Mass."[128] Having little money, most Mexicano families "had no choice but to stand in the back of the church" or sit in a select few seats on the in the back on the left side.[129] The indignities continued as Mexicanos were forced to use the side door rather than enter at the center entrance.[130] The discrimination caused the first Novenas to be held in the homes of the devout. It was not until the late 1930s and early 1940s that they were able to hold La Novena in the parish as well as hang a small picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the back of the church.[131] The push to hold the event at the church became essential for acceptance as equal. For Saginaw's St. Joseph's Mexicano parishioners, La Novena, prior to the 1970s, represented the foremost time of year when they

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[127] García, *A World of its Own*. Also see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*, Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!"
[128] Roche interview.
[129] Roche interview. Also Las Damas interview; Carmen M. Stricker, "After Six Decades…St. Joe's Novena Continue," *Mi Gente*, November 1995.
[130] In the Catholic Church, the center door is for meant for prestige and honor. For example, the center door at Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Italy is only opened on special occasions. It would be demeaning to force a group of people to only use the side door.
[131] Las Damas interview; Carmen M. Stricker, "After Six Decades."

were able to advance to the foreground of church social space. For those twelve days in December, Mexicanos from St. Joseph and surrounding parishes were able to physically occupy the building through their congregating together and claim social space by heralding a distinctly culturally Mexican holiday in the Spanish language, often dressed in what members of Las Damas described as "traditional Mexican apparel."[132]

The push to celebrate La Novena, combined with the growth of the Mexicano portion of the congregation, directly aided in Mexicanos being accepted into the church as social equals. In 1944, their determination and demonstration of piety impressed the new Monsignor, Harold Bolton, and together they petitioned and received a "special script from the Holy See in Rome, granted to the parish for ten years, in view of the special devotion of the 300 Mexican families of St. Joseph's."[133] La Novena became a permanent staple of St. Joseph, drawing worshippers from all around the state. The celebration provided Mexicanos an avenue through which to claim space within a religious center in which they were originally not welcomed. Moreover, the planning of the yearly event by Las Damas de Guadalupe helped the women – and other similar groups formed in the church – develop organizational strategies that saw them, by the 1970s, obtain the institution of Spanish language liturgy and a Spanish language choir team for Mass, featuring Mexicano instruments such as guitars, drums, and trumpets. This change was the result of the long-developing organizational strength of Mexicano parishioners who "called for Spanish music because the [previous] singing lacked spirit."[134]

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[132] Las Damas interview
[133] "Novena at St. Joseph's to Honor Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 8-16," *Catholic News Weekly*, December 2, 1945, in Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 104.
[134] Las Damas interview; Larry Rodarte Jr., "Jimmy Fulgencio was one of a Kind," *Mi Gente,* February 2015, 5; Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 96.

Assembling for culturally Mexican events, often performed in the Spanish language and sometimes under dual national flags, instructed the Mexicano community in organizational practices and signified an important non-conformist political expression that provided physical entrance into the civic, social, and political spheres. In order to host and gather for events, groups and coordinators had to come together, raise money, procure sponsorships, rent out halls or other venues, send out advertisements to draw spectators, and possibly pull permits in order to utilize public spaces such as parks, buildings, lots, or streets (often the case for parades).[135] Doing so extended Mexicano influence beyond their prescribed space as (temporary) laborers while engaging them in the local political sphere. Though the Mexican Consul often did provide aid to Mexicano events during the 1920s, many local events began as small gatherings in people's homes, outside the Consul's purview. That was certainly the case for the Saginaw community which "in 1927…began the novena in their homes with families taking [hosting] turns," prior to finally gaining admission to use the Parish.[136] This was also the case for some *dieciséis* celebrations, such as the 1924 Port Huron *fiesta patria* held in the home of Guillermo Guardarrama.[137] Out of this situation, new community leaders emerged. These local leaders organized their own groups to host larger celebrations that not only displayed a vibrant Mexicano culture, but also pushed the events into spaces previously not accustomed to having a Mexicano presence.

The *dieciséis* celebrations held in Marine City, Michigan in 1926 and 1927 epitomized this process of extended influence and access. Much like other towns, the independence celebrations were held there with pride, under the auspices of the River District

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[135] While more research is necessary, there were also a number of street concerts that occurred from the 1950s to the 1970s that would fall into this category as well. See Gutierrez interview.
[136] Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 53; Las Damas interview.
[137] "Mas Preparativos Para La Celebracion de las Fiestas Patrias," *La Prensa*, August 14, 1924, 11.

Mexican Association and its president Frank Rodriguez. Rodriguez was tasked with the mission of going to the city council to ask permission to rent a venue for the festivities. Not only did Rodriguez secure the local Auditorium (also known as the Opera House) to hold the event, but he also convinced the city council to allow the Mexicanos to decorate the streets and even the storefronts in honor of the occasion with both American and Mexican national flags.[138] The event illustrated the enlargement of space as Mexicanos grew from home services to a single insular venue (in 1926) to the more public Main Street (in 1927), elucidating how celebrations allowed Mexicanos to engage the political sphere and assert cultural citizenship as they peacefully assembled. Marine City was also not an isolated event. Rather, throughout the state, region, and country, Mexicano organizations repeated this process. In 1925, Francisco Vasquez, without any organizational backing, secured the Opera House in Shepherd to herald Mexico's Independence Day.[139] The same year, *el Comité Patriótico* approached the Pigeon mayor to obtain the use of Buerker Hall.[140] Likewise, for a 1940 *dieciséis* in Cass City, Mexicanos secured both the "Opera House hall and Sampson Brothers hall, which adjoined each other, for their celebration."[141]

In addition to being allowed to utilize public and private venues, the Marine City celebrations illustrated at least some acceptance into civic society. The events took over the city to such an extent that the Marine City Motor Casting Company closed for two days until the celebration was over because thirty-five Mexicanos employed there were attending the

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[138] "Mexicans Keep National Day;" "River District Mexicans Today Celebrate Mexico's July Fourth."
[139] "Mexicans Make Merry Two Days," 1.
[140] "En Pigeon, Michigan." *La Prensa*, September 25, 1925, 5.
[141] "Locals," *Cass City Chronicle*, September 27, 1940, 4. See also See also Guadiana interview; Martinez interview; "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday;" "*Ecos de las Fiestas Patrias en Diferentes Lugares de E. Unidos*;" "Mexicans Celebrate National Holiday in Pigeon," *Pigeon Progress*, September 20, 1929, 1; "La Vida Mexicana en los Estados Unidos;" "Owendale, Mich.," *La Prensa*, September 14, 1930, 12; "Celebración de las fiestas patrias en Michigan;" "Happenings in the Thumb of Michigan Towns and Villages," *Cass City Chronicle*, August 30, 1940, 5.

festivities. The proceedings were also well attended by local Anglo leaders. George Cramer of the Foundry and Fred Holmes of the Motor Casting Company provided welcome addresses during the events. The newspapers noted many local city officials, including the mayor, were in attendance.[142] This suggested a sense of acceptance and legitimacy in an era when most Mexicanos were viewed as lower class citizens or foreigners. While Mexicanos did not need Anglo legitimization, the Anglo presence demonstrated the bridging, at least for a short time, of some of the cultural and social barriers that separated them from the white community. By gaining access to public facilities and garnering approval from local politicians, Mexicanos were able to gain entry into civic and political space, laying claim to cultural citizenship.[143]

This push into the civic and political spheres via celebrations continued to grow and develop in the following decades. Having the right to host and celebrate non-U.S. cultural holidays in public spaces with government approval signified the right to participate in civic life. This was exemplified by one of the longest enduring Michigan Mexicano organizations, La Unión Cívica Mexicana in Saginaw, which was founded in 1945.[144] According to Larry Rodarte, grandson of one of the founders, La Unión Cívica had three principal purposes:

> 1) to fight discrimination and advocate for civil rights;
> 2) work for educational attainment for Mexican youth;
> 3) propagate Mexican culture to keep it alive as people assimilated as Americans.[145]

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[142] "Mexicans Keep National Day;" "River District Mexicans Today Celebrate Mexico's July Fourth."
[143] For more on cultural citizenship, see Mitchell, *Coyote Nation*.
[144] In 1940 there was a group of Saginaw Mexicano men who formed a group under the name of Caballeros de Guadalupe at St. Joseph's parish. Many of these men then formed La Union Pan Americana de Saginaw in 1943, which became renamed La Unión Cívica Mexicana on March 25, 1945, filing as a nonprofit with the Michigan Corporation and Securities Commission in Lansing. There also were recognized by the Detroit Mexican Consul under the name La Unión Cívica Mexicana.
[145] Larry Rodarte was the grandson of Joseph V. Diaz, who was not only a founder member of La Unión Cívica Mexicana, but also the first Mexican to graduate from Saginaw high school. Larry Rodarte, Jr., "A Historical Tale of Jose Vicente Pracedis Del Amparro Diaz," *The Diaz Observer*, July 2013, 2, http://en.calameo.com/read/0015939401ef284bc9c2b, accessed February 23, 2017.

It was these guiding principles that have directed the organization for more than seventy years. They also realized early on the importance of intertwining these goals. The organization prominently hosted both the *dieciséis* and Cinco de Mayo events for Saginaw residents. They publicized and brought pageantry to the events by the annual crowning of *La Reina* (the queen) and through elaborate decorations and costumes.[146] Hosting popular celebrations unified many in the Mexicano community (in Saginaw and from the surrounding areas) and provided a platform for engagement in politics, encouraging broader participation by the public. At the events, speakers would expound on the plights of the Michigan Mexicanos, inform Mexicanos of – and inspire them to stand up for – their civil rights, and encourage celebrants to be actively involved in the political process. For instance, during the late 1940s and early 1950s they regularly protested to congressional representatives regarding the "veritable injustices toward the migratory laborers, who have no proper guarantees necessary to sustain a standard of health."[147] Thus, using the celebrations to draw attention to local problems and writing to congressmen led to more direct political activism for the community at large.

Moreover, this increased influence extended far beyond just the organizers and leaders of the events. Participants, though most often not making a clear delineation between pleasure seeking and political activism, were very much a part of the process of pushing into the civic and political spheres.[148] The sheer number of Mexicanos in attendance added not only "strength in number" to the perceived success of the events, but the increased expansion to new, more, and larger venues was directly related to the number of attendees. For

[146] Rodarte, "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 6-7.
[147] Rodarte, "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 7.
[148] See also Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; García, *A World of its Own*.

instance, in the aforementioned Marine City example, Rodriguez went to the city council to gain entrance to the Auditorium in 1926. The good conduct and sheer number of Mexicanos in attendance prompted organizers to not only ask for more access to public space in 1927, but also for the local Anglo political leaders to oblige the request. This physically enlarged the Mexicano occupation of space, even if only temporarily. Thus, all participants played a part in claiming the first-class citizenship rights of assembly in public spaces often denied them as a segregated people living in a racialized environment.[149]

While attendance was important to the overall success, the events also encouraged participation from all members of the community. Musicians were able to display their talents. Women helped to plan, organize, and host the events, as well as cook and sew costumes needed for the festivities. It also provided young women with leadership opportunities. Young *mujeres* sold tickets for the events and often were in the running for *La Reina* or her court, providing inclusion and pride. Larry Rodarte emphasized how the Cívica events allowed young Mexicanos "to show off their talents and to take pride in their ethnic culture."[150] Children, such as a pre-teen Rose San Miguel, were able to participate as well. San Miguel remembered fondly being part of the troupe, dancing traditional Mexican dances during the celebrations in a dress her mother sewed and that she has held onto for more than fifty years.[151] In addition, the funds donated by participants during the fiestas helped amass the $15,000.00 needed to build a Mexicano community center in Saginaw, which not only provided year-round leisure activity, but also became a meeting place to organize politically

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[149] This is building on Matt García's monograph on Mexicanos in Los Angeles. He contended most participants did not view pleasure seeking and ending discrimination as mutually exclusive, but assumed they were one and the same. He cited the use of dance halls and music groups as asserting a cultural citizenship. See Matt García, *A World of its Own*, chapter 4. Also see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, Chapter 4; Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!"
[150] Rodarte, "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 6-7.
[151] San Miguel interview.

in order to combat racial prejudice faced in Saginaw.[152] It was through this evolving process of pushing into civic and political space though positive celebratory leisure gatherings that witnessed La Unión Cívica able to obtain a proclamation in 1979 by the governor of the State of Michigan that the first Saturday in May was when Cinco de Mayo was to be celebrated in Saginaw, complete with a parade and festival at Ojibway Island.[153]

Finally, it was Mexicano organizations such as La Unión Cívica Mexicana in Saginaw or *El Circulo Mutualista* in Detroit, groups formed to better the community often through a focus on Mexican cultural activities, that paved the way for young Mexicanos to stake a claim and fight for first class participatory citizenship. The groups and events set examples of how to organize in order to engage politics. For example, the children of Jesus Miramontes, co-founder of La Unión Cívica, attributed their focus on migrant rights as being derived from their father's example during his days in the Cívica. Miramontes's son, Lupe Gomez, credited the organizational events as ensuring the "younger generation would never forget who they were [even] while they were advancing [socially, economically, politically, etc].[154] It was the next generation's job to ensure they continued Mexicano progress in the state. Likewise, Maria Guadiana credited her later involvement in activism in the Cesar Chávez boycotts, in the Brown Berets, and in educational reform to her father who was a founding member of El Circulo. While she stated the earlier generation had organized to keep the Mexican cultural traditions alive, it provided organizational instruction for those

[152] "Colorful Fiesta Tonight Awaited by Mexican Folk," *The Saginaw News*, September 16, 1946 in *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years*, Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 27.
[153] Manning, "Cinco de Mayo."
[154] Rodarte, "La Unión Cívica Founders: Jesus Miramontes," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 21-22.

who grew up attending and participating in the events, as the focus of "the next generation or two generations [became] more the social movement situation."[155]

While participants may not have thought of themselves as political actors at the time, because the events had to be approved by local city officials and venues had to be secured to host the events, all celebrants (organizers, attendees, and those who had direct roles in the festivities) shared together in engaging the political sphere through their leisure activities. They entered the political realm as a byproduct of their gathering together to Mexicanize the landscape, whether in rural or urban arenas. Thus, the planned leisure activities – celebrations, religious events, and concerts – provided Michigan Mexicano communities with the opportunity to push into Michigan political and civic space.

**Conclusion**

On the one hand, Mexicano celebrations in Michigan represented an instrument used by the U.S. and Mexican governments (as well as local leaders) to typecast Michigan Mexicanos as low wage laborers and/or as belonging to Mexico. In either case, they were on the outside looking in on mainstream Anglo society. On the other hand, Mexicanos had their own complex reasons for celebrating; they ultimately used the festivals to construct new communities and new identities. It was not that Mexicanos sought to forget their Mexican roots—as they still observed the *fiestas patrias* with great fervor—but the traditional holidays began to coexist with life in the north. The fiesta sites became spaces where Mexicanos negotiated for the retention and incorporation of both Mexican and American culture. The assemblies also facilitated the evolution of the inter- and intra-regional communal networks that proved vital to the growth of the Mexicano community.

[155] Guadiana interview.

Moreover, these gatherings became essential contested spaces for Michigan Mexicanos to claim social space and engage the political sphere. The organizational strategies depicted by groups such as La Unión Cívica Mexicana, Las Damas de Guadalupe, and the River District Mexican Association elucidated a claim to the first-class citizenship right to assembly and left a blueprint on how to organize that future generations would use to fight for civil rights during the Chicano era of the 1960s and 1970s. Ultimately, celebrations and other gatherings represented an important method used by Michigan Mexicanos to overcome the Anglo-imposed boundaries as it brought them together in an area where they remained only a small percentage of the overall populace. The gatherings depicted pride, drew attention to their plights, and became a space to discuss solutions. While celebrations were vitally important, they were only one of the leisure methods embraced by Mexicanos.

## Chapter 3: Claiming Space through Sports

The year 2012 was a banner year for Major League Baseball's (MLB) Detroit Tigers. While the team won the American League Pennant before getting swept by the San Francisco Giants in the World Series, the Tigers made further headlines by having a player not only win the American League Most Valuable Player (MVP) award, but also complete the Triple Crown.[1] Miguel Cabrera became the first Latino player and the first player since 1967 (and only the seventeenth player in history) to accomplish the feat.[2] The Venezuelan born player became a local, national, and international icon. His popularity soared among baseball fans causing his jersey to become ranked nineteenth in sales among all baseball players in 2012 (rising to twelfth in 2013 and eighth in 2014).[3] It has become common to see Tiger fans of all ethno-racial backgrounds wearing Cabrera's number twenty-four jersey (and certainly those of other Latino players as well) not only in the stadium, but around the state as well. The year 2012 also marked the seventh annual "Fiesta Tigres," a night set aside "to recognize and honor the contributions of Hispanic and Latino players to the game of baseball."[4] In front of a sold out stadium, the Tigers honored their then thirteen roster Latinos, as well ex-

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[1] The Triple Crown is an earned award for a player who leads his league in home runs, batting average, and runs batted in (RBIs).

[2] "Triple Crown Winners," *Baseballreference.com*, http://www.baseball-reference.com/awards/triple_crowns.shtml, accessed September 21, 2016.

[3] "Detroit Tigers place 3 among top 20 selling MLB jerseys," *SB Nation Detroit*, October 2, 2012, http://detroit.sbnation.com/tigers/2012/10/2/3443994/mlb-most-popular-jerseys-tigers, accessed September 21, 2016; Mark Newman, "Jeter tops MLB jersey sales in his final season," *MLB.com*, July 10, 2014, http://m.mlb.com/news/article/83850422/derek-jeter-tops-mlb-jersey-sales-in-his-final-season, accessed September 21, 2016.

[4] "!Fiesta Tigres!," *MLB.com*, http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/fan_forum/fiesta_tigres.jsp, accessed September 21, 2016. The players included Eric Avila (Cuban-American), Joaquin Benoit (Dominican Republic), Miguel Cabrera (Venezuelan), Octavio Dotel (Dominican Republic), Omar Infante (Venezuelan), Gerald Laird (Mexican-American), Victor Martinez (Venezuelan), Jhonny Peralta (Dominican Republic), Anibal Sanchez (Venezuelan), Ramon Santiago (Dominican Republic), Jose Valverde (Dominican Republic), Brayan Villarreal (Venezuelan), Al Albuquerque (Dominican Republic). See Larry Rodarte, Jr., "Latino Contributions," *Mi Gente*, August 2012.

Tiger standouts. The current popularity of Latino athletes stands in stark contrast to the historic narrative of the social marginalization of Mexicanos and other Latinos in Michigan.

The proud fans of the Detroit Tigers (and fans of other teams as well) have demonstrated how sports have provided a platform for current Latinos to gain acceptance and to enter the mainstream popular culture consciousness.[5] This trend is not new, though the study of how baseball and other sports provided a space from which to negotiate for socio-cultural belonging, political engagement, organization, community building, and identity formation has only recently been given the scholarly attention it deserves. For much of the twentieth century the right to play sports alongside whites was a status marker for masculinity, belonging, and social equality. Through the fight to integrate the local and professional athletic ranks, scholars have illustrated how sports became a "grey area" where athletic prowess could blur the ethno-racial color line.[6] Examination at the local level has explicated how sports provided Mexicanos with an opportunity to demonstrate hard work, to promote themselves in a positive manner to their Anglo neighbors, to lay claim to first class citizenship rights, and to practice organizational skills needed for more direct political

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[5] As of this writing most MLB baseball teams, as well as National Basketball Association (NBA) teams, have Latino nights and/or weeks dedicated to celebrate Hispanics/Latinos, which often includes honoring prominent Latinos and the changing of the teams nicknames from English to Spanish on their jerseys and telecasts.

[6] Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); William B. Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space and Rights* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997); Samuel O. Regalado, "The Minor League Experience of Latin American Baseball Players in Western Communities, 1950–1970," *Journal of the West* 26, (1987): 65–70; Samuel O. Regalado, "Baseball in the Barrios: The Scene in East Los Angeles since World War II," *Baseball History* 1, (1996): 47–59; Samuel O. Regalado, *Viva Baseball: Latin Major Leaguers and Their Special Hunger* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Gregory Rodríguez, "Palaces of Pain: Arenas of Mexican American Dreams Boxing and the Formation of Ethnic Mexican Identities in Twentieth Century Los Angeles," Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1999; Gregory Rodríguez, "Boxing and Masculinity: The History and (Her)story of Oscar de la Hoya," in *Latino/a Popular Culture*, ed. Michelle Habell-Pallán and Mary Romero (New York: New York University Press 2002), 252–268. For more on nonwhite ethno-racial groups and sports see Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Charles Martin, *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

activism.[7] Specifically, historian Michael Innis-Jimenez contended leisure activities (celebrations and sports) became a "third space" for South Chicago Mexicanos to combat discrimination.[8]

Building upon this existing scholarship, this chapter will shift the focus to more sparsely populated Michigan landscape (compared with places like Chicago and Los Angeles) and examine the growth of sports from the 1920s to the 1970s. I argue that athletic activities became essential spaces for Michigan Mexicanos in their quest to make a home in Michigan's racialized environment. Both as participants and as fans, Mexicanos utilized sports to form new cultural identities and forge intrastate and intraregional communal ties. Sports emphasized hard work and competiveness that allowed Mexicanos to contest their imputed position as weak and passive sojourners. I also contend the playing fields constituted a vital social area allowing Mexicanos to engage the civic arena, to defy segregation by claiming first class citizenship access to public space, to organize

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[7] José Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Delia Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2015, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370; Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Juan Javier Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa! Mexican/Chicano Soccer Associations and Transnational/Translocal Communities, 1967-2002," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2004): 352-376; Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest, 1916–1965: The Politics of Cultural Survival and Civil Rights," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 7, (2000): 131–151.

[8] Innis Jimenez built on Edward Soja's urban social theory. See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996). Innis-Jiménez's work firmly placed the study of sports in the Midwestern environment, greatly expanding the study of Mexicanos in the region. While not all-inclusive, the most prominent monographs on Midwestern Latinos include Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Marc S. Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism & Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

communally, and to provide an avenue to help bridge the social and economic barriers within the state. Though sports were certainly not new to Mexicanos in the Midwest, athletics, from little league to recreational leagues to semi-professional leagues, took on an important function in the Great Lakes Region by providing positive publicity to the relatively new and small population group.

This chapter will examine the role of sports in Michigan from the 1920s to the 1970s illuminating how sports afforded Michigan Mexicanos new methods of overcoming the boundaries set against them, while simultaneously demonstrating the creation of distinct Michigan (and Midwestern) identities. To portray the vital role of this leisure space, this chapter will first will examine two sports that had antecedents in Mexico – baseball and boxing – the former being by far the most popular game both to watch and participate in. These sports, baseball in particular, were a part of Americanization efforts as Anglos introduced and promoted "American" culture south of the border. Consequently, because U.S. Anglos considered these sports more respectable, whites tended to be more accepting of Mexicanos who participated, though certainly some paternalistic undertones were present. These sports, most popular among the Mexican generation, helped to establish and shape their lives and identities in the Midwest region. The analysis then turns to more distinctly "American" sports adopted by Mexicanos after entering the United States as they constructed new cultural identities within the Great Lakes Region, including football, basketball, and cheerleading. Though participation in these sports fell primarily to the Mexican American generation, fandom bridged all ages. The adoption of these sports illustrated the growth and divergence of Mexican American identity.

This chapter draws from outside disciplines to explore how sports operate on a number of important levels. First, sports provide for the social need of to belong. The father of this social thought, Abraham Maslow, conceptualized that humans have an intrinsic need "to herd, to flock, to join, and to belong."[9] While true for all ages, students can feel an even more innate desire because they spend much of their day at school with classmates.[10] For ethno-racial minority groups, this anxiety can function at an even higher level. Having fewer co-ethnics to connect with combined with the feelings of social otherness experienced from the majority group to cause extreme loneliness. Historian Marc Rodriguez touched on the divide between belonging and otherness in his study of Crystal City, Texas, noting that joining sports teams served as a method for Mexicanos to claim inclusion by seeking the status of "jock" and cheerleader, positions "long reserved for Anglos…as uncontested status markers within the schools."[11] Rodriguez found these designations remained long into the 1960s with Mexicanas being excluded from cheer squads. It was that exclusion that sparked the second Crystal City revolt in 1969 as Mexicanas fought for civic equality.[12] Though there did not seem to as much pushback to joining athletic teams in Michigan as there was in Crystal City, the desire for Mexicanos to belong was just as intense. The smaller population meant there were even fewer co-ethnics to associate with. In some cases, during the 1940s and 1950s, there were only a handful of Mexicanos total in a high school, making inter-ethnic social acceptance all the more vital.[13]

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[9] Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper Publishing, 1987).
[10] Thomas Baskin, et al, "Belongingness as a Protective Factor Against Loneliness and Potential Depression in a Multicultural Middle School," *The Counseling Psychologist*, *38*, (2010): 626-651; R.F. Baumeister and M.R. Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation," *Psychological Bulletin 117,* (1995): 497-529.
[11] Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*, Kindle Location 883.
[12] Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*, Kindle Location 2359.
[13] For examples, see the graduating classes of Blissfield in *The Blissfield Advance*, 1951-1960, The Schultz-Holmes Memorial Library, Blissfield, Michigan; The Bad Axe High School Yearbook 1930-1950, Bad Axe

Concerns over juvenile delinquency and socially acceptable youth leisure culture during the 1950s and 1960s provide another context for understanding the important social space that sports provided. In urban spaces, youths sometimes turned to the streets to find social acceptance, belonging, and as a means of combating the segregation and racism they faced. Historians Lilia Fernández and Andrew Diamond each documented how gangs operated in Chicago as a reaction to police and Anglo harassment, while Edward Escobar documented this experience in Los Angeles.[14] While youth congregating at pool halls had some acceptance among the Mexican generation, among their children and grandchildren it represented socially unacceptable behavior that was often viewed as a gateway to gangs, crime, and violence.[15] As a result, many adults began to view the organized sports as a positive influence that provided social belonging and a space to act out aggression.

Notions of respectability can also be tracked through local newspapers. Consequently, sports reporting can reflect how a segment of the community is viewed by the larger readership. Headlines, word choice, and placement of articles within newspapers could indicate social acceptance or exclusion by providing either positive or negative referents regarding Mexicanos. In their article concerning Latinos in Lorain, Ohio, Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack tracked acceptance, respectability, and cultural citizenship

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Area District Library; Emily Martinez interview, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession); Artruo and Art Reyes interview by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Burton, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession).

[14] For gang activity among Mexicano youths see Andrew J. Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Edward Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*.

[15] For the use of pool halls among the Mexican generation see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

through references to Mexicanos and Puerto Ricans in the popular press. They found that the local newspaper, the *Lorain Morning Journal*, was silent during the 1920s and 1930s concerning Mexicanos, despite a significant presence. They contended this indicated "little inclusion within respectable Lorain society."[16] Their work focused on Latinos' ability "to present themselves as sexually-normative" as a critical factor in increased social acceptance during the post-World War II era, a status they tracked by the increased frequency of articles appearing in the society section of the local newspaper.[17] In Michigan, while celebrations certainly were one avenue to receive positive coverage, regular appearances in the sports section signified positive attention paid to Mexicanos as they participated in the more socially accepted "American" cultural activities. Thus, this examination illustrates the impact of sports went far beyond just who played what and the win-loss column.

**The Diamond**

For most of the twentieth century baseball represented a quintessential American cultural experience. Though prior to 1947 Major League Baseball was nearly an all-Anglo sport, baseball would become an integral Mexicano leisure activity that had a dramatic impact beyond just recreation.[18] The baseball diamond denoted what historian Adrian Burgos, Jr. termed a "cultural battleground" where struggles for respectability and belonging

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[16] Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home: Latinos in Twentieth-Century Lorain, Ohio," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 149-165.

[17] Mitchell and Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home," 165. See also Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Divisions and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands*,(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), chapter 5;

[18] In 1947 Jackie Robinson became the first African American to break the color line by starting first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers. However, while baseball owners long held to a supposed strict interpretation of all white players, historians such as Adrian Burgos, Jr. have documented how many Latinos were able to pass as "white enough" to play in Major League Baseball prior to 1947, including the Hall of Famer Ted Williams, whose mother was Mexican, despite his "white" phenotype. For more, see Burgos, *Playing America's Game.*

overlapped with the actual game being played.[19] Mexicanos remade the diamond into a crucial space where they negotiated cultural identity, created communal ties, developed leaderships skills, and pushed for social inclusion.[20] "America's Game" became another method Mexicanos embraced in their effort to cross the social, political, and economic boundaries they faced in Michigan.

Strongly perceived as a traditional American sport, baseball has had a long history in Mexico and other Latin American countries, representing an archetypal American cultural export. As early as the 1870s, U.S. businessmen began making direct investments into Mexico as a way of expanding their business operations during this period of American imperialism. American cultural forms, including baseball, closely followed the investment of capital south of the border.[21] For Americans, teaching baseball to their Mexican employees was an attempt to "civilize" them with more "wholesome" leisure activities, converting Mexicans from the "barbaric" pursuits of bullfighting and cockfights. Americans in Mexico were attempting to remake working class Mexican culture into something more "respectable" and, thus, more "American." Reformers thought that prowess and participation on the diamond would shape potential immigrants into proper U.S. citizens by instilling a strong work ethic and a focus on the greater good (teamwork).[22] Businessmen agreed with this strategy as a means of providing paternalistic benefits in the hopes of controlling their low

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[19] Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, 73.
[20] This builds on the theories of Juan Javier Pescador's research on soccer fields and boxing rings in Detroit, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois, as well as Michael Innis-Jiménez's work showing how sports in the Windy City provided recreational outlet, provided a positive physical and cultural environment, and allowed Mexicanos to claim physical space through their use of the park system. See Juan Javier Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa! Mexican/Chicano Soccer Associations and Transnational/Translocal Communities, 1967-2002," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2004): 352-376; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*.
[21] John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 255-256.
[22] For more on this concept, see Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, 73.

paid, overworked labor force in order to stave off unionization.[23] Thus, the export of American leisure (baseball) was an attempt to make future imports (laborers) into something more acceptable and controllable. As a consequence, by the time Mexicanos began making their way north to the Midwest in the 1920s, baseball had become a firmly fixed part of Mexicano culture. Even for those who were born in the United States, numerous historians have documented baseball's popularity among them, indicating that whether from Mexico or Texas, baseball was a familiar leisure activity for Michigan Mexicanos to engage in.[24]

The diamond figured prominently during the first wave of migration during the interwar period as a leisure activity and a site for new identity formation. On an individual level, rooting for new teams represented an active choice to remake cultural affiliation. In 1934, the Detroit Tigers won the World Series making them the best team in Major League Baseball that year. David Arceo recalled his father telling him about this experience. Rafael Arceo, a Flint Buick factory worker, drove to Detroit with is entire family to take part in the victory celebration of the world championship, suggesting how much love and loyalty he had developed for his hometown team in the previous eight years of residency.[25] The same was true for Art Morales of East Chicago, Indiana who played for an armed forces baseball team during World War II. He recalled the great thrill it was for him to play alongside some of the

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[23] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Hart, *Empire and Revolution,* 255-6, Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), chapter 3.

[24] Francisco E. Balderrama and Richard A. Santillan, "Los Chorizeros: The New York Yankees of East Los Angeles and the Reclaiming of Mexican American Baseball History," in *The National Pastime, Endless Seasons, 2011: Baseball in Southern California*, ed. by SABR (Phoenix, AZ: Society for American Baseball Research, 2011), http://sabr.org/research/los-chorizeros-new-york-yankees-east-los-angeles-reclaiming-mexican-american-baseball, accessed August 20, 2016; Burgos, *Playing America's Game*; Cohen, *Borderline Americans*, chapter 5; Jorge Iber and Samuel O. Regalado, eds., *Mexican Americans and Sports: A Reader on Athletics and Barrio Life* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), chapter 2 and 6; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*, chapter 3; Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 131.

[25] Rafael Arceo had arrived in Flint in 1926. David Arceo interview, by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).

Chicago White Sox professional players he had cheered for prior to the war, denoting his rooting interest.[26] Having "hometown" professional teams were a new experience for Midwestern Mexicanos because there were none in Texas until the 1960s. This emotional connection to their hometown baseball teams suggested the early construction of a Midwestern-centric Mexican American identity among the Mexican generation, as they called the Midwest their home.

While the formation of large statewide leagues would wait until after World War II, teams and games sprang up across the state and region engaging Mexicanos on a community level. Mexicano baseball historian Richard Santillán has demonstrated how baseball during the interwar era was vital because the games brought together entire communities, often numbering into the thousands. This space shaped local identity formation, offered leisure respite and a positive manner of acting out aggression, and connected Mexicano communities.[27] Though some details are scare, the important role of sports was not lost on local Michigan Mexicanos. In 1925, Mexicanos in Elkton, Michigan formed "el *Comité Patriótico Deportivo Cultural Mexicano*," (The Mexican Cultural Sports Patriotic Committee). This group formed in order to plan leisure recreational activities for rural farmworkers in the Thumb Region.[28] In Saginaw in 1926, *La Cruz Azul* (The Blue Cross Women's Group) planned and hosted an event that featured food and a baseball game. The Spanish language press reported that the teams bore the names "*Zaragoza*" and "*Cruz*

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[26] Interview with Art Morales, East Chicago, Indiana, May 1, 1987, quoted in Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 131-151.
[27] Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 131-132.
[28] Jesse Gonzales note cards on Chicano and Mexican History, Box 1, Folder 19, Juana and Jesse Gonzales Papers, The José F. Treviño Chicano/Latino Activism Collections, MSS 382, Special Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan [hereafter JJGP]. The Thumb region of Michigan is designated as the farmland area that is east of Flint and the Tri-Cities (Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland) and north of the Metro Detroit area. Because the lower peninsula of Michigan is roughly shaped like a mitten, the Thumb region on a map is the area that would be where the thumb on a hand would fit into a mitten.

*Azul*."[29] Keeping traditional Spanish team names while gathering together to engage in "America's Pastime" suggested a syncretic fusion of Mexican and American cultural forms while drawing together communities during the early years of migration.[30]

Despite the Great Depression disrupting all areas of life and provoking mass deportations, Mexicano baseball in the Midwest remained important to local Mexicanos.[31] During the 1930s, Mexican teams "La Aztecas," "Carta Blanca," and "La Junta" (from Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Mexico) traveled throughout the United States playing exhibition games against both Anglo and Mexicano teams, including stops in Benton Harbor, Michigan and Chicago. The newspapers noted the games were well attended by local Mexicanos and Anglos alike.[32] Additionally, Saginaw developed its own semi-professional Mexicano team nicknamed "La Favorita." The team traveled to the Thumb Region to take on the Elkton "Piratas" for the 1938 *dieciséis de septiembre* celebration.[33] Managed by Sabino Arias, the

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[29] "La Comisión Mexicana Independiente De Chicago Celebrara Las Fiestas," *La Prensa*, September 15, 1926, 5. *La Prensa* was published out of San Antonio, Texas, but had a broad circulation providing news concerning Mexicano colonias throughout the United States allowing Mexicanos to remain connected to each other no matter their migration routes or places they permanently settled.

[30] For more on the creation of a syncretic cultural identity, see Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 50.

[31] In addition to the horrific effects of the Great Depression, Mexicanos in the 1930s also faced a perilous xenophobia that precipitated the repatriation of Mexicanos to Mexico. Repatriation involved sending Mexicans back to Mexico either voluntarily or by coercion. Most historians agree that more than one million people were sent to Mexico and that up to sixty percent of those repatriated were U.S. citizens, either naturalized or native born. See Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression; Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).

[32] "'La Junta' en serie de tres juegos con los 'Casa de David,'" *La Prensa*, November 1, 1934, 7; "'La Junta' jugará en Chicago el sábado 15 de los corrientes," *La Prensa*, June 5, 1935, 7; "Japanese Play Mills; Florals Face Mexicans," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1935, A4; "Double-Headers, 3 of 'Em, Todays Semi-Pro Lineup," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1935, A2; "Florals Play Squares Two Games Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 23, 1935, A2; "Mills Lose, 4-2, Then Triumph, 7-1," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 24, 1935, 17; "Mills to Play Aztecas Today in Two Games," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1936, B2; "Double Header Carded Today for Semi-Pros," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1936, B2; "Mills, Florals Each Play Two Games Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1937, A5; "Monarchs and Mills Meet in 2 Games Today," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1938, B2.

[33] The players included Ruben Naranjo, Arlie Morrell (a pitcher who notched fifteen victories), G. Naranjo, D. Naranjo, F. Arevalo, B. Rice, F. Naranjo, G. Bartel, F. Trevino, A. Gomez, L. Palamo, W. Wrege, L. Ledesma, T. Montemayor, D. Castaño, R. Luna, T. Badford, and R. Delgado. "Buen Record de una Novena Mexicana de

Saginaw team also hosted a game against a Chicago Mexicano team in 1939, compiling an overall record of 19 wins and 5 losses that season.[34] The games became all day community affairs (as the teams often played doubleheaders). Gathering for intra-state and international competitions such as these, as well as playing intra-regional games against teams in the Calumet and Chicago, allowed Mexicano players and attendees to cement communal ties and create a broader ethno-racial solidarity with other Mexicanos across the state and region, in addition to providing some inter-ethnic interaction. This signified how the diamond became an important gathering space. While somewhat limited because the teams were principally in larger cities (in part due to the Depression), this kind of community building would only grow during the next large wave of Midwestern migration that occurred during the World War II and post-war period.

Fig. 3.1 Saginaw "La Favorita" Team Picture. "Buen Record de una Novena Mexicana de Saginaw, Mich," *La Prensa*, October 22, 1939, 4.

The 1940s through the 1970s became a "golden age" of baseball for Michigan Mexicanos with informal and organized teams springing up across the state.[35] Expanding

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Saginaw, Mich," *La Prensa*, October 22, 1939, 4; "Celebracion de las fiestas patrias en Michigan," *La Prensa*, September 28, 1938, 13.

[34] "Sociales de Chicgao, Ill.," *La Prensa*, September 30, 1939, 4.

[35] While baseball was far and away the sport of choice, softball teams also sprang up as competitive leagues, both fast and slow pitch, especially during the late 1950s and into the 1960s. While generally speaking, softball was a sport of older aged participants compared with baseball, for the purposes of this work, both softball and

from the interwar period, local teams dotted the Michigan landscape. Cities fielding one or more teams included Adrian, Albion, Alma, Bay City, Benton Harbor, Blissfield, Charlotte, Detroit, Eaton Rapids, Ecorse, Elkton, Flint, Grand Rapids, Imlay City, Jackson, Lake Odessa, Lansing (having as many as eight teams concurrently), Marshall, Pontiac, Port Huron, Potterville, Saginaw, Tecumseh, and in nearby Toledo, Ohio (see Map 3.1).[36] These teams were not isolated, but regularly competed with each other near and far. For instance, it was common for the Blissfield team to play against rival teams from Adrian and Toledo.[37] Emily Martinez also fondly recalled her husband playing for the Blissfield Cardinals and traveling with him across the state to play against teams in Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Saginaw.[38] Teams played exhibition games (such as at the *fiestas patrias* or just for bragging rights on a Sunday afternoon) or in local leagues. The winners of the area leagues often then advanced to statewide "Latin League" tournaments to determine the best Latino team in the

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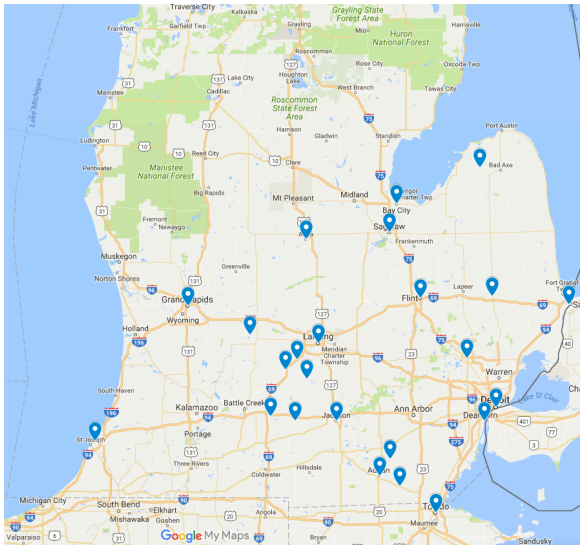
baseball teams/leagues illustrated the same function. Consequently, the size of the ball and arm motion of the pitcher will be used interchangeably to illustrate the use of the diamond as an essential border space.

[36] See "Adrian's Best Softball Players Ready to Meet Fame Toledoans in Two Games at Island Sunday," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 2, 1947, 10, "Adrian Mexican Nine Whips Toledo 13 to 7," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 4, 1947, 5, "Mexican Nine to Play Twin Bill Sunday," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 28, 1947, 9; "Lake Odessa, 1954," Box 1, Folder 27 Lake Odessa News Clippings, Gilbert Salazar papers, 1948-1999, MSS 399, Special Collections, MSU Libraries, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan [hereafter GSP]; "MG Blue Sox, Lansing," Box 1, Folder 30 MG Blue Sox Photos, GSP; "Panthers" Box 1, Folder 31 Panthers, Lansing, 1966 Photos, GSP; "Charlotte, MI Baseball League," Box 1, Folder 34 Charlotte Schedule, GSP; "Opening Games Book for Independents," *Blissfield Advance*, May 19, 1949, 1; "Independents Take Opener," *Blissfield Advance*, May 26, 1949, 1; "Junior Legion Nine Entering County Tourney," *Blissfield Advance*, June 15, 1950, 1; "Central Tri-County League, 1974 Baseball Schedule," Digital Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan [hereafter DMC], http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/michilac/msuspcjft_doc_gis500/msuspcjft_doc_gis500.pdf, accessed November 18, 2016; "Central Tri-County League, 1976 Baseball Schedule," DMC, http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/michilac/msuspcjft_doc_gis502/msuspcjft_doc_gis502.pdf, accessed November 18, 2016; See also Reyes interview; Zamarripa interview.

[37] Toledo, Ohio is only approximately seven miles south of Blissfield, Michigan.

[38] Martinez interview.

state.[39] The games brought rural Mexicanos into contact with urbanites, creating community and providing a space to exchange ideas.



Map 3.1 Confirmed Michigan Mexicano Baseball Teams, 1940-1970. "Michigan Mexicano Baseball Teams," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed November 15, 2016.

The increased assembling on the diamond during this period shaped community growth. While researching Lansing area Mexicano baseball, Lansing Latin American League organizer Gilbert Salazar interviewed Benny Huerta, one of the founders of the Central Tri-County Baseball League. Huerta, spoke of how he viewed baseball as providing a means of creating "neighbors," because he found it difficult to bond with the people and communities in the Lansing area. In Huerta's mind, co-ethnics surrounded Mexicanos in the Southwest, but in Michigan the sparse Mexicano population was more isolated, creating feelings of homesickness. Even Mexicano co-workers in factories did not easily become friends given the hardships of factory life and lack of familial contact. This belief led Huerta, alongside Eluterio Lopez and Dario Medrano, to start weekend sports activities in 1948. Though their first team, the Lansing Blue Sox, did not last long, it was the beginning of the

[39] While most all the players were of Mexican descent, most archival sources utilize the term "Latino" and "Latin" in describing the teams and leagues. They chose to the term "Latino" to be more inclusive in order to acquire talent from other Caribbean and Latin American countries.

Lansing Tri-County League.[40] Historian Richard Santillán interviewed numerous Midwestern Mexicanos for his work on the connections between baseball and politics including Flint resident Hilario Perez and East Chicago resident Abe Morales. Perez, a longtime player and coach, stated "The state of Michigan was a hotbed for Mexican baseball during the 1940s through the 1970s…. [We traveled to] Flint, Detroit, Lansing, Adrian, Emily City [sic], Port Huron, and Pontiac. We also played Mexican teams from the state of Ohio."[41] Morales remembered traveling even greater distances, describing how visiting teams and fans packed up and left early Saturday morning in a caravan of cars traveling to Michigan, Nebraska, and Kansas.[42] Gathering to play baseball games against teams from other cities thus facilitated travel and provided a structured social space that allowed working class Mexicanos – players and spectators alike – the opportunity to connect together, establishing social and political links in ways they may not have had otherwise.[43]

Whether participating in leagues or just for an afternoon respite, gathering together at the ball field became as fundamental to Mexicano community and familial life as going to church. In many cases the diamond and the pew overlapped each Sunday providing Mexicanos with a sense of social and spiritual camaraderie. For instance, on most summer Sundays in Blissfield in the 1950s, Emily Martinez and her family packed a lunch of taquitos and walked the five miles to attend Mass at Saint Peter's Catholic Church (because they did not own a car). After Mass, the Martinez family then walked to the local park, chose up sides with fellow Mexicano parishioners, and played a co-ed pick up baseball game.[44]

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[40] Gil Salazar and Noe Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues: History in the Making* (Lansing: Michigan State University, 2000), 2-5.
[41] Lalo Perez quoted in Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest."
[42] Morales interview.
[43] For more on the links between baseball and politics see Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest, 131-151.
[44] Martinez interview.

Likewise in Grand Rapids, a typical weekend included attending Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe, followed by many parishioners congregating at Rumsey Park on the city's southwest side to play baseball against other Latino teams from the west coast of Michigan. "Traditional Mexican" food was sold (such as fajitas and chicharrones) as fundraisers to cover uniforms, equipment, and travel costs.[45] Games started around one in the afternoon and, again, doubleheaders were common. These games attracted many from the community. In Lansing, Gilbert Salazar relocated the "Cardinals" home field from Marshall Field to the more family friendly Washington Park because crowds often exceeded 500 spectators. He noted, "Washington Park had picnic areas, restrooms, a playground for children and two playing diamonds. Two games were played there each Sunday beginning at noon and ending at 6:00 p.m."[46] The atmosphere attracted families, migrant workers, and non-baseball fans alike, illustrating how the diamond fostered community growth among fellow co-ethnics by providing a social and leisure gathering space outside the traditional confines of religion and *fiestas patrias*. Baseball provided, for the most part, a wholesome family space for friends to assemble – to relax and discuss issues facing the community at large.[47]

The concern for families and children resonated among many in the Michigan Mexicano community who worried about negative influences turning the younger generation

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[45] See Delia Fernández, "Becoming Latino: Mexican and Puerto Rican Community Formation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1926–1964," *Michigan Historical Review* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 71–100.
[46] Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 18.
[47] It was not always family friendly as competition and off-field issues overflowed onto the field. In 1958, Ray and Johnny Gonzales walked onto the diamond during a game between the Lansing Cardinals and the Saginaw Gallitos. Ray fired a gun multiple times at Dario Medrano nearly fatally wounding him, in what was described as a family feud between the Medrano and Gonzalez families. The incident made news across the state and ocean as Gil Salazar, Medrano's bother in law heard of the incident while serving in the Army in South Korea. See "Ball Player Shot in Family Feud," *Traverse City Record Eagle*, May 19, 1958, 19. For more on this incident and on baseball's role as a community building activity, see Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*. Also see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*.

to gangs or other trouble.[48] Many Mexicanos viewed sports as a constructive alternative. In Saginaw, Francisco "Pancho" Diaz, one of the founders of *La Unión Cívica Mexicana*, formed a youth baseball team in order to create a "positive influence for the Mexican teens."[49] He teamed with Joe Luna, owner of a local grocery store, to form "Los Gallitos." The two men developed Luna's Baseball Field in Indiantown, a playing field with bleachers and concession stands. Diaz also purchased the equipment and uniforms in order to develop a strong community atmosphere among the Mexicano youths.[50] In Blissfield, Emily and Henry Martinez worked in the migrant housing community at the county fairgrounds to improve education and life for Mexicano youth (adults as well). Henry Martinez, understanding the important role of sports in teaching teamwork and discipline, spent many years as a coach in the Blissfield Little League as well as helping to organize Mexicano youth teams in order to provide a constructive atmosphere of athletic endeavors for area youth.[51] In all cases, the diamond became a leisure safe haven, a gathering space where Mexicano youth could congregate and spend their time and energy as opposed to loitering on street corners or in pool halls.[52]

Prowess on the diamond helped provide acceptance and respectability for Mexicanos within Anglo social society, as organized teams offered a common ground between the two

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[48] The issue of gangs and fighting among Mexicano teenagers was a sentiment echoed by many within the community, especially among the founders of *La Unión Cívica Mexicana* in Saginaw and the Martinez family in Blissfield. See Larry Rodarte, Jr., "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* March 25, 1995; Martinez interview; Tony Moreno interview, by Steven Rosales, November, 15, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Frank Gonzales interview, by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[49] Larry Rodarte, "La Unión Cívica Founders: Francisco Diaz," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana*, 16.
[50] Members of the Saginaw Mexicano community are currently attempting to designate Luna Field a State Historical Marker. Rodarte, "La Unión Cívica Founders: Francisco Diaz," 16.
[51]Henry had tried out for the Detroit Tigers but had hurt his arm, ending his professional playing career. Martinez interview; "Henry N. Martinez, 70, of Blissfield passed away Thursday, April 3, 2008, at Toledo Hospital," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, April 5, 2008, 2A.
[52] Pool halls were often strongly associated with Mexicanos in the Midwest. Pool halls became places to gather, gamble, share news and grievances, and send remittances. For more, see García, *Mexicans in the Midwest* and Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*.

groups. While it certainly was not the case in every city, the local newspaper coverage in Adrian, Blissfield, and Lansing were illustrative of this process. In the Adrian-Blissfield area, local sports – middle school, high school, and even recreational leagues – were a vital part of the community as a whole, with lengthy articles regularly appearing on the front page of *The Blissfield Advance* and the *Adrian Daily Telegram* regarding baseball, basketball, and football. In the *Advance*, there were only five mentions of Mexicanos in Blissfield during the 1920s. During the 1930s, the number of articles increased to fifty. However, only two of those fifty would be considered to be even semi-positive. Six of the articles were in reference to "Mexicans" as laborers (one even calling them "peons"), twenty-nine were concerning various Anglo-led outreach programs for the poor Mexicano community, while thirteen referenced "Mexicans" as possible blights on society (illness, death, thievery, welfare, and deportation). The only two non-negative mentions were advertisements that "Mexican [music] records" were available for purchase.[53]

The 1940s showed change, though it was only in part. There were ninety-six Mexicano references in total. In addition to nineteen article references linking "Mexicans" to "labor," there were thirty-five articles about Anglo-led outreach program such as Vacation Bible School and mission work in the Mexicano migrant community. There was also much discussion (fourteen articles) over the fear of the diphtheria/tuberculosis outbreak that was noted in chapter one. Despite these negative referents, there were also the beginnings of positive attention via baseball.[54] The Adrian Nine Mexican team and the Adrian Indians (another "all Mexican" team) began to make appearances in the sports section of the *Adrian Daily Telegram* and *The Blissfield Advance.* The local Blissfield Independent baseball team

[53] *The Blissfield Advance*, 1921-1940, Schultz-Holmes Memorial Library, Blissfield, Michigan.
[54] *The Blissfield Advance*, 1941-1950, Schultz-Holmes Memorial Library, Blissfield, Michigan.

(Anglo team) played multiple games against the Indians. It is reasonable to assume both Anglos and Mexicanos attended the games as spectators signaling inter-ethnic interaction on the field and in the stands. With the headline "Adrian Mexican Nine Whips Toledo 13 to 7," it seemed a source of local pride that the Adrian Nine were able to beat the rival Toledo team.[55] Though the paper still labeled the team as "Mexican," the positive attention along with printing news about upcoming contests and win-loss records hinted at the beginning of change in the Anglo-perception of Mexicanos.

The 1950s witnessed the relative explosion of positive newspaper coverage for Mexicanos. There were a total of 307 Mexicano references. Of those, 117 were advertisements for "Mexican" and "Spanish-language movies" at the local cinema (subject of the next chapter). That left 190 articles about Mexicanos, though the term "Mexican" was employed in only a small percentage of them, mostly in reference to the "Mexican Village," the neighborhood where most Mexicanos lived.[56] More than half of the remaining articles involved Mexicano-surnamed individuals taking part in team sports (baseball, basketball, football, and track) alongside their Anglo classmates and teammates with no ethno-racial qualifiers. For example, in a 1955 weekly recap, the newspaper wrote, "The loss was charged to [Henry] Martinez although in the words of Coach Garey he pitched 'a very good game.'"[57] In an article previewing the 1957 high school baseball season, the paper wrote,

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[55] For instance, see "Adrian's Best Softball Players Ready to Meet Famed Toledoans in Two Games at Island Sunday," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 2, 1947, 10; "Adrian Mexican Nine Whips Toledo 13 to 7," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 4, 1947, 5; "Mexican Nine to Play Twin Bill Sunday," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 28, 1947, 9; "Opening Games Book for Independents," *Blissfield Advance*, May 19, 1949, 1; "Independents Take Opener," *Blissfield Advance*, May 26, 1949, 1; "Junior Legion Nine Entering County Tourney," *Blissfield Advance*, June 15, 1950, 1.

[56] Both Anglos and Mexicanos referred to this neighborhood as the "Mexican Village." It was located in Riga Township near the closed Great Lakes Sugar Company plant refinery. Local historian Charles Lindquist noted many early homes were constructed from material taken from the plant. Charles Lindquist, *Spanning the Years: A History of Blissfield, Michigan 1824-1999* (Adrian, MI: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2000), chapter 5.

[57] "BHS Nine Loses to Morenci 12-6," *Blissfield Advance,* May 12, 1955, 1.

"Five lettermen back for another season include Al Price, senior, in the outfield; Lauren Grinage, senior, as catcher; Bob Fatchett, senior, as pitcher; Tom Paulson, 3rd base, and Henry Martinez, shortstop, both juniors," signaling Martinez's prowess.[58] In recapping the opening game the paper wrote, "…Henry Martinez, on the mound for Blissfield, struck out ten and walked one and allowed three hits."[59] During the 1958 high school baseball season, Martinez's senior year, he was ruled "ineligible because of age," but remained a part of the team "giving Coach Swain a hand."[60] After high school Martinez was the first Mexicano to receive "full support from all the coaches in Lenawee County to go to the Detroit Tigers for tryouts" (though he hurt his arm ending his chances).[61] Emily (Ybarra) Martinez (who later married Henry) reflected that sports was a means by which Henry and other athletic Mexicanos were able to fit in and prove themselves as masculine to their classmates, and judging by the newspaper coverage, it seemed to work.[62]

While sports were certainly not the only factor, and things were far from racially perfect, by appearing in the newspaper sports section alongside Anglos without the distinguishing or segregating label of "Mexican," Anglo residents and leaders provided at least a tacit acceptance of the Mexicano community as social athletic equals. Martinez and all other Mexicano athletes were consistently listed only by their names alongside Anglo teammates. This coverage extended from the summer little league program to the junior and high school level to the adult recreational/minor league level. For instance, in a full-page advertisement for the upcoming 1958 Little League and Babe Ruth League baseball season,

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[58] "Baseball Opener Here on April 12 with Addison," *Blissfield Advance,* April 4, 1957, 1.
[59] "BHS Nine Scores Three Victories in Three Games," *Blissfield Advance,* May 2, 1957, 1.
[60] "BHS Baseball Practice in Full Swing for First Game April 15," *Blissfield Advance,* March 20, 1958, 4.
[61] "History of Mexican-Americans in Blissfield," Lenawee County Historical Museum, "Spanish American," 2001.614.
[62] Martinez interview.

at least nine Mexicanos were listed on the various teams alongside Anglo boys.[63] This provided interethnic interaction both on the field and in the stands, helping to normalize resident Mexicanos as a part of Blissfield, rather than only being viewed as aliens, migrants, laborers, or health risks to the community. During the 1950s, when making references to Spanish-surnamed residents, Mexicanos were treated just as their Anglo counterparts. For instance, when speaking about a Mexicano the newspaper simply used the phase "[insert name] of Blissfield," signaling they were a part of the community.[64]

In Blissfield, this process of normalization had an interesting consequence according to Emily Martinez. That is, while Mexicanos, such as she and her family, were able to become more a part of the larger Blissfield community, there was still animosity and disconnect toward the yearly migrant workers. Though she did not recall the exact year, she stated:

> We had some Anglo boys who came to the one of the [migrant] camps here and threw some bottles of beer and rotten eggs at the camp. I was already helping the families in the area, so I said to my husband, 'What are we going to do? We need to get them to know who it is they are talking to, being nasty to.'[65]

Rather than merely reprimand them or call the authorities, her "husband and his brother made a team, a local team of [migrant] Hispanics and a local team of Anglos."[66] She went on to note that the Anglo teams "included us," the longtime resident Mexicanos, whom the Anglo boys apparently had less of a problem with.[67] This situation typified the muddled situation

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[63] "Baseball," *Blissfield Advance*, May 29, 1958, 1.
[64] "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* April 18, 1957, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* August 22, 1957, 5; "Weddings," *Blissfield Advance,* October 24, 1957, 4; Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* November 21, 1957, 5; Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* April 17, 1958, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, October 16, 1958, 5; "Injured Trooper Returns Home," *Blissfield Advance*, January 22, 1959, 6; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, October 22, 1959, 4.
[65] Martinez interview.
[66] Martinez interview.
[67] Martinez interview.

that could arise when ethno-racial groups negotiated for belonging and elucidated how non-monolithic Mexicanos were as a group (i.e. some were able to achieve acceptance while others faced greater persecution). Because her husband and his brothers had long been baseball players (and became longtime Little League coaches), the diamond became a natural fit as they "were trying to get the two groups together and get it straightened out."[68] They utilized sports as a means to have both sides occupy the same physical space in order to teach about hard work and mutual respect. According to Martinez their plan worked in that situation. The teamwork, competition, and common ground of the diamond provided a universal language of acceptance and esteem between the youths.

There was a similar situation in Lansing, with baseball providing recognition and interethnic interactivity. The formation of the Lansing Blue Sox in 1948 signaled not only the commencement of a larger Latin American league that provided statewide Mexicano community formation, but also served as a means of inclusion with fellow Anglo Michiganders.[69] The Blue Sox – and later the Cardinals, the Latins, the Panthers, and the Aztecas that followed them – became fixtures in the sports pages of the *Lansing State Journal* during the late 1950s into the 1970s. Headlines ranged from "Latin-American League Lead to Lansing Cards" to "Cardinals Win on No-Hitter."[70] Short two to three

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[68] Martinez interview.
[69] See Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 3.
[70] "Tri-County Lead to Fowlerville," *Lansing State Journal*, 1955; "Latin-American League Lead to Lansing Cards," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cards, Blue Sox W in Sunday Tilts," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cardinals Near L-A League Title," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cardinals, Blue Sox Win Baseball Victories," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Panthers Swamp Jackson, 20 to 7," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cardinals Win on No-Hitter," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cards Beat M-9, Hold Loop Lead," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cards Win Third Straight Title," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Cards Beat M-9 in 15 Innings," *Lansing State Journal*, 1965; "Panthers Claw Jackson Club, 9-6," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Capture 12 Straight in League Play, 8-3," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Topple Caballeros, 4-2," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Dump Cardinals, 10-5," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Cinch Latin Loop Title," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Score Win in 10th, 9-8," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Car Dealers Face Latin League Foe," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Car Dealers Top Panthers, 6-3," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Three Lansing Teams Post Wins," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Cards, Panthers Win in

paragraphs recaps recounted the highlights of the game providing coverage to exceptional performances. For instance, in the no-hit game, the *Journal* noted "Van Sickler worked five innings and Buysse four to give the league-leading Cardinals a 9-1 record. Bobby Ledesma hit a home run and a single and Meno Galaviz had a triple and two singles in the 14-hit Cardinal attack."[71] The newspaper coverage provided positive attention to be paid to Mexicanos without ethno-racial qualifiers. It placed Mexicanos alongside Anglos within an Anglo-accepted sphere of cultural respectability.

As was the case in Blissfield, the Lansing Mexicano baseball clubs and leagues facilitated further acceptance of Mexicanos as part of the larger Anglo community due to interethnic interaction on the diamond. As historian Jose Alamillo demonstrated, for the Mexican American and Chicano generations, baseball was an interethnic space that provided them a chance "to proclaim their equality…without fear of reprisal."[72] In Lansing, this paradigm functioned in two ways. First, in addition to participating in the Latin American Baseball League, teams such as the Lansing Caballeros also participated in the Tri-County League, a league featuring Anglo teams from Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties (the Caballeros were not the only team to do so). This was especially prevalent from 1948 to 1961, prior to the formation of the Latin American League, as Mexicanos teams functioned primarily as traveling teams playing in cross-ethnic leagues as well as against other Mexicano teams. Participation provided increased competition, an opportunity to

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Slugfests," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Latin-American League Pitchers Star in Opener," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; "Panthers Hold Latin Loop Lead," *Lansing State Journal*, 1966; Box 1, Folder 3 Baseball News Clippings, GSP.

[71] "Cardinals Win on No-Hitter."

[72] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, 99-100.

demonstrate their skill, and a chance to prove themselves against Anglos within an Anglo-approved masculine environment.[73]

Second, most "Mexican" teams had at least a few non-Mexicano players on each club.[74] Originally, there were strict guidelines in the Lansing area Latin American League regarding how many non-Latinos could be on the team.[75] From 1961 to 1965 the "5-Latino" rule required at least five Latinos (a majority) to be on the field during a game, but in 1966, the rule was changed to not require teams to field mostly Latino squads. According to Gilbert Salazar, the 5-Latino rule was "what made the Latin American league unique," but that the 1966 rule changes "had an effect on Latin American teams."[76] For example, in 1966 a new Lansing team formed, the Panthers, managed by Frank Puentes, consisting of Cleo Ruiz, Gil Salazar, Lee Coryell, Herman Reyes, John Robinson, Fred Duncan, Roger Coryell, and Doug and Tom Isenhart.[77] This was in contrast to the 1961 Caballeros who had an eighteen-man roster with only four non-Latinos.[78] While the number of Anglos per team certainly increased after the rule change, most teams long had at least a few Anglos on them, becoming more ethnically diverse the longer the team and leagues were in existence.[79] This inter-ethnic diversity in athletic competition (competing against Anglos or as teammates) illustrated how baseball provided a common ground for interaction and camaraderie. Mutual

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[73] For more on rivalry, and the chance to prove themselves see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, chapter 4.
[74] "Roster: Caballeros de Santa Maria, 1961," Box 1, Folder 11, Caballeros de Santa Maria, GSP.
[75] The Latin American League was formally founded for the Lansing Area (based in nearby Charlotte, Michigan) in 1961 featuring teams from Charlotte, St. Johns, Albion, and Lansing. Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 10.
[76] Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 20.
[77] Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 20.
[78] "Roster: Caballeros de Santa Maria, 1961."
[79] "By Laws of the Latin American League No. 2," DMC, https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/michilac/msuspcjft_doc_gis539/msuspcjft_doc_gis539.pdf, accessed September 28, 2016; See also Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues,* 20.

acceptance on a small level, such as a team, was a first step to greater socio-cultural acceptance.

1961

CABALLEROS de SANTA MARIA LANSING, MICHIGAN

Managers

David Pizana
Thomas Hernandez
Dario Medrano, Assistant.

| No. | Player | Pos. | Age | Present Home | Home Town |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Frank Puente | OF | 21 | Lansing | Harlingen, Texas |
| 6 | Zeke Pizana | 2b | 28 | Lansing | Crystal, Texas |
| 7 | Gilbert Salazar | OF | 24 | Lansing | San Antonio, Texas |
| 8 | Pete Perez | 3b | 25 | Lansing | Harlingen, Texas |
| 9 | Dick Betcher | C | 31 | Lansing | Mason, Michigan |
| 10 | Matt Black | OF | 34 | Lansing | Lansing, Michigan |
| 11 | Thomas Hernandez | MGR. | 32 | Lansing | Hebbronville, Tex. |
| 12 | Manuel Delegado | 2b | 26 | Lansing | Taft, Texas |
| 13 | Albert Montemayor | C | 26 | Lansing | Saginaw, Michigan |
| 14 | John Luna | P | 27 | Lansing | |
| 15 | Al Hernandez | OF | 27 | Lansing | Hebbronville, Tex. |
| 16 | Ruben Alfaro | OF | 26 | Lansing | Weslaco, Texas |
| 17 | David Pizana | MGR. | 26 | Lansing | Crystal, Texas |
| 18 | Lee Coryell | 1b | 45 | Lansing | |
| 19 | Dario Medrano | SS | 31 | Lansing | Larado, Texas |
| 20 | Abel Nieto | 3b | 24 | Lansing | Thrall, Texas |
| 21 | Bill Peatross | P | 26 | Lansing | Lansing, Michigan |
| 22 | Andy Armbula | 2b | 22 | Lansing | Harlingen, Texas |

Fig. 3.2 Roster of the Lansing Caballeros de Santa Maria, 1961. "Roster: Caballeros de Santa Maria, 1961" Box 1, Folder 11. GSP.

Prowess on the diamond also offered some the possibility of obtaining better employment. Due to the competitive nature of local non-Mexicano baseball leagues, factory owners recruited and poached talented baseball players to play for their company teams in order to obtain an advantage over other company teams. In Corona, California, historian Jose Alamillo highlighted this power dynamic was a common experience with employers seeking a competitive edge while being able to exert control over the Mexicano employees.[80] Historian Richard Santillán corroborated this, noting that because Midwestern businesses wanted to win, "companies went out of their way to find outstanding Mexican players."[81]

[80] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, chapter 4.
[81] This occurred from the Major Leagues to the recreational leagues. Adrian Burgos, Jr. noted how this desire to win caused some professional baseball owners to "bend" the color line for players they could pass off as "white enough." This gave many Latino players a chance to play even before African Americans. See Burgos, *Playing America's Game*; Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 150.

There is less evidence of this being widespread in Michigan, and although details are sparse, it is reasonable to suggest it took place. This seemed to be the case in Marshall where the Calhoun Pickle Company team was made of mostly Mexicano men who brought success and victories to their owner.[82] On the west side of Michigan, an opportunity to play on the company team became a motivating factor for some to leave sugar beet fields.[83] In Lenawee County, it was not uncommon for former field workers skilled in baseball to play on factory teams – such as at the Magnesium Plant, for the Blissfield Merchants, or at Dunbar-Borton Piping and Heating.[84] Whether done paternalistically or not, the opportunity to play on company teams greatly benefited Mexicanos. It provided at least some acceptance within mainstream society, as standout players' names appeared in the local newspapers, and also meant the players had to have employment at the factories/companies they played for, allowing Mexicanos to escape farm work. In addition to local employment, some Mexicano players performed so well in high school and the local leagues they were even able to parlay their talent into Major League tryouts.[85] This substantiated how baseball helped aid athletic Mexicanos in overcoming the economic barriers they faced in Michigan.

The establishment of local teams and Latin Leagues also provided important leadership opportunities for Mexicanos in the state. Team managers and league officials in Michigan developed organizational skills based on being in charge of a large, diverse group of people.[86] The scheduling of league games and playoffs against teams from other parts the state demonstrated responsibility and coordinated efforts between communities. The creation

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[82] "Calhoun Pickle Co. Beats Walnut Point by 19-9 Score," *Marshall Evening Chronicle*, August 18, 1947, 6.
[83] Juan Baez, interview by Delia Fernández, Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 15, 2011 quoted in Fernández, "Becoming Latino," 94.
[84] Lenawee County is home to Adrian and Blissfield. Martinez interview.
[85] Martinez interview; Salazar and Hernandez, "*Lansing's Latin American Leagues;"* Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 133.
[86] For how this operated in Southern California see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, chapter 5.

of bylaws for the league included the formation of a Board of Directors and required all managers (or proxies) to be at all league meetings. This drew a larger number of community members into organizational activities, including working class residents. As a number of Midwestern historians have noted, leadership positions in the *mutualistas* and *comités patrióticos* often were reserved for those who were better educated and more well off financially.[87] While certainly this occurred in baseball leagues, the diamond opened new opportunities for people like Benny Huerta, Gilbert Salazar, and others who helped in the formation of the Lansing Latin League, and Henry Martinez of Blissfield who became a longtime little league coach (later inducted into the Blissfield Little League Hall of Fame).[88] It provided the chance to be involved and make a difference in the community.

Equally important was the procurement of ball fields to play the games, which allowed Mexicanos to assert first class citizenship, often denied them at other venues due to discriminatory segregationist policies.[89] Historian Richard Santillán found Midwestern Mexicanos were often barred from using public parks, or, when they were allowed access, it was to the "worst diamonds and undesirable times to play."[90] However, this was not always the case. In Blissfield, Emily Martinez said her husband and his team respectfully approached the city in order to use the local park to play their league games. She never recalled having a problem because they followed proper procedures and were granted access.

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[87] For more on the class separations in Mexicano organizations see Arredondo, Mexican Chicago; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[88] Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues;* Martinez interview; "Henry N. Martinez, 70, of Blissfield passed away Thursday, April 3, 2008, at Toledo Hospital."
[89] Many historians have documented racial discriminatory policies levied against Mexicanos in the Midwest region. Zaragosa Vargas wrote of unequal access for Mexicanos to movie houses and parks such as Belle Isle and Boblo Island in Detroit, while Juan García and Gabriella Arredondo highlighted racist policies in housing in the Calumet and Chicago, respectively. See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny;* Valdés, *Al Norte*; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[90] Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 152.

In the Lansing area Latin League, teams were required to secure fields to host home game. It was part of the bylaws for organizing a team.[91] As noted earlier, the Lansing Cardinals chose a better public park and space that was more inviting for Mexicano families. The petitioning for and granting of access to public parks, such as Lansing's Washington Park, was an early form of organized activism that not only benefited the Mexicano community immediately, but also set a precedent and legacy of civic engagement for the civil rights era that followed.[92] As with sites for celebrations, securing access to public spaces – parks and fields – was vital to Mexicanos in overcoming the social impediments they faced within the state.[93]

Women also found the diamond as a place of advancement. As with men, participation allowed women to display their hard work, discipline, teamwork, and determination. From the 1940s to the 1960s both Emily Martinez and her mother found great enjoyment on the diamond playing in local recreation leagues in the Blissfield-Adrian area, playing on all women's teams as well as on co-ed squads.[94] However, during the 1960s and 1970s, women's baseball and softball leagues began forming all across Michigan. The leagues not only saw young women in the forefront, but also, just like the men's leagues, helped forge identity and camaraderie across the state for the participants and spectators. In Saginaw, the most prominent team was the Casa Chapa Grocery team, who from 1975 to 1977 accrued forty-five wins and only five losses, winning two City League Class B Championships. In the Lansing area, teams included the Lansing Chicanas who won the 1976 Lansing City League Championship, as well as the Lansing Aguilas, Eaton Rapids

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[91] "By Laws of the Latin American League No. 2."
[92] Prior to World War II there was far more racism involved in finding diamonds on which to play, as well as at theaters and on public transit. For the most part, in Michigan after the war, securing baseball field to play games was nowhere near as difficult as it was for some Mexicanos to purchase housing in what were "white" neighborhoods. See Martinez interview; Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 18; Richard Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 133; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[93] For more see Flores and Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship*; Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!"
[94] Martinez interview.

Jaycees, Lansing Jets, Lansing Aztecas, and the Lansing Indians.[95] Greater participation in sports on high school teams and in recreational leagues became a way to lay claim to opportunities presented by virtue of their generational position as Mexican Americans.[96] Moreover, whether as players or spectators, traveling for games expanded women's sphere of influence by establishing important social, economic, and political links that connected them to other Mexicano communities across the state and region. Women also took an active role in selling foodstuffs at the games that provided extra income for families or acted as fundraisers to aid the baseball teams.[97]

**The Ring**

Though largely an individual sport, never reaching the level of participation or spectatorship of baseball, the boxing ring nonetheless became an essential space, playing an important role among Michigan Mexicanos in obtaining social respectability. Ranging from the national to the local level, pugilism emphasized masculinity, competitiveness, and discipline. Simultaneously it provided an inter-ethnic gathering space for Mexicanos, Anglos, and African Americans, in which skill between the ropes often trumped skin color and socio-economic situation (very little money is need to box locally). Throughout the period of the 1920s to the 1970s, boxing provided Mexicano men a means of proving their

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[95] "Casa Chapa Groceries," Box 1, Folder 16, GSP. "Roster: Caballeros de Santa Maria, 1961." See also Salazar and Hernandez, *Lansing's Latin American Leagues*, 24;

[96] Many historians have noted that the younger generation of Mexicanas often began to "rebel" against Mexican traditions of women being silent and more hidden. In doing so, scholars have noted the young Mexicanas were asserted their rights (and culture) as Mexican American. See Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio;* Ruíz, *From Out of the Shadows*; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American. Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also San Miguel interview.

[97] Martinez interview; Santillán, "Mexican Baseball Teams in the Midwest," 153; Baez interview.

worth and a way to physically act out against their internal sense of economic and social otherness experienced due to their position of living in a racialized environment.[98]

Boxing gyms ran the gamut from small rings in the back of buildings to large organized training facilities. In Saginaw during the 1940s, a local Mexicano restaurant owner featured dancing on the weekends in his attached hall, but opened up the space during the week for young Mexicanos to box. Prior to being drafted, Army Veteran Lupe Ortega was a regular participant, fondly recalling that place, saying, "someone brought gloves and we did a lot of boxing back there."[99] Ortega stated he did not fight to be "macho," but rather for learning self-defense. This was a skill that served him well in the Army where he boxed for recreation (against white boxers) and when he felt personally attacked by Anglo soldiers.[100] While far more organized, Golden Gloves Boxing also became a popular method for amateur Michigan Mexicano boxers to compete inter-ethnically for respect while providing a positive recreational outlet. From the 1950s onward, many Mexicanos trained at local gyms in order to participate in the statewide tournaments with a number of Mexicanos not only competing, but also achieving great success. This dedication and commitment led to respect among peers, regardless of skin color or ethnic background. One such facility was the Capitol Caravan Boxing Club in Lansing. Mexicanos were welcomed there to train and compete. During the 1955 Lansing Area Golden Gloves Tournament, at least eight Mexicano boxers competed within the fourteen different weight classes.[101] The winner of the

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[98] Rodríguez, "Palaces of Pain;" Rodríguez, "Boxing and Masculinity;" Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!"
[99] Guadalupe Ortega interview, by Steven Rosales, May 29, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[100] Ortega interview.
[101] Tournaments were held yearly with Mexicanos well represented. See "1955: Lansing Area Golden Gloves Tournament," "Weight Division," and "Golden Gloves State Tournament 1973," Box 2, Folder 21, GSP.

1955 Open Lightweight Division was Al Hernandez of Lansing. He repeated as state champion in 1956 and 1957 before losing in the championship bout in 1958.[102]

The popularity of the sport caused Mexicano individuals and organizations to open boxing clubs throughout Michigan and the Midwest. These gyms provided Mexicanos a means to claim physical space within the Anglo-dominated cities (via real estate ownership, a topic in the next chapter) and a way to reach out into the community, which allowed Mexicanos the opportunity to claim social space.[103] While many gyms opened from Lansing to Flint to Detroit, the Pontiac "Azteca" Boxing Club in Pontiac epitomized the importance of boxing clubs for the community. It was incorporated in 1949 as a means to "unite the Latin American community through athletic, recreational and social activities." While their focus was providing a positive atmosphere and promoting accord among the local Mexicano community, the founders and trainers reached out to those in the community of "all sizes, ages and races" to show how the sport of boxing extended beyond the color of a person's skin, elucidating how sports could be, at times, color blind.[104] The Azteca produced the 1960 Golden Gloves champion Ruben Flores (who later returned to the gym as a trainer). They also received accolades from the city of Pontiac in 1975 commending "The Azteca Club [for

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[102] Hernandez was certainly not the only Mexicano to become a Golden Gloves champion. In 1977, four Mexicanos won titles in different weight divisions including C. Lopez, KD. De Leon, R. Torres, and R. Lara. See "One Time Champ to Compete Present Champ," Box 2, Folder 24, GSP; Jesse Gonzales note cards.

[103] For the role of club ownership, see Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!"

[104] The club also sponsored other local teams including baseball, softball, T-ball, bowling, basketball, and golf. There were similar clubs started in Flint, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Adrian, and Saginaw. Trainer Lalo Perez founded the Flint CERCA Boxing club. He would later create and direct Flint's Eastside Boxing Club. See "Azteca Athletic Club: Program 1974," DMC, https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/michilac/msuspcjft_doc_gis924/msuspcjft_doc_gis924.pdf, accessed June 28, 2016; "Azteca Athletic Club: Program 1975-76," DMC, https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/michilac/msuspcjft_doc_gis923/msuspcjft_doc_gis923.pdf, accessed June 28, 2016; "A Fighting Chance," *Detroit Free Press*, May 17, 1984, 75; "Azteca Boxing Team," *Detroit Free Press*, March 27, 1986, 73; "Hilario "Lalo" Perez dies," *mlive.com*, November 26, 2008, http://www.mlive.com/living/flint/index.ssf/2008/11/hilario_lalo_perez_dies_flint.html, accessed June 28, 2016.

being] of service not only to Latins, but to the entire Pontiac community."[105] The U.S. House of Representatives honored the club in 1977 for its outstanding athletic achievements and its service to the community.[106] The physical presence and outreach mission of the clubs provided a Mexicano-controlled lasting sphere of influence within Anglo dominated cities.

Whereas social acceptance for Mexicanos in baseball was demonstrated by appearances in local newspapers, social acceptance for boxing can be implied through monetary investment. It was certainly true that Mexicano boxers appeared in the newspapers as well, but the lack of high school boxing teams and the more individual nature of boxing resulted in far less coverage. Rather, the funding needed for boxing clubs, gyms, and tournaments came from outside donations and sponsorships. The Azteca noted they did much internal fundraising but that the "major part of the funds…are donations and contributions…[from] civic and sports-minded people, as well as other businesses and organizations who share the clubs interests in preparing the youth of today for a better community tomorrow."[107] While many businesses in the Mexicano community supported these ventures, they were not the only businesses that advertised. Anglo businesses such as Griswold Sporting Goods, Metropolitan Life Insurance, Farmer's Insurance Group, Miller's Quality Furniture, Speedy Cleaners, Robbie's Trophies, Northside Automotive Supply, and a number of local liquor stores, along with the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 653 and 596, chose to sponsor the Pontiac "Azteca" Boxing Club.[108] While part of the decision to do so certainly was for self-promotion, their active choice of where to put their money indicated, at the least, a tacit acceptance of the work the gym was doing among young people and of the

[105] "Azteca Athletic Club: Program 1975-76."
[106] The boxing club also produced champions in 1977 (Oscar de Leon and Raymundo Torrez). See "February 9, 1977" and "April 23, 1977," Jesse Gonzales note cards.
[107] "Azteca Athletic Club: Program 1975-76."
[108] "Azteca Athletic Club: Program 1974."

Mexicano community itself who were owners, managers, trainers, and members. Consequently, this monetary legitimization signaled that the hard work, discipline, and dedication of boxing provided a certain level of respectability and civic inclusion for local Mexicanos.

Beyond local participation, professional boxing was a popular sport to follow among Mexicanos. The Spanish language newspaper *La Prensa* printed numerous articles on the sport between the 1920s and the 1960s, including lengthy editorials and recaps on prominent Mexicano boxers fighting in Michigan and elsewhere. The sheer volume of articles on the sport regardless of the fighter's ethnicity spoke to the popularity of the sport among Mexicanos in the United States. For example, the exploits of Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis, both inside and outside the ring, received much attention in the paper.[109] Moreover,

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[109] The Spanish language newspaper *La Prensa* printed numerous articles on the sport of boxing between the 1920s and the 1960s. They printed lengthy editorials and recaps on prominent Mexicano boxers fighting in Michigan and beyond during the 1930s. In addition, the sheer number of articles on the sport regardless of the fighter's ethnicity spoke to the popularity of the sport among Mexicanos in the United States. For a sample of articles on Mexicano boxers see "Kid Torreón será Enfrentado con S. Azzarella," *La Prensa*, July 30, 1930, 8; "Fidel La Barba va a Pelear Hoy con Peña," *La Prensa*, April 29, 1932, 9; "Johnny Peña Ganó su Encuentro con Fidel La Barba," *La Prensa*, May 1, 1932, 7; "Tommy Paul Gano el Titula Mundial de Peso Pluma," *La Prensa*, May 27, 1932, 9; "Magnífica Impresión Causó Panchito Villa en Detroit," *La Prensa*, July 10, 1938, 11. For a sample of articles illustrating boxing's popularity see "Rickard Declara que Procederá Judicialmente Contra J. Dempsey," *La Prensa*, October 1, 1925, 6; "En Detroit Hay un gran Enthusiasmo por el Pugilato Profesional," *La Prensa*, November 5, 1927, 8; "Frankie Genaro y Roco Pelearan en Detroit," *La Prensa*, December 2, 1928, 8; "Jackie Fields y Joe Dundee Pelearan Hoy Disputandose el Titulo de Peso Welter," *La Prensa*, July 25, 1929, 8; "Jackie Fields es Multado en la Suma de $1,000," *La Prensa*, September 7, 1929, 8; "Primo Carnera es Clasificado en el Número 13," *La Prensa*, September 20, 1931, 7; "Joe Louis, el 'Dinamitero de Detroit' Clasificado como el Numero Uno de la Division de Peso Completo," *La Prensa*, January 1, 1935, 9; "Insignificante Pelea Entre Baer y Hunt," *La Prensa*, January 5, 1935, 1; "McCoy Opina que Louis Vencera a Primo Carnera," *La Prensa*, June 4, 1935, 7; "Joe Louis ha Ganado la Cantidad de $371,645 en 18 Meses Desde que se Convirtio en Profesional," *La Prensa*, December 27, 1935, 7; "Kid Berg Encabeza el Programa Nactional de Boxeo," *La Prensa*, July 21, 1936, 7; "Programa nacional de pugilato para esta semena," *La Prensa*, April 6, 1937, 7; "Henry Armstrong fue el Mejor Pugilista del Ano," *La Prensa*, December 28, 1937, 7; "Louis Dice que Noqueara a Pastor antes del Sexto Round," *La Prensa*, September 19, 1939, 6; "Louis y Pastor Pelean Hoy por el Campeonato Mundial de Peso Completo," *La Prensa*, September 20, 1939, 6; "Baer, Con y Nova, Indicados a Pelear con Joe Louis," *La Prensa*, March, 1941, 13; "Que Joe Louis Necesita Dinero Antes de Ingresar al Ejercito," *La Prensa*, April 16, 1941, 7; "Boxeo al dia," *La Prensa*, September 15, 1946, 11; "Boxeo al dia," *La Prensa*, April 3, 1947, 5; "Boxeo al dia," *La Prensa*, November 7, 1947, 7; "El Cartel Nacional de Boxeo," *La Prensa*, January 13, 1948, 5; "Boxeo al dia," *La Prensa*, April 2, 1948, 7; "El Cartel de Boxeo en los Diversos Cuadriláteros del País esta semana," *La Prensa*, June 22, 1948, 5; "Boxeo al dia," *La Prensa*, February 22, 1951, 5; "Boxeo al dia in Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, November 17, 1951, 5; "Davey

having Mexicano heroes to cheer for such as Kid Torreón, Fidel La Barba, and Johnny Peña helped cement cultural identity and brought ethnic pride, while the ardent following of U.S. champions, regardless of ethno-racial affiliation, aided in the growth of a Mexican American cultural identity.[110]

For spectators, in addition to the interethnic interaction that occurred at boxing matches, following events in the ring could provide a shared experience upon which to connect with fellow compatriots. For instance, Rose San Miguel's father loved watching the sport because, in part, it was a space where skin color was of less significance. During the 1950s and 1960s her father owned a large pickle cucumber farm just west of Saginaw, in Gratiot County. He, like his Anglo neighbors, hired Braceros ("*nacionales*") to work the land. According to his daughter, who was a pre-teen at the time, he felt he was helping his fellow co-ethnics. However, Rose remembered very clear lines drawn between employer and employee. Despite an ethnic affinity, the workers did not enter into their boss's house. San Miguel remembered the workers "never wanted to come into the house…it was the *patron's* house and they just didn't feel it was right for them to come in."[111] She once went to speak with the *nacionales* and they told her "to go home [because] this is not the place for you; we work for your father."[112] After telling her father about this, he answered "[the workers] don't consider it respectful for you to be talking with them…. They had a very clear distinction"

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TKO Guiliani," *La Prensa*, April 30, 1953, 1; "Chuck Davey Sufrio Nueva Derrota en Box," *La Prensa*, September 10, 1953, 5.

[110] For more on American popular cultural influence on Mexican American identity growth, see Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.

[111] San Miguel interview.

[112] San Miguel interview.

that the workers and employers were on different planes of society.[113] However, according to San Miguel, boxing facilitated some interaction:

> My dad used to watch the Gillette Boxing on TV and [the workers] wouldn't come into the house to watch. They would be outside the house, close to where the TV was to hear the fights. So my dad started turning the TV around because he couldn't get them to come into the house to watch [the fights]. So he would turn the TV around and interact with them in that way.[114]

Despite a window of separation, and while there were other forms of interaction (such as her father taking the workers to town each weekend for supplies), San Miguel remembered boxing as providing a shared experience offering camaraderie between her father and his co-ethnic workers. Like baseball, boxing provided a space to gather and connect, but there were also other new sports Mexicanos embraced as part of their culture.

**New Midwestern Sports: The Gridiron and the Hardwood Court**

Baseball certainly was the sport with the broadest appeal and with the most prolific statewide participation (based on the wide range of ages who participated). Other sports, however, also became vitally important to the lives of Michigan Mexicanos and were much more specific to the American and the Midwestern experience. Chief among these were football and basketball.[115] Certainly both sports were played in Texas, but collegiate football

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[113] San Miguel described this by illustrating with her hands saying her father was "here" and the workers were "here" (holding her hand higher than the other). In regards to the issue of "respect," it is certainly possible her father felt differently than his daughter remembered it, perhaps describing it as "respect" due to her age and/or to teach her a lesson. However, Rose does also state she went to speak with the workers because "it was how she was raised" (insinuating her boldness to speak with whomever she wanted as a product of her upbringing in Michigan). Though her father may well have sought to have clear lines of separation, it does not change the kindness showed during the boxing matches. San Miguel interview.

[114] San Miguel interview.

[115] For the purposes of this work, the term "football" will be used to indicate American football rather than soccer. There were certainly other sports that Mexicanos embraced, though never to the degree of football and basketball, including golf, cross country, track, and volleyball. See San Miguel interview; Zamarripa interview.

and basketball have long been ubiquitous to life in Michigan and the Great Lakes region.[116] Rural Indiana has popularly been lauded as the "home" of basketball by sports fans and the region is home to the top two ranked college football programs in terms of number of wins and winning percentage (University of Michigan and Notre Dame).[117] The beginning of gridiron play in the 1870s for many colleges and universities in the Great Lakes Region signaled the commencement of an autumn rite for Midwesterners who popularly followed their schools.[118] Like the diamond and the ring, the football gridiron and hardwood court of basketball became essential negotiated spaces that provided social acceptance and had a significant impact on Mexicano cultural identity formation suggesting just how Michigan- and Midwestern-minded northern Mexicanos had become.

By and large, most Mexicano adults who traveled to Michigan as migrant workers or settled there did not have the opportunity to play football or basketball due to the constant traveling and because local teams and adult leagues did not develop until the 1960s and

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[116] For works on the importance of football and basketball, see Chad S. Conine, *The Republic of Football: Legends of the Texas High School Game* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Lane Demas, *Integrating the Gridiron: Black Civil Rights and American College Football* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011); Ignacio M. García, *When Mexicans Could Play Ball: Basketball, Race, And Identity In San Antonio, 1928-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); Kurt Edward Kemper, *College Football and American Culture in the Cold War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Martin, *Benching Jim Crow*.

[117] Over the past decade the University of Michigan and Notre Dame have fluctuated who has the best all-time winning percentage. At the start of the 2016 season, Notre Dame held a slight edge, but in November 2016, the Fighting Irish were forced to forfeit some wins stemming from an NCAA violation, placing Michigan back into first place. "Football Bowl Subdivision Records," *NCAA*, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/stats/football_records/2015/fbs.pdf, accessed November 30, 2016.

[118] The University of Michigan and Notre Dame are far and away the most popular programs from the region nationally. The football team in Ann Arbor, Michigan began play in 1879 while the team from South Bend, Indiana began in 1887, showing just how long football has been a part of Midwestern leisure culture. In comparison, the University of Texas began playing football in 1893. *The Chicago Tribune* noted the Michigan-Racine game in 1879 was the first college football game west of the Alleghenies. "Foot-Ball: The Racine College and Michigan University Teams," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1879, 5; "Michigan Football Traditions," *MGoBlue.com*, http://www.mgoblue.com/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/021910aad.html, accessed November 30, 2016; "First Game in Notre Dame Football History," *University of Notre Dame*, http://125.nd.edu/moments/first-game-in-notre-dame-football-history/, accessed November 30, 2016; "UT Football: All-Time Results," *Texas Sports*, http://www.texassports.com/sports/2013/7/21/FB_0721134841.aspx?id=131, accessed November 30, 2016.

1970s. One such example of a local Mexicano football team was the "Gundry Gorillas" of Flint who were set to play against a Saginaw team in the self-titled "Chicano Bowl" under sponsorship of the Flint Spanish Speaking Information Center in 1970 (discussed in greater detail in chapter four).[119] During the 1970s many basketball city and state leagues also developed, including both Latino and inter-ethnic leagues. For instance, the Mexicano men's team from Saginaw (Taco Villa) participated in both the Latino tournament as well as the Saginaw Basketball League, an inter-ethnic league. From 1973 to 1975 Latino basketball teams hailed from Saginaw, Detroit, Bay City, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Flint, Adrian and Pontiac.[120]

Despite these few examples, participatory introduction to play on the gridiron and the hardwood most often occurred for young Mexicanos growing up in area schools. Joining the high school team and exhibiting athletic prowess could demonstrate masculinity, provide inclusion and respect among classmates, and illustrate a Mexican American cultural identity. That was certainly the case for a number of Michigan Mexicano residents. In Flint, Augustine Zamarripa joined the football team in part because it was the sport that his classmates (white and black) were playing, making football an opportunity to fit in as an "American," rather than being viewed as different.[121] Frank Gonzales played high school football in Saginaw during the 1940s in part because he loved sports and wanted to be a part of the school team (he recalled there only being about three Mexicanos in his school).[122]

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[119] "The Spanish-Speaking Information Center: Newsletter No. 10," Folder 1, The Spanish Speaking Information Center, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint Library, Flint, Michigan.
[120] See "Taco Villa Wins Class E Championship," *El Renacimiento*, December 17, 1973, 20; "Latino-Americano Basketball All-Tournament Selection," and "Detroit Win State Title," *El Renacimiento*, April 28, 1975. "Latino Americano Basketball Tournament, 1975," Box 2, Folder 9, Basketball – Men Newsclippings and Photos, GSP.
[121] Zamarripa interview.
[122] Gonzales interview.

Illustrating the intergenerational conflict that could arise between the Mexican generation and their American raised children, Gonzales said he had to "kind of work through my mother" to play because "My dad was a hard working individual who did not believe in deviations; he didn't believe in sports for the children either."[123] Gonzales insinuated his father was just so focused on the idea of having to work that he felt sports were a distraction from what needed to be accomplished. Consequently, for Mexicanos like Gonzales, football (as well as other sports) was a means of social liberation and an opportunity to be typical "American" teenager. Tony Moreno attended St. Joseph's Catholic School in Saginaw and recalled playing basketball side by side with Anglos, Mexicanos, and African Americans. The bonds formed on the court brought him together with fellow teenagers, though Moreno recalled extracurricular fighting (including knives) between African American and Mexicanos elucidating that while sports could bring the ethno-racial groups together, it was not an easy path.[124] In all these cases, Mexicanos joined in part because they relished having the opportunity to participate in new social leisure activities by virtue of their status as Mexican Americans.

As was the case with baseball, Blissfield offers a valuable case study regarding the role of football and basketball in obtaining Anglo social acceptance. Emily Martinez recalled that high school sports became one method Blissfield Mexicanos used to "fit in" with their Anglo classmates during the 1950s. Martinez described her future husband as strutting

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[123] Gonzales interview. For more on intergenerational issues arising as the Mexican American generation took part in culturally American activities, see Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

[124] Moreno interview.

around the schoolyard, feeling like a "big shot" due to his athletic endeavors.[125] While the extent to which he "strutted" could be open to interpretation, there was no doubt as to the positive attention Blissfield Mexicanos received due to their success on the gridiron and the hardwood. During the decade of the 1950s Mexicanos appeared in *The Blissfield Advance* more than fifty times for participation in basketball (44) and football (10). The manner in which the text portrayed them suggested a certain level of inclusion within mainstream society, occurring as Mexicanos appeared alongside Anglo teammates, as part of an interethnic ensemble. [126]

While many articles were more mundane in nature, only listing the players (Anglo or Mexicano) who were high scorers, there were also many articles signaling out Mexicano basketball players who were significant contributors. At the start of the 1956 varsity basketball season, the *Advance* wrote, "the team is rounded out with Crots, a pivot-man who can hook or drive under for a layup and [guard Abel] Sanchez, the long-shot artist."[127] More illustrative were articles that came at the end of the 1956 season. In recapping how well the Blissfield team did in the regional tournament, the paper commended Sanchez, writing "How well [the game plan] worked is shown by Abel Sanchez, who stuck like flypaper to Bob Howard, Adrian's scoring ace, and held him to only three field goals all evening, while at the same time managing to tip in 9 points himself."[128] This came after Sanchez was named to the district All-Tourney team.[129] Sanchez went on to receive a Varsity Letter from his coach

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[125] She also told of how some students acted out and were mistreated based on their skin color while others, like her, focused on being kind and on being a studious pupil, which created peace for her. Emily Martinez interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, November 15, 2013.
[126] In addition, there were also nine occurrences regarding Mexicanos competing and staring on the high school track team. *The Blissfield Advance*, 1951-1960, Schultz-Holmes Memorial Library, Blissfield, Michigan.
[127] "BHS Cagers Win Two, Clint and Tecumseh," *Blissfield Advance,* December 22, 1955, 1.
[128] "BHS Cagers in Regionals," *Blissfield Advance,* March 15, 1956, 1.
[129] "Three Cagers Win Places on League Teams," *Blissfield Advance,* February 9, 1956, 1.

after the season.[130] Abel Sanchez received attention and praise based on his talent, but he was not the only Mexicano to do so. In a January 1956 Junior Varsity basketball game, the *Advance* highlighted that Henry Martinez scored 10 points in one game and 21 in a second game that past week.[131] Martinez was named to the varsity team for the 1957 season, while Reuben Sanchez made varsity as a guard in 1958.[132]


Fig. 3.3 Blissfield Varsity Basketball team photograph, 1955. Abel Sanchez starred on the team and received regular coverage in the newspaper. "Blissfield High School's Basketball Team Enters Tourney Play Friday," *Blissfield Advance*, March 3, 1955, 1.

Given the treatment in the newspapers, it is reasonable to suggest Mexicanos were cheered for and accepted by their Anglo neighbors and teammates because of their skill and because they helped their hometown teams win. For instance, in February 1957, the eighth grade basketball team was invited to the home of the Uckele family for a turkey and ham

[130] "Letters awarded to basketball boys at assembly," *Blissfield Advance,* April 19, 1956, 1.
[131] "Blissfield Cage Squad Outpoints Hudson, Bedford," *Blissfield Advance,* January 12, 1956, 1.
[132] "Two Lettermen Among 9 out for Basketball," *Blissfield Advance,* November 22, 1956, 1; "BHS Royals Open Basketball Season in New Gym Here Friday," *Blissfield Advance*, December 4, 1958, 1.

dinner. This included young Reuben Sanchez.[133] Leading up to the start of the 1959 season the *Advance* highlighted the captains picked for the Junior High teams: "In balloting by the teams last week, the Junior high teams chose their captains for the year. The 7th grade chose Dick Million and Jerry Ricker as co-captains and the 8th grade chose David Martinez. Congratulations boys."[134] Martinez's teammates thought enough of him to vote to install him as their captain, suggesting that talent and/or character trumped ethno-racial concerns.

This positive attention to Mexicano athletes extended to the gridiron as well. In previewing the upcoming 1956 football season, the *Advance* told its readers about the team that Blissfield would be fielding: the "probable starting line-up announced by [Coach] Chenhall will see Henry Martinez at fullback…Martinez, a starter on the reserve basketball team last season is trying football for the first time, and looks good."[135] Martinez did start the following week and scored a touchdown in an early October game before having his season end early after hurting his leg in a late October contest.[136] The newspaper noted his brother, Paul, "showed promise on the reserve team and will be moving up to the varsity" the next season (he did make the varsity in 1958).[137] Further achieving accolades were other members of the reserve (junior varsity) football team. In recapping a 1958 game, the *Advance* wrote: "The BHS reserve squad beat the Onsted Eleven, 7-6, last Thursday night in a game played on the home field. Rubin [sic] Sanchez went around the end for the Royal's

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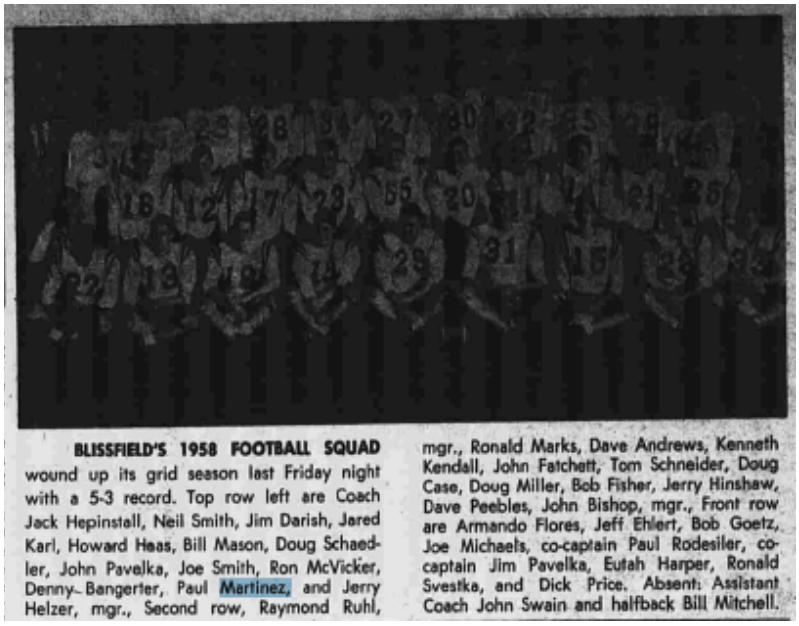
[133] "Uckele Hold Dinner for Jr. High Team," *Blissfield Advance,* February 21, 1957, 1.
[134] "Captains Named by Junior High Teams," *Blissfield Advance*, December 11, 1958, 4.
[135] "BHS Grid Season Opens Friday Night at Dundee," *Blissfield Advance* September 13, 1956, 1.
[136] "BHS Grid Season Opens Friday Night at Dundee;" BHS Gridders Win Opener at Dundee," *Blissfield Advance,* September 20, 1956, 1; "Blissfield Nips Onsted, 27-18 in Sloppy Game," *Blissfield Advance,* October 11, 1956, 1; "Hudson Just Too Good," *Blissfield Advance* October 25, 1956, 1.
[137] "Football," *Blissfield Advance,* November 15, 1956, 1.

single tally of the afternoon with Armando Florez [sic] running the extra, and winning, point."[138]



**BLISSFIELD'S 1958 FOOTBALL SQUAD** wound up its grid season last Friday night with a 5-3 record. Top row left are Coach Jack Hepinstall, Neil Smith, Jim Darish, Jared Karl, Howard Haas, Bill Mason, Doug Schaedler, John Pavelka, Joe Smith, Ron McVicker, Denny Bangerter, Paul Martinez, and Jerry Helzer, mgr., Second row, Raymond Ruhl, mgr., Ronald Marks, Dave Andrews, Kenneth Kendall, John Fatchett, Tom Schneider, Doug Case, Doug Miller, Bob Fisher, Jerry Hinshaw, Dave Peebles, John Bishop, mgr., Front row are Armando Flores, Jeff Ehlert, Bob Goetz, Joe Michaels, co-captain Paul Rodesiler, co-captain Jim Pavelka, Eutah Harper, Ronald Svestka, and Dick Price. Absent: Assistant Coach John Swain and halfback Bill Mitchell.

Fig. 3.4 Blissfield Varsity Football team photograph, 1958. Paul Martinez earned a spot on the varsity team in 1958 carrying on the family tradition started with his older brother, Henry. "Blissfield's 1958 Football Squad," *Blissfield Advance*, November 13, 1958, 4.

While it is true acceptance via athletic prowess most directly benefited only those individuals who competed, there was an indirect benefit to the whole Mexicano community. Not once during the 1950s sports coverage were any of the participants labeled with the term "Mexican" or with any other qualifying designation that signified they were "different" from their classmates. On the contrary, the lack of an ethno-racial identifier carried over to their, and their classmates', student lives. For instance, students elected Ruben Sanchez as First Lieutenant for the Safety Patrol and later elected Abel Sanchez as student class president.[139] Sanchez also was captain of one of the senior teams who went door-to-door selling

[138] Though some could argue the misspelling of names in this article represented some slight against Mexicanos, it is not substantiated. In other articles the names were spelled correctly and anyone who played enough high school sports knows how often newspapers misspell names. "Reserves Beat Onsted, 7-6," *Blissfield Advance*, October 2, 1958, 4.

[139] "Students Elect Safety Patrol, Service Squad," *Blissfield Advance*, February 3, 1955, 8; Class Officers Elected at BHS," *Blissfield Advance,* September 22, 1955, 1.

newspaper subscriptions to raise money for the senior class trip to Washington, D.C. (a position Henry Martinez and Eva Sanchez later held).[140] In the larger community as well, it was only beginning in the second half of the 1950s that Mexicanos began appearing in the "Society" section of the *Advance* alongside Anglos, again with no mention of any ethnic heritage. In April of 1957, the paper reported: "Born Monday at Bixby hospital to Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Sanchez of Blissfield, a daughter."[141] They treated soldiers similarly: "Army Pvt. James N. Martinez, son of Mrs. Mary Madrid, 606 Jipson st., is a member of the 7th Infantry Divison [sic] in Korea. He entered the Army in July 1956 and arrived in Korea last January. The 23-year-old soldier is a 1952 graduate of Blissfield high school."[142] While sports certainly were not the only factor, "normalizing" Mexicanos to the public by removing any ethnic signifiers was first witnessed in the sports pages of the local newspaper.[143]

For young Mexicanas, the quest for belonging was often a more difficult maze to navigate. Participating in sporting and recreational activities was not always something Mexicano families thought a young girl should do.[144] At the same time, Mexicanas faced

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[140] "Seniors Net $221 On Subscription Drive 2nd Week," *Blissfield Advance,* March 1, 1956, 1; "Students will Canvass Homes thru February," *Blissfield Advance,* February 6, 1958, 1; "Subscriber Drive Lags in 3rd Week," *Blissfield Advance*, March 26, 1959, 1; "BHS Seniors Begin Drive For Advance Subscribers," *Blissfield Advance*, March 5, 1959, 1.

[141] "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* April 18, 1957, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* August 22, 1957, 5; "Society," *Blissfield Advance,* September 26, 1957, 3; "Weddings," *Blissfield Advance,* October 24, 1957, 4; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* November 21, 1957, 5; Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance,* April 17, 1958, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, October 16, 1958, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, February 5, 1959, 4; "Society," *Blissfield Advance*, April 16, 1959, 3; "Queen Candidates," *Blissfield Advance*, May 28, 1959, 1; "Birthday Parties," *Blissfield Advance*, June 11, 1959, 4; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, August 13, 1959, 5; "Baby Talk," *Blissfield Advance*, October 22, 1959, 4.

[142] "Stationed in Korea," *Blissfield Advance,* April 11, 1957, 10; "Mostly About Folks," *Blissfield Advance*, February 26, 1959, 1; "Reserves Complete Two Weeks Duty," *Blissfield Advance*, August 27, 1959, 4.

[143] For more on using newspapers to tract social acceptance see Mitchell and Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home."

[144] For more on young Mexicanas negotiating and breaking away from the "traditional" mores of their parents' generation see Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin; University of Texas Press, 2011); Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*, chapter 8; Ruiz, *Cannery Women Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry*, 1930-1050 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*.

being both ethnically Mexicano and female, precipitating an even smaller circle of co-ethnics to bond with in Michigan schools. While participation on girls' teams became increasingly frequent, especially in basketball, during the later 1960s and 1970s, the gridiron and the hardwood court offered desirable opportunities to "fit in" with fellow Anglo classmates in high school. Many viewed cheerleading from the sidelines as means to spark inter-ethnic respect, belonging, and an opportunity to expand their American cultural lives.[145] Though there did not seem to be the pushback from Anglos that historian Marc Rodriguez found in Crystal City, Texas, perhaps due to the smaller overall Mexicano population, Michigan Mexicanas still faced difficulties.[146] Rose San Miguel recalled her family was well respected within the local Mexicano community in Gratiot County, describing it as her family being treated "like royalty" because her father had a good job at Dow Chemical and had attractive, eligible daughters. However, she lamented, "…and then I would go to school and I wasn't treated that way at all. It was confusing for me."[147] San Miguel recalled, "I was not like all the other girls." She stated that Josephine Gagne and David Gutierrez "were the only other Hispanics in my graduating class that looked Hispanic." She had another Mexicana classmate, Phyllis Garza, who she went all the way through school with. Garza, though, had lighter skin and seemed to "fit in" better with classmates, according to San Miguel. San Miguel's skin was darker, her hair was longer, and the bows her mother braided into her braids made her look different. As a consequence, she cut her hair, "then the eighth grade I became a cheerleader" as a means of fitting in. She joined the cheerleading squad despite her

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[145] There is also some evidence of this occurring in band as well, though more research is needed in this area. In Blissfield, Eva Sanchez joined the band and achieved recognition as a saxophone player in district competitions and while performing at football games. She had her picture in the newspaper as a senior playing at her last home game. See "BHS Bandsmen Win Honors in District Festival," *Blissfield Advance,* February 6, 1958, 1; [untitled], *Blissfield Advance*, November 6, 1958, 1; "Sr. High Band in Last Concert Of Year May 2," *Blissfield Advance*, April 30, 1959, 1.
[146] Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*, Kindle Location 2359.
[147] San Miguel interview.

parents refusing to allow her to cheer at football games, deeming it as "just not something her family did."[148] While inclusion was limited in San Miguel's case, talent on the cheer squad was a means of providing notoriety for other young Mexicanas. In Lansing, Cynthia Majorado earned a first place prize in an individual cheerleading competition for the ninth grade division while competing against girls from Lansing, Charlotte, Eaton Rapids, Mason, Ovid-Elsie, Portland, and Williamson. She parlayed that success into mentoring young girls from different schools on the skills it took to become a member of their school's cheerleading squad, opening doors for greater acceptance among peers. She earned the respect of her classmates and was elected to student council as well.[149]

**Becoming Midwestern on the Sports Page**

Even if Mexicanos could not or did not participate in football or basketball (such as in the Mexican generation), the fandom following of collegiate teams clearly demonstrated how culturally Michigan- (and Midwestern) minded that Mexicanos had become as they remade their identities living and working in the north. Televisions were not always prevalent in every household or at pool halls, especially during the early migration period, meaning that in order to follow a favorite sports team, people turned to newspapers and radio for news and results. One of the leading Spanish language papers in the nation was *La Prensa*, published out of San Antonio, Texas, which had a broad distribution supplying news for both traveling migrant laborers as well as those who settled out of the stream.[150] Beginning in the 1920s,

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[148] San Miguel interview.
[149] She was also a member of the school softball team. "Latino Girl Wins Cheerleading Competition," March 14, 1977, Box 2, Folder 30, Cheerleading High School, GSP.
[150] *La Prensa* was long regarded as a well-respected publication both for Mexicanos throughout the United States and in Mexico. While the major base of circulation was in San Antonio (covering many migrants who made yearly trips north), the newspaper's popularity caused it to be shipped out of the city and out of state including at schools, clubs, and universities. The newspaper began publishing in 1913 and suspended operation

the newspaper began printing collegiate football box scores and results on a weekly basis. Continuously reporting on football suggested significant interest in the sport by *La Prensa's* readership. Additionally, while the box scores did feature teams from across the United States, most of the schools highlighted were from the Great Lakes Region. Notre Dame was a fixture, as were the prominent programs at Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. Smaller Michigan colleges also made regular, recurring appearances in *La Prensa* including Detroit, Mt. Pleasant, Adrian, Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, Eastern Michigan University (Michigan State Normal School), Western Michigan University (Western Michigan Normal School), Wayne State University, St. Mary's, Albion, Alma, and Ferris State (Institute). While the larger universities often had nationwide following, the smaller colleges seemingly only had local appeal. The decision to print outcomes from those programs suggested not only high curiosity among those who made yearly migrations, but also the presence of a significant Mexicano population residing in the state and region, otherwise the newspaper would not have chosen to feature those universities and colleges.[151]

The coverage of collegiate football expanded dramatically during the 1930s, suggesting an increasing interest in the American sport among Mexicanos. The dramatic increased attention to "American" sports paralleled two important developments in the life of the founder of *La Prensa*, Ignacio Lozano. First, during the 1930s and 1940s, following the repatriation drives of the United States during the Great Depression, Lozano began to change

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in June 1963 (though it had a stoppage in 1957). See Richard A. García, "Class, Consciousness, and Ideology: The Mexican Community of San Antonio, Texas: 1930 – 1940," *Aztlan* 9 (Fall 1978): 23-70; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano: The Mexican Exile Publisher Who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles," *American Journalism* 21 (2004): 75-89; Nora E. Ríos McMillan, "La Prensa," *Texas State Historical Association,* http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eel03, accessed September 15, 2012.

[151] "Resultado de los Juegos de Foot-ball," *La Prensa*, October 8, 1926, 4; "Resultado de los Juegos de Foot-ball," *La Prensa*, October 11, 1926, 4; "Resultado de los Juegos de Foot-ball," *La Prensa*, October 18, 1926, 4; "Resultado de los Juegos de Foot-ball," *La Prensa*, October 25, 1926, 4' "Resultado de los Juegos de Foot-ball," *La Prensa*, November 1, 1926, 4;

his rhetoric regarding his insistence that Mexicanos abroad would and should one day return to Mexico, realizing many were in the United States to stay. That being the case, it now made more sense to consume greater amounts of American popular culture. Second, his son Ignacio, Jr. was attending university at Notre Dame suggesting an increased awareness and interest in the region.[152] This attention overlapped with the increased growth of the Mexicano community in the Great Lakes Region, including Michigan, during the late 1930s and into the 1940s.

The result was an explosion of nearly 200 articles concerning Midwestern-related football during the 1930s. In addition to providing the results for an increased number of colleges and universities, *La Prensa* began also printing previews and schedules for upcoming games, informing readers of when and whom their favorite team would be competing against. They also wrote articles concerning injuries for star players, All-American team selections (often with pictures), and college bowl games. What did not change from the 1920s, however, was the prominent inclusion of large and small schools from across the Great Lakes Region, including many articles focusing exclusively on the University of Michigan, Notre Dame, and the Big Ten Conference at large.[153] For instance, in 1932 *La Prensa* ran an article merely to inform Spanish speakers that halfback Stanley Fay was elected to be team captain for the University of Michigan replacing Ivy Williamson for

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[152] Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano," 82-3.

[153] There were more than 170 references to collegiate football teams residing in the Midwest just in the 1930s. To determine this I searched the online Hispanic American newspaper database cross referencing key terms including "football," "futbol," "Gran Diez," "Notre Dame," and "Mich" from the years 1910 through 1960. I recorded each reference to a Midwestern school, whether in the headline or the text. Most every article came from *La Prensa*, San Antonio. Most of the early articles were merely scoreboard recaps. As the 1930s progressed, the articles became increasingly detailed with analysis, feature articles, images, and news concerning the schools. Readex (Firm), *America's Historical Newspapers*, 2004, http://infoweb.newsbank.com/?db=EANX.

the upcoming season.[154] In 1933 the newspaper wrote a feature article on the Wolverines becoming the winningest program in college football history (based on winning percentage) with an overall historical record of 102-32-5 while later printing a large image featuring the hard-earned scoreless tie that saved Michigan's chances to compete for the national championship (which they went on to win that season).[155] In addition, the paper provided news of coaching changes for Michigan, (as well as Michigan State) focusing on the reason for the firing and the potential front-runners to replace the ousted head coach (the paper also followed up with the hiring announcement).[156] Moving beyond of providing mere basic details of scoreboards to providing expanded coverage of news and analysis illuminated the increased popularity and consumption among the Mexicano community, while the sheer preponderance of attention concerning *El Gran Diez* (the Big Ten Conference), Notre Dame, and other Michigan schools suggested how regionally rooted Mexicanos had become in their Mexican American cultural identity.

Like football, college basketball became a popular leisure sport to follow as well, providing yet another example of an "American" athletic activity Mexicanos embraced. Commencing in the 1930s, *La Prensa* began publishing results from the college hardwood in addition to its coverage of the gridiron. While it never received the same detailed attention as football, the reporting – featuring numerous Michigan teams weekly – illustrated how Mexicanos had formed cultural fandom attachments to their new hometown teams or else a San Antonio-based newspaper would not waste the print space to inform readers of the

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[154] "Stanley Fay Fue Elegido Capitan del Michigan," *La Prensa*, November 24, 1932, 7.
[155] "Michigan es el Mejor Anotador de Football," *La Prensa*, November 14, 1933, 4; "Mchigan y Minnesota Empataron, 0 a 0," *La Prensa*, November 22, 1933, 7; "Michigan proclamado campeón nacional de football," *La Prensa*, December 12, 1933, 7
[156] "Numerosos 'Coaches' de Football han Renunciado de Sus Puestos," *La Prensa*, December 30, 1937, 7; "Nuevo Entrenador de Michigan," *La Prensa*, February 17, 1938, 7. See also "Crowley fue nombrado 'coach' de Fordham," *La Prensa*, January 6, 1933, 9.

outcomes. Throughout their coverage, the colleges at Adrian and Hillsdale made the most frequent appearances, indicating a significant year-round population that resided in that farming area of the state and/or a significant population traveling there from Texas that desired news from their "second home" (as basketball is a winter sport). Other schools regularly featured included the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Michigan Tech, Wayne Teachers, Ferris State, St. Mary's, Michigan Normal, Kalamazoo, Alma, Albion, Hope, Olivet, Grand Rapids, Western Michigan, Central Michigan, Northern Michigan, Battle Creek, Calvin, and nearby Toledo. The overwhelming number of colleges from the Great Lakes Region that appeared weekly caused schools from the Midwest to often dominate the results sections.[157]

The reporting of *La Prensa* elucidated more than just increased popularity and adoption of American sports. The coverage of the Spanish language newspaper also illustrated the incorporation of English language athletic nomenclature and lexicon into the linguistic construction of the Mexican American identity. For instance, *La Prensa* often made a conscious decision to apply English language terms when referencing athletics in their headlines (as well as in the article content), eschewing a Spanish translation. Some terms such as the football positions of "Quarterback" and "Halfback" have no historical Spanish equivalent, making the English term more applicable. However, the newspaper also most often chose to print English terms such as "coach" (*entrenador*), "football" (*futbol* or *futbol Americano*), and "gridiron" (*campo*), rather than use their Spanish language

[157] There were twenty references to collegiate basketball teams residing in the Midwest just in the 1930s. To determine this I searched the online Hispanic American newspaper database cross referencing key terms including "basketbol," "basket," and "Mich" from the years 1910 through 1960. I recorded each reference to a Midwestern school, weather in the headline or the text. All articles came from *La Prensa*, San Antonio. *America's Historical Newspapers*.

counterparts, which would have been just as appropriate.[158] The editorial choice to use English words illustrated the appropriation of American sport and English lexis into Mexican American cultural signifiers suggesting the acceptance, normalization, and evolution of American culture within the daily leisure and cultural lives of U.S. Mexicanos.[159]

**Conclusion**

Just as other leisure activities, sports played a pivotal role in the lives of Michigan and Midwestern Mexicanos. The diamond, the ring, the gridiron, and the hardwood court became fundamental gathering spaces where social acceptance, cultural citizenship, community organization, and cultural identity were developed, negotiated, and enacted. By far the earliest and most popular activity was baseball. The adoption of "America's Pastime" through the formation of Mexicano leagues (and rooting for Major League teams) linked intrastate and intra-regional Mexicanos communities together, while claiming access to

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[158] There were times in which the newspaper did use the Spanish language equivalents, though English seemed the overwhelming preference for these certain terms. There were more than 90 times when an English word was chosen over a Spanish equivalent during the 1930s and this was just in the headlines for collegiate football alone. There were also many times it took place in the main articles. I found this while conducting my search in the online Hispanic American newspaper database using the key terms of "football," "futbol," "Gran Diez," "Notre Dame," and "Mich" from the years 1910 through 1960, suggesting this was only a small sample of the sheer preponderance of English language use in a Spanish language newspaper. All articles were taken from *La Prensa*, San Antonio. *America's Historical Newspapers*.

[159] While certainly not everyone read (or could read) the newspaper, the choice to print English words was significant in and of itself as it demonstrated appropriation of English cultural norms (language) into Mexicano lingo/culture. It is hard to ascertain just how many people actually read *La Prensa* on a daily/weekly basis. One issue was literacy, which increased the longer Mexicanos lived in the United States, especially for children who attended U.S. schools, meaning the Mexican American generation was much more literate. However, official statistics regarding literacy, generally taken from the U.S. Census, are not applicable here as the paper was in Spanish. A reading knowledge of Spanish would be nearly impossible to deduce from the Census because literacy was defined as knowledge in English. What is known are the circulation figures for *La Prensa*, which had a daily circulation of 22,587 (rising to 32,669 on Sunday) in 1930 before dropping to a daily circulation of 7,118 (15,662 on Sundays) in 1940 due to the Great Depression. That circulation would not even be enough to reach all of San Antonio's Mexicano population, but the paper did circulate to other states as well. However, the choice to incorporate English into a major Spanish language newspaper is what is vital here, especially for a newspaper that had promoted Mexican cultural retention for so long, calling itself of "voice" of Mexicanos *afuera*. Some could charge *La Prensa* was more of a voice for Mexicano elites, and while there is validity to this, this chapter has shown the popularity of sports for working-class Mexicanos, suggesting it is likely all classes would embrace the lexicon. See Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano," 76, 82.

public parks and fields illustrated a stake to first class citizenship. Talent on the field brought interethnic respect, acceptance by the local media, and offered some the opportunity for enhanced economic possibilities. Participation in all the sports promoted interethnic competition, offered the chance to prove masculinity, and provided a sense of belonging among one's peers and in the larger community. Though relatively new for U.S. Mexicanos, football and basketball had a large impact identity formation. The growing popularity for both "American" leisure activities demonstrated the incorporation of American popular culture into their cultural lives. The increased analytic and editorial articles regarding Michigan teams (and the Great Lakes Region more broadly) suggested increased rooting interest, depicting how Mexicanos in the north formed unique cultural identities rooted and grounded in the Michigan and Midwestern experience.

Like celebrations in the previous chapter, sports provided yet another method employed by Michigan Mexicanos to engage with Anglo Michiganders and overcome the socio-cultural boundaries they faced. While the adoption of American sports into Mexicano daily culture helped to claim social space, the next chapter will illustrate the claiming of physical space through the formation of neighborhoods and businesses that became essential in cementing a permanent foothold in Michigan.

## Chapter 4: Constructing Community, Making a Home

Blissfield Mexicanos made great strides regarding inclusion during the 1950s, but, as the Martinez family found out, things were still far from perfect in the 1960s. Emily (Ybarra) Martinez had graduated high school and found steady employment working for the Snyder family who owned a large manufacturing plant in the city. In October 1963, she married Henry Martinez, relenting from her desire to join the Air Force or become a nun. Later that year her father had finally saved enough money to purchase a home and went looking around town. Emily recalled her father "found a house he liked for the family, right on the street I worked for the Snyders."[1] She vividly recollected what transpired a few days later while at work: "Mrs. [Mary Kay] Snyder, she didn't know how to talk to me that day. She said 'I really need to talk to you, [it's] important.' She told me they were picking up a petition so that [my father] could not move there…[and] live there on that street."[2] Martinez went to tell her father what happened and remembered him "feeling so bad; embarrassed, embarrassed to have people think they didn't want us to live by them."[3] She informed her father they could fight it in court, but he refused. Instead Martinez went home to her new trailer house and talked to her husband. She told him, "This man who you work with at Snyder is building a house on Monroe Street. I would love to live on South Monroe Street." Her reasoning was simple: "My dad wasn't allowed to live there. I was going to make sure I lived there, and I did." Though it took some months for the house to be completed, Martinez

[1] Emily Martinez interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, November 15, 2013, [hereafter Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza].
[2] Martinez interview, "Chicana por mi Raza."
[3] Martinez interview, "Chicana por mi Raza."

proudly moved onto Monroe Street into the "last house on the right hand side of a paved road."[4]

Having the choice of where to live and purchasing a home were vitally important signifiers of inclusion and cultural citizenship. Though integration within Anglo neighborhoods could be difficult, the formation of communities afforded Michigan Mexicanos a physical space from which to create a home in Michigan, to construct cultural identity, to connect with other Mexicanos across the state, and to fight for first class citizenship. This topic is fundamental to understanding the Mexicano experience in the United States. By overlapping residential spatial formation and the physical occupation of space with elements of race, class, and ethnicity, scholars have been able to illustrate how the built environment aided the struggles and influenced the growth of U.S. Mexicano communities. For example, historian Jose Alamillo analyzed how both temporary and permanent community leisure structures – including churches, pool halls, and movie theaters – were critical gathering spaces for the residents of Corona, California, providing "safe havens" within the Anglo controlled environment.[5] Likewise, in the Chicago-Calumet region scholars have illustrated how Mexicanos attempted to "Mexicanize" their environment in order to make a home in the Midwest.[6] This included the co-opting of pool halls, sports

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[4] Martinez interview, "Chicana por mi Raza."

[5] José M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); See also Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Eduardo Obregon Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[6] Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Delia Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and

teams, and celebrations. Extending that research into the post-World War II era, Lilia Fernández highlighted how Mexicanos and Puerto Ricans rallied around specific issues facing the community at large, including the lack of education and urban renewal proposals.[7] In all cases the scholars found that while the physical communities were forged based on a shared ethno-racial affiliation and struggle, Mexicanos acted on their physical and cultural environment to develop community centers, organizations, access to education, and places of worship that became magnets to unify and uplift the community.[8]

This chapter will expand this topic further into both rural and urban Michigan to highlight the diversity in how Mexicano communities developed and grew in response to the racialized environment. While both celebrations and sports had an important lasting impact and occurred on a recurring basis, they represented only impermanent instances of gathering. The settling down via the creation of neighborhoods offered Mexicanos an even more tangible means to carve out a place for themselves in the state and provided a physical space from which to contest Anglo discrimination. The ability to purchase homes, move into neighborhoods, and improve their communities did much to project a positive image of Mexicanos to their Anglo neighbors, helping to dispel some of the stereotypes of Mexicanos only as temporary laborers. Moreover, interviewees repeatedly brought up the importance of their neighborhoods and neighbors, as well as the topics of food, movies, music, and education. These themes were a reminder that Mexicano communities consisted of people who shared hobbies, dreams, and aspirations; people who sought to create a home and life for

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Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2015, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370.

[7] Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[8] Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*, Kindle Locations 313-318.

themselves in Michigan. These topics also highlighted the impact of the decision to settle permanently in Michigan out of the migrant stream.

To examine the growth of Mexicano communities in Michigan, this chapter will first illuminate the different types of neighborhood formations in the state, analyzing how Mexicanos created permanent structures and organizations that enabled them to plant root in their communities. While many scholars have chosen to study one city, or possibly two to compare, I will look at multiples cities and communities in both rural and urban Michigan. In doing so, I argue that ethno-racial settlement patterns were not homogenous throughout the state, but rather that Mexicanos adapted to their local physical and social environments in order to construct their own communities. While each locale developed its own distinctive model, each also built organizations and institutions that buttressed its growth and acted as an anchor to bring the community together. Through the process of purchasing homes, erecting or creating Spanish-speaking churches, and establishing businesses and organizations, Mexicanos were able to create permanence, defy segregation, engage local politics, strengthen intra-state communal ties, and form a foundation for laying claim to first class citizenship rights.

The conversation will then turn to explore leisure activities and educational opportunities that opened to Mexicanos by virtue of creating permanence in Michigan. While the physical formation of neighborhoods was important, Mexicanos residents utilized their neighborhoods as a means to engage popular culture. Mexicanos participated in popular culture activities such as food consumption, going to the movie theater, as well as developing and listening to music. These leisure pursuits became everyday ways to forge cultural identity, bond with others in their community, and to connect with Mexicanos across the

state. In addition, I will also analyze education since nearly all respondents noted the importance of education in their lives and in those of their children as a means of overcoming the social, economic, and political boundaries they faced. As with popular culture, new opportunities for education came as a direct result of creating permanent homes and spaces in Michigan.

This chapter borrows from several urban planning and social theories in order to examine the twofold nature of "community." Communities are both physical and social. That is, communities are made up of physical structures – houses, businesses, and organizational buildings – and are also made up of people consisting of non-tangible elements, such as religion, music, language, sports, holidays, and socio-emotional connections. Home ownership was a symbol of permanence, respectability, and, as social historian Olivier Zunz found, an "emblem of immigrant working-class culture."[9] In establishing ethnic neighborhoods, immigrants were able to claim physical space in cities, but as other scholars found, ethnic enclaves often proved to be a double edged sword.[10] On the one hand, they acted as security for new arrivals and provided much in the way of cultural stability (language use and customs). On the other hand, the enclaves could be difficult to improve or escape as they often were found in low-income areas (at times caused

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[9] Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[10] Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City* (New York: Verso, 2001); Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

by white flight), which created less tax base to fund projects. This could result in poverty and a lack of access to quality education.[11]

Despite the potential pitfalls of ethnic neighborhoods, home and business ownership created physical spaces from which to launch initiatives to effect change and overcome the boundaries that Mexicanos faced. As historian Thomas Sugrue contended "housing became a major arena for organized political activity in the 1940s."[12] Though he was specifically referencing African Americans' fight to purchase homes in urban Detroit areas that were predominately Anglo, the same held true for Mexicanos across the state in subsequent decades. Whether attempting to purchase homes in Anglo areas or just for creating ethnic enclaves, housing allowed Mexicanos to actively carve out their own spaces that facilitated access to education and allow for engagement in local politics. Moreover, while employment often dictated where communities formed, the jobs were not the anchors of the communities. Instead, as historians have illustrated regarding Chicago, ethnic groups gathered into enclaves centered on mutual associations, grocery stores, credit unions, and churches. The insular nature of the ethnic communities allowed the groups to adopt forms of mass popular culture (movie theaters, radio, etc.) while still retaining the most important aspects of their own culture.[13]

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[11] Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Rachael A. Woldoff, *White Flight/Black Flight: The Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

[12] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* 55.

[13] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*; Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Workers Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

Most of these studies have focused on large urban areas containing a sizeable ethnic population, which made it easier for ethnic groups to create insular "safe havens."[14] Examining the less populated or rural areas illustrates a much more individualized and non-linear process. As historian Delia Fernández argued in her study of Grand Rapids, Michigan, "the more numerous, but smaller, cities…reveal trends in community and city development and identity construction that…differ from those of larger cities."[15] That is, each city and town developed distinctly based on a confluence of environmental and socio-cultural factors including the number of Mexicanos in the area, acceptance by Anglos, the type of worked performed, the existence of previously constructed housing, and location in the state. Though they were not homogenous, the Michigan Mexicano communities all had a few things in common; most notably settling near the major sources of employment, having unifying structural community anchors, and/or specific causes that arose to unify the community.

**Neighborhood Construction**

By far the earliest, largest, and longest enduring Michigan Mexicano community is Detroit's Mexicantown (see Map 4.1). Migration began around 1918 as Mexicano workers arrived in the Motor City seeking factory employment. The population grew as some Mexicanos left their sugar beet contracts, while others arrived after working on the rail lines.[16] Nearly 80 percent of the first residents were male and 75 percent of those were *solos*

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[14] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade;* García, *A World of Its Own.*
[15] Delia Fernández, "Becoming Latino: Mexican and Puerto Rican Community Formation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1926–1964," *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring 2013): 76.
[16] George T. Edson, "Mexicans in Detroit, Mich.," Carton 13, Folder 31, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. [hereafter PTP]

(single).[17] Once there they sought out housing. Early on many workers stayed in boarding houses before eventually seeking more permanent dwellings. They originally congregated in Downtown Detroit, but as more families began arriving in the 1920s, Mexicanos started to re-settle into an area known as Corktown, which had a historic Irish and Polish population.[18] This new area became what is now known as Mexicantown. The area was chosen because, first, Mexicanos were allowed to purchase homes there (in part because the Irish and Polish were leaving downtown for the suburbs) and, second, it was only five miles from Henry Ford's River Rouge plant, which became the major employer to Mexicanos.[19] Thus, the enclave developed around proximity to the major employers (factories and railroad). The area also featured pre-established houses, which allowed Detroit Mexicanos the ability to more easily focus on adding permanent cultural structures, such as businesses, to grow their neighborhood. This meant Mexicantown developed as an ethnic enclave like other ethnic groups in Detroit and in a similar pattern to Mexicano *colonias* in other large urban centers like Chicago and Los Angeles.[20] However, other Michigan cities did not follow suit.

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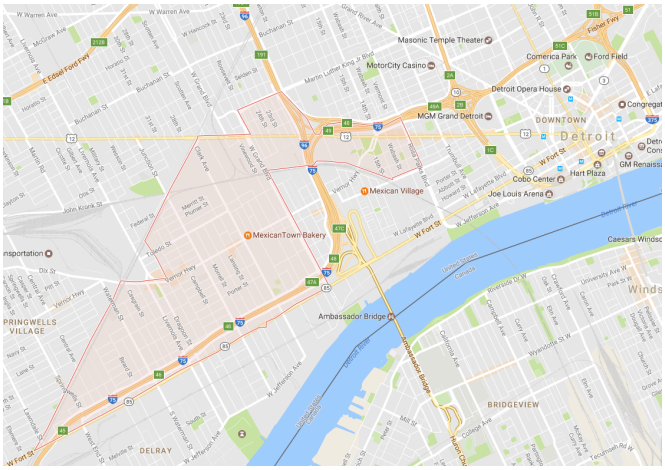
[17] Edson, "Mexicans in Detroit," 5.

[18] Norman Humphrey, "The Migration and Settlement of Detroit Mexicans," *Economic Geography* 19, no. 4 (1943): 358-361. See also Rudolph Valier and Sonya Yvette Alvardo, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2003); Marietta L. Baba and Malvina Hauk Abonyi, *Mexicans of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1979); David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Eduard Adam Skendzel, *Detroit's Pioneer Mexicans: A Historical Study of the Mexican Colony in Detroit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Littleshield Press, 1980); Maria Elena Rodriguez, *Detroit's Mexicantown* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[19] Baba and Abonyi, *Mexicans of Detroit*; Humphrey, "The Settlement of Mexican Detroit;" Skendzel, *Detroit's Pioneer Mexicans*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.

[20] Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Davis, *Magical Urbanism*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*.

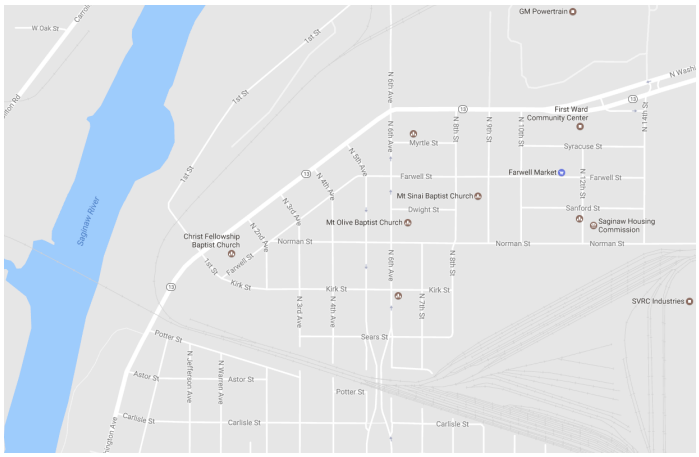



Map 4.1 Mexicantown, City of Detroit, Michigan. The shaded area is the present day approximate borders of Mexicantown. It resides just southwest of downtown Detroit. "Mexicantown, Detroit, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

While other cities in Michigan developed Mexicano enclaves, none followed the pattern of the Motor City by creating a majority ethnic Mexicano population, even cities that similarly developed based on factory work. Saginaw had many factories, making it a popular destination for many Mexicanos from the nearby sugar beet fields and the refineries in the Tri-Cities area (see Map 4.2). Most Mexicanos settled in the First Ward, which was "on the other side of the tracks."[21] While it was more of an established area with preexisting housing, Saginaw resident Tony Moreno described growing up in there during the 1950s and 1960s: "We grew up in a neighborhood [consisting of] mostly blacks [and] Hispanics."[22] Gilbert Guevara echoed this stating, "Living in the First Ward…you were either black or Mexican."[23] Both men recalled not experiencing much racism as long as they remained in their insular community, though Moreno remembered he and his friends got into a number of fights growing up with Blacks, but he chalked it more up to "boys being boys" than racist

[21] Tony Moreno interview by Steven Rosales, Nov. 15, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). See also George T. Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw," October 22, 1926, Carton 13, Folder 31, PTP; Steven Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican': An Oral History of the Mexican-American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920-1980," *Michigan Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 33-62.
[22] Moreno interview.
[23] Gilbert Guevara interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

rivalry.[24] Thus, while most Saginaw Mexicanos lived in the First Ward, it continued to be a shared space with African Americans, and never fully their own.[25] Though not developing ethnic insularity because they never had enough population to represent an ethnic majority, Saginaw Mexicanos created institutions alongside African Americans that anchored their community.




Map 4.2 First Ward, Saginaw, Michigan. The First Ward, bounded by M-13 and the railroad tracks, was long considered a poorer part of town. "First Ward, Saginaw, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

In contrast, Flint never developed a central neighborhood, despite Mexicanos settling in Vehicle City to work at the local automobile factories and purchasing homes there (see Map 4.3). There were slightly larger concentrations at the north end and upper east side of town, but others chose to live west of downtown, or some even south of the city.[26] Each

[24] Moreno interview.

[25] In Detroit, the Irish and Polish moved out of the Corktown area quickly, but Saginaw's First Ward remained a shared space of Mexicanos and African Americans. See Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality*.

[26] Residents tend to divide Flint into the cardinal directions. Central Downtown Flint is centered on Saginaw Street and the Flint River. Just to the west of downtown centered on Chevrolet Avenue were a host of Chevrolet and Fisher Body Plants (home of the 1937 Sit Down Strike). They have all been torn down in the new millennium, but Kettering University remains there as a reminder of the city's factory roots. The Eastside is home to the Cultural Center (Applewood Mott Estate, Whiting Auditorium, Planetarium, and the Sloan Museum). The North End was based on proximity to "Buick City" (a number of plants manufacturing Buick automobiles that all closed by the turn of the new century). This section lies north of Hamilton Avenue and is now bounded between I-475 on the east and north and I-75 on the west. Regarding the settlement patterns of Flint Mexicanos, see David Arceo interview by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession); Arturo and Art Reyes interview, by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 26, 2015,

family, in general, purchased a home closest to work and/or family (real or fictive kin). As a result, Flint Mexicanos were more integrated into the city, compared with other Michigan cities, lacking any real form of a central neighborhood or business district. While some houses were preexisting, others had to be built. For instance, David Arceo recalled growing up in his family's house at 625 Waldman Avenue. According to Arceo, there was no address "625," as it was on a lot between two houses. One day his father, Rafael, spoke with the postman who informed him he needed an address in order to receive mail. The two of them – Rafael and the mailman – decided on 625 and Arceo put up a mailbox with those numbers on it (only later getting the address properly registered). Later, his father expressed a desire to move to Flint's north end since that was where his "compadres" mostly lived, but his wife, Fermina, put a stop to it, arguing he would waste too much time and money gambling with friends and on transportation, since the house on Waldman was much closer to his job at Fisher Body.[27] Other families settled accordingly. After arriving to Flint in 1952, Apolonio Zamarripa obtained employment at Buick. Therefore, he settled his family in the north end.[28] Flint Mexicanos thus lived in homes within existing neighborhoods according to workplace proximity. This precipitated less contact with co-ethnics, which would lead them to seek other unifying structures.

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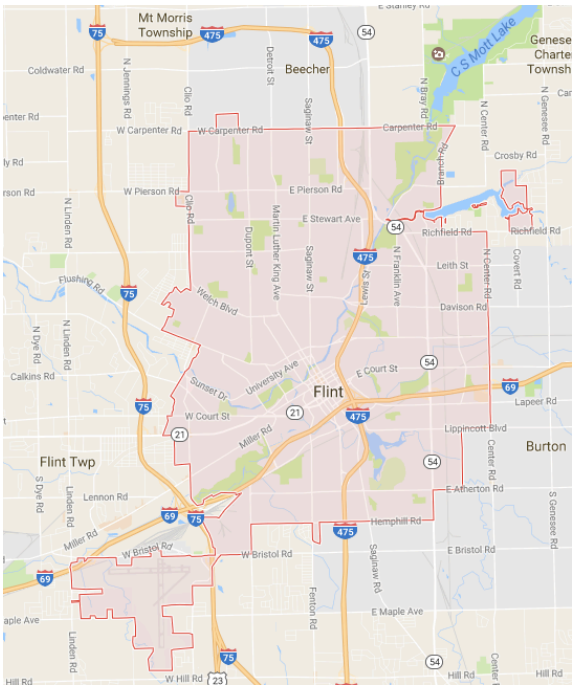
Burton, MI, digital file (in author's possession); Jane Haney, "Flint-Lansing Chicano Migration, 1976," Folder 39, Box 2, The José F. Treviño Chicano/Latino Activism Collections: Juana and Jesse Gonzales Papers, MSS 382, Special Collections, MSU Libraries, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan [hereafter JJGP].

[27] Arceo interview. See also Haney, "Flint-Lansing Chicano Migration, 1976."

[28] Zamarripa interview.




Map 4.3 City of Flint. Flint Mexicanos were scattered within the shaded area, based on proximity to factory employment. "Flint, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

Lenawee County, home to the cities of Blissfield and Adrian, witnessed the most diversity in settlement patterns. Mexicanos replaced another ethnic group (Hungarians) as they did in Detroit, but there it was for contract sugar beet work. Because of this, initial entry during the 1920s led Mexicanos to mostly reside in makeshift housing on the farmer's property. For example, former migrant worker Victoria Ramos remembered "one place [being] a barn converted into apartments."[29] Others recalled converted chicken coops and farmers building new barns for animals and giving the old barns to migrants.[30] World War II changed all of this. During the 1940s, wartime manufacturing created a demand for more

[29] Victoria Ramos Oral History in *Los Anos de Oro: Past and Present*, ed. Sharon M. Jones (Oral History Project, SER, Jobs for Progress 1980), 21.

[30] See Efrain Gutierrez interview by Brett Olmsted, August 6, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession); Emily Martinez interview by Brett Olmsted, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession); Marylou Olivarez Mason Oral History, "A Mexican American from Texas," in *The Sweetness of Freedom: Stories of Immigrants* by Stephen Garr Ostrander and Martha Aladjem Bloomfield (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010) [hereafter Olivarez Mason Oral History], 170. See also Jim Norris, *North for the Harvest: Mexican Workers, Growers, and the Sugar Beet Industry* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009); Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

laborers and the defense plants in Adrian courted Mexicanos as workers. Anglos refused to allow Mexicanos to live in the city limits so, as the story goes, Les Brown (founder and plant manager at the Magnesium Fabricators) looked out his window, saw the Lenawee County Fairgrounds, and proposed to place temporary barracks on the grounds to house Mexicanos workers.[31] Ramos described rows of small buildings, with about two or three rooms each, with no plumbing or electricity, though wood for the stoves was provided in the winter months.[32] These cramped and uncomfortable multi-family tract homes proved dismal to Mexicanos and most sought to escape as soon as possible. Still not able to purchase within Adrian due to discrimination (such as petitions signed to prevent sales), they instead purchased homes just east of the corporate limits (and between the Magnesium plant and the fairgrounds) in a neighborhood that became known as Sunnyside.

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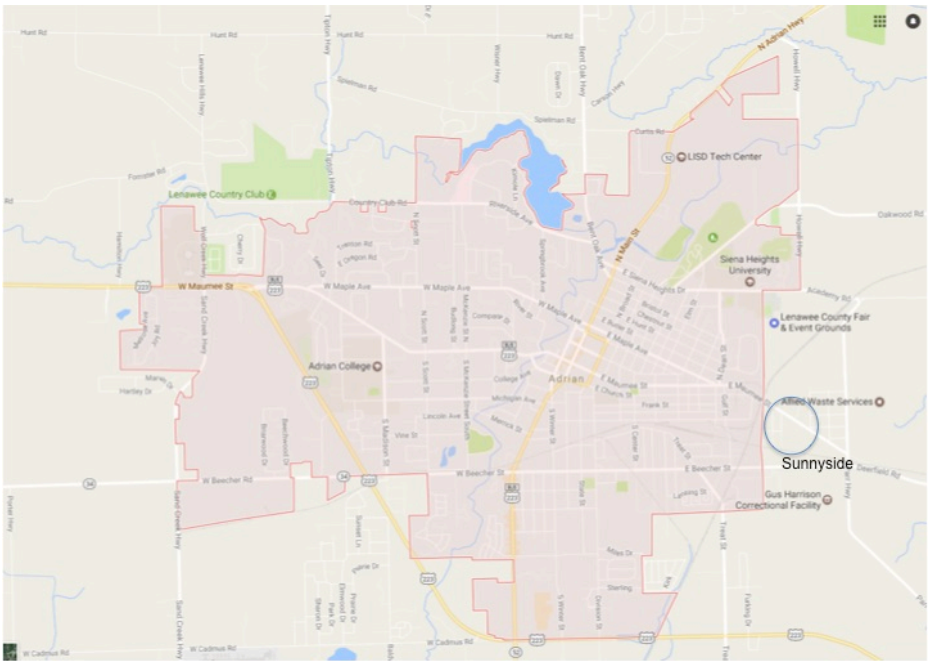
[31] Charles Lindquist, "County's Hispanic Roots Go Back Many Year," *Daily Telegram*, September 16, 1989, 5; Lindquist, "Adrian fit bill for Bohn metal plant," *Daily Telegram*, September 23, 1989, 5; Charles Lindquist, Lenawee County's Hispanics Have Made Their Mark," *Daily Telegram*, September 30, 1989, 5; Charles Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked* (Adrian, MI: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2004); Charles Lindquist, *Lenawee County: A Harvest of Pride and Promise* (Brightwaters, NY: Windsor Publishing, 1990); Annick Peron, "Early Settlement of Mexican-Americans in Lenawee County, 1920-1945," (Unpublished Manuscript, Hispanics Box, Lenawee Historical Museum, Adrian, Michigan, 1978); Emilia Angela Rojo, "Between Two Conflicting Cultures: A Phenomenological-Participatory Investigation of the Enduring Struggle of a Mexican American Community," Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1980. For more on tract housing during the 1940s to the 1960s see Valdés, *Al Norte*.

[32] Ramos Oral History, 21.




Map 4.4 Sunnyside Neighborhood and Adrian, Michigan. The shaded area is the present day city limits, while the predominately Mexicano neighborhood lies just outside. "Adrian, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

The Sunnyside neighborhood (see Map 4.4) boomed starting in the 1940s and proved a strategic location. In 1943, another large plant, Bohn Aluminum, opened just to south of the Fairgrounds providing more work opportunities and easy transportation.[33] Most of the Sunnyside homes were built during between the 1940s and 1960s and while there were multiple ethnicities living there, Mexicanos accounted for 50 percent of residents by 1950, steadily increasing to 85 percent by 1990.[34] Though conditions were far from ideal, as proper water and sewage was not installed until the 1970s, the neighborhood became home to Adrian Mexicanos.[35] At the same time, though, the fairgrounds continued to be used to house migrant farmworkers long past the ending of the Bracero Program in 1965. Consequently, while Mexicanos in Adrian developed a mixed enclave, Mexicanos also

[33] Linquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked;* Charles Lindquist, "Latinos in Lenawee County," e-mail correspondence with author, August 2014, (in author's possession).
[34] United States Department of the Interior, "Historic American Landscapes Survey: Sunnyside Addition," Written Historical and Descriptive, Library of Congress, July 30, 2012, http://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/mi/mi0700/mi0735/data/mi0735data.pdf, accessed December 16, 2016.
[35] United States Department of the Interior, "Historic American Landscapes Survey: Sunnyside Addition."

resided in a separate transient community. Some annually stayed at the fairgrounds and if they decided to settle permanently in the area, they then sought housing elsewhere. This created separate classes of Mexicanos in Adrian – permanent residents and migrants, each with their own goals and issues.

A similar situation developed in Blissfield (see Map 4.5). After initially living on their farmer's property and deciding to stay in Blissfield, a number of Mexicano families banded together to start their own neighborhood. In the 1930s and 1940s many moved into the old Hungarian housing settlement into an area known as "Honkeytown."[36] As more Mexicanos decided to remain in Blissfield, new housing was needed. As in Adrian, Mexicanos were not very welcomed to live in the Blissfield city limits so they looked instead at nearby Riga Township. There, the Great Lakes Sugar Company beet refinery plant had closed down in 1954 because local farmers no long predominately grew sugar beets in the post-World War II era. A salvage company purchased the property in 1957, and then stripped the building the following year. In the refinery's shadow, Joseph Mirelez owned a three-acre plot of land where Mexicanos chose to develop. Local historian Charles Lindquist noted Mexicanos paid rent to Mirelez to live and build on the land, constructing self-made houses made from the scrap material they took from the old sugar plant.[37]

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[36] There are conflicting stories regarding the "Honkeytown" name. It has been said it came from an abbreviated, and derogatory, term for Hungarians who previously resided there. Others, such as Emily Martinez, recalled the name being reinforced because cars passing by constantly honked at the field workers. Martinez interview; Charles Lindquist, *Spanning the Years: A History of Blissfield, Michigan, 1824-1999* (Adrian, MI: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2000), chapter 6.
[37] Lindquist, *Spanning the Years*, chapter 6.


Map 4.5 Mexican Village and Blissfield, Michigan. The shaded area is the present day city limits, while the Mexicano neighborhood lay just outside. "Blissfield, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

This area became known as the Mexican Village and from the start there were public health issues. There was only a one-inch hydrant in front of the property to supply water, there was no sewer system for sanitation, and no trash disposal.[38] Even in these poor conditions the neighborhood was beneficial for Blissfield Mexicanos. Constructing a home and thus exiting the migrant stream was an important step. Emily Martinez described it as being a change in who and what they were; by staying in Blissfield permanently, they became "seasonal farmworkers" as opposed to "migrant farmworkers."[39] This distinction signified permanence, self-determination, and a choice to make a home in Michigan. Many still performed farm work, even at times going to other cities temporarily to pick, but Blissfield was now their home and it was that decision that started the process of building community. For children, it was also an important distinction as it meant they would have an educational advantage by not traveling back and forth to Texas, which greatly disrupted their educational progress.

[38] Linquist, *Spanning the Years*, 169.
[39] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

Traverse City presented yet another model for Mexicano neighborhoods (see Map 4.6). As Marylou Olivarez Mason recollected, "it was like being in a city in Texas. I mean, you'd go downtown, the majority of the people that you would see there would be Mexican."[40] The fact was, however, Traverse City, unlike the other cities discussed never developed many Mexicano residents. Rather, this community generally consisted only of temporary cherry pickers. Olivarez Mason explained the reason for this:

> Because during that certain time that's all there was, Mexicans there to pick cherries. Everybody came from all over to pick cherries. It was just for a certain period of time in July, from the beginning of July for four or five weeks. You started with sweet cherries, you'd get those done, and then the sour cherries, and that was it. That was the end of the crop.[41]

Indeed, Mexicanos arrived from all over. Cruz Zamarripa recalled leaving Flint in the summer, traveling with his mother and siblings, up to Traverse City for cherries.[42] Efrain Gutierrez traveled there from Indiana (after a stop in Saginaw), while Emily Martinez's family went there from Blissfield.[43] Ida Roche recalled that while her stepfather preferred going elsewhere, most Mexicanos from Saginaw traveled north for the cherry harvest.[44] In addition, many yearly migrant workers also traveled up the west side of Michigan each year following the crops to Traverse City to join with permanent Michigan residents. While most pickers stayed on the peninsula just north of downtown in farmer provided housing, on the weekends Mexicanos ventured into downtown to spend time shopping, fishing, and swimming at the cool sandy shores of Lake Michigan.[45]

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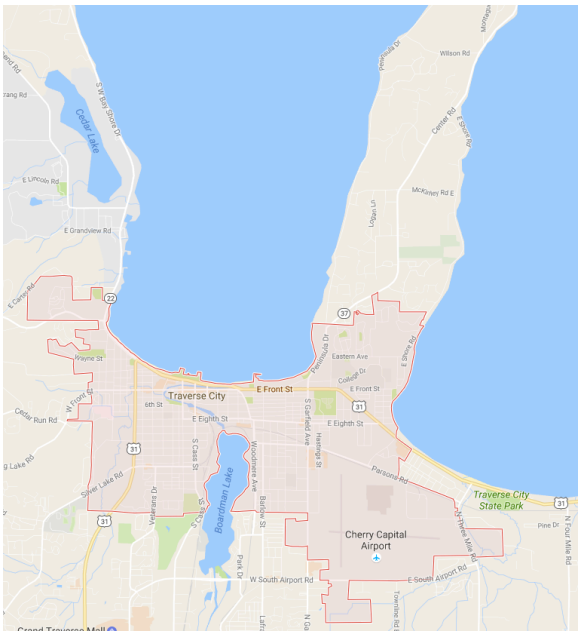
[40] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 157.
[41] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 157-158.
[42] Zamarripa interview.
[43] Gutierrez interview; Martinez interview.
[44] Ida Roche interview by Steven Rosales, January 16, 2013, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[45] Gutierrez interview; Olivarez Mason Oral History, 157-158; Grace McIlrath Ellis, "A Barrier Traversed," *The Rotarian*, August 1952: 29-31, https://books.google.com/books?id=oEYEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&ca




Map 4.6 Traverse City. The shaded area represents the city limits. The peninsula extending into Lake Michigan contains the heaviest concentration of cherry orchards and was where most Mexicanos resided during the picking season. Workers ventured into downtown on weekends. Downtown Traverse City lies on the street paralleling the sandy coastline. "Traverse City, Michigan," Map, *Google Maps*, accessed January 2, 2017.

## The Importance of Businesses

Though there was great diversity in how Michigan Mexicano communities developed, each Mexicano settlement provided a stable and permanent space from which to create other institutions that defined community. As important as houses were (other than in Traverse City), local businesses proved vital to bring people together and to provide items for needs, wants, desires, and a sense of cultural identity, even in areas which did not develop ethnic insularity. As historian Jose Alamillo noted in his work on Southern California, while Mexicanos often faced discrimination at work and when trying to purchase homes, Mexicano businesses and other organizations provided "safe havens" to gather within the Anglo dominated environment.[46] Business development was a specialized means of constructing

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d=0#v=onepage&q&f=false, accessed January 16, 2017; "Cherry Farm," *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, January 6, 1949, 6.

[46] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, 82. Also García, *A World of its Own*; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.

their physical and cultural environment, demonstrating permanence and providing a (possible) means of interethnic interaction with potential patrons.[47] Mexicano-owned businesses provided not only economic benefit and self-determination for the owners, but also provided jobs for local Mexicanos without having an Anglo boss. Businesses buttressed communities by enabling residents to remain within the enclave for services/goods, thus providing insularity and helping residents avoid some discrimination. Moreover, many businesses became lasting institutions in the communities, totems of culture that projected success and a proud heritage.

Because of the size of the population, Detroit developed the most diverse set of businesses in the state. During the 1920s, the Motor City boasted more than twenty Mexicano businesses including a number of pool halls and barbershops.[48] As historians have noted, these types of businesses "served as centers of the Mexican male leisure culture" during the decade as Mexicanos males "drank collectively with other men, gambled their earnings in poker and pool games."[49] Pool halls became a fundamental gathering spot for working class Mexicanos providing social and recreational outlet, offering information exchange, acting as permanent addresses for mail service, and even functioning as a bank.[50] Many businesses often only remained for a few short years, but they provided Mexicanos with a chance to gather and connect with co-ethnics, a space to speak in their native language free from the discrimination found in the larger cityscape. In addition to pool halls, pre-Depression Detroit also boasted several *sastrerías* (tailor shops), candy and specialties shops,

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[47] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, chapter 4; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*, Kindle Locations 273-276.
[48] Edson, "Mexicans in Detroit," 20; "Afuera de la Cuidad de New York," *La Prensa* (New York), July 23, 1928, 7; "Afuera de la Cuidad de New York," *La Prensa* (New York), December 26, 1928, 6.
[49] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*, 57.
[50] Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; García, *A World of its Own*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*, 191-94; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, Vargas, *Proletarians*.

hotels, clothing stores, and *relojerías* (watch shops), providing Mexicanos with greater insularity.

Detroit Mexicanos also established many restaurants and bakeries. Ethnic food establishments have long served prominent roles within communities. They not only offered needed sustenance, but also afforded ethnic groups a chance to hold onto their cultural heritage though cuisine. Eateries were a meeting space to converse with others, while some establishments also had halls attached that were used for dances and parties. The restaurants provided a linguistic comfort zone for employees and, once established, could project a positive image as Anglos came to patronize.[51] While conducting his U.S. government-commissioned survey of Midwestern Mexicanos in 1927 and 1928, George T. Edson noted he dined in Detroit Mexicano restaurants often and found that the waiters "understood…little English."[52] While he found this as a negative, as it could preclude inter-ethnic patronage, the restaurants provided employees a sphere in which they could utilize their native language without fear of intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.

Many Detroit Mexicano businesses came and went, especially as the 1920s gave way to the Great Depression, but by the mid-1930s, Mexicantown developed a central business district called "la Bagley," named for the street where most of the businesses were located (that name was later changed to Mexicantown). Included were a number of restaurants such

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[51] Since many business owners and staff only spoke Spanish, it could preclude Anglos from patronizing, but the longer established the restaurant was, the greater the chance for positive world-of-mouth to attract other ethnic groups. For more on ethnic food and entrepreneurship, see Amy Bentley, "From Culinary Other to Mainstream American: Meaning and Uses of Southwestern Cuisine," *Southern Folklore* 55, no. 3 (1998): 238–252; Yong Chen, *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Natalia Molina, "The Importance of Place and Place-Makers in the Life of a Los Angeles Community: What Gentrification Erases from Echo Park," *Southern California Quarterly* 97 no. 1, (Spring 2015): 69-111; Perales, *Smeltertown*, chapter 2; Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que Vivan Los Tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[52] Edson, "Mexicans in Detroit," 20.

as Veracruz, Penjamo, Las Palmas, El Matador, and Mexican Village (which is still in operation, though cut off from the rest of present day Mexicantown by the I-96/I-75 Fisher Freeway completed in the 1980s).[53] Longtime President of the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation Maria Elena Rodriguez found there were at least thirty-five Mexicano businesses by the mid-1930s just on Bagley Street and Michigan Avenue.[54] By the 1940s, a number of local bakeries and two tortilla factories opened; La Michoacana and La Jalisciense made both flour and corn tortillas, and have endured more than seventy years. These businesses provided jobs and represented a permanent staple of Mexican cultural cuisine within metro Detroit.

The 1950s witnessed the formation of another long lasting Mexicantown institution, the Honey Bee Market *La Colmena*.[55] Though there were earlier grocers selling Mexicano foodstuffs, Honey Bee Market typified what Mexicano-operated businesses meant to the local residents. Established in 1956 by Gerardo and Maria Alfaro, the grandparents of the current owner Tammy Alfaro-Koehler (who, along with her husband, took over in 1996), the supermercado initially operated out of the first floor of the couple's house on the corner of Bagley and 17th Street. They sold an increasing variety of Mexican goods, but they remained famous for their chorizo (Mexican ground sausage with spices) that has been made based on a "secret family recipe" on location since the store's opening.[56] While they would move from the house to a 4,000 square foot brick building (and later to a 15,000 square foot store), what made the store special was what it meant to the community. It was (and is) a place for

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[53] Rodriguez, *Detroit's Mexicantown*, 8.
[54] Rodriguez, *Detroit's Mexicantown*, 8.
[55] "About Us," *Honey Bee Market La Colmena*, http://www.honeybeemkt.com/pgen.aspx?seed=1418, accessed December 13, 2016; "Honey Bee Market La Colmena, Est. 1956," *Sweet-Juniper*, last modified May 27, 2010, http://www.sweet-juniper.com/2010/05/honey-bee-market-la-colmena-est-1956.html, accessed December 15, 2016; Jeff Broder, "Catch the Buzz," *Detroit Metro Times*, August 23, 2006, http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/catch-the-buzz/Content?oid=2185306, accessed December 15, 2016.
[56] "About Us," Honey Bee Market La Colmena; Broder, "Catch the Buzz."

residents to purchase spices, meats, and ingredients to make their own cultural Mexican food. According to Tammy Alfaro-Koehler, Alfaro named it "*La Colmena*" (the hive), because the store was to be "where the bees gather," the bees being local residents.[57] Honey Bee, like all the Mexicano-owned bakeries, barbershops, restaurants, and pool halls, was to be a physical space for the residents of Mexicantown to gather together. Though they have an expanded clientele today, originally the store catered primarily to local Mexicanos. Most employees spoke Spanish, which providing a sense of familiarity for patrons. What made these establishments so important was their ability to offer services to the Detroit Mexicano residents, drawing them together based on a shared cultural past so they could obtain needed/desired goods without harassment.

While Detroit had the greatest number of businesses (to correspond with the greatest number of residents), Mexicano establishments were just as prominent and vital elsewhere in Michigan. In Saginaw during the late 1920s, George Edson noted the development of a business center within their First Ward neighborhood, "parallel to and facing the [Pere Marquette] railroad tracks and station," which consisted of "a tailor shop, two restaurants, and a pool hall."[58] In addition, an advertisement for a book and music store in Saginaw appeared in 1930. The ad mentioned carrying Spanish language newspapers and magazines, as well as portable phonograph machines and religious articles, thus indicating the move from supplying merely needed items to providing desired goods.[59] This suggested that Saginaw Mexicanos were developing their own sense of community (and that some had an expendable discretionary income). By the 1940s, Saginaw residents began developing an expanded central business district within the First Ward. For instance, Luis Enriquez opened

[57] "About Us," Honey Bee Market La Colmena; Broder, "Catch the Buzz."
[58] Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw."
[59] "Radios, Fonografos, Y Discos," *La Prensa*, February 7, 1930, 2.

the first Mexican grocery store in Saginaw, La Tapatía, in 1942 at the corner of Third and Kirk Streets.[60] Francisco "Pancho" Diaz worked as a butcher at another local Mexicano grocery store, El Monterrey. He then went into business for himself remodeling a building at the corner of Eighth and Farwell to open El Pato Grocery Store (later called Frank Diaz Grocery), a place Rose San Miguel recalled going to often for food and music.[61]

As in Detroit, it was the evolution of area businesses that provided the greatest impact for residents, as the businesses became a pillar of the community. By the 1950s the central business district was fully developed, providing Mexicanos with all their needs and wants. Long time residents John Lopez remembered a thriving small business community: "[there] used to [be] grocery stores, barber shops, drug stores, pool halls. Everything was there for the Hispanics."[62] Other community members recalled clothing stores, hardware stores, shoe stores, and Laundromats/dry cleaners.[63] This was part of the reason people like Gilbert Guevara stated he did not experience much discrimination growing up. The wide range of Mexicano-owned and operated businesses meant he did not have to venture to other areas of the city for goods. He recalled not really learning about discrimination until he entered junior high school, which was out of his neighborhood, closer to downtown. What Guevara described was how local businesses enabled Mexicanos to create an insular neighborhood.[64] At the same time, these establishments also became gathering spaces to discuss issues facing the community. For example, Manuel Herrera owned and operated the Economical Shoe

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[60] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Louis Enriquez," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 15.
[61] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Francisco Diaz," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 16; Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).
[62] John Lopez interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). See also Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican.'"
[63] Las Damas interview, by Brett Olmsted, June 29, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).
[64] Guevara interview. Also Moreno interview.

Shop for more than twenty-five years. Residents recalled, "Many community leaders would stop by during working hours to chat and discuss strategies for organizing" with Herrera and others.[65]

In addition to the permanent establishments that were vital to the community, an informal Mexicano food market also developed. This offered women a chance to enter the economic marketplace within the male predominated workspaces, while simultaneously providing a means of projecting a positive image of Mexicanos through food culture. The previous chapter told of selling foodstuffs at baseball games, but this was much more wide-spread in the cities. Vincent Pardo's grandmother cooked Mexican food for his grandfather's lunch at the foundry. Finding that his Anglo co-workers desired to purchase his lunch, his grandfather had his wife make larger and larger quantities to take with him to work in order to sell.[66] In explaining this, Pardo opined: "At that time, Mexican food was kind of rare…for [Anglo] people."[67] Similarly, Frank Gonzales remembered his mother making tostadas. He and his brother sell them by walking up and down the streets in Saginaw's First Ward or at local pool halls as a means of bringing in extra income for the family.[68]

**Organizations**

Anywhere there was any sizeable Mexicano population there were some restaurants and other businesses, but the smaller locales did not facilitate the construction of central business districts such as those in Detroit and Saginaw. Organizations, though also important

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[65] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Manuel Herrera," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 14.
[66] This was not exclusive to Michigan. For instance, see Perales, *Smeltertown*.
[67] Vincent Pardo, Jr. interview by Steven Rosales, May 23, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession). See also Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican.'"
[68] Frank Gonzales interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

in the larger cities, became vital unifying anchors for the smaller towns. Many early Mexicano organizations started as mutual aid societies and patriotic organizations, often with Consular support. Their task was to aid the members of the *colonias* and reinforce Mexican culture. They also provided recreational outlet, frequently in the form of hosting the *fiestas patrias* as well as dances throughout the year. Much can be said regarding class differences and how much actual benefit everyone in the community received, and this subject has been covered by numerous historians.[69] However, despite class and political differences, these types of organizations did provide long lasting benefit to the community as some evolved to offer other needed services, positioning them to have a greater impact in the community. In addition, other organized institutions, such as churches, also became something both large and small Mexicano populations could look to as a means of strengthening and bringing visibility to their community.

Large cities, such as Detroit, developed many organizations. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Motor City had more than seventeen different organizations, most of which disbanded by the late 1930s and 1940s.[70] El Circulo *mutualista*, founded in 1922, was the longest enduring organization. It was noted for consisting of mainly the elite of the community, those with white-collar jobs. This limited participation, but the group nonetheless served an important role. In addition to helping organize/fund the *fiestas patrias*, they also donated $5,000 to help establish the Detroit based Spanish language newspaper *El*

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[69] See chapter two of this dissertation. Also Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); García, *A World of its Own*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

[70] These included Anáhuac, Chapultepec, Chihuahuenses Unidos, Circulo Mutualista Mexicano, Comisión de Festejos Guadalupanos, Comité Patriótico, Cruz Azul, Damas Católicas, Latin American Club, Liga de Obreros y Campesinos, Liga Filarmónica Mexicana, Obreros Unidos Mexicanos. Alvarado, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan*, 67-70.

*Eco de la Patria* (The Echo of the Mother Country). They, along with La Sociedad Católica Mexicana, also raised money for the building of the Mexicano-financed Our Lady of Guadalupe church.[71] Opened on October 27, 1923, the church itself has been documented by historians as being a source of community pride for the more than 10,000 area residents in its hosting of social and community events.[72] Unfortunately, the church closed in 1938 as attendance declined due to the effects of the Great Depression, the location of the church not being within the developing Mexicantown district, and the growth of other churches closer to home.[73] Most Mexicanos then turned to Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, which was at Vernor Avenue and Junction Street, or the Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church with its longtime Priest, Father Clement Kern, who became a relentless advocate for Detroit Mexicanos.[74] While El Circulo may not have always had the greatest participation from the community, the group still inspired the next generation of activists, instructing them in organizational activism. For example, Maria Guadiana, daughter of one of the founders, went on to start a Detroit Brown Beret chapter, joined in the boycotts of Cesar Chávez, and was integral in education reform in the Motor City (including the installation of the first Latino principal in southwest Detroit in 1974). She viewed her involvement as the direct legacy of her father's actions in El Circulo, as it taught her about getting involved.[75]

Mexicantown's insular enclave provided an anchor for the community in and of itself, but other areas were much more reliant on other organizations. Saginaw, despite housing a

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[71] Alvarado and Alvarado, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan*, 67-70; Vargas, *Proletarians*, 153-154.
[72] Vargas, *Proletarians*, 145-146.
[73] Alvarado and Alvarado, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan*, 31; Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan*, 17-18. Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[74] Alvarado and Alvarado, *Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Michigan*; Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan*; Genevieve M. Casey, *Father Clem Kern: Conscience of Detroit* (Detroit, MI: Marygrove College, 1989).
[75] Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013.

significant Mexicano population, had a shared enclave, precipitating the need for other unifying cultural magnets. The organization La Unión Cívica Mexicana provided the first of two major unifying pillars for the community. The Cívica was founded in 1945 and while the group was known for hosting the annual *fiestas patrias*, they meant far more to the community. The annual events helped in their goal to "propagate the beautiful traditions of their Mexican heritage," but their dual mission of uplifting the Mexicano population by fighting veritable social injustices stood out as providing a more tangible outreach into the community.[76] These goals guided the group and they did much to improve life for Saginaw Mexicanos. Unlike El Circulo, the Cívica quickly realized the importance of greater community involvement. Member Manuela Ontiveros reflected that while membership was originally only for males, the men "soon found out that females were more adept at cooking, sewing, and teaching songs and dances for cultural programs. A few years after its founding, women were allowed as members. As a result, it became a family oriented club. Husbands, wives, youth, neighbors, friends all have had direct participation in all functions of this organization."[77] In 1959, the group purchased land at 2715 Wadsworth Road to build a social center that would act as a meeting place for the families of the community. The center provided legal, linguistic, and educational help to Tri-City Mexicanos as well as offered a physical place to hold organizational meetings.

Moreover, the Cívica helped lead the community in protest activism. In 1946, Cívica president Joseph V. Diaz wrote to the Saginaw County Relief Director: "This organization [the Cívica] has continually protested against illegalities committed by irresponsible parties

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[76] Larry Rodarte, "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 6-7.
[77] Manuela Maymie Ontiveros, "Reflections on the Unión Cívica Mexicana," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 8-9.

in bringing Mexican laborers to this state, without legal responsibilities. We have strongly protested to our congressional representatives against these veritable injustices toward the migratory laborers, who have no proper guarantees necessary to sustain a standard of health and living in our state of Michigan."[78] The fight to help migrant workers was an ongoing issue for the group. Lupe Gomez, daughter of Cívica co-founder Jesus Miramontes, recalled going with her father as they fought inequities:

> Many members were involved fighting for our rights. I can remember going out to the camps because they had called the Cívica. They told the members of their complaints and they wanted us to fight for them. The men who ran the migrant camp were giving them drinking water that not even the animals would drink. Living quarters were outrages. My dad and other members took time off from work to fight for the rights of these people.[79]

In 1966, Miramontes and other members of the Cívica would "physically march to Lansing from Saginaw, where they submitted their complaints [regarding treatment of migrants] to the Governor. My dad [Miramontes] was one of the men who carried the cross in that march and people from all over took part.[80] Gomez also described how the group had to "fight City Hall for the rights that all people should have" as she recalled the discrimination that existed in Saginaw as city officials denied Mexicanos access to rent the City Auditorium.[81] She stated one of her father's proudest moments was when La Unión Cívica "protested and the doors were open. Once they did this others were allow[ed] access because the Auditorium doors were opened by the Cívica."[82] Thus, the Cívica and its building provided a central institution from which to launch initiatives and also illustrated how blurred the line between the rural and the urban spheres really was.

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[78] Rodarte, "History of Saginaw's La Unión Cívica Mexicana," 7.
[79] "La Unión Cívica's Founders: Jesus Miramontes, *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 21.
[80] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Jesus Miramontes," 21; Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan,* 41.
[81] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Jesus Miramontes," 21.
[82] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Jesus Miramontes," 21.

While the role of the organization itself cannot be understated, it was the people who founded it and kept it going who made it a successful community institution. Founding member and first Cívica president (as well as the first Mexicano to graduate from Saginaw High School in 1928), Joseph Diaz played a prominent role in the community. Even before helping establish the Cívica, he was the only Mexicano *notario* (notary public) and filed "many income tax papers of the Mexican community."[83] Diaz was bilingual and "helped the Saginaw government as an interpreter in civil and criminal cases, [because] he was concerned that Hispanics were not given equal treatment."[84] By the late 1940s, he, alongside Monsignor Harold Bolton, helped found the St. Joseph Catholic Credit Union and kept track of its accounting (this was a precursor to Catholic Federal Credit Union).[85] Other co-founders, such as Francisco Diaz also had a large impact. In addition to owning a grocery store, he owned quite a bit of land. According to locals he "donated the land for the [First Ward Community Center], requiring that the organization only pay the taxes."[86] He did because of his love and concern for area kids.[87] Though these individuals were middle class, and class divisions certainly existed in housing and amenities, there appeared to be less class conflict between the Cívica and the Saginaw Mexicano community compared with Mexicano organizations elsewhere.[88] The Saginaw leaders seemed to be more inclusive of community involvement.

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[83] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Joseph Vicente Diaz, *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 12-13.
[84] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Joseph Vicente Diaz," 12-13.
[85] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Joseph Vicente Diaz," 12-13.
[86] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Francisco Diaz," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 16.
[87] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Francisco Diaz," 16.
[88] There are numerous instances of class divisions within the Mexican American historiography. See Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley:

In the 2010s, some questioned if the Cívica was still relevant and necessary. Responding to this, Larry Rodarte (grandson of Joseph Diaz) wrote "Ask yourself: What other entity in our community celebrates our traditions and culture the way La Unión Cívica Mexicana does…. Or do the majority of Saginaw Hispanics think of the Cívica as a millstone, an albatross, and its building a white elephant? Everyone, and I mean everyone, as some tie to the Cívica as recipients of its community services for over six decades."[89] The third *reina de dieciséis* (1947), Juanita Jaime, may have summed up the historic role of the Cívica best: "La Unión Cívica really was the beginning of the unity within the Saginaw Mexican community."[90] Through a communal effort, the Cívica involved the community in successive generations and increased the quality of their lives in the city. The organization became a primary vehicle to help Saginaw Mexicanos construct their physical and social environment.

Saginaw's second community pillar was St. Joseph Parish, though residents had to fight to integrate and transform the church into something that was more their own. Members of Las Damas de Guadalupe described the First Ward Mexicano community as living "in the shadow of Saint Joseph" and their fight for inclusion therein illustrated how the church became a focal point for the community.[91] As noted in the chapter two, St. Joseph employed a culture of segregation from the 1920s to the mid-1940s. At that time, Mexicano parishioners worked with the newly arrived Monsignor, Harold Bolton, to remove the

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University of California Press, 1995); John McKiernan-Gonzalez, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2012); Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*; F. Arturo Rosales, ¡*Pobre Raza! Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Vargas, *Proletarians*.

[89] Rodarte is the editor of *Mi Gente* magazine and a longtime historian/proponent of Latino heritage in the area. He is also the grandson of Joseph V. Diaz, one of the original founders of La Unión Cívica. Larry J. Rodarte, Jr., "The Cívica, Dow and the Soaring Eagle," *Mi Gente*, March 2011.

[90] "Juanita Jaime: Reina 1947," *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 28.

[91] Las Damas interview.

culturally marginalizing markers that stigmatized Mexicanos.[92] Pew rental was abolished, the picture of La Virgen was moved to the front of the church, and "anyone could come in any door."[93] By 1945 more than 300 Mexicano families were members of St. Joseph, "and they supported the Church, sent their children to the school [there], and participated in the life of the Parish including several organizations."[94]

By 1952, though, church attendance was in decline, and Mexicanos took an active role in restoring the congregation. On December 12, 1952, Teofilo "Jack" Romero sat in Mass at St. Joseph and "felt something in my heart, some sadness, as I saw only two-thirds of the seats were occupied. I looked toward Our Lady and perhaps I imagined that her face was very sad...So few people. I see we are losing our traditions."[95] Upon contemplation Romero went to speak with the priest, prayed, and went to La Unión Cívica to announce a meeting."[96] That meeting was the first of many and led to the formation of a group known as the Caballeros de Guadalupe, which included all Mexicanos as officers. They worked with Msgr. Bolton and Las Damas to raise money and order a crown for La Virgen from Morelia, Mexico. Attendance increased, as did the number of marriages St. Joseph conducted for Mexicanos – at a rate of nearly one per week during the 1950s.[97] By 1961, the efforts of the Mexicano parishioners witnessed "a life-size statue of our Lady of Guadalupe...[fashioned

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[92] This did not just occur in Saginaw, but was a common fairly common theme in Mexican American studies. See, for instance, Jennifer R. Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015); Perales, *Smeltertown*.
[93] "Carmen M. Stricker, "After Six Decades…St Joe's Novena Continues," *Mi Gente*, November 1995, in *Recuerdos Guadalupanos de Saginaw, Michigan* by Elena Ruiz Sánchez (Saginaw, MI: Elena Ruiz Sánchez, 2005), 160 [hereafter Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*].
[94] "St. Joseph Parish, Saginaw, Michigan: 75th Jubilee," in Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 62.
[95] Teofilo (Jack) Romero, "Handwritten Account of the Events of 1952-1953 Culminating with the Coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe," in Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 37-39.
[96] Romero, "Handwritten Account," 39.
[97] "Marriages," Steven Rosales notes on St. Joseph (in author's possession).

and] brought from Mexico" to be displayed with reverence in the main sanctuary.[98] The hard work of groups such as Las Damas and the Caballeros, along with the devotion of the Mexicano parishioners, helped to slowly reconstruct St. Joseph into a sanctuary for Saginaw Mexicanos. In 1965, there was rumor that the Parish may be closed permanently. The Mexicano "parishioners worked all night building a Styrofoam shrine in front of the church and placed the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe on top. They prayed though the night for the Virgin's intercession. St. Joe's never closed and the shrine became a permanent part of the church."[99]

The transformation of St. Joseph continued into the 1970s as Mexicanos once again saw their church was not serving the needs of the Saginaw Mexicano community, which they felt was precipitating the diminishing membership and attendance. Saginaw resident Matt Fulgencio, described what it was like attending a "traditional" Mass with his grandmother and listening to the music: "I didn't like it. There was an old woman playing the organ and I didn't understand why they didn't have guitars and trumpets."[100] A meeting was called in 1970 and the Capuchin priests agreed to institute greater "Mexican cultural expression." A group of singers named *La Rondalla de San Jose*, led by Jimmy Fulgencio, began leading the "congressional signing at the Mexican Mass on Sundays" which created "a new appreciation of the Mexican culture and heritage to St. Joe's."[101] Fr. Bill Frigo recollected Fulgencio's words as he raised his hand in 1970 to volunteer for the task:

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[98] "Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe," in, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 53-54.
[99] "Stricker, "After Six Decades…St Joe's Novena Continues."
[100] Matt Fulgencio took over the music ministry at St. Joseph after his uncle, Jimmy Fulgencio, retired. Sue White, "Jimmy Fulgencio was 'there for people' in his musical ministry at Saginaw's St. Joseph Church," *The Saginaw News*, January 7, 2015, http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2015/01/jimmy_fulgencio_was_there_for.html, accessed December 28, 2016.
[101] "St. Joseph Parish: 1873-1973," in Sánchez, *Recuerdos Guadalupanos*, 174-7.

> I don't know how to read music, nor do I know how to play a musical instrument. I have a tin ear and cannot sing or keep the right pitch, however I have my brother George. He plays the guitar. Maybe I can ask him to lead the music at the Mass.[102]

As the story went:

> Jimmy recruited George, and George recruited Salvador Gomez. They didn't know any religious music, only bar songs. They spent hours in the basement of the rectory learning religious music. Eventually recruiting many others – trumpet players, drummers, and other singers – *La Rondalla* took shape.[103]

Described as "mariachi-style worship" the Fulgencio-led choir recorded their own album in 1979, performing for both President Jimmy Carter and Cesar Chávez when they visited Saginaw, and even traveled to play at the Basilica de Guadalupe in Mexico City (constructed at the site where Juan Diego saw La Virgen).[104] Though it took forty years, and things were still far from perfect, Saginaw Mexicanos had worked hard to create their space within St. Joseph Catholic Parish, a Church that was a focal point for many in the community.[105]

Flint Mexicanos similarly developed organizations and a church for themselves that acted as magnets of the community. David Areco, born in Flint in 1932, recalled while growing up that every Mexicano knew every other Mexicano in Vehicle City, despite being more spread out geographically. He cited the International Institute as the unifying force of the early Flint Mexicano community.[106] The Institute opened in 1922 on the corner of Industrial and Leith Streets and though not specifically a Mexicano organization, it became a place for Mexicanos to find help. According to Arceo, if someone needed legal advice, they went to the International Institute; if someone wanted to buy a home, they went to the

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[102] "Jimmy Fulgencio Was One of a Kind," *Mi Gente*, February 2015, 5.
[103] "Jimmy Fulgencio Was One of a Kind," 5.
[104] White, "Jimmy Fulgencio."
[105] This push by Saginaw Mexicanos coincided with larger institutional changes to the Catholic Church following Vatican II in 1968. Changes included allowing churches, such as the Latin American Church, the opportunity to utilize more traditional cultural instruments, including guitars, during Mass. See Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race*, chapter 6.
[106] Arceo interview.

International Institute; if someone needed a doctor recommendation, they went to the International Institute. Mexicanos were welcomed there and there gathered for dinners, parties, and dances. They even purchased a "Victrola" on which they played Spanish language records.[107]

In order to establish a Mexicano-led organization to focus specifically on Mexicano issues, residents worked to construct the Spanish Speaking Information Center (SSIC). It was formed as part of the Genesee County Model Cities Project.[108] Founded October 29, 1969, residents pushed for its formation in order to place a "special emphasis on the problems of Mexican-Americans as the second largest minority group in Flint."[109] The SSIC was to concentrate on the economic, educational, and social problems of the community, as well as future issues that arose as new Mexicanos arrived after leaving the fields to settle in the city.[110] In practice, the Center "referred people to other places to help them get what they needed."[111] For instance, the SSIC worked with the Urban League to help local Mexicanos get placed in skilled trades apprenticeship programs and provided information on issues ranging from taxes to college applications to Planned Parenthood to house painting. They also hosted English (ESL) classes, adult reading classes, family picnics, and karate classes. They offered a dental care program for low-income children and formed both a football and peewee baseball team. In September 1974, they helped sponsor the local CERCA Center as a bilingual counseling and crisis intervention center. The SSIC stated it was "the first

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[107] Arceo interview.
[108] "Spanish Speaking Information Center," Folder 1, Latin Americans, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan.
[109] "Spanish Speaking Information Center;" "The Spanish-Speaking Information Center Newsletter," Folder 1, The Spanish Information Center, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan.
[110] "The Spanish-Speaking Information Center Newsletter."
[111] Reyes interview; Zamarripa interview.

counseling center in Flint concentrating just on Raza youth, though everyone is welcome."[112] While the SSIC was indeed important, by the time it was founded, it competed with local chapters of La Raza Unida and the G.I. Forum for the attention of the approximately 800 Mexicano families in Flint for funding and participation, somewhat limiting it effectiveness.[113]

What really seemed to draw Flint Mexicanos together was the Church. A Civil Rights Commission official once described "the Flint Mexican-American community as 'clannish but not organized.' It is not…an especially unified community, especially compared with…Saginaw. Its real claim to cohesion lies in the unity focused around a Catholic church."[114] Estimates approximate that between sixty-six and eighty-five percent of Flint Mexicanos identified as Catholics in 1970, making the Catholic Church an important influence in the lives of residents (the rest attending a Spanish speaking Baptist Church, a Pentecostal Church that holds services in its basement, or non-church goers).[115] However, being more spread out, Mexicanos did not have "one" church to call their home prior to the 1950s. Many living on the southern side of the city went to Holy Redeemer, which was

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[112] "The Spanish-Speaking Information Center Newsletter."

[113] In 1970 there were nine different organizations operating in Flint that aimed to aid Mexicanos. Three of them were not specifically only for Mexicanos – the Catholic Social Services, the International Institute, and the Model Cities Program – but did reach out and provided services for area Mexicanos. The other six were Mexicano organizations and included the Caballeros de San Juan, the Holy Name Society, St. Vincent de Paul, the G.I. Forum, La Raza Unida, and the Spanish Speaking Information Center. These would all start to overlap and began merging into one building by the 1980s and 1990s. "Michigan Civil Rights Commission: Training Manual for Migratory Farm Labor Projects, Summer 1969," Folder 3, Latin Americans, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan; "Summary of Mexican-American Meeting," June 11, 1970, Folder 2, The Spanish Information Center, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan.

[114] "Michigan Civil Rights Commission: Training Manual for Migratory Farm Labor Projects, Summer 1969," Olive Beasley Papers, Folder 3, Latin Americans, Olive Beasley Papers, Genesee Historical Collection, University of Michigan-Flint, Flint, Michigan, A-60.

[115] Haney, "Flint-Lansing Chicano Migration, 1976," 26. "Michigan Civil Rights Commission: Training Manual for Migratory Farm Labor Projects, Summer 1969," A-54.

where the Arceo family grew up (Rafael and Fermina Arceo were founding members).[116] The Zamarripa family attended St. Francis for many years.[117] Some of the Reyes family went to St. Joseph, while others attended Holy Redeemer. However, that all began to change in the mid-1950s.

Apolonio Zamarripa described how he often felt alienated living in Flint, feeling as if he were "a stranger in a strange land" and he sought "solace from other Latinos in the area."[118] His family members recalled, "This solace was found when he joined Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church which [was started in 1957 and] was located in the basement of St. Francis Catholic Church on Carpenter Road."[119] Desiring their own building, and fearing they would lose their Mexicano congregants if they stayed in the basement, area Mexicanos united to fundraise the money needed for the building project.[120] This effort brought the working class Flint residents together and included such things as selling beans and tamales around town.[121] Zamarripa's brother, Pete Gatica, donated land on Coldwater Road on the north end of city on which to construct a permanent meeting place for Our Lady. They were able to secure a Cuban priest, Father Lorenzo, to hold Spanish Mass and parishioners flocked to the parish causing it to "overflow every Sunday and Wednesday night."[122] The church acted "as a hub" for the Flint Mexicano community, drawing rural farmworkers from the outskirts of Genesee County, offering aid, classes, and a yearly Fiesta Mexicana (near the

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[116] Rafael Arceo was also a founding member of the Holy Redeemer Catholic Credit Union, and was the number seven customer after it opened. Arceo interview; "MCC to Host Annual Hispanic Awards Ceremony May 22," *Mott Community College*, last modified May 15, 2003, http://mcc.edu/cgi-bin/press_rel_display.cgi?pressid=2461, accessed February 12, 2014.
[117] Zamarripa interview.
[118] "Apolonio Hernandez Zamarripa: April 10, 1923 – July 15, 2006," Zamarripa obituary and memorabilia, (in author's possession).
[119] "Apolonio Hernandez Zamarripa: April 10, 1923 – July 15, 2006."
[120] Arceo interview; Zamarripa interview.
[121] Arceo interview.
[122] "Michigan Civil Rights Commission: Training Manual for Migratory Farm Labor Projects, Summer 1969," A-54.

dieciséis) to celebrate Mexicano cultural heritage.[123] While many Mexican restaurants came and went in the economically challenged city, the church still stands as a fixture of the Flint Mexicano community.

Though they established fairly insular neighborhoods in Lenawee County, discrimination forced Blissfield and Adrian Mexicanos to spend much time physically constructing their homes and neighborhoods (as opposed to Mexicanos in Detroit, Saginaw, and Flint who largely moved into pre-existing housing and neighborhoods). Consequently, while religion did play an integral role in both cities, community needs and causes arising from new neighborhood construction unified citizens to a far greater extent. In Blissfield, during the 1950s, residents flocked to St. Peter's Catholic Church. The Parish seemed to be quite welcoming of its growing Mexicano congregation. Emily Martinez remembered walking alongside her family (with nine siblings) the five miles to the church each Sunday because they did not own a car.[124] During the cold Michigan winter, the church helped her family. Martinez's father originally cut wood in the agricultural offseason after deciding to remain in Blissfield year-round. However, he lacked proper tools, boots, and clothing, so St. Peter's provided him with what he needed to support his family. Martinez recalled in later years her father contributed money to the church because they had shown compassion towards him.[125] During the decade the church also aided Mexicanos by helping them start organizations within the church, including the Sodality of Our Lady that hosted La Novena and the Guadalupan Club of the Holy Name Society that organized dances for local

[123] Zamarripa interview.
[124] Martinez interview.
[125] Martinez interview.

Mexicanos.[126] The church also held several large First Holy Communion services, Confirmation services, and weddings for Mexicanos.

The devotion seemed to help Mexicanos achieve a level of social respectability as the services received prominent attention in the area newspaper, *The Blissfield Advance* (often including pictures). For one wedding the newspaper provided a lengthy article written just as any other Anglo announcement: "The bride, given in marriage by her Uncle, Simon Briones of Blissfield, was lovely in her ballerina length gown of white lace over satin, with long sleeves and bouffant skirt worn over a hoop."[127] The church also launched several outreach programs for migrants under the leadership of Mexicanos.[128] When the church organized a Credit Union in 1959, Victor Sanchez was elected to be on the three-man supervisory (auditing) committee.[129] In 1974, James Martinez (who was the first Mexicano graduate of Blissfield High School in 1952) became an ordained deacon in the Catholic Church.[130] In all cases Mexicanos were simply listed by name alongside other Blissfield residents who were also part of the Church.[131] The newspaper never prefaced articles or Mexicano names with a status marker of "Mexican" suggesting a modicum of acceptance.

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[126] "Plan Spanish Dance," *Blissfield Advance*, April 2, 1959, 2.
[127] "Weddings," *Blissfield Advance,* October 24, 1957, 4.
[128] "Sodality Votes $150 To Migrant Program," *Blissfield Advance*, September 18, 1958, 4; "Classes for Migrant Children Begin Here," *Blissfield Advance*, August 6, 1959, 1.
[129] "Credit Union Organized in St. Peter Parish," *Blissfield Advance*, September 24, 1959, 1.
[130] Lindquist, *Spanning the Years*, 228.
[131] "Bishop Nelligan Confirms 47 at St. Peter Sunday," *Blissfield Advance*, April 21, 1955, 1; "Confirmation Class Honored at Family Dinners," *Blissfield Advance,* May 16, 1957, 3; "Bp. Donnelly Confirms 43 at St. Peter's Here," *Blissfield Advance,* May 9, 1957, 4; "25 Receive First Communion at St. Peter's." *Blissfield Advance,* May 2, 1957, 5; "Rights Friday for Manuel Solis, 77," *Blissfield Advance,* December 5, 1957, 1; "Mexican Dinner Planned Aug. 24," *Blissfield Advance*, August 14, 1958, 1; Solidarity Plans Part for Children, Sisters," *Blissfield Advance*, December 18, 1958, 8; "Class Receives First Holy Communion," *Blissfield Advance*, May 7, 1959, 1.


Fig. 4.1 Mr. and Mrs. Joe Sanchez Wedding Announcement. "Weddings," *The Blissfield Advance,* October 24, 1957, 4.

In Adrian, Mexicanos formed their own church – La Iglesia Bautista Cristiana. Located at 409 Croswell Street in Adrian, the church opened in 1944 and was noted as being "one of the first signs…[that] Hispanics were becoming a community."[132] Reverend Ramon Navarro served as its pastor for forty years before retiring in 1984.[133] As of 1947, the church had a regular congregation of approximately thirty families.[134] The goal of the church was always to reach out to both the spiritual and material needs of area Mexicanos. For instance, Navarro worked with Ruth Borradaile (an emergency farm labor field assistant) in order to open the church's basement as a "reception center for migrant workers coming into this territory…. Workers on arrival may go to the center for a hot meal and a chance to clean up and rest for a few hours, or overnight if necessary, while awaiting assignment to the farms

[132] Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked*, 212.
[133] Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked*, 212-213.
[134] "Reception Center Being Set Up for Migrant Workers," *Blissfield Advance*, April 10, 1947, 2.

they are to work."[135] The newspaper noted the church was struggling financially – due to the low wages of the congregants and the financial burden of having just completed their church building – but were still opening their doors to help incoming farmworkers.[136] As of 2014, La Iglesia Bautista Cristiana had become Croswell Family Worship Center, but the church sign retained the old Spanish name as a subtitle and the pastor, Ralph Vallejo, still reached out to serve Adrian Mexicanos. While it was certainly not the only church Mexicanos attended, it was the earliest and the longest enduring, as the local Catholic Church, St. Mary's, did not begin to make a concerted effort to reach out to attract Mexicanos to attend services or for membership until the 1960s.[137]

While religion was an important influence, in the 1950s each Lenawee County community rallied together by forming local action committees to physically improve their neighborhoods. In Blissfield, the Mexican Village neighborhood, due to its poor living conditions, became an opportunity for Mexicanos to engage local politics and seek first class citizenship. Residents worried about their safety as rats and vermin nested in the piles of bricks taken from the demolished sugar factory that were awaiting use to build more homes. Six Mexicano families formed a committee and petitioned the Lenawee County Health Department for help. An editorial in the local newspaper noted the problem had existed for years but "avoiding it didn't solve it…. [Rather] residents…have shown rare courage in trying to do something about it themselves."[138] The paper stated that officials paid "immediate attention" to the request and inspected the property the same week. The residents were noted as being "permanent residents of Blissfield…[who] own their own

[135] "Reception Center Being Set Up for Migrant Workers," 2.
[136] "Reception Center Being Set Up for Migrant Workers," 2.
[137] Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked*, 213.
[138] "Helping Others to Help Themselves," *Blissfield Advance*, April 3, 1958, 2.

homes…[and] take pride in its appearance."[139] While the editorial noted that "making interior improvements, are a matter of individual resources" the large infrastructural issues facing the neighborhood were "a challenge to community cooperation."[140] Not once in this editorial or in any of the following dozen articles regarding this issue did the newspaper label residents as "Mexican," other than as the name of the neighborhood. The only label attached to any of the resident's names was "of Blissfield" signifying a level of residency and respect.

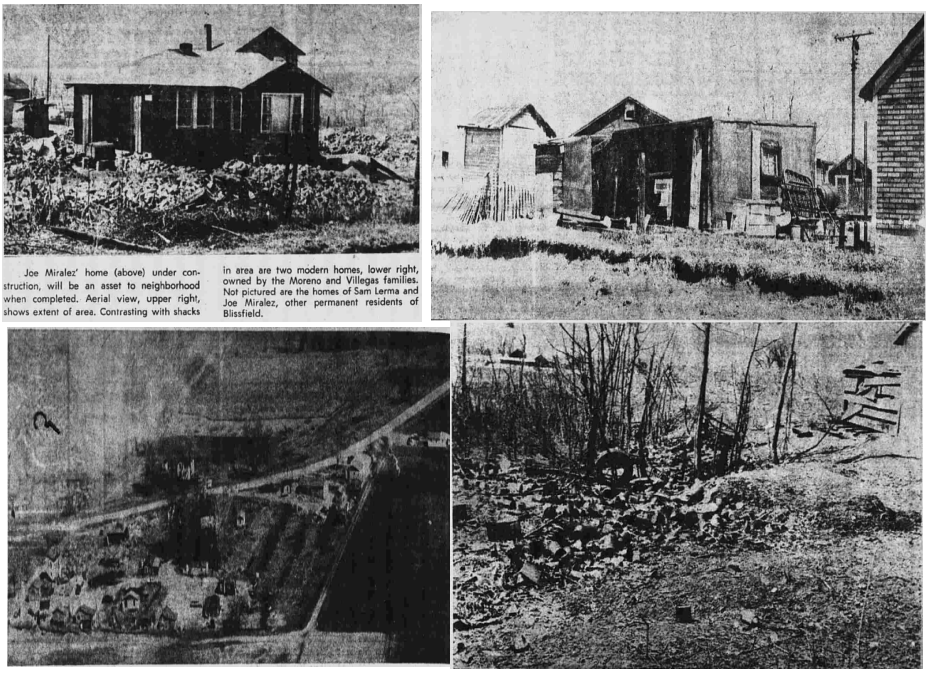


Fig. 4.2 Various images of the Mexican Village neighborhood outside Blissfield, Michigan. Upper left: Jose Mirelez's completed home. Upper right: Homes considered "shacks" by the newspaper. Lower left: Aerial view of Mexican Village. Lower right: Piles of bricks and debris awaiting use. "Mexican Village Topic of Meeting Here on June 26," *Blissfield Advance*, June 19, 1958, 8.

The complaint and subsequent inspection set off a series of meetings that began in April of 1958 to discuss possible solutions and that enlisted aid from Michigan State University's Institute for Community Development (a new department which had only begun operating that same month financed with government grant money). The issue brought local Mexicanos into contact with health officials, local leaders, and government representatives.

[139] "Helping Others to Help Themselves," 2.
[140] "Helping Others to Help Themselves," 2.

For example, in an April 18 meeting, Blissfield residents Mr. and Mrs. Celestino Moreno, Jesse Mirelez, and Joseph Villegas traveled to East Lansing to meet with members of the County Health Department, a county nurse, a county sanitary engineer, sociologists, economists, and urban planners.[141] Local meetings at the high school gym followed and while a sewage system was deemed too costly at that time, one immediate effect came from Charles Newcomb volunteering to purchase trashcans for each home and to make regular collections, while Joe Villegas would collect fees from tenants to pay for the service.[142] In addition, local Anglos volunteered to join with Mexicanos for a community "work bee" clean up day to remove trash and waste.[143] In 1959, the committee formed a non-profit corporation known as the Parkwood Development Corporation to sell stock shares to raise money to build proper homes.[144] Though it still took years to achieve all the needed improvements, the efforts engaged many Mexicanos in local politics and activism.

There was a similar situation in Adrian's Sunnyside neighborhood. The area was economically depressed despite many Mexicanos able to obtain jobs at the Bohn Factory and Stubnitz-Green Plant. As of the 1950s the neighborhood still lacked many city services, including city water access and sewer system. To combat this, Sunnyside residents launched multiple initiatives during the 1950s, petitioning for aid and/or for the annexation of the community by the city of Adrian. In 1952, residents were successful in requesting the city of Adrian work with Madison Township (where Sunnyside was located) to install sewer lines

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[141] "Proposed Clean-Up of Mexican Village to be Discussed May 1," *Blissfield Advance*, April 24, 1958, 1,4; See also "Mexican Village Topic of Meeting Here on June 26," *Blissfield Advance*, June 19, 1958, 1,8; "Meet Tonite [sic] on Mexican Village Plan," *Blissfield Advance*, June 26, 1958, 1; "Mexican Village Committee Holds Talks at Mission," *Blissfield Advance*, November 20, 1958, 8; Lindquist, *Spanning the Years*, 169.
[142] "Mexican Village Topic of Meeting Here on June 26."
[143] "Committee Begins Work on Mexican Village Clean-Up," *Blissfield Advance*, July 3, 1958, 1.
[144] "Corporation Formed to Aid Homesite [sic] for Mexican Villagers," *Blissfield Advance*, February 19, 1959, 8; "Mexican Village Committee Seeks to Raise $300," *Blissfield Advance*, March 19, 1959, 4; "Objections Raised to Relocating Mexican Families in New Homes," *Blissfield Advance*, April 23, 1959, 1.

for the 100 lots in the subdivision and to connect Sunnyside with the mile long interceptor line. Until that point residents still relied on outhouses.[145] This victory did have some negative consequences. According to the *Adrian Daily Telegram*, the workers who installed the sewers made a mess of the neighborhood: "trees and shrubs have been torn up permanently, fences removed and not replaced. One well was entirely abandoned…. Streets were torn up over an eight month period."[146] The paper noted that residents were never paid for the damages. Despite this, the residents pressed on.

In 1953, Sunnyside residents sent a letter petitioning the city of Adrian for water services. From the beginning the effort was an interethnic affair with the original letter signed by Carl Polhemus, Edith Ostrander, Nellie Hooker, Mae Heath, Leonard Ostrander, Jose Regalado, Refugio Delacruz, Pedro Regalado, Federico Cruz, Eliseo Delacruz, Manuel Gonzalez, and Margie Ostrander.[147] The "approximately 30 property owners and 60 registered voters" followed up the letter by filing a petition seeking annexation by the city saying "we now have sewers and gas but no water."[148] All told annexation would "provide garbage and rubbish pickups, fire protections, road and street widening and improvement, installation of a fire alarm system, and a water system."[149] The effort seemed to be supported by Adrian's mayor, but issues of school zoning (what if Sunnyside desired to attend Adrian Public Schools rather than stay in Madison Township) worried some Adrian residents.[150] In

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[145] "Sunnyside to get Sanitary Sewers," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, January 28, 1952, 1.
[146] "Sunnyside Outlines Position on Water," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, February 13, 1953, 1
[147] "Sunnyside Outlines Position on Water."
[148] "Petitions Request Annexation Action in Sunnyside Area," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, February 19, 1953, 1; "20 Acres of Land is Involved in Sunnyside Annexation Plan," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, February 21, 1953, 1; "Petitions to Annex Land in Sunnyside Being Circulated," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, April 23, 1953, 1
[149] "Sunnyside Gains Outlined," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, July 13, 1953, 1.
[150] "Sunnyside Gains Outlined;" "School Problems in Annexation Plan Discussed by Group," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 12, 1953, 1.

the end there were not enough votes to pass the measure from either the City of Adrian or Madison Township residents.[151]

Residents tried again in 1954 as Manuel, Eliseo, and Refugio Delacruz led efforts to secure nearly 1000 signatures from Adrian and Madison Township to present to the county clerk.[152] The election in November became very controversial as residents of Madison Township and Adrian approved annexation, but the measure fell by a count of 41-14 by Sunnyside residents. Locals protested the results alleging fraud and the case went to court in 1955.[153] The prosecutor argued seven of the ballots were invalid because the voters did not even reside in Sunnyside. Removing the seven ballots from the total of fifty-five votes left forty-eight valid ballots. Attorney Betz called on twenty-seven witnesses, nearly all of them Mexicano, to testify. Each of them waived their right to keep a secret ballot and said they voted "yes" on the initiative. With those twenty-seven voters alone, the annexation proposal would have passed 27-21.[154] Ultimately, the judge in the case found no evidence of election fraud. While he acknowledged that some errors existed, it was "not enough to materially change the outcome," meaning the annexation effort failed for a second time.[155] Some have linked these failures to a 1962 dysentery outbreak in Sunnyside, but nonetheless, just the process of putting the initiative on the ballot and challenging the results helped engage Mexicanos in local politics and provided organizational opportunities.[156] Moreover, despite these setbacks for area Mexicanos, the 1960s did show promise for greater inclusion as Zaragosa T. Vargas passed the civil service exam and become the first Mexicano hired at the

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[151] "Comment on Annexation Election," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, September 15, 1953, 1.
[152] "Sunnyside Residents as Annexation Vote" *Adrian Daily Telegram*, August 7, 1954, 1.
[153] "Betz Rests Case Over Fraud, Error, in Sunnyside Vote," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, March 18, 1955, 1.
[154] "Betz Rests Case Over Fraud, Error, in Sunnyside Vote."
[155] "Sunnyside Annexation Election Found Valid by Judge Marin; Court Finds Errors, No Fraud," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, April 1, 1955, 1.
[156] "Historic American Landscapes Survey: Sunnyside Addition," 3.

Adrian branch of the U.S. Post Office (a job he held for twenty six years).[157] Two of his children, Olga and Zaragosa Jr., graduated from Adrian High School in 1966, Olga being elected Homecoming Queen in 1965, a first for Mexicanos in Adrian. All this was important to Adrian's Mexicano community, as they were the only ethno-racial/cultural minority group large enough to register on the U.S. Census.[158]

**Growth through Popular Culture and Education**

The physical construction of space was vital to the establishment of local communities of Mexicanos in Michigan, highlighting the overwhelming adaptability of Michigan Mexicanos to take their presented environment and then to shape it and mold it in order to create a Mexicanized space – a place that was theirs.[159] However, even more important was what Mexicanos did with the opportunities opened to them by virtue of the growth of their communities. Having permanent physical spaces afforded Mexicanos the opportunity to connect with other Mexicano communities via food and popular culture, often with the larger communities acting as hubs of Mexicano culture to the smaller ones. This helped the Michigan Mexicano community, as a whole, blend Mexican cultural traditions into emerging new Mexican American cultural identities.[160] At the same time, creating permanence also opened new opportunities in education, allowing Mexicanos to claim space

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[157] Charles Lindquist, "Lenawee County's Hispanic Have Made Their Mark," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, September 30, 1989; "Obituary: Zaragosa T. Vargas," *Adrian Daily Telegram*, last modified September 15, 2010, http://www.lenconnect.com/article/20100915/News/309159939#ixzz38zubGyMh, accessed January 2, 2017.

[158] The 1970 U.S. Census reported that Mexicanos represented 9.6 percent of Adrian's population. Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked*, 277.

[159] For works regarding the creation of Mexicanized space see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade;* Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*; Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latin;" García, *A World of Its Own*; García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American.*

[160] For more see Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American.*

in schools and have access to better education. This would allow succeeding generations the chance to bridge the economic and social boundaries set against them.

**Food Exchange**

A common theme in many interviews for this project was the difficulty of procuring certain traditional Mexican foods and spices while living in Michigan, especially prior to the 1960s. While beans and rice were common in many places, not all Mexicano communities, especially outside Detroit, were always able to have easy access to spices, baked goods, or even the meat needed to make *barbacoa*. To secure desired food and to keep their traditions alive, Mexicanos often relied on intra-state communal networks. For example, during the late 1950s and early 1960s in Lenawee County, Emily Martinez recalled asking her father if she could join with other students in going to Detroit to buy Mexican bakery items: "My dad said alright. [We] bought bread, like day old bread, and tortillas and I helped distribute it."[161] Martinez traveled from Blissfield to Detroit and back in order to give specialty goods to migrant workers in the fields. While food certainly could be bought locally for sustenance, this effort was done to bring culturally familiar foods to workers, and demonstrated how Lenawee County Mexicanos were connected to Detroit Mexicanos. This same process was also what helped Traverse City Mexicanos build community ties. Marylou Olivarez Mason remembered how she and other cherry pickers were able to enjoy comfort food despite not having any stores that far north:

> My uncle was very entrepreneurial. He had an old panel truck, and he would come out to the farms from Saginaw. He would bring baked goods and things we didn't have over there. He would go to the farms and sell to the people.

[161] Martinez interview.

> He'd come once a week. Come from Saginaw to Traverse City because you wouldn't find any products like that at the grocery store.[162]

Gilbert Guevara's father did similarly. He worked for General Motors throughout the week, but traveled from Saginaw to Traverse City on the weekends to bring food and groceries to family and friends picking cherries.[163] Food allowed larger Mexicano enclaves such as Detroit and Saginaw to act as hubs of culture to other areas of the state.

Many interviewees spoke of a different method utilized for the procurement of other delicacies such as *barbacoa*. In the United States, *barbacoa* is meat generally derived from a cow (though other variations include goat or lamb), specifically from the cow's head. The meat is slow-cooked in spices, often in a hole dug in the ground. The meat is then shredded and used in making tacos (generally with homemade corn tortillas). What made this special for Mexicanos in Michigan was the ability to obtain a portion of the cow Anglo butchers normally just discarded. Many Mexicanos sought out a local butcher who was willing to set aside the cow's head for them and hold it for when they wanted one. Rose San Miguel reminisced about her father going to a butcher shop in St. Louis, Michigan:

> Anytime he went there [the butcher] would have one for him…. Anytime he went to that particular butcher shop they had them…. My dad had this hole dug in the back[yard] and that was where he would cook the *barbacoa*. He would go into St. Louis and bring back these cow heads; they would be in the bathtub, and they would be there until he was [ready] because sometimes they were frozen and so to defrost them, he would put them in the bathtub and [then] the night before, at midnight, my brother in law would come over, or his male friends would come over; they would get the fire going, they would wrap the thing up, with spices, and wrap it up in aluminum and burlap and sit out there all night, just tending the fire, drinking, [and] talking. So the following day that would be what we would eat, *barbacoa*.[164]

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[162] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 158.
[163] Guevara interview.
[164] San Miguel interview.

Other families repeated this as well. Efrain Gutierrez remembered his mother going to the local slaughterhouse in the early 1950s seeking to purchase a cow's head and intestines (to make *tripa*). The butcher was taken a little off guard by the request and though Gutierrez's mother offered to pay for the meat, the butcher gave her the parts for free since he was just planning on throwing them away. By 1956, Gutierrez stated the butcher realized he could charge money for these parts since Mexicanos kept coming year after year.[165] In Flint, Arturo Reyes recalled traveling to Saginaw in order obtain a cow's head to make *barbacoa* for his family since Anglos in Flint said "they couldn't sell it" to them.[166] For each family, it was about creating community by connecting with family and neighbors while enjoying and maintaining a cultural tradition.

Food created a shared experience that connected the rural and urban communities. San Miguel remembered her father increasing the size and diversity of his farm's livestock: "To make extra money he [her father] would [raise] baby goats. He would then sell them to Mexican restaurants here in Saginaw."[167] Her family also traveled to Saginaw in order to partake in that food culture. She recalled after dances were over, her family "would then drive over to El Favorito and have a meal. A lot of the people who were at the dance we would see show up there…. We would have our meal, my dad would give the waitress a hard time, and the waitress would give it right back to him. It was kind of an atmosphere of visiting friends."[168] At other times the San Miguel family traveled to Saginaw to go grocery shopping: "I don't know the real name of the store (my parents were big about giving people nicknames), but we would go to 'El Pato,' which is 'The Duck'…mainly on Saturdays and

[165] Gutierrez interview.
[166] Reyes interview.
[167] San Miguel interview.
[168] San Miguel interview.

Sundays and we would pick up specialty things: jalapeños, they would have *barbacoa*, then in this one little corner they would have records, 45's, of different [Spanish singing] groups that came in; Ruben Vela was a big one."[169] Thus, food connected urban and rural Mexicanos, aiding in the maintenance and construction of their cultural identities in the north.[170] It also illustrated that assimilation was not thrust upon them, as Mexicanos continued to find ways to preserve their cultural heritage.

**At the Movies**

In a similar manner, Spanish language cinema played an important role in the lives of Michigan Mexicanos, allowing them to carve out their own space in the cities while aiding in the retention of Mexican culture. In Saginaw, La Unión Cívica co-founder Vicente Lopez loved walking down to Gem Cinema on Sixth Street: "On the weekends my Dad used to love to go watch the films of his country" his son Manuel recalled.[171] Rose San Miguel also spoke of this theater: "Monday through Friday, the Black people showed Black films, and then on Saturday and Sunday was when they showed Mexican films."[172] She remembered attending these movies from the time she was six or seven years old in the early 1950s until she was in high school. This coincided with the Golden Age of the Mexican film industry, which produced Mexican film stars idolized by the masses giving Mexicanos celebrities to

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[169] The name of the store indeed was El Pato, owned by founding member of La Unión Cívica Francisco "Pancho" Diaz. San Miguel interview. Efrain Gutierrez told a similar story regarding his time in Saginaw. See Gutierrez interview.
[170] For more on food and identity construction, see Bentley, "From Culinary Other to Mainstream American;" Chen, *Chop Suey;* Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Perales, *Smeltertown*, chapter 2; Pilcher, *¡Que Vivan Los Tamales!;* Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows.*
[171] "La Unión Cívica Founders: Vicente Lopez, *La Unión Cívica Mexicana: Celebrating 50 Years,* Commemorative Booklet, March 25, 1995, 20.
[172] San Miguel interview.

look up to and emulate.[173] San Miguel lamented the theater "started bringing in more modern films and that wasn't what my parents were into. They were more into [the old western style]: Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Lola Beltrán, María Félix, Antonio and Luis Aguilar, Pedro Armendáriz."[174] While she could not remember who brought the Spanish language films into Saginaw, she laughed while recalling he wore a large white Stetson hat. Rafael Arceo attempted to bring this to Flint Mexicanos as well. He was able to find a theater on North Saginaw Street, on the northern outskirts of Flint, near Montrose, that was willing to allow him to show Spanish language films. His son, David, recalled his father driving up to Saginaw weekly to obtain the film reels and driving back to Vehicle City so Flint Mexicanos could enjoy Mexican movies as well. He did this for a few years during the late 1950s, but had to stop, as it proved too difficult, especially in the winter months (this was before the interstate highway system).[175] While not successful for a long duration, Arturo Reyes remembered enjoying seeing films in his native language during that time.[176]

Spanish language movies were similarly popular and well attended in Blissfield. *The Blissfield Advance* weekly published screening times, titles, and stars of the movies to attract local Mexicanos. Though there were a few instances in the 1940s, it was again the 1950s that witnessed the Golden Age of Mexican cinema explode in Blissfield, as there were more

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[173] The Golden Age of Mexican Cinema (1936-1959) was an era in which the Mexican film industry combined high levels of production, quality, economic success, and critical acclaim. For more on the Mexican and Mexican American film industry and its importance to U.S. Mexicanos see Charles Ramírez Berg, *The Classical Mexican Cinema: The Poetics of the Exceptional Golden Age Films* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015); Carl J. Mora, *Mexican Cinema: Reflections of a Society, 1896-2004* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982); Chon A. Noriega, *Chicanos and Film: Representation and Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Chon A. Noriega, *The Mexican Cinema Project* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1995); Chon A. Noriega, *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Agrasanchez Rogelio Jr., *Mexican Movies in the United States: A History of the Films, Theaters and Audiences, 1920-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2006); Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.
[174] San Miguel interview.
[175] Arceo interview.
[176] Reyes interview.

than 115 references to Spanish language films shown at Bliss Theater from 1953 to the end of the decade. The films, known in the newspaper as the "Mexican Feature," were run seasonally to coincide with the greater influx of migrants, generally beginning in May and concluding in October. Many prominent films were shown each week at seven o'clock, including *Mi Noche de Bodas, Los Paquetes de Paquita, Que Lindo Cha Cha Cha, Fugitivos, Lo Que Le Paso A Sansón, El Sindicato del Crimen,* and *Así Se Quiere En Jalisco*.[177] The movies changed weekly and continued even after the movie house changed mangers in 1959. The Spanish language films were so popular the new manager, Al Nemeth, made sure to comment regarding them when *The Blissfield Advance* interviewed him concerning the change in management, saying "that the Mexican features which have been drawing Spanish-speaking crowds on Tuesday and Wednesday nights will be continued if demand warrants."[178] He even promised to keep the theater open throughout the winter if the demand was there. While going to the movies in and of itself was simply partaking in popular culture, in these cases it also helped to cement their Mexicano cultural identities by giving them a space congregate together as they enjoyed Mexicano heroes and entertainers on the silver screen depicting a heritage to be proud of.[179]

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[177] "Bliss Theater," *Blissfield Advance*, 1951-1960, Schultz-Holmes Memorial Library, Blissfield, Michigan.
[178] "Al Nemeth Is New Theater Manager," *Blissfield Advance*, July 23, 1959, 1.
[179] For more on the Spanish language cinema and identity formation, see Fernández, "Becoming Latino," 96; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.


Fig. 4.3 Sample Movie Advertisement for "Mexican Features" at the Bliss Movie Theater. "Bliss Theater," *Blissfield Advance*, June 7, 1956, 2.

**Music and the Great Outdoors**

Food and cinema represented very specific methods for Michigan Mexicanos to construct cultural identities rooted in a Mexican heritage. Simultaneously, Mexicanos also engaged in new Michigan-centric activities that illustrated the incorporation of U.S. and Midwestern cultural constructs into their Mexican American identity. Mexicanos engaged in new behaviors that made them feel at home in the state. For instance, during the 1950s Eddi Sanchez of Blissfield gained local fame and got his picture on the front page of *The Blissfield Advance* because he bagged a nearly four pound "pheasant which measured 37 inches from tip of its tail to tip of beak" while hunting.[180] Hunting pheasant and deer have long been rites of Michigan male culture. That Sanchez appeared in the newspaper without a segregating

[180] "Mostly About Folks," *Blissfield Advance*, November 8, 1956, 1.

marker of "Mexican" suggested acceptance and inclusion in Anglo society for participating in a traditional Anglo Michigander activity. Another Michigan summer ritual is that of "going up north," whereby you pack up on the weekend and travel somewhere north of Saginaw or along Lake Michigan to camp and/or spend time on a lake. Marylou Olivarez Mason worked for Dr. Kirk Herrick and she remembered how he owned some land "up north on the Indian River. So I went on our first [family] vacation."[181] She recalled purchasing a camper and spending much time in the summer with her children going to up to Higgins Lake State Park: "To this day, I still missing going camping."[182]

Though the older generation tended to be drawn the Spanish language movies, the younger generation of Mexicanos (those who grew up in the Midwest and were teenagers during the 1950s and 1960s) often embraced more American forms of popular culture. This was typified in music. Music provided leisure expression and outlet for Mexicano youths that distinguished them from their parents' generation and helped them fit in with their friends and classmates.[183] While Rose San Miguel recalled going to El Pato to see and hear the latest Spanish language records and fondly remembered traveling from Saginaw to Lansing to see Ruben Vela in concert, as a teenager she began to rebel against her Mexican heritage and, instead, embrace American popular culture. She described this conversion by referencing her decision to partake in the music of Neil Diamond and The Beatles.[184] It was not that she wanted to be defiant, but San Miguel wanted to listen to what her friends were listening to and she enjoyed the music. Similarly, Saginaw resident Fred Mendel also recalled his rebellion against his "strict parents" by his listening to Jimi Hendrix and the

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[181] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 168.
[182] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 169.
[183] For more on the role of popular culture, music, cultural coalescence, and cultural identity, especially among the Mexican American generation see Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*.
[184] San Miguel interview.

group Queen, as well as by keeping his hair long and wearing bellbottoms. He stated his parents did not hassle him too much regarding his choices in dress and music so long as he kept his grades up.[185]

This embracement of music among the Mexican American generation was no more clearly demonstrated than in the formation of a rock and roll group known as Question Mark and the Mysterians who burst on the scene in the mid-1960s. The original three members – Bobby Balderrama (guitar), Robert Martinez (drums), and Larry Borjas (bass), were all children of Mexicano migrants who had come to the Saginaw Valley area for farm work before finding jobs in the automobile industry, settling permanently in the area.[186] Balderrama was introduced to rock and roll on the guitar by a fellow migrant farm worker, Dave Garcia, who showed him the chords on the tailgate of the family station wagon in Standish, Michigan. The group formed in 1964 and the youths began practicing in the garage at Borjas's house. They began by playing cover songs of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones and soon found their front man in the form of Martinez's older brother Rudy, who had the charisma and dynamic stage performance that was needed during that era of music following the British Invasion.[187] The elder Martinez had recently attended Saginaw High School and became known for always wearing shades. After playing at a teen dance at Saginaw's G.I. Forum, the group came in contact with their first manager, David Torres, who was "was impressed by the frenzied reaction of the girls at the dance, and by the fact that he

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[185] Fred Mendel interview by Steven Rosales, April 18, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[186] Due to the draft, other men would be recruited to rotate in, including Eddie Serrato, Frank Lugo, and Frank Rodriguez, but they were the original founding members of the group. "96 Tears," *96 Tears*, http://www.96tears.net, accessed January 2, 2017; "Question Mark and the Mysterians," *Norton Records*, https://web.archive.org/web/20111017202249/http://www.nortonrecords.com/question.html, accessed January 2, 2017; "? (Question Mark) and the Mysterians," *Michigan Rock and Roll Legends,* http://www.michiganrockandrolllegends.com/mrrl-hall-of-fame/107-question-mark-and-the-mysterians, accessed January 2, 2017.
[187] Larry Rodarte, Jr., "Question Mark and the Mysterians," *Mi Gente*, Special Commemorative Issue, February 1996.

had never before seen a rock band in which all of the members were of Mexican descent."[188] It was also Torres who suggested Rudy Martinez adopt his trademark name of "?."

Together they created the song "96 Tears" in 1966 and the group recorded two songs on an album at the Art Shields Studio, which was little more than a patio on the back of a house at 405 South Raymond Street in Bay City. After recording, they began playing live gigs, often selling their album for twenty-five cents at events. Though he was hesitant to play their song on the radio, Flint deejay Bob Dell did book the group for recurring performances at teen dances at Mt. Holly (a ski resort just south of Flint), demonstrating the interethnic appeal of the Mexicano group in a similar manner to that of the late Ritchie Valens who topped the charts in 1958 with his hit "La Bamba."[189] Fans of all ethno-racial backgrounds helped give the Mysterians their next big break, pushing them to the top of the charts.

In order to persuade disc jockeys in Flint and Detroit to play their song, the group and their fans called to the radio stations requesting to hear "96 Tears." Question Mark recalled the effort:

> I told them [fans] to call WTAC [in Flint] and request the record. And they did it. [Flint Disc Jockey] Bob Dell came to me and asked if I had a copy of 96 Tears cause he was hounded with calls. The public was doing what I was asking. He started playing it on the radio and it entered the top 40, went to 38, 36 and then dropped to 37. Dell said he would play it, but he wasn't pushing it. In radio back then, you could send in postcards to request a song. So I decide to write 100 postcards at $.03 cents postage. I went to different cities, Midland, Saginaw, Bay City on different days. I told my sisters to send requests and they told their friends. I wrote tons of requests, typed some, use different handwritings, but I did it and I heard my requests on the radio. So now he [Dell] started to play it. Then I heard other requests that I knew weren't mine. Because of the response I created, other people started catching on.[190]

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[188] "? (Question Mark) and the Mysterians."
[189] "Ritchie Valens," *Richie Valens*, http://ritchievalens.com, accessed January 2, 2017.
[190] Rodarte, "Question Mark and the Mysterians,"

Through this perseverance, the Detroit market picked up the song as well. By October 1966 "96 Tears" reached number one on the charts, was certified gold in November, and finished the year as the number two song on *Billboard's Top Records of 1966*. The song outperformed other 1966 hit singles by groups including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Supremes, and The Beach Boys.[191]

Leisure activities such as going "up north" and music combined with the embracement of Midwestern terminology, such as what a soft drink was called, to aid in creating a distinctly Michigan Mexican American identity. For instance, Rose San Miguel fondly recalled her father getting paid on Friday and driving to Midland to cash his check with him. On the way home "my Dad would buy a little bag of [roasted peanuts] and we would get bottles of pop to share and a small bag of roasted peanuts. That was a biggie to have a bottle of pop."[192] The use of the word "pop" denotes a very Midwestern cultural marker and for Mexicanos it became important to learn the word quickly to ensure they received what they wanted. Ordering a "pop" in Texas may draw strange looks from the cashier, but ordering a "soda" in Michigan will likely earn the customer a soda water rather than the desired soft drink.[193] Consequently, leisure activities helped Mexicanos remake their cultural identities.

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[191] "96 Tears;" "Question Mark and the Mysterians,"

[192] San Miguel interview. Others also echoed this as well. As early as 1928 records show Mexicanos utilizing the term "pop." One interviewee highlighted working alongside several Polish men. The man stated, "One of them [the Polish workers] told me how to say "bottle of pop" in Polish so that I could buy refreshments." See Robert C. Jones "Field notes: Michigan – Detroit, 1928," Carton 11, Folder 69, PTP. See also John Sanchez interview by Steven Rosales, November 5, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Lopez interview.

[193] There are numerous articles and websites devoted to his debate. Generally speaking people in the South and Southeast say "Coke" even if not referring to the Coca-Cola brand, those in the Northeast and far West embrace the term "soda," and those in the Midwest say "pop." One of the most popularly referenced surveys came from a study by Matthew Campbell and Professor Greg Plumb of East Central University in Oklahoma who geographically plotted people's preference by region. See, for instance, "Pop vs Soda," *Pop vs. Soda*, http://popvssoda.com, accessed January 2, 2017.

**Claiming Space through Education**

The ability to claim space in schools and pursue education was a vital benefit (and sometimes cause) of the decision to create permanent physical spaces in the state. That is, settling into homes and neighborhoods opened new opportunities for Mexicano children to gain access to education. Hindrances still often stood in the way, though, as classrooms were sometimes a space of exclusion for Mexicanos.[194] For example, members of Las Damas in Saginaw recalled the Spanish language being forbidden in the 1950s. In one instance, a Mexicana kindergartener got caught speaking a few words of Spanish at school. Her teacher reprimanded her, walked her home, and told her father "if you don't stop speaking Spanish to her, I'm going to report you" (presumably to immigration).[195] While conducting interviews regarding Mexicanos in Adrian schools, one researcher found many negative reflective experiences. In one case a respondent stated, "You didn't belong in school, they were doing you a favor by educating you and you better know that," while another recalled their experience of learning about ethnicity in social studies class: "…everyone knew that the Irish were policeman, the Jews were businessmen, the Mexicans were fieldworkers."[196] In the eighth grade, Emily Martinez remembered her teacher slapping her. Though she did not want to return to school the next day, she did go back and stood up to the teacher saying if she ever did that again she would report the teacher to the principal.[197]

That being the case, most interviews conducted for this dissertation still labeled education as the key to making a home in the state and overcoming the social and economic

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[194] See chapter 1 of this dissertation; Guevara interview.
[195] Las Damas interview.
[196] Ed Codina, "Mexican-Americans in Lenawee Schools, 1943-53," (Unpublished Manuscript, Archives Room, City of Adrian Library, 1983) 10-11. Also Rene Perez Rosenbaum, "Migration and Integration of Latinos into Rural Midwestern Communities: The Case of Mexicans in Adrian, Michigan," *JSRI Research Report No. 19*, Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1997.
[197] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

stereotypes that viewed Mexicanos as only being laborers. Education was often a difficult, but essential, path to navigate for Mexicanos arriving in Michigan. Children of migrants often faced many dilemmas while traversing the country. Because children regularly helped in the fields for extended periods and repeatedly had to move to a new area even during the school year, many young Mexicanos lost progress or found their progress did not transfer correctly from Texas to Michigan.[198] Emily Martinez failed both the third and fourth grades because, despite having passing grades and being able to pass the exams, she simply was absent too often causing her to not be in school the minimum required days. She remembered crying because she knew she was smart enough, and yet that was not enough.[199] Efrain Gutierrez recalled a similar feeling in 1956 as he was held back from moving up to fourth grade because he also lacked the minimum number of school days attended.[200] This hurt many children of migrant workers, many of whom had to drop out of school, sometimes perpetuating the next generation into manual labor as well. By choosing to settle out of the migrant stream and create permanence in Michigan (elsewhere as well), parents provided a means for their children to obtain education that helped them claim space and succeed in Michigan's racialized environment.

Though there were certainly teachers who hindered Mexicanos through discriminatory practices, many interviewees also recalled teachers who encouraged them at a young age and helped open up the school sphere to them. This was especially important for the Mexican American generation, as they were the first to attend school in Michigan. For

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[198] For other works on the school issues for migrant children, see Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Gonzales, *Labor and Community*; Norris, *North for the Harvest*; Perales, *Smeltertown*; Marc Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
[199] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[200] Gutierrez interview.

Marylou Olivarez Mason, education was a leading impetus for her parents to settle in Michigan. One of her uncles persuaded her parents that formal education was needed for Olivarez Mason "to make her way in the modern world" even offering up his home in Saginaw to them to start off in. She recalled she began school at age twelve, and that the teachers "told me the harder I worked, the faster they would move me up in the grades. There were a couple teachers who really helped me."[201] Elsewhere, Emily Martinez more fondly recalled grade school in Michigan: "Growing up as a student, as a young girl, I was always teacher's pet because I did everything I was supposed to do. I helped the teachers. I helped the students. Once I learned, I learned to help others. So I didn't have a problem."[202] Because of her willingness, Martinez, said many of her early teachers took a special interest in helping her learn English, because she mainly spoke Spanish before settling in Blissfield.[203] Still speaking Spanish when starting school in Michigan was common for those not born in Michigan. Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa recalled very different Flint school experiences. Cruz was born in Texas and struggled early on in school because he spoke only Spanish when he started and still spoke Spanish at home with his family. His younger brother, Augustine, was born in Michigan and remembered knowing English when he started kindergarten. While Cruz said he had a few teachers who helped him greatly, Augustine started with an advantage.[204] Similarly, David Arceo, despite being born in Flint, reminisced about the first day at Cody School: "the school teacher asked [the students] who knew the alphabet and I raised my hand…[and said] 'ah, beh, seh, cheh…' She interrupted, 'no, no, no,

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[201] "Marylou Hernandez (Olivarez-Mason): Yearning to Learn," in *Great Girls in Michigan History* by Patricia Majher (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 61.
[202] Eighth grade marked a big change in the education system in Blissfield as that was when all the rural, small schoolhouses converged into Blissfield High School. This made it a more inter-racial atmosphere, making Mexicanos much more of a minority. Martinez interview.
[203] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza; Martinez interview.
[204] Zamarripa interview.

David, you have to say it in English.'"[205] He thought it was odd that the alphabet posted on the wall above the chalkboard was "missing some letters."[206] Despite the rough start, Arceo fondly recalled how compassionate Mrs. Cody was to teach him English.

Parents understood the value of their children obtaining a good education so the next generation could outperform them. It was a means to help ensure their children did not end up having to do fieldwork or working the hardest jobs at the factory as they did. It was a means to cross the economic barriers they faced, which could also improve social standing. As Emily Martinez indicated, she fit in well with both teachers and classmates because she worked hard to succeed in school. Even when she desired to drop out to help the family her father made her stay in school and finish. She never had to return to fieldwork.[207] In Saginaw, Rose San Miguel recalled what her mother wanted for her:

> My mother heard that you needed a high school diploma…. I graduated and went through the graduation ceremony on a Friday and Monday morning I was up at five o'clock getting ready and she rode with me into Saginaw, took me around to all the plants, and put in an application to find a job. She didn't want us working in the fields, she wanted that done and over with, with my older brothers and sisters. She wanted [me] to have an office job where [I] would not be under the heat of the sun, the rain, the mud, [and] the critters. She wanted better…and for her that meant a high school diploma and working inside.[208]

San Miguel was the first of her family to graduate high school in large part because she was born after her parents were no longer migrants. Her older brothers and sisters did not finish school because the traveling back and forth to Texas caused too much disruption during the school year.[209] Many Mexicanos echoed this sentiment. Despite being born in Saginaw,

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[205] Arceo interview. Efrain Gutierrez also recounted special teachers reaching out to him. See Gutierrez interview.
[206] Arceo interview.
[207] Martinez interview.
[208] San Miguel interview.
[209] San Miguel interview.

Fred Mendel spent much of his childhood following the crops, which caused him to drop out of school. He went on to finish his GED at age thirty-nine to show his children how important education was as a means of getting ahead.[210] Marylou Olivarez Mason worked hard for her own education and then pushed her children by taking them out into a friend's field to work: "I took them out there so they could see how hard it was to work out in the field, and that if they didn't stay in school, if they didn't get an education, this was the kind of work they were going to have to do."[211]

While a high school education was difficult, yet important, goal, the thought and process of obtaining higher education was often even more daunting. Raul Mosqueda recalled that a university degree "was not really conceivable" for most Mexicanos during the 1950s and 1960s. The feeling stemmed from the rigors of migrant work, a lack of encouragement from educators to stay in school, and the cost (though Mosqueda did go on to earn his doctorate in dentistry).[212] Although San Miguel's mother pushed her to finish high school, Rose had a very different conversation regarding her aspirations for higher education: "I mean, college, I wanted to go to college, I *wanted* to go to college so bad, but it was like, 'no.' Her [mother's] exact words were 'that's what rich white kids do, that's not what you do.'"[213] San Miguel secured the office job, as her mother desired, at Dow Chemical in Saginaw, but used that money to go Delta College to pursue higher education.[214] John Sanchez recalled his father getting him a job at Oldsmobile and becoming infuriated at his son for quitting after only a few months on the job. Sanchez did not like the shop life and

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[210] Mendel interview.
[211] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 170.
[212] Raul Mosqueda interview by Steven Rosales, June 13, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[213] San Miguel interview.
[214] San Miguel interview.

took the money he earned to pursue a college education. Running low of money again, Sanchez was rehired at Oldsmobile and again only worked long enough to earn some more money to return to college. He repeated this pattern once more in his attempt to better his life and job prospects.[215]

Realizing the importance of education and the hindrances of pursuing it, many programs were developed and targeted specifically at Mexicanos to allow them to gain access. The G.I. Forum developed several scholarships and raised money internally to offer Michigan Mexicanos the chance at higher education. Alejandra Zuñiga was a lifelong member the Saginaw G.I. Forum and one of her primary tasks was to organize banquets and dances to act as fundraisers for scholarships directed at Mexicanos.[216] This helped young people such as John Lopez. Lopez joined the U.S. Air Force because he could not afford to go to college. After the war, Lopez utilized the G.I. Bill to receive an education and was able to obtain a good job as an electrician at Saginaw Steering Gear (a subsidiary of General Motors), a job he held for twenty-five years before retiring.[217] Other monies were also allocated for Mexicanos including those by the Catholic Church. By 1969, the Michigan Diocese provided "110 Mexican-Americans with four year scholarships to the seven Catholic colleges and universities in the state" including the University of Detroit, which had fifty scholarships available.[218] Each institution was also given a college recruiter specifically designed to reach out into the Mexicano community.[219] In Flint, the SSIC similarly

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[215] Sanchez interview.
[216] Alejandra Zuñiga interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, January 16, 2013, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[217] Lopez interview.
[218] "Report by La Raza Unida Steering Committee to the Michigan Catholic Conference Board of Directors," Carton 2, Folder 56, Report by La Raza Unida – Michigan, JJGP, 19.
[219] "Report by La Raza Unida Steering Committee," 20.

developed outreach programs and established a recruiter to encourage local Mexicanos to attend college. The SSIC also set up a few scholarships to aid the process.[220]

A major mitigating factor in making the attainment of higher education possible was the establishment of permanent residences. This provided stability for Mexicano youths, who were able to apply themselves academically and thus remove their family lineages from the life of being farm laborers, with many going on to become activists for the Mexicano community. For instance, after four years of migrating back and forth from Texas to Michigan, Zaragosa T. Vargas settled in Adrian. While his daughter, Olga, became homecoming queen, she went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts "cum laude" from Adrian College, becoming a long time teacher in Adrian. Vargas's son, Zaragosa Jr., returned to school after serving two tours of duty in Vietnam as a Marine and earned his Ph.D. in American Studies and History at the University of Michigan. The younger Vargas became a professor, making stops at the University of Michigan, Yale, and the University of California at Santa Barbara, before ending up at the University of North Carolina. He has published numerous articles and books regarding Mexicanos in the United States.[221]

The Arceo family had a similar journey in Flint. Rafael Arceo furthered his career in the shop by receiving training to be a welder during World War II. His sons graduated from high school in Flint and pursued higher education locally as a means of obtaining higher paying jobs at General Motors. Both David and Ralph Jr. parlayed that education into locally elected positions with David serving on the Genesee County Road Commission and Ralph on the Davison (suburb of Flint) City Council. David's daughter Kathleen attended to Eastern

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[220] "Spanish Speaking Information Center;" "The Spanish-Speaking Information Center Newsletter."
[221] Lindquist, "Lenawee County's Hispanics Have Made Their Mark." While Vargas has written many articles, for his two most famous works see Vargas *Proletarians*; Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Michigan University. While there, she joined the Hispanic Club and helped establish the Multicultural Center. She then earned her law degree and went on to practice in San Antonio, helping local Mexicanos there.[222] David Arceo stated that he believed Mexicano culture in Michigan was raised by means of education. That is, it was education that allowed Mexicanos to become a recognized and regular part of Michigan society. Arceo proudly recounted how eight of thirteen grandchildren completed their undergraduate degrees and "that is where the culture has risen…. It doesn't rise because someone gives you an extra nickel. You have to do it on the perception of what you can do and want to do."[223] Working hard and claiming space in education was the key to crossing the social and economic boundaries faced in Michigan. While similar outcomes may have transpired had the first generation remained in Texas or as migrant workers, the educational success for the second and third generation came far easier by virtue of their parents permanently settling in the state.

**Conclusion**

Though no two cities in Michigan developed Mexicano enclaves in the same manner, there were several common themes. First, settlement tended to be predicated on proximity to work, which helped save money on transportation. Second, while most settled in areas already containing co-ethnics, it was not always the case, such as in Flint. Third, once established, Mexicanos adapted to their environment to physically build and carve out space for themselves in order to create community. Mexicanos established businesses, restaurants, churches, and organizations that helped area Mexicanos retain a sense of Mexicanness. If

[222] Arceo interview.
[223] Arceo interview.

they did not create their own places, such as at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Saginaw, Mexicanos worked to remake existing spaces into something that was more welcoming and their own. Other communities, such as those in Adrian and Blissfield, had to physically construct new neighborhoods, which created a need to band together in order to procure needed civic amenities. This enabled area Mexicanos to engage the local political sphere, setting the stage for more organized forms of activism in the 1970s and beyond.

The establishment of permanent institutions also aided Mexicanos in constructing their cultural identities and in overcoming the social and economic obstacles set against them. Food and Spanish language cinema afforded Michigan Mexicanos the opportunity to connect with other Michigan Mexicano communities, while simultaneously taking part in the same popular culture as Mexicanos in Texas or California. Music served a similar function, but as the younger generation engaged in English language songs and rhythms, it helped cement the formation of a new cultural identity. These examples typify how Mexicanos embraced and utilized leisure popular culture activities. In addition, educational opportunities expanded as a result of established permanence in the state. Education became a key for Mexicanos to better themselves, as nearly every interviewee for this project noted how vital education was to making a better life in Michigan. While certainly the sharing and evolution of food, movie, and music culture, as well as better education, could have taken place elsewhere, and did, these cultural attributes developed distinctly because of the decision to settle in Michigan. Though education was fundamental, one of the chief goals of education was to acquire skills in order to obtain better employment and that is where the discussion turns for the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Labor and Union Activism

On a chilly spring Saturday in 1986, three generations of Arceos stood outside General Motor's (GM) Fisher Body Plant No. 1 in Flint, Michigan to take a picture next to the historical marker commemorating the 1937 United Auto Worker (UAW) Sit Down Strike. Rafael, then 80 years old, smiled as he stood proudly with his son David and grandson Paul. As they lingered at the site in the shadow of the smokestacks that Rafael helped construct, the three men heard shouts coming from behind them. The Arceos looked up and saw workers with their heads sticking out the open windows of the factory. One of the workers yelled down, "Thanks, old-timer!" Rafael gave a wave of acknowledgement, thinking to himself, "People haven't forgotten."[1] In that moment, it did not matter that Rafael Arceo was of Mexicano descent. He was simply a proud union brother who had fought against General Motors in the Sit Down Strike. That union legacy benefited all workers, but it meant even more to Mexicanos like Arceo. It meant his wife, Fermina, never had to labor in the Michigan fields again (something she had done prior to meeting Arceo in Genesee County), and ensured his children would never have to.[2] Arceo's story at General Motors helped to illuminate how important factory work and unionization was for Mexicanos in Michigan in their struggle to overcome the socio-economic boundaries they faced. Though life was not always smooth for Michigan Mexicanos, they learned to adapt and utilize the labor arena as a means to fight for their civil rights in order to better their lives – for themselves and their children.

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[1] David Elsila, *We Make Our Own History: A Portrait of the UAW* (Detroit, MI: International Union, UAW, 1986), 13.
[2] David Arceo interview by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).

Work played a pivotal role in the lives of Michigan Mexicanos because job opportunities were most often the prime motivation in the decision to travel north. While certainly other mitigating factors played a role in the decision to remain in Michigan (pregnancy, racism, and educational opportunities among them), without the prospect of steady employment, leaving the migrant stream would not have been a viable option. Previous works on Midwestern Mexicanos have shown the struggles faced at work as well as how Mexicanos engaged in forms of labor activism to improve their work conditions. Historians have depicted the horrific working conditions associated with farm work, including how Mexicanos protested those conditions by engaging in small strikes and attempting to unionize the fields to affect change.[3] Similarly, historians have depicted the rigors and dangers of the industrial sector and factory life in the Midwest, where Mexicanos were often positioned in the hottest, hardest, and dirtiest jobs. These scholars also noted that Mexicanos were not passive in merely accepting the conditions, but rather worked for improvement, whether by trading badges, walking off the job, and/or attempting to join unions.[4] The latter method has been more extensively covered regarding the Southwest,

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[3] Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Jim Norris, *North for the Harvest: Mexican Workers, Growers, and the Sugar Beet Industry* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009); Marc S. Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism & Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region, 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

[4] Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Juan Ramon García, *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

though scholars have offered some poignant examples of early unionization efforts in the Midwest.[5]

The largest union in the United States following World War II was the United Auto Workers (UAW). The union's home has long been the state of Michigan and though much has been written regarding Mexicano labor in the state and region, little has been written regarding Michigan Mexicanos in the UAW, as most studies concerning industrial labor in the Midwest have focused on the pre-World War II era when the UAW was only in its infancy.[6] Yet, the UAW played a pivotal role in Mexicano life in the state. As was the case with leisure activities and communities, I argue that unions, specifically the UAW, became a primary vehicle utilized by Mexicanos to create a place and space for themselves in Michigan. Participation in the UAW enabled many Mexicanos to cross the socio-economic barriers they faced and to remove their families from the cycle of involvement in farm labor. The UAW also assisted in drawing the attention of the larger Michigan population to the issues facing farmworkers, helping to bridge the urban/rural divide. At the same time, union participation aided Mexicanos in the creation of their Michigan Mexicano cultural identity as they found a brotherhood in the union. However, as has been found in other labor studies, the UAW was often slow to reach out and address the needs of groups such as African

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[5] For Southwest examples see Clete Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: the FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Vicki Ruíz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Vicki Ruíz, *From out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[6] Within the historiography there is very little concerning Mexicanos in the UAW, and even less regarding Michigan. The greatest detail comes from Elizabeth Escobedo regarding Mexicanas in California. For references see Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*; Steven Rosales, "'This Street is Essentially Mexican': An Oral History of the Mexican-American Community of Saginaw, Michigan, 1920-1980," *Michigan Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 52-53; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*, 169; Vargas *Proletarians*, 196-197,199.

Americans and Mexicanos.[7] This situation caused many Mexicanos to remain in farm work even after securing a factory job. Examining the shop floor ethno-racial issues of Mexicanos in Michigan places this study of the Mexicano-UAW experience into the larger twentieth century U.S. labor history narrative.

Mexicanos developed strategies to deal with the continued inequity within the UAW. Mexicanos took advantage of local opportunities by participating in both Michigan's strong industrial and agricultural economies when the union did not fully serve their needs. This generally occurred as one family member (usually the father) held a job at a factory while the rest of the family engaged in seasonal farm work across the state, helping to subsidize the family income. This was possible because, from the 1940s to the 1970s, Michigan's automobile industry continued to grow and expand as the nation's leader in automobile manufacturing, employing hundreds of thousands of workers.[8] At the same time, Michigan ranked first in the nation in the production of sour cherries, plums, peaches, and blueberries; third in sweet cherries; and was still a leader in sugar beets.[9] Though there was a small decline in the 1960s into the 1970s, Michigan employed 70,000 to 100,000 seasonal and migrant agricultural workers (mostly Mexicanos) annually during this period.[10] By engaging in both economies, Mexicanos were able to secure a more stable economic footing.

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[7] See, for example, Kevin Boyle, "'There are no Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal': The Struggle for Racial Equality in the United Automobile Workers, 1940–1960," *Labor History* 36 (Winter 1995): 5-23; Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Nelson Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
[8] Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*.
[9] During the 1920s, Michigan ranked second in sugar beet production. During the 1950s, the state also ranked near the top in the production of cucumbers, canning beets, asparagus, celery, onions, cantaloupes, strawberries, cabbage, snap beans, cauliflower, carrots, and tomatoes. See F. A. Stilgenbauer, "The Michigan Sugar Beet Industry," *Economic Geography* 3, no. 4 (1927): 494; State of Michigan, Study Commission on Migratory Labor, *Migrants in Michigan: A Handbook on Migratory, Seasonal, Agricultural Workers in Michigan*, Lansing, 1954 [hereafter *Migrants in Michigan: A Handbook*]
[10] *Migrants in Michigan: A Handbook*, 9.

However, as Mexicanos became more actively involved in the UAW, pushing it to address their needs, they were often able to take advantage of advancement opportunities within the factories and union, allowing their families to leave agricultural work behind.

Consequently, by pushing the examination of labor activism into the post-World War II era, this chapter presents a more dynamic and complex portrayal of Mexicano labor in Michigan. Though some outsiders could perceive the moving back and forth between low wage work as evidence of limited available opportunities and a lower-class status, it opened up spaces for Mexicanos to carve out some limited autonomy in their lives. The state's dual economy offered fluidity for workers, empowering them to make their own choices, and providing them with a greater means to participate in leisure activities. Addressing the labor crossover illustrates how Mexicanos actively contested discrimination in job placement and promotion. To examine the impact of the UAW on Michigan Mexicanos, both in the factory and the field, this chapter opens with the 1937 Sit Down Strike. This union victory opened new opportunities and created a legacy of inclusion for some Mexicanos. Still, the union did not immediately address all their concerns, so Mexicanos utilized Michigan's dual economy to their advantage when the shop floor realities did not align with union rhetoric. Over time, Mexicanos actively pushed back from within and fought for their civil rights in the union. This included pushing the UAW into the fields in support of Mexicano efforts there, linking the workers in the dual economy. The chapter further shows that though there were definite limitations to the UAW, life outside the union could be met with greater hardships. Ultimately, Mexicanos embraced unionism, but also demonstrated agency in paving their own way in helping their families get ahead in Michigan.

This chapter builds on the work of scholars who show the interconnectedness of equal labor opportunities, the right to organize, and civil rights. Being involved in labor activity, or fighting for labor rights, is very much a part of first class citizenship to the United States. Denying Mexicanos the right to organize, at times by threatening deportation, meant they were being denied access to participate freely in American society. As historian Zaragosa Vargas illustrated, Mexicanos were very well aware of and insisted that New Deal legislation and wartime policies included them, too.[11] Though labor organizations were the not only major civil rights vehicle for Mexicanos, Mexicano unionists pushed the labor movement to embrace Mexicano initiatives. That is, unions, in and of themselves, did not go out of their way to include Mexicanos, but had to when pressed by workers. Additionally, as historian Vicki Ruiz illustrated, the fight for equal pay and respect at work was central to the fight for claiming public and social space.[12] This analysis elucidates the centrality of labor activity for Mexicanos in overcoming the barriers they faced.

Mexicano labor history, and the story of Michigan Mexicanos specifically, is very much a part of the broader narrative of U.S. labor history. Throughout the interwar period "radical" rhetoric concerning social democracy intertwined itself with more traditional American values concerning wages and family security. These ideologies took root in the minds of working class Americans. As labor historian Gary Gerstle found, for many workers in this era, striking and unionization were about patriotism and claiming rights as American citizens to make a livable wage.[13] Radical labor leaders like Walter Reuther embraced this

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[11] Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*; See also Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness*.
[12] Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*; Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*.
[13] Gary Gerstle, *Working-class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

political rhetoric in his quest to create a closed shop at the Big Three Automobile Makers.[14] Even after the legislation of the New Deal and Word War II, the key words of family, equality, and dignity were utilized to unite a very disparate workforce, even drawing in groups such as Mexicanos and African Americans, who proved vital in the strike to unionize Ford Motor Company.[15] Though there were times that Mexicanos were brought in as strikebreakers, historians have shown they most often refused to be used as scab labor.[16] Instead, Mexicanos were eager to unite with unions and employ strikes, staking claim to first-class citizenship and embracing the same rhetoric as their Anglo co-workers. In Michigan, while there would be some Mexicano-led movements, due to their smaller population, union involvement was most often as part of larger unions, such as in the UAW, and Mexicanos were as quick to join in the rank-and-file as they were to take leadership positions to push for change.

**The Rise of the UAW**

Labor during the interwar period, particularly in the Michigan automobile industry, was full of hardship as employers viewed their employees as imminently replaceable regardless of ethnicity. The implementation of the assembly line was a boon to the automobile industry, but created monotonous and dangerous conditions for workers who performed a single repetitive task all day long. A rough existence at the shop caused by speed ups, a lack of safety concern, and disposability betrayed and belittled the dignity of all workers. Workers of all ethno-racial backgrounds in Flint recalled life at General Motors

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[14] The Big Three are General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. See Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism*; Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[15] Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit.*
[16] Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio*; Valdés, *Barrios Norteños*; Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*.

during the 1920s and 1930s with disdain. Maynard "Red" Mundale recollected, "I've went home at night and my hands were swollen up and my wife had to feed me my supper."[17] Jack Foust's child remembered their father "coming home from work…. and he'd sit down on the front porch and fall asleep…. My mother and my grandmother would take his shoes off and his socks would be bloody."[18] Henry Kraus recounted the hot Michigan summers, explaining that "During July, a torrid heat wave sent the thermometer over 100 degrees for a week straight. But the assembly lines pounded away mercilessly while the workers fell at their stations like flies. Deaths in the state's auto centers ran into the hundreds within three or four days."[19] J.D. Dotson told how the few African Americans that worked there were put in the foundry pouring iron, faced with working in intense heat. He recalled, "If you tell 'em you were sick, they'd say, 'Die and prove it,'" and when workers did collapse from the heat and exhaustion they would "carry them out on a stretcher."[20] Though he remembered not being discriminated against because he was Mexicano, Rafael Arceo equally shared in the grueling Flint factory environment. He recalled:

> In 1929 we had a foreman who cracked the whip. Made me so mad I threw an oil can at him. He wanted to fire me, but I was too good a worker so he just docked me three days. There was a time when I'd come home from work so tired I'd lie on the floor so my wife could feed me. I'd eat right there on the floor. There was no limit, sir, to how many cars we'd sand.[21]

The pay was so dismal that Arceo, with two children, could ill afford to even have a family portrait taken, he reminisced. Still, workers largely had to keep their complaints to themselves. Arceo spoke of what happened to workers who slowed down or spoke up

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[17] Jan McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1936-1937: Witnesses and Warriors*, (Flint, MI: Mott Community College, 1999), 3.
[18] McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike*, 3.
[19] McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike,* 3.
[20] McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike,* 5.
[21] McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike*, 3.

against the atrocious working conditions: "They were escorted to the window. 'See those hungry people out there?' the foreman would ask them. 'If you don't want your job, they do.'"[22]

Life in the factories was far from ideal, but could be far worse based on a person's phenotype and/or knowledge of English. An unnamed Mexican man lamented to an interviewer that a "lack of knowledge of English makes it hard…to even get a job at fifty cents an hour as a common labourer [sic]."[23] Even if Mexicanos found a coveted factory job, employers often lumped those with darker complexions with African Americans and assigned them to the dirtiest and hardest jobs at the factories. In Saginaw, conditions at the local foundries were described as "muy duro" (very hard).[24] One Mexicano observer explained that:

> Young men go to work for the Grey Iron Foundry [in Saginaw] in the full bloom of health and within a year or two they fade and die. In the hot summer days the Mexican boys frequently faint at their task…. Tuberculosis results from inhaling the gas and from going out from the hot room into the cold air, sometimes with their clothing wet with sweat.[25]

While some Anglos did perform these tasks, they were typically assigned to non-English speaking immigrants. David Arceo recounted how his uncle had also moved up to Michigan from Galveston in the 1920s to find work, but "when he saw what the automobile worker was doing in the plants was like, 'that's not work, that is not for human people.'"[26] What he saw was Mexicanos being funneled into the hardest and most dangerous jobs – sanders,

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[22] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.
[23] Robert C. Jones, "Field Notes, Detroit, Mich.," Carton 11, Folder 71, Detroit Conversations, Paul S. Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley [hereafter PTP].
[24] George T. Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw Mich.," Carton 13, Folder 31, PTP, 7.
[25] Edson, "Mexicans in Saginaw," 7.
[26] Arceo interview.

polishers, steel stampers, and foundry laborers.[27] By the mid-1930s, all workers were fed up and ready to unionize for change.

Chartered on August 26, 1935, the UAW targeted the unskilled working class for membership. By April 1936, the union boasted a membership of approximately 24,000 workers and was looking for its first major breakthrough victory.[28] According to historian Sidney Fine, the UAW leadership surveyed the Big Three and realized that Ford was impenetrable and would result in certain defeat. They viewed Chrysler as winnable, but that the company was too small to prove the union's worth. Therefore, the UAW chose to strike General Motors first. The UAW leadership was planning on waiting until January 1, 1937 to begin the strike, as that was when the new Michigan governor, Democrat Frank Murphy took office. Though Murphy had not spoken expressly in favor of unions, he also had not spoken against them, giving the UAW some hope for, at the least, no state interference. The proposed strategy was to strike Fisher Body Plant No. 1 in Flint and a Fisher Body Plant in Cleveland, Ohio at the same time, because those two plants were the only two that produced the dies from which the car bodies of Buicks, Pontiacs, and Oldsmobiles were stamped. General Motors got wind of the impending strike and made plans to remove the dies from Fisher No. 1. Before GM could act, workers, hearing rumors of management's actions, gathered together and started the Sit Down Strike on December 30, 1936.[29] Mexicanos were involved from the very beginning.

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[27] See Vargas, *Proletarians*, chapter 3.
[28] "UAW: Through the Decades," *UAW*, https://uaw.org/members/uaw-through-the-decades, accessed February 17, 2017.
[29] Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), chapters 4-6.

**Mexicanos in the UAW: The 1937 Sit Down Strike**

The 1937 Sit Down Strike was a watershed moment, solidifying the UAW as a working class union. The victory provided a legacy that many Mexicanos embraced to claim space and construct identity in Michigan. This was no more clearly demonstrated than by Rafael Arceo, whose story illustrated the convergence of Mexicano unionization efforts and the U.S. labor movement in the state of Michigan. Arceo arrived in Flint in 1926 after obtaining employment with a construction company in Chicago. While in Vehicle City during the 1920s he accomplished three important things. First, as a construction worker, Arceo helped to build the Fisher Body Plant No. 1, the plant that was home to one of the most famous strikes in U.S. history. Second, he married Fermina Martinez on September 16, 1928 and she became pregnant shortly thereafter. Third, he landed a new job. Having completed the construction of Fisher Body, his construction crew was heading to Pontiac to build more automobile plants. Arceo desired to go, but his friends advised him against moving saying, "Wait a minute. You've got yourself a wife, buddy. You're going to settle down."[30] Trying to figure out what to do next, his friend then informed him "on that front door right there it says 'Help Wanted at Fisher 1.'" So, Rafael Arceo took a job sanding cars for General Motors at the plant he helped build.[31]

Arceo vividly recalled the late 1920s and early 1930s period of sanding automobiles with a sponge, rag, sandpaper, and oil, saying "It was hell." The workers, regardless of ethno-racial background, experienced a crushing workload, replete with constant speed-ups,

[30] Arceo interview.
[31] Arceo interview; Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.

"management treating them like dogs, and…belittling their intelligence."[32] Arceo told how "The foreman controlled the whole area. He hired and fired. It didn't make any difference to him [who you were]."[33] Things continued to get worse during the Depression years as Rafael and Fermina lived in poor economic conditions. Their son, David, remembered hearing stories that his father had heard of the repatriation efforts and desired to return to Mexico (hearing you would be given a card to gain reentry to the United States in five years). Fermina wrote to her *suegro* (father-in-law) seeking to dissuade her husband. Rafael's father wrote back, "If you think that you are poor in *los Estados Unidos*, what makes you think you will be any richer in Mexico. You tell that son of mine, for him to stay there. I do not want to see him because you will be worse off than you are in the United States."[34]

The Arceos stuck around and while the Michigan economy began to improve, the conditions in the shop did not. Reflecting on 1936, Rafael described how he "and his co-workers had sworn to fight for themselves by banding together in a union."[35] One night "a woman visited the small, rented Arceo home and asked him if he wanted to join the UAW." His quick answer was "Sure do."[36] A publication on the history of the UAW illustrated what happened next: "He [Arceo] and other in-plant organizers began meeting in secret to dodge GM's spies, thugs, and community sympathizers. When the company couldn't bully them

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[32] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6; Also see Gilbert Guevara interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Tony Moreno interview by Steven Rosales, November, 15, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[33] Arceo interview; Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.
[34] Arceo interview. During the Great Depression, the United States initiated a coerced "voluntary" repatriation program to send Mexicans back to Mexico. Scholars estimate that nearly 1,000,000 people of Mexican descent were repatriated, nearly sixty percent of whom were U.S. citizens, U.S. born or naturalized. See Arredondo, *Mexicano Chicago*; David A. Badillo, *Latinos in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006)*;* García, *Mexicans in the Midwest*; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974); Valdés, *Al Norte*; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[35] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.
[36] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.

into submission, it tried to buy them out with $25 and $50 bonuses. That didn't work, either."[37] Historian Sidney Fine found there were as many as 200 spies reporting union activity in the Flint area and that each GM plant manager was using a private detective service to stave off unionization attempts.[38] On December 30, 1936, after learning GM was becoming wise to a looming strike, workers inside Fisher Body No. 1 literally took a seat for their rights with Rafael Arceo, Frank Vargas, and Ramon Jimenez among them.[39] In addition to the three Mexicanos, several African Americans were also part of the group, making the Sit Down Strike a multi-ethnic affair.[40]

As the standard "heroic" story went, strikers remained in the plant while food was passed through the windows to allow workers to physically occupy the plant so GM could not bring in scab labor to break the union efforts. The Sit Down Strike became a very organized affair that demonstrated tremendous cooperation between workers, and several laborers did leave the plant for various reasons over the course of the nearly seven week strike. The workers formed an elected court system and numerous committees to provide for food, recreation, sanitation, and grievances.[41] Arceo served proudly in the strike. He pulled guard duty once a week "protecting his fellow workers and the machinery inside" the plant.[42] He also left Fisher Body each night to go home to be with his two sons, David and Reuben, and his pregnant wife.[43] Fermina recalled being both fearful and hopeful during the strike. She knew it was important because she had watched her husband become worn down by the

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[37] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 6.
[38] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 38.
[39] Arceo interview.
[40] It is difficult to know all who participated in the Sit Down Strike and in what manner. Strikers could not put their names on any lists for fear that if the strike failed they would be blacklisted and have little hope of finding employment. Arturo and Art Reyes interview by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession).
[41] Fine, *Sit-Down*, chapter 6.
[42] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 7.
[43] Arceo interview; Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 7.

speed-ups. She recalled, "I was very scared about the outcome. But I was angry too. We'd lost a baby only a short time before, and we couldn't afford even nine dollars for the funeral. I prayed for that union. I wanted a union for my husband and me."[44] Due to her pregnancy and care for a sick child, she was unable to join the Women's Emergency Brigade that supplied food to the Sit-downers and that also stood between the factory doors and the Flint police, but her heart and soul was with them.[45]

The strike ended on February 11, 1937, with GM capitulating and the UAW earning recognition and its first Big Three labor contract. The workers sang out "freedom" as 800 Sit-downers marched the streets. Fermina, pregnant and all, bundled up her two sons in warm clothes and ventured out onto the icy-cold streets of Flint to celebrate with the crowds of people cheering and crying for the UAW victory. Rafael Arceo remembered thinking:

> Thank God for the union. Now we don't have to work like slaves any more…. I don't think any words can describe what the union has meant to me. If it wasn't [sic] for the union we wouldn't have owned our home and had a little money to spend. The proudest thing for me was winning job security. It changed my life. It assured me I could feed my family. A man acts with confidence with a good union behind him.[46]

Fermina added, "After the men built the union, they worked an eight-hour day and had more time for their families. Wages went up. Rafael brought home $65 a week."[47] The UAW victory brought human dignity to workers like Rafael Arceo. The foreman no longer took them to the window to show them potential replacements and could no longer fire or lay

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[44] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 7.
[45] Food was provided by the union, the wives, and by the local Hamady Brothers grocery store that issued food on credit in support of the union. Arceo interview.
[46] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 7.
[47] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 7.

workers off just because they felt like it. For his service and participation in the UAW, a bronze bust of Rafael Arceo was cast and resides in the local union hall.[48]

Fig. 5.1 Bronze Bust of Rafael Arceo, 1987. To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Sit Down Strike, the UAW, in conjunction with Mott Community College, chose a handful of Sit Downers, including Arceo, to memorialize for their service to the UAW. Image taken from McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike.*

After the victory in 1937, the UAW next targeted Chrysler and in 1939 earned its second Big Three contract. In 1942, the UAW faced off against Henry Ford, a man who once declared he "would rather shut down his factories than give in to the union."[49] In addition to Ford's stubbornness, the UAW also faced the task of appealing to a much more diverse workforce. In addition to the thousands of Mexicanos working at Detroit area Ford plants compared with the few that worked at GM plants in Flint, Ford was also a much larger employer of African Americans.[50] The rallying of the disparate ethno-racial groups was vital to the victory at Ford. Proclaiming themselves as champions of the working class, no matter

[48] McFarlane, *The Flint Sit-Down Strike;* Reyes interview.
[49] Nelson Lichtenstein et al, *An American Experience: Henry Ford*, PBS Program Transcript, (Sarah Colt Productions, 2013), http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/media/uploads/special_features/download_files/henryford_transcript.pdf, accessed January 17, 2017.
[50] Ford Motor Company was the largest employer of Mexicanos in the Midwest during the 1920s and 1930s. For example, in 1928, nearly 4,000 Mexicanos had jobs at Ford's Highland Park, Fordson, and River Rouge plants. See Zaragosa Vargas, "Armies in the Fields and Factories: The Mexican Working Classes in the Midwest in the 1920s," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 7, no. 1 (Winter, 1991): 68; Vargas, *Proletarians*.

a worker's skin color, the union continued to grow exponentially. By 1943, the UAW claimed a quarter of a million members and became the largest union in the United States.[51]

The combination of creating a closed shop within the Big Three Automakers and the wartime conversion to building tanks, planes, and munitions in patriotic support of the war effort precipitated many changes for workers. As World War II continued, factories were drained of workers. This opened many new positions in the automobile industry. New hires became line workers, and those with some factory experience could gain advancement.[52] Though Rafael Arceo discovered he was not qualified for the wartime jobs, his son, David, recalled how the war opened new opportunities for those who had the ambition to take them. Through the union, the elder Arceo had heard there was a chance to begin a program to learn to the skill of welding, which, upon completion, would offer higher pay. David recounted the situation:

> And they [UAW] said 'Okay Ralph, we're going to send you to school to become a welder. You have to go to school for six weeks.' So he came home and told Mom, 'I've got to go to school for six weeks so I can become a welder.' And he says, 'Well that's the good news.' [She asked] 'What's the bad news?' [He responded] 'There's no pay.' She said, 'We'll live.'[53]

Fermina realized this was a good opportunity and assured her husband he should take advantage of it. David smiled as he remembered how his mother had more than 350 mason jars of canned food stored up in their basement that provided nourishment during his father's training. He recalled there were "peaches, applesauce, jellies, bananas, hot peppers, [and] everything else under the sun."[54] Rafael received his training and went to work as a welder in Fisher's Grand Blanc (suburb of Flint) plant that had been converted to a wartime tank

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[51] "UAW: Through the Decades."
[52] Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*; Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit.*
[53] Arceo interview.
[54] Arceo interview.

plant.[55] Job advancement training was another advantage of being a UAW member, one that benefited many Mexicanos in the future, including his own children.

While his father was an original UAW member, David represented the next generation. He joined GM's AC Spark Plug in Flint in 1951. With the steady income, he was able to attend Flint Junior College and General Motors Institute (GMI) to study drafting.[56] Soon after, he got a job designing tools at Fisher Body No. 1, the same building as his father. David recalled being overjoyed saying, "My take-home pay nearly doubled, to about $75 a week. I couldn't believe I was making that much."[57] Unfortunately, that job was a skilled trade and not unionized, but that did not deter young David. In 1956, he worked on the union organizing committee to help the draftsmen sign their first union contract as white-collar workers. David served 12 years as chairperson of his UAW unit. All through the 1960s and 1970s, the job provided stability for his family, until GM closed his department in 1983. Though it was a hard blow, he was able to return and retire in 1985 at age 53, after thirty-five years of working at General Motors.[58] The union-won wages he earned at Fisher Body allowed him to have a home and a savings. The union-negotiated pension that GM still owed him allowed him to pursue other careers while still taking care of his family. He became a "full-time command sergeant-major in the National Guard, the first Latino to hold that position in Michigan."[59] He also utilized the leadership he learned in the UAW to earn a spot on the Genesee County Road Commission. David's daughter, Kathleen, attended Eastern Michigan University and went on to receive her law degree. Even though she never

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[55] Arceo interview.
[56] GMI was opened in 1926 to train GM plant supervisors and engineers, as well as offering a work-study co-op program. It became an official university focusing on engineering and in 1982 it shed its General Motors exclusive ties before become Kettering University in 1998. "1926, GMI, the In-House School That Became a University," *GM Heritage Center*, https://www.gmheritagecenter.com/index.html, accessed January 17, 2017.
[57] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History,* 11.
[58] This includes time accrued while he was serving in the military. Arceo interview.
[59] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History,* 12.

worked for GM, the UAW had provided the stability and socio-economic benefit for her to achieve her dreams, a legacy that began with her grandfather in 1937.[60]

To Mexicanos like the Arceo family, membership in the UAW, in addition to the economic stability it provided, also meant a changed socio-cultural identity and sense of place. Their union brotherhood helped to supersede their identity as Mexicano other in Michigan. It was not that they did not honor their cultural heritage (for several years the elder Arceo brought Spanish language movies to Flint), but that their participation in the UAW helped construct a distinctly Michigan and UAW-centric identity that became part of who they were. The UAW-earned wages enabled Arceo to purchase his home in Flint, rather than continue renting, allowing his family claim physical space to make a home in the city. Arceo's social circle also expanded. To Rafael Arceo, his union co-workers, no matter their ethno-racial background, were family: "My home family and my union family are one and the same. The same sharing. The same pride." His son, Ralph, Jr., described it this way:

> Growing up I didn't think there was anything but the UAW. All my friends and all dad's friends were UAW. As long as Dad did his job, the union protected him. He was always at the plant, even sick, being a good union brother. I saw him work a whole second shift some days to watch out for a fellow worker who didn't show up.[61]

His other son, David, recalled, "Mom knows as much as dad about his co-workers because we're a union family and a family union."[62] Rafael and Fermina attended "countless union dinners, dances, and picnics," often taking their children to be a part, socially and culturally attaching them to their UAW brothers and sisters. Speaking concerning the years after Rafael's retirement in 1967, Fermina stated, "the union hall is the place where we go to be with our old friends. We sit and talk, we play bingo, [and] we remember the great [union]

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[60] Arceo interview.
[61] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 10.
[62] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 10.

fights."[63] The union hall became an inter-ethnic gathering space that, at times, saw ethno-racial background fade into the background.

Though it was the story of one family, an identity rooted in the UAW was a narrative that played out to some degree in many interviews for this project. Co-workers – union brothers and sisters – became best friends and extended family members, regardless of skin color. In fact, not one person stated they only associated with co-ethnics at work or outside of work. Arturo and Art Reyes spent much time at the union hall with fellow members before and after their promotions within the UAW. Their UAW membership was simply part of who they were/are as individuals and the union hall was a place to gather among friends.[64] In Lansing, José Rodriguez fondly recalled co-workers playing pranks on each other at the shop. He spoke of occasionally dancing on the factory line with Marilyn Coulter when the line broke down. Rodriguez also remembered always going across the street from the Fisher Body plant to Harry's Bar to grab some beer and food with co-workers. When asked if his union brothers became like family, he responded, "I've been there 38 years and I met lots of guys, lots of people, and there's been some good buddies…. There's [sic] some guys I really got close to. They helped me out a bit…. [Some would] come over my house, and we'd play cards."[65] He stated they constantly played Euchre, which is a very Midwestern card game. After retiring, he said what he missed most was his friends, but that he had a group of about

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[63] Elsila, *We Make Our Own History*, 10.
[64] Reyes interview. See also Frank Ornelas interview by Steven Rosales, May 28, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Burton, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession).
[65] José Rodriguez interview by Marilyn Coulter, Cheryl McQuaid, and John Fedewa, "José (Joe) Rodriguez, a Hispanic American, Discusses His Career as a Production Worker and UAW Member at the Fisher Body Plant in Lansing, MI," January 24, 2006, Lansing Auto Town Gallery Oral History Collection, G. Robert Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, http://www.lib.msu.edu/uri-res/N2L?urn:x-msulib::vvl:DB15557, accessed August 28, 2014.

thirty people who got together once a year to "hang out," talk, and reminisce.[66] Similarly, Alex Hernandez of Lansing, recalled while growing up how his father hosted "card parties" in the family's mudroom for all his shop friends. He also remembered how at the start of each union meeting they all sang "Solidarity" to reinforce the family nature of the UAW and their role in it.[67] Others spoke about the fun and camaraderie experienced while participating in inter-ethnic UAW-sponsored sporting leagues and community outreaches.[68] For each, to a greater or lesser extent, it was a brotherhood (or sisterhood).

Despite these many positives, the union did not automatically remove all inequality. Following the entrenchment of the UAW after their victory over Ford in 1943, many cracks in the purported union egalitarianism manifested.[69] Many scholars have studied the UAW's failures concerning ethno-racial equality and the union's decline of power and influence. Historian Nelson Lichtenstein argued the decline came as union leaders, Walter Reuther chief among them, became agents of the state, which shifted the attention away from the day-to-day struggles of workers on the shop floor.[70] Others contended the loss of influence stemmed from lingering racism and fear on the shop floor.[71] In either case, Mexicanos had to find ways to overcome the socio-economic barriers that persisted.

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[66] Rodriguez interview.
[67] Alex Hernandez interview by Marilyn Coulter, Gary Judy, Cheryl McQuaid, and Earl Nicholson Sr., "Alex Hernandez, a Hispanic American, discusses his career as a production worker and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI," March 8, 2006, Lansing Auto Town Gallery Oral History Collection, G. Robert Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, https://www.lib.msu.edu/branches/vvl/autotown/detail.jsp?id=58, accessed August 28, 2014.
[68] Hernandez interview; Rodolfo (Rudy) Reyes interview by Marilyn Coulter, John Fedewa, Michael Fleming, and Doreen Howard, "Rudolfo (Rudy) Reyes, a Hispanic American, discusses his career as a production worker and UAW member at the Fisher Body plant in Lansing, MI," August 11, 2005, Lansing Auto Town Gallery Oral History Collection, G. Robert Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, http://www.lib.msu.edu/branches/vvl/autotown/detail.jsp?id=91, accessed August 28, 2014.
[69] Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit*.
[70] Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). See also Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism*; Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*.
[71] Boyle, "'There are no Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal;'" Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism*;

**Labor in the Dual Economy**

The goal for most Mexicano adults was to obtain quality, permanent employment in order to remove their families from seasonal and migrant fieldwork so the next generation would not have to toil in the fields as they had. For many, this meant finding a UAW-backed job at one of the Big Three Automakers, as Arceo had. Due to Rafael Arceo's early involvement in the UAW, his family enjoyed success and never had to return to the fields. However, not all Mexicano were so fortunate as they found life was not always equal in the union.[72] For instance, Arturo Reyes remembered a time "when GM said [Mexicans] had 'too much fat between the shoulders,'" preventing many Mexicanos from obtaining good jobs.[73] These types of discriminatory hiring practices began in the 1920s and persisted well into the 1970s.[74] Reyes continued, "Even when I hired in, in '66, most of them – African Americans, Hispanics – were [automatically] guided to the foundry."[75] While others did not recall such overt discrimination, many Mexicanos noted being hired to less than desirable positions. In Saginaw, Frank Ornelas was first hired to sweep the floors on third shift while George Castañeda recalled Mexicanos always working in the hottest jobs for much of his 49 years of working at General Motors.[76] Likewise, in Lansing, though José Rodriguez was fortunate enough to obtain a position doing soft trim (such as installing seatbelts and seat covers), he noted most Mexicanos were funneled into the harder jobs, this despite there being a

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[72] Boyle, "'There are no Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal;'" Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*.
[73] Reyes interview.
[74] For early examples of these practices, see Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago*, Vargas, "Armies in the Fields and Factories," 47-71; Vargas, *Proletarians*.
[75] Reyes interview.
[76] George Castañeda interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Ornelas interview. Also see Guadalupe Ortega interview by Steven Rosales, May 29, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Ida Roche interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, January 16, 2013, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

Mexicano supervisor at Rodriguez's plant.[77] Augustine Zamarripa summed up the situation, "If you look at the archives of pictures of the plant and see pictures of the lines you will see all older white guys. If you look at pictures of the foundries they are all older black guys. If you see a white guy, chances are he doesn't speak English."[78] In addition to the discrimination faced, factory layoffs during economic downturns caused additional economic adversity for workers who could face being out of work months at a time.

To combat this situation, many Mexicanos adapted to and embraced Michigan's dual economy. Because most Mexicano families first arrived in Michigan engaging in farm work, only later finding an urban job, they had the requisite knowledge to utilize Michigan's fields during times of financial need. That is, Michigan Mexicanos took advantage of what the Great Lakes State had to offer by participating in both factory work and farm work, often simultaneously. This is not to insinuate life became easier for Mexicanos, as it meant additional hardships, but Michigan's dual economy did provide expanded economic opportunities. Additionally, partaking in both the urban and rural arenas helped Mexicanos confront the social exclusion they faced by providing extra income to participate in leisure and material culture.

Engaging in farm work provided a way to keep families afloat during recessions and factory layoffs. For example, Ida Roche was born just outside Saginaw in 1933. She described how her stepfather had gotten job as a sandblaster at General Motors. She recalled how he came home filthy, sitting down in the same chair every night. All the children ran to see who would be the first to take off his shoes and to see if he had any sweets left from his lunch bucket they could have. However, he spent much of the period between 1938 and

[77] Rodriguez interview.
[78] Zamarripa interview.

1943 being laid off from the shop, causing the entire family to go to work in the sugar beet fields. In one of the years (she could not remember exactly which one), the family also traveled to Marshall, Michigan to pick pickle cucumbers. Her father returned to the shop in 1943, but was laid off again in 1948. That year she recalled having to go to Ohio to work the tomato crops.[79] She was also not alone in this. Cruz Zamarripa recalled his father returning to migrant work between Texas and Michigan during a GM layoff in the late 1950s before returning to the Flint Buick plant by the end of the decade.[80] Though hardly ideal, Michigan's dual economy did provide Mexicanos with a buffer of economic protection.

While layoffs represented a direr situation, many Mexicanos, even with steady factory employment, still struggled to get ahead economically. Finding they could pay their bills, but could ill-afford material or luxury items that were needed or wanted, Mexicanos found occasional farm labor critical in their strategy to support themselves. For example, many recalled the struggle of their parents to purchase school clothes each September. By participating in the dual economy, Mexicanos were able to provide their children with much more than they had as children themselves. Cruz Zamarripa recalled many summers traveling up the west side of Michigan. As soon as school let out in June he traveled with his mother and siblings to South Haven (just south of Grand Rapids) to pick blueberries. After finishing there, the family traveled north for the cherry harvest, first making a stop in Ludington before finishing in Traverse City in early August. The family did this without his father, Apolonio, who continued to work his job at Buick. Zamarripa stated they performed this work so the family could earn extra money to purchase new school clothes that helped the Zamarripa children fit in with their classmates (and have warm clothes for Michigan

[79] Roche interview.
[80] Zamarripa interview.

winters).[81] Similarly, Gilbert Guevara remembered spending nearly a decade of his childhood traveling for five weeks to Traverse City to pick cherries with his brothers for extra money. Their father worked for General Motors in Saginaw and went up to visit them on weekends to bring food and groceries.[82]

Mexicano family participation in the dual economy was, for many, just a regular part of life and viewed as necessary. Saginaw resident Tony Moreno stated he grew up believing it was his duty as a child to work the fields to supplement the family income.[83] Other local Mexicanos remembered that the "majority of the Saginaw [Mexicano] community" traveled to Traverse City each summer because most Mexicanos were still considered of the "poor class."[84] In some cases even fathers had to join in when possible. Lupe Alviar described how all his cousins and aunts went to Oceana County in the summer while his uncles worked in the factories Monday through Friday. On Friday nights, his uncles drove over, not to take groceries as Guevara's father did, but to pick cherries and apples alongside them.[85] Saginaw resident John Sanchez was more introspective of the arduous summer fieldwork as he labored beside his mother, bothers, and sisters (while his father worked at Oldsmobile). He recalled that it was definitely "not the best job [he] ever had, but [it] was the most important job [he] ever had" because it taught him hard work and discipline.[86] Sanchez said the experience taught him to dream because he did not want to work the fields for the rest of his life. He would look up and see an airplane and when the sun hit it just right, it would gleam,

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[81] Zamarripa interview.
[82] Guevara interview.
[83] Moreno interview.
[84] Roche interview; Moreno interview.
[85] Lupe Alviar interview by Steven Rosales, April 30, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[86] John Sanchez interview by Steven Rosales, November 5, 2009, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

and "you would dream [and think] how do I get there from here?"[87] In all cases, the families engaged in this extra work to provide a better standard of living for their children in hopes they received a good education to get off the farm permanently. This worked for many, such as the Zamarripa family. By the time Cruz's youngest brother, who was born in Flint in 1960, came of working age, the family was stable enough that he did not have to go out in the fields.[88]

Even for those migrants who never settled in the Midwest, working the summer in the Michigan fields could offer an important opportunity to improve socio-economic standing that came with being able to participate in the material consumer world.[89] Efrain Gutierrez smiled as he told stories of how he continued to make the trek north from Texas into his high school years, after his family had stopped the yearly migration rounds and permanently settled in the San Antonio area. Though his family had finally procured stable jobs, Gutierrez's generation (those in high school in the 1960s) knew making money was difficult. Gutierrez stated, "If you wanted money you had to go north" because there still were not many jobs for Mexicanos in Texas. He recalled after his sophomore year going north for the summer just to earn extra money to purchase a car.[90] His wife also recalled attempting to do similarly during her teenage years. She knew if she could just go to Michigan for a single summer, she would be able to return in time to start school in the fall and have her own automobile. She pleaded with her father, but, unfortunately for her, he did not relent.[91] Nonetheless, it was easy to understand the lure for young people of temporarily heading

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[87] Sanchez interview.
[88] Zamarripa interview.
[89] For more see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).
[90] Efrain Gutierrez interview by Brett Olmsted, August 6, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession).
[91] Gutierrez interview.

north for a summer job. Thus, for Mexicanos who were no longer strictly migrant laborers, the Michigan fields offered economic opportunity for those willing to go.

**Pushing the UAW for Change**

The dual economy did provide important options for Mexicanos, but becoming more active in the union proved a more direct way of making the UAW accountable and responsive to their specific needs. One of the most important issues was the enforcement of the seniority policy. In the UAW, seniority was the major determining factor in promotions, but many minority groups encountered structural obstacles to their ability to access the privileges that their length of service should have conferred.[92] In some cases, language was the limiting factor. In Saginaw, Gilbert Guevara described his father wearing a long, heavy leather apron with goggles and being constantly filthy while working for GM's Grey Iron Foundry. Though his seniority placed him in a position for a new job, Guevara explained that his father did this for thirty years until finally a man who spoke some Spanish came into the plant and translated for him. As a direct result, his father became an inspector for his last decade before retiring. However, Guevara found too many Mexicanos remained foundry laborers all their lives, passed over for promotions because the UAW did not enforce their seniority policy equally on the shop floor.[93] In Flint, Augustine Zamarripa similarly described his father, Apolonio's, experience:

> Pop's experience in the shop; he used to talk to me about it. A lot of times, because [Hispanics] were [supposedly] used to working, they were put to work on some of the tougher jobs. Their seniority [was important] because it was a union job, [but] a lot of times their seniority wasn't recognized because

[92] See, for instance, Boyle, "'There are no Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal;'" Lewis-Colman, *Race against Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union;* Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther*.
[93] Guevara interview. See also Frank Gonzales interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).

> they didn't speak English. A lot of times they were passed over for better jobs because they couldn't read the posting or they couldn't communicate their want for a better job.[94]

Apolonio's sons did not lay all the blame directly on the UAW, as according to them the union had many other pressing issues to deal with. This mindset corresponded with what historians like Lichtenstein argued when saying the UAW leadership got sidetracked in political squabbles and lost focus on unifying the shop floor.[95]

Though the UAW did not solve all the lingering issues on their own, people like Apolonio Zamarripa, Frank Ornelas, and Arturo Reyes found that the key to getting ahead was to get actively involved in fighting for their rights. As the previous anecdote illuminated, limited English language skills hindered Zamarripa's mobility despite his length of service. He was passed over for better jobs and promotions because he could not read English very well and the postings were not bilingual. His sons explained it all changed when a new committeeman came to his Buick plant in the mid-1960s. They stated, "It wasn't until a guy named Frank Molina started getting involved with the union. Frank was bilingual and would talk to these guys, [and] explain their rights to them…[saying] you don't have to work these kind of jobs, you can put in for [better] jobs."[96] This was an epiphany for Zamarripa. His son Augustine recalled, "Once the old man started talking to Frank and started realizing that the language barrier and education barrier…was too great, he started trying to educate himself and he started night school."[97]

Zamarripa became proactive. He became more fluent in English and better educated so he could understand his rights and benefits as a UAW union member working at General

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[94] Zamarripa interview.
[95] Lichtenstein, *State of the Union.*
[96] Zamarripa interview.
[97] Zamarripa interview.

Motors. He realized that only then could he have the knowledge to apply for promotions and/or to refuse tasks that fell outside the purview of the UAW-GM contract. This process opened a new world to him. Augustine explained:

> [Pop] became baffled at the managers and the handlers on the line. He finally started saying, 'Okay, I'm not going to do that,' because they wanted to put double work on him and he said 'No, I have my job and I don't have to do that.' The language he started learning, English, was for defense.[98]

As a result of his efforts, Apolonio not only stopped having to do extra work, but also put in for a better job and for the last twenty years before retirement he drove an overhead crane rather than perform the rigors of line work. His son similarly sought out UAW-earned benefits to improve his job opportunities. Augustine stated, "I went to Mott [Community College] and graduated with an associate's degree in industrial technology and machines, which was in line with my job. But it was paid for by the United Auto Workers, through their tuition assistance program."[99] Like his father, it was about being more engaged and making the UAW work for them to improve their lives.

For the elder Zamarripa being proactive meant understanding his rights and standing up for them. For others, it was about scaling the UAW hierarchy. Frank Ornelas explained that when he got hired in 1949 to sweep floors he was not very active in the union, just a member. He was drafted in 1950 and served in Korea. After returning from war in 1953, his job was waiting for him because he was honorably discharged. Though he did not provide extended details, Ornelas alluded to how the combination of warfare and racism in the military had conditioned him to take a more active role in fighting for civil rights. At the shop, he found that the more involved he became in the UAW, the greater the promotions he

[98] Zamarripa interview.
[99] Zamarripa interview.

received. He served six years on the Executive Board of his Local.[100] He retired from General Motors after twenty-seven years as a supervisor in the Quality Control Department, far above his entry-level sweeper position. He also became the first Latino to run for Saginaw City Council (he lost by approximately forty votes) and parlayed the experience in his UAW Local to an appointment to serve a four-year term on the Planning Commission. Later, Michigan Governor George Millikan appointed him to the State Labor Board, as position he held for three years. By choosing to actively get more involved in the UAW, rather than just wait for it to be handed to him, Ornelas was able to improve his socio-economic standing while simultaneously becoming active in the community as he fought for the civil rights of others.[101]

While getting involved in the UAW proved an invaluable avenue to effect change, it was not always an easy path to follow. Arturo Reyes had long witnessed the discrimination that occurred against Mexicanos and African Americans. He decided to get involved and ran for committeeman in the 1970s, though doing so highlighted the racism and discord of the shop floor. He reminisced:

> I was the first Latino/Hispanic committeeman in skilled trades at Buick. We had over 3000 skills tradesmen. For me to be elected to that was something. As a matter of fact, we had an electrician who told me that 'if we elect you,' because we [had] never had a Mexican, 'I will retire.' When I got elected, I went to see him and he said 'I'm retiring.'[102]

After his success in that position, Reyes decided to run for a higher position, shop committeeman:

> At Buick, we had nine shop committeemen, seven were white, two were Black. When I put my name in, the Blacks came up and said 'you're trying to take one of our spots.' And the whites came in and said, 'look, we don't have

[100] Ornelas interview.
[101] Ornelas interview.
[102] Reyes interview.

> a spot [for Hispanics].' And I said 'I'm running.' And I ran, [and] I won, but that's what we [Hispanics] had to fight against. At one point, they even had some of the older Hispanics who made it so far as alternative shop committeeman come and talk to me. They did and said 'why aren't you satisfied with being an alternative shop committeeman. That's as far as we made it and as far as anyone is going to let you go.' And I said 'No, that the people will speak.'[103]

African Americans were afraid. They argued that Reyes was a Hispanic, and as a Hispanic, if he won, he would be taking one of the seats set aside for African Americans.

Reyes's situation highlighted much about shop floor politics and the racial tension that persisted within the UAW from the 1940s through the 1970s and beyond. Though the bureaucratization of the labor movement was a chief culprit, racism also continued because of the deeply entrenched personal feelings of fear and animosity among rank-and-filers. That is, both Black and white workers were intent on breaking and/or defending the color line.[104] The UAW, for its part, instituted policies in an attempt to help make it more equal, such as by assigning a certain number of seats on the shop committee for African American workers. Reyes running for that position made the situation more complex as it brought up the discussion of where Mexicanos fit in the racial binary. In this case, all clearly assumed he was taking one of the seats earmarked for Blacks. Reyes did win the election, signifying a level of social respect that came with hard work and good character. It does raise the question if, possibly, Anglo co-workers voted for him just to upset the power of African

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[103] Reyes interview.

[104] Inside and outside the UAW, racial tension on the shop floor has long been a problem when attempting to organize worker dating back into the nineteenth century. See, for example, Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism;* Boyle, "'There are no Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal;'" Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010); William Harris, *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapters 5 and 6; Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*; Bruce Nelson, "Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in Mobile During World War II," *Journal of American History* 80 (1993): 952-988; Tyina Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Emilio Zamora. *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

Americans, though there is no evidence this took place. Nonetheless, the victory was important to the Reyes family, creating a legacy that saw his son become president of Flint UAW Local 651 and his nephew run for Flint City Council.

**The Impact of the UAW on Farm Labor in Michigan**

The UAW also had an important impact on the farm labor movement in Michigan, helping to stimulate what had been stagnant efforts to unionize the fields. There had been attempts at farm unionization in Michigan. In Blissfield in 1935, 500 sugar beet workers went on strike. The unionists included a multi-ethnic coalition of Czechs, Romanians, Mexicanos, and German-Russians. American Federation of Labor (AFL) Local 19994 won a union contract as a result, but strong arm tactics by the sugar companies, the Supreme Court decision to invalidate the Agricultural Adjustment Act, and the ruling that the National Labor Relations Act did not apply to farmworkers severely weakened the union. By 1938, Local 19994 was too weak to carry on a strike and Texas Mexicanos filled most of the beet labor needs in the coming years.[105] Organizing in the Michigan fields from the 1940s to the 1970s continued to be far more problematic than it was in the factories. Difficulties originated from diversity in the workforce, individual labor contracts, constant movement, and lack of federal protection. In addition, despite many Michigan Mexicanos participating in both arenas to get ahead, there was an overall lack of attention paid to the fields by urban Michiganders. However, breakthroughs in the 1960s, including attention and support from the UAW, helped to bring awareness to the plights of Michigan farmworkers and stimulate some advances.

[105] For more, see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture: Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, No. 836*, (Washington: GPO, 1945); Valdés, *Al Norte*, 40-45.

Problems organizing the fields in the post-World War II period stemmed from a number of factors, not the least of which was the very diverse workforce. Excluding small numbers of other ethno-racial groups who also participated, farm labor consisted of: 1) Mexicano seasonal farmworkers who resided in Michigan but followed the crop seasons (often having one member of the family involved in factory work); 2) part time summer farmworkers such as those who utilized farm work just for extra income (whether from Michigan or elsewhere); 3) migrant Mexicanos who came up annually from Texas who most often had individual contracts negotiated by their crew; 4) Braceros who came as contract laborers from Mexico from 1942 to 1965; and 5) Puerto Ricans who entered the fields starting in 1950 as part of Operation Bootstrap.[106] The latter two groups came on contracts stipulating they could not be involved in labor activism (though some strikes certainly occurred, principally in the Northwest).[107] Each group had its own interests and farms maintained further segregation among the workers. As Efrain Gutierrez recalled, there were three separate living arrangements on Saginaw farms. Migrants lived in farm housing divided from those who lived permanently in the area. Braceros had their own special barracks-style work camps also separated from the rest of workers. Gutierrez said they only socialized with the other groups if they met while in the city on weekends (to say nothing

[106] As part of their effort to aid the increasing poverty in Puerto Rico, the United States instituted a policy of importing 5,000 Puerto Ricans on labor contract visas. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there were also some Haitians and Cubans joining in the fields as well. For more on this see Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 6.

[107] For information on Braceros, see Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (Santa Barbara, CA: McNally & Loftin, 1964); Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, *Mexicanos in Oregon: Their Stories, Their Live*s (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010); Mario Jimenez Sifuentez, *Of Forests and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016); Valdés, *Al Norte*.

about Puerto Ricans).[108] Despite all being of Latino descent, this diversity acted to severely curtail labor organization efforts.

As Emily Martinez explained, it was not that a farm workers' union was absent, just too weak to collectively bargain. When her family began their annual trips to Blissfield in the 1940s, she stated her family never joined the union because they had already negotiated and had their contract for the year. After settling in Blissfield permanently they changed to being seasonal farmworkers who, while they did pick crops in Blissfield, often spent much time traveling throughout the state. The constant movement hindered unionization efforts.[109] That, however, did not stop the Blissfield Local from being there and trying to help those in the community. In 1964, Emily Martinez sought to purchase a house in the city as a way to stand up for her civil rights. She had been informed that a petition had been started to keep her father from purchasing a home there (Chapter 4). In order to afford the new construction, she needed a loan. Martinez met with the local farmworkers union and they went with her to see the house. They had a program in place to help area Mexicanos purchase homes and they agreed to financially back her property, and even did so requiring no down payment.[110] Though she did not join the union when her family arrived in the 1940s, the union was still there for her, and she went on to help many farmworkers through her activism efforts.

Despite lacking a formal union, Mexicanos still found ways to voice their displeasure over poor work conditions and substandard pay. Efrain Gutierrez explained how this operated in practice. He traveled north with his work crew that consisted mainly of his extended family members and fictive kin. With no union to join, they started and

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[108] Gutierrez interview. Also Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 5.
[109] Emily Martinez interview July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession).
[110] Emily Martinez interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, November 15, 2013 [hereafter Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza].

participated in small-scale strikes. When they felt they were being slighted, his work group, by themselves or with other groups working the same fields, called for a strike and all stopped working. Gutierrez explained these were only very short work stoppages, usually resolved within a day or less, and resulted in something like a ten cent raise.[111] What made these strikes effective was also what made a larger movement difficult. The strikes worked because large work crews, connected together economically, struck a local farm on which they consisted the majority of the work force. Additionally, each farmer was, for the most part, independent, despite often belonging to a larger collective that helped to recruit workers. Mexicano workers had the ability to strike against an individual rather than a large, faceless corporation, as existed in places like Blissfield.[112] Though this proved effective for small strikes, ultimately, the disconnected nature of farms dissuaded larger organizational action. That is, unlike in the automobile industry where General Motors operated several different plants, each manufacturing different automobile parts, and whereby striking one plant could disrupt production elsewhere, there was no overarching corporation that united tomatoes in Indiana and Ohio, sugar beets in Saginaw, potatoes in Munger, and cherries in Traverse City. Consequently, a divided workforce and the independent nature of farms thwarted mass unionization and larger civil rights initiatives.

The 1960s, however, witnessed several significant changes that provided a shot-in-the-arm to the organizational efforts in Michigan's fields. First and foremost was the redistribution of farmland in the region. Farm owners saw the efficiency of the automobile industry after World War II and made changes to become more profitable. The adoption of

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[111] Gutierrez interview.

[112] Following the 1935 Beet Strike, the farmers and sugar company in Blissfield reorganized and started a number of organizations to thwart union efforts. This included Great Lakes Sugar Company taking a more active role among the local sugar beet farms. *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture*, 382-383.

mechanization, factory management techniques, and corporate business practices reduced the number of family farms in the state. Historian Dennis Valdés found that large corporations began to buy up independent farms evidenced by the average acreage of farms increasing from 111 acres to 153 acres between 1950 and 1965.[113] This would, theoretically, make it easier to strike. Next, the Bracero Program was winding down and though it did not end officially until 1965, fewer and fewer men came each year. Though Puerto Ricans still were imported, they did have U.S. citizenship unlike the Braceros, meaning they had more rights and could more easily be organized.[114] Perhaps the biggest change, though, came from Cesar Chávez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) in California, which had the support from large industrial unions like the UAW.[115] All these factors initiated a new era for Michigan Mexicano farmworkers and helped to create some unity between the migrant farmworkers and the permanent residents.

Cesar Chávez made national headlines as he led the charge to organize the fields of California, and the subsequent boycotts had a tremendous effect on Michigan Mexicanos. United Farm Worker organizers traveled to Michigan for organizing campaigns and to drum up support for the grape boycotts.[116] In 1968, the UFW had tried and failed to block the distribution of California grapes from a Detroit fruit terminal in efforts led by a local Catholic nun, Sister Lupe Anguiano and Los Angeles boycott veteran, José Serda. As a result, Chávez commissioned Hijnio Rangel to go to Detroit to oversee the boycott. Working with UAW Locals, Rangel promptly arranged a 5,000 person march from Ann Arbor to

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[113] Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 8. For more on the structural changes within just the sugar beet industry see Mapes, Sweet Tryanny.
[114] Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 8.
[115] See Lori Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
[116] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*; Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chávez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

Detroit.[117] Chávez, himself, also made numerous trips to Michigan further cementing his long-standing support from UAW president Walter Reuther.[118] These efforts not only brought attention to the UFW efforts in California, but also helped to connect urban Michigan Mexicanos to rural/migrant Michigan Mexicanos, inspiring more Michigan Mexicanos to get involved in activism. For instance, the UFW movement was one of the major impetuses that launched Maria Guadiana into activism. Though she credits her propensity for activism to growing up experiencing her father's involvement in Detroit's El Circulo Mutualista, Guadiana really began to get involved the day Thomas Gonzales of the Catholic Workers Organization knocked on her door asking if she wanted to help organize the UFW's grape boycott.[119] Her father was in agreement and she attended the local rally in Detroit. She then went out to California and worked at ground zero. It was this experience that led her to start a Brown Beret Chapter in Detroit, to help organize Latinos en Marcha (an initiative to boost college attendance among Detroit Latinos), and to push for public school education reform where she helped install the first Latino principal in the Motor City.[120]

Even if Michigan Mexicanos did not become activists to the extent of Guadiana, participation in the grape boycott got them more involved and helped bring awareness to issues facing Mexicano farmworkers in Michigan as well as California. Emily Martinez proudly recalled meeting Cesar Chávez when he visited Michigan to speak with workers. She recalled that even though the Lenawee Country workers were not unionized very well, they unequivocally participated in the grape boycott.[121] In Flint, despite having a good job at

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[117] See García, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 78-79.
[118] Martinez interview; Reyes interview; García, *From the Jaws of Victory*, 37-42.
[119] Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013.
[120] Guadiana interview.
[121] Martinez interview.

Buick, UAW member Apolonio Zamarripa helped rally Flint Mexicanos and educate everyone else about why the boycott existed. In his eulogy, his family remembered his resolute support, saying "From 1965, when the first cry of '*huelga'* echoed in San Joaquin Valley, to 1968 when the strike moved to the Midwest and east in the form of a national and international boycott, Apolonio's support of '*la causa*' never wavered."[122] They spoke of their father as a man of action, which included picketing several Flint area grocery stores, attending meetings and rallies, passing out literature to inform others, and wearing his "*huelga*" buttons proudly as "a constant and uneasy challenge to others that their cooperation and support were greatly needed."[123] He believed so strongly in *la causa* he included his younger children in the movement to instill in them a desire to make the world a better place. It was said "many times [his children] were present at the picket lines passing out literature and yelling '*huelga, huelga*,' along side [sic] their father, as he guided and modeled for them how to give back to their community."[124] As the boycott changed to lettuce, Zamarripa still went out to picket and continued to give monetarily to *la causa*.

In addition to the on the ground support of working class Michigan Mexicanos, the UFW strikes and boycotts received financial support from many co-unions, including the UAW. In Michigan (and elsewhere), the UAW helped provide support – time, food, manpower – for local rallies, marches, benefit dances, and events for the at least fifteen Boycott Committees that were scattered throughout the Great Lakes State.[125] The UAW also

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[122] "Apolonio Zamarripa Obituary and Eulogy," Zamarripa family personal papers shared with author during interview, (in author's possession).
[123] "Apolonio Zamarripa Obituary and Eulogy."
[124] "Apolonio Zamarripa Obituary and Eulogy."
[125] Cities in Michigan that had committees in the 1970s included Adrian, Ann Arbor, Big Rapids, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Holland, Kalamazoo, Kalkaska, Lansing, Mt. Pleasant, Muskegon, Port Huron, Saginaw, and Ypsilanti. "Marcha por Justicia," 1976, Box 2, Folder 27, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Archive, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan [hereafter ALUA].

provided lists to the UFW field offices of "[UAW] union men" – Anglo and Mexicano – in each city who were eager to help in organizing the boycott efforts.[126] The UAW helped coordinate and publicize marches from Bay City to Saginaw, from Lansing to Detroit, and from Holland to Grand Rapids.[127] Whether it was providing advertisement, recognition, or food, the UAW stood by their fellow union in solidarity with slogans such as "An injury to one is an injury to all" and "Solidarity Forever."[128] In Flint, Arturo and Art Reyes recalled the UAW helped support the UFW by providing buttons and signage.[129] The elder Reyes noted, "There was a boycott [in Flint]. It was a good movement here…. Some [people] would say 'you can't tell me I can't buy grapes,' but we had good support. Our UAW membership was behind it."[130] Though the UFW was its own entity, the UAW, as the largest union in Michigan, brought greater attention to the issues facing Mexicanos among its members in the urban centers.

All the changes of the 1960s regarding the Michigan farming landscape combined with the national attention brought about by Cesar Chávez and the UFW, the newfound support of urban Michigan Mexicanos, and the solidarity of the UAW to finally provide some breakthrough in farm labor activism in Michigan. In 1969, three Monroe County growers "agreed to allow union representation elections on their farms, but the elections fell through when the Detroit office of the National Labor Relations Board ruled that the farm workers had no right to a union because they are not covered by the National Labor Relations

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[126] "Union Men Who Have Helped in Grape Boycott," August 1970, Box 2, Folder 2, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, ALUA.
[127] "Holland/Grand Rapids March," 1976, Box 2, Folder 27, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, ALUA; "Bay City/Saginaw March" 1976, Box 2, Folder 27, UFW Michigan Boycott Collection, ALUA.
[128] "Marcha por Justicia."
[129] Reyes interview.
[130] Reyes interview.

Act."[131] Farmworkers in Croswell delivered another breakthrough the following year. On August 6, 1970, a cucumber grower, J. Kenneth Weller, signed the first union agreement with migrant farmworkers under the UFW Organizing Committee (UFWOC).[132] The agreement came about after a sit-in at Weller's company office of fifty migrant workers and union organizers. According to the UFWOC, the agreement stipulated that the company would "recognize the UFWOC as the sole bargaining agent for its workers and agree to negotiate with the union," which was vital to any union effort.[133] Though Weller tried to deny it was a union recognition agreement, the "fact that Weller signed any agreement, however, was an important landmark for the Michigan UFWOC, which has been trying for several seasons to gain recognition from Michigan fruit and vegetable growers who hire migrant labor."[134] This brought a level of humanity and dignity to the workers. It was not the "cure all" to solve all migrant labor problems, as issues such as the use of pesticides, poor housing, access to education, and a lack of bilingual notifications still proliferated the farms, but it was an advancement that illustrated the growing momentum and a level of acceptance of migrant Mexicano civil rights. While it was the UFWOC that finally broke through, support from the nation's largest union certainly help draw attention to the plight of Michigan's farmworkers.[135]

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[131] Julie Morris, "Migrants Get First Union Talks," *Detroit Free Press*, August 6, 1970, 1.
[132] Morris, "Migrants Get First Union Talks;" Valdés, *Al Norte*, chapter 8.
[133] Morris, "Migrants Get First Union Talks."
[134] Morris, "Migrants Get First Union Talks."
[135] For more on the farm labor organizing and the UFWOC in the Midwest see W.K. Barger and Ernesto M. Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in the Midwest: Social Change and Adaptation among Migrant Farmworkers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora*.

**Non-UAW Industrial Work**

Despites its faults, the UAW clearly did benefit Michigan Mexicanos in the factories and even provided aid and support to Michigan's farmworkers. However, while the UAW did represent workers in the automobile industry, other, smaller Michigan factories were not closed shops. Some Mexicanos found non-union factory work difficult and precarious as they could be fired on the whims of managers. However, even in those situations, Mexicanos were quick to stand up for themselves. During the 1960s, after having her third child, Emily Martinez took a job at a local Lenawee County factory in order to help support her growing family. As she described it, "I was no longer working in the fields and making good money. I got a job doing press work in a factory, with raw steel. They cut it up and they put it through a machine."[136] Though the pay was better, conditions at the factory were less than ideal stemming from the dangerous machinery, a lack of safety equipment, and because "there were two brothers who owned that factory in Blissfield [that] always got a kick out of making the women cry."[137] Despite Martinez working hard, the brothers eventually targeted her. She recalled:

> I was making twice as much money as anyone there because we were on piece rate. When you're on piece rate you work as fast as you can and they didn't like the idea I worked for [only] forty-five minutes of the hour [and then] took off fifteen minutes to catch up with myself and make sure I was ready to go for another forty-five minutes. They didn't like me to do that.[138]

Martinez remained determined to stand up for her rights as human being and lay claim to dignity. As the brothers complained about her taking a fifteen minute break each hour, she responded by calling them out for their ill treatment of all their employees:

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[136] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[137] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[138] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

> I said, 'you know, I don't like that I don't have any safety guards for my hands. You see that man over there that lost part of his arm? I don't know what you gave him, but you should have given him a lot of money for losing his arm, and I am not going to lose my arms.' I created that situation because there were other people who cut their fingers and things that like…and nobody was doing anything about it.[139]

Though that stopped their harassment of her that day, the brothers did not forget. Not long after that incident Martinez's son got sick. Knowing he may get worse, Martinez informed her bosses she likely would not be in the next day so she could care for her son. Indeed, the following morning her son was running a high fever and she did not go into work. The following day Martinez returned to work and she described the belittlement that occurred:

> They [the brothers] called me to their office right away and I said 'Yes, what can I do for you?' They started getting upset with me and making me feel like I needed to cry too, but I didn't because I had already made the decision before…. And they said 'well you take 15 minutes to do this, 15 minutes to do that,' all of this kind of stuff. [Martinez responded] 'Well, I am here to work. You are holding me up because I am on piece rate. You're costing me money and you're losing money. What do want me to do?' [The brothers retorted] 'Aren't you going to quit?'[140]

The brothers' goal was to rile her up emotionally to entice her to quit, knowing if she did, she would not be able to draw unemployment. Martinez remained strong and said, "I am going back to work."[141] As she turned to leave their office, they said to her, "You are going to walk away from us?" and then in unison said, "You're fired." Martinez replied, "Thank you," and left the factory to go file for unemployment benefits (which she received).[142] Though Martinez showed strength by standing up for what was right, and though she went on to pursue a career in education that helped many students, her experience at the factory illustrated how a lack of a union could hurt workers compared with Mexicanos in Flint and

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[139] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[140] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[141] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.
[142] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

Saginaw who, because they had union backing, were able to improve their lives while maintaining employment.[143]

Even when unions were present, Mexicanos discovered discrimination persisted. Like others, Lupe Ortega found the Saginaw plants funneled Mexicanos to the worst jobs, and he was determined to do better than that. He became an electrician and sought to join the local electricians union in Saginaw, but they did not allow him to join. Ortega believed whole-heartedly it was ethno-racial discrimination. Though the union leadership did not say it was because he was Mexicano, they politely told him he would be better off to just "do his own thing."[144] He did just that and in 1977 he started his own business named "Ortega Electrical Company." Ortega grew his company to six employees to help handle the business load and landed a contract at Dow Chemical in Saginaw. Following this, Ortega explained, the union came back and actively pursued him to join their ranks. They did not want a non-union company working at a place like Dow. In return for joining the union, Ortega would be expected to pay union dues of nine percent, which he said would have amounted to $2,200.00 per month at that time. He reminded them of their refusal to allow him to join previously, told them "no," and then shouted out to his employees that he was giving them a raise with the money he would be saving by not joining the union.[145] Consequently, while the UAW was not perfect regarding racial issues, they seemed to have had a better record in providing support for Michigan Mexicano workers than others.

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[143] This is not to say Mexicanos did not find success outside the UAW, but that the union was a primary vehicle for many Mexicanos. Martinez, herself, would be successful in education. For more examples of success outside of the automobile industry and the UAW, see Gonzales interview; Sanchez interview; Alejandra Zuñiga interview by Steven Rosales, Saginaw, Michigan, January 16, 2013, audio tape (in Rosales' possession).
[144] Ortega interview.
[145] Ortega interview.

**Conclusion**

The labor arena was an important space for Michigan Mexicanos, as it was most often the primary motivating factor in deciding to travel to and/or settle in Michigan, though hardship and discrimination pervaded the workplace. To combat this, many Mexicanos were quick join in union activism and when speaking of Michigan that meant involvement in the UAW, a union that represented the greatest number of Mexicanos during this period. From the first victory of the UAW in 1937, Mexicanos were active participants, utilizing the union to improve their job opportunities and their economic well being, as seen in the case of the Arceo family.

However, due to a number of internal and external factors, the UAW did not always readily reach out to address the needs of groups such as African Americans and Mexicanos. The result for workers was a continuation of discriminatory hiring practices that funneled Mexicanos into the worst positions at the factories and created a lack of job advancement opportunities. This placed the story of Mexicano labor in the UAW into the larger pattern of U.S labor union history. Mexicanos fought this situation on two fronts. Many families took their knowledge of Michigan's strong, historic dual economy and participated in both factory work and farm work simultaneously, often with the head of household retaining his employment in the factory while the wife and children worked the fields. As time passed, Mexicanos also became more actively involved in the union process to push for significant changes, as witnessed in the cases of Arturo Reyes and Frank Ornelas. The increased participation of Michigan Mexicanos in unions reflected the larger nationwide pattern of Mexicanos becoming more involved and militant in standing up for their civil rights. Thus, unionization within the labor arena helped Michigan Mexicanos create space for themselves

in the Great Lakes State. UAW membership enabled them to obtain stable, higher paying employment, helping Mexicanos bridge the socio-economic divide that persisted. Further, for many, union brotherhood signified a changed cultural identity and social acceptance from Anglo coworkers.

Though more research on the subject is still needed, Mexicano labor activism was also inextricably tied to increased political activism of the 1960s and 1970s, and beyond. For example, Elena Herrada viewed her activism in education reform as directly influenced by her father's activism as a UAW strike captain while at Chrysler.[146] Consequently, participation in the UAW categorically benefited many Mexicanos beyond just the immediate participants. Despite many noting some ill treatment, most noted that conditions in the UAW were equal to or better than what they faced in larger society, improving as time went on and they pushed for change. The more actively they stood up for themselves, the greater their advancement. For many families, this meant the ability to stop participating in Michigan's dual economy out of necessity – only sending their children to the fields to teach them a lesson as Rose San Miguel and Marylou Olivarez Mason described. Ultimately, labor was a vital battlefront, and the UAW became a primary vehicle utilized to overcome the barriers set against Mexicanos in Michigan, helping provide the income needed to live and to participate in leisure activities.

[146] Elena Herrada interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 15, 2013.

## Epilogue: The 1970s and Beyond

On March 28, 2009, about 100 people gathered on a cold, blustery day at the snow-covered University of Michigan-Flint campus. They were there to connect, to remember, and to march. As they were preparing to commence, Pablo Lopez lifted a framed United Farm Workers of America (UFW) flag, containing a photograph of Cesar Chávez in the corner of it, over his head and shouted, "Cesar Chávez!"[1] The event was held to commemorate Chávez's March 31 birthdate. The chairman of the march, Art Reyes, president of United Autoworkers (UAW) Local 651, stated the event was to raise awareness about Chávez and the struggles of all workers, because Flint was, and is, a union town. The local news reported, "People of all ages turned out for the march, carrying Mexican flags and pictures of Chávez."[2] Among them was Elodia Mireles of Flint who marched alongside her husband, two sons, and five grandchildren. She stated, "I [marched] back in the 70s. I brought my grandchildren to experience what I did."[3] Her son, José Mireles, stated the march was "about passing that dream on and uplifting our young people so that they can maybe do something that gets a street named after them."[4] The marches illustrated how proud and engaged Flint Mexicanos have remained. The event was a bold declaration that they were Mexicano, connecting them to the larger U.S. Mexicano population through a common culture and struggle, despite representing only a relatively small population.[5] This feeling of

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[1] Bernie Eng, "Marchers honor Cesar Chávez in downtown Flint," *mlive.com*, March 28, 2009, http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2009/03/marchers_honor_cesar_Chávez_in.html, accessed February 17, 2015.
[2] Eng, "Marchers honor Cesar Chávez in downtown Flint."
[3] Eng, "Marchers honor Cesar Chávez in downtown Flint."
[4] Eng, "Marchers honor Cesar Chávez in downtown Flint."
[5] The marches were an annual event in the early 2000s. See Brooke Rausch, "20th Anniversary of Chavez Drive to be Marked with a March in Flint," *mlive.com*, March 27, 2007, http://blog.mlive.com/flintjournal/newsnow/2007/03/20th_anniverary_of_chavez_driv.html, accessed February 17, 2015; Melissa Burden, "Dozens March in Flint to Honor the late Cesar Chavez," *mlive.com*, March 27, 2010, http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2010/03/dozens_march_in_flint_to_honor.html, accessed

camaraderie stands in contrast to how Maria Guadiana, whose story led off this dissertation, felt as an "outsider" at the 1969 National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference.[6] Though things may still not be perfect forty plus years later, this juxtaposition illustrates the transformation of how far Michigan Mexicanos have come in feeling more a part of the larger Mexican American community.

From the time Mexicanos entered Michigan in the early twentieth century, they found themselves living and working within a new racialized environment. Based on phenotype, language, and jobs performed, Anglos treated Mexicanos as inferior and as outsiders. Because there was not a historic Mexicano population in the region, local newspapers did much to color the minds of Anglo Michiganders. In the years leading up to Mexicano arrival in the state in the 1920s, newspaper rhetoric focused on banditry and violence stemming from their coverage of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). In the early years of migration, most newspapers continued their prejudiced coverage by portraying Mexicanos as exotic others or linking Mexicanos to dirtiness, filth, and disease. All this negativity surrounding Mexicanos in the English language press before and during the early years of migration strengthened inherent racial tropes casting Mexicanos as racially other. In the minds of most Anglos, Mexicanos were first-class laborers but second-class citizens. This degraded view of Mexicanos helped erect powerful figurative boundaries of social, economic, and political exclusion that led to their persistent marginalization. Economically, Mexicanos were relegated to fieldwork or the worst jobs in factories. In the community, segregation and

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February 17, 2015; Sarah Schuch, "The fifth annual Cesar Chavez March takes place Saturday," *mlive.com*, March 25, 2011, http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2011/03/the_fifth_annual_cesar_chavez.html, accessed February 17, 2015. Sarah Schuch, "About 70 people March Down Chavez Drive in Flint to Celebrate the Accomplishments of Cesar Chavez and his Fight for Farm Workers" *mlive.com*, March 26, 2011, http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2011/03/about_70_people_march_down_cha.html, accessed February 17, 2015.

[6] Maria Guadiana interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 7, 2013.

racism existed at movie theaters, in housing, and in education, precipitating additional affronts to their civil rights.

Within that racialized environment, Mexicanos, from the time they first entered the state, actively negotiated, constructed, and molded the space around them, redefining how and where they belonged. Because Michigan Mexicanos never constituted a numerically significant population in any one area and/or were migrant laborers in constant movement, large organized forms of resistance often proved difficult. Instead, Mexicanos in Michigan claimed belonging via leisure spaces and labor unionism. By gathering together for activities such as celebrations, sports, movies, and music, Mexicanos claimed physical and social space within Michigan's cities and towns. Simultaneously, the leisure activities connected them with other Mexicano communities across the state and region. Within this process, they built their own sense of community, both by celebrating their own ethnic culture and by embracing local Michigan culture, which helped make local Anglos more comfortable with their presence. In doing so, they challenged the preconceived stereotypes designed to hold them back. Within the labor arena, Mexicanos embraced interethnic union activism and pushed the labor movement to address their needs when the unions fell short in curtailing lingering racism found in job placement and promotion. The result of their efforts was economic security and advancement that helped them overcome Michigan's socio-economic barriers, while also enabling greater participation in leisure activities.

Additionally, the urban and rural divide that has characterized the study of Mexicanos in Michigan was not so stark – especially when considering the areas of leisure, culture, and labor. There was tremendous crossover between the urban and rural communities, as larger Mexicano enclaves, such as Saginaw and Detroit, became hubs of cultural exchange. Sweet

breads and Mexican delicacies made their way from the Motor City to Lenawee County migrant laborers. Cow's heads for *barbacoa*, Mexican groceries, and movies traveled from Saginaw to Mexicanos in Flint and Traverse City. This connected rural and urban Mexicano communities sometimes separated by several hours driving time. The divide between industrial and agricultural work was equally fluid. In the face of discriminatory hiring practices, many Mexicano families maintained economic viability by performing both factory and farm jobs at the same time. Many interviewees reported that one family member (usually the father) held a job at a factory while the rest of the family engaged in seasonal farm work across the state, helping to subsidize the family income. Many recalled that was how families paid for school clothes each year. Taking advantage of Michigan's dual economy helped many Mexicano families get ahead to achieve their goal of keeping the next generation from having to perform field work out of necessity.

In breaking the rural/urban divide, what also is revealed is that the strategies utilized to overcome the imposed boundaries did not work equally in all areas. For example, constructing central communities was vital for Detroit and Saginaw, creating insularity, but that same insularity caused some additional hardships in the more rural Lenawee County, while Flint Mexicanos never developed an enclave at all. These differences are more evidenced in leisure activities. Celebrations were vital for claiming space in Detroit and Saginaw as large communities of Mexicanos gathered to put on vibrant displays of culture. Though the smaller Lenawee County also celebrated the *fiestas patrias* yearly, it was sports that provided greater opportunities for social advancement. Contributing and starring on the local football, baseball, and basketball teams provided positive attention that aided in the removal of ethno-racial identifiers from Mexicano names in the local newspapers – athletes

simply became part of the team and community. In Flint, sports were important for young Mexicanos, but it was the Mexicano-financed Catholic Church and interethnic solidarity in the UAW that helped advance Mexicano residents. What was consistent across the state was that Michigan Mexicanos adapted remarkably to their environment by finding which mode of leisure and/or labor worked the best, enabling them to overcome the socio-economic and political impediments they faced.

Through these processes, Michigan Mexicanos remade their cultural identities. Many aspects of their identity formation would parallel those of Southwestern Mexicanos including debates over self-identifying labels such as "Chicano," "Mexican," and "Mexican American," highlighting how Mexicanos were not homogenous as a group. At the same time, however, Michigan Mexicanos also developed distinct Michigan and Midwestern cultural identities by combining Mexican cultural heritage with the embracement of local cultural traits. For instance, many Mexicanos became enamored with more regionalized American sports. Rafael Arceo was so ecstatic over the Detroit Tigers winning the World Series in 1934, he took his whole family from Flint to Detroit to be part of the festivities at a time when there were no professional baseball teams in the Southwest.[7] Cheering for their favorite teams represented a distinctly Midwestern cultural attachment. In addition, participation in the American high school sports such as baseball, football, and basketball illustrated an incorporation of new cultural athletic norms into the lives of Michigan Mexicanos.[8] Music also showed the evolution of cultural identity as youths began listening

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[7] David Arceo interview by Brett Olmsted, February 23, 2015, San Antonio, TX, digital file (in author's possession.

[8] See chapter 4; Also Emily Martinez interview by Brett Olmsted, July 6, 2015, Adrian, Michigan, digital file (in author's possession). For more on the role of sports, see José M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Adrian Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball,*

to English language musicians. Fans flocked to see and support local Saginaw Mexicano group Question Mark and the Mysterians who learned rock and roll in the shadow of Motown, garnered interethnic fame, and produced a certified gold album for their song "96 Tears."[9] Other characteristics such as participation in going "up north" on vacations and embracing the regional lexicon of ordering a bottle of "pop" designated Michigan Mexicanos as culturally distinct. Each of these were markers of a Mexican American identity rooted within the Michigan and Midwestern experience. The changes were significant enough for many Mexicanos to report feeling "different" from Southwestern Mexicanos when the two groups came together.[10]

From the time they entered the state, Michigan Mexicanos utilized leisure and labor to remake their cultural identities and claim space in the Great Lakes State. Though political action certainly took place during the period investigated, the next generation that grew up in Michigan took what their parents taught them about creating space and claiming rights, utilized their Michigan education, and took to heart the civil rights rhetoric of the country during the 1960s to become more outspoken regarding social issues. As a result, Michigan Mexicanos experienced some significant political breakthroughs in the 1970s and beyond. In

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*Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Ignacio M. García, *When Mexicans Could Play Ball: Basketball, Race, And Identity In San Antonio, 1928-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); Matt García, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Juan Javier Pescador, "¡Vamos Taximaroa!: Mexican/Chicano Soccer Associations and Transnational/Translocal Communities, 1967-2002," *Latino Studies* 2, no. 3 (December 2004): 352-376;

[9] Larry Rodarte, Jr., "Question Mark and the Mysterians," *Mi Gente*, Special Commemorative Issue, February 1996. For more on identity formation through leisure and music see Alamillo, *Making Lemonade*; García, *A World of its Own*; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[10] For examples, see Lupe Alviar interview by Steven Rosales, April 30, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Gilbert Guevara interview by Steven Rosales, June 14, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Guadiana interview; John Lopez interview by Steven Rosales, May 22, 2010, Saginaw, MI, audio tape (in Rosales' possession); Rose San Miguel interview by Brett Olmsted, June 25, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).

1974, prominent Michigan Mexicanos, including Emily Martinez, Jane García, Elena Herrada, and Jane Gonzalez, worked in Lansing to help pass the 1974 Bilingual Education Act.[11] The act helped migrant children adapt to learning English in schools, but, according to Herrada, for many Michigan Mexicanos who grew up in the state, it was also an opportunity to study and learn the Spanish language.[12] At the university level, activists worked to create Chicano/Latino studies programs. Founded in 1971 by a coalition of community Latino activists, the Chicano-Boricua Program at Wayne State University in Detroit is the second oldest Latino undergraduate program in the Midwest. The fight for its institution illustrated the emergence of a pan-ethnic Latino identity that materialized in the 1960s, though more research is needed.[13] The program was designed to provide education in Latino history, but also to focus on educational outreach into the Detroit Latino community. It became a gateway to attract Detroit Mexicanos like Elena Herrada to enter higher education.[14]

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[11] This fight had come on heels of two school walkouts in 1970, a nine day walkout starting March 3 at Pattengill Junior High School in Lansing and a May 12 walkout of nearly 1,000 mostly Hispanic students at Webster School in Detroit to protest academic conditions. Governor George Milliken approved P.A. Bilingual Instruction for Michigan public schools on October 17, 1974, though it would not begin until September 2, 1975 with a state legislative appropriation of $300,000.00. For more on this see Jaime Alanis, "The Harrison High School Walkout of 1968: Struggle for Equal Schools and Chicanismo in Chicago," Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010; Jane Garcia interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, January 30, 2014; Jesse Gonzales, "La Historia de los Betabeleros," Box 2, Folder 34, Juana and Jesse Gonzalez Papers, MSS 382, The Jose F. Treviño Chicano/Latino Activism Collections, MSU Libraries, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan; Elena Herrada interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, December 15, 2013; Martinez interview; Emily Martinez interview by Maria Cotera, Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collective, November 15, 2013, [hereafter Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza].

[12] In the 1974 Bilingual Education Act amendments, the federal government recognized that equal resources allotted did not translate to equal education, especially for non-English speaking students. The result of the Act was to require additional funding (from federal and state sources) be utilized to provide instruction in both English and the student's native language. This also helped pave the way for additional foreign language courses available to all students. Herrada interview; Gloria Stewner-Manzanares, *The Bilingual Education Act: Twenty Years Later* (Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1988).

[13] For more on a Michigan-based pan-ethnic Latino identity, see Delia Fernández, "From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2015, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370.

[14] Francisco Cardasco, *Bilingual Schooling in the United States: A Sourcebook for Education Personnel* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1976), 264; Herrada interview; "Wayne State's Chicano-Boricua Studies Celebrating 35th Anniversary," *Wayne State University*, last modified November 13, 2006,

Additionally, in 1980, Benjamin Fernández made history by becoming the first Latino to run for U.S. President. He stated, he was born "in a boxcar in Kansas City, raised in the sugar beet and tomato fields of Michigan, and acquired a college education working his way through college as a waiter."[15] Though he did not make it through the Republican Primary, it was quite an accomplishment for the child of migrant farmworkers turned self-made millionaire.[16]

Mexicano farmworkers also achieved some greater success in this period. Mary Lou Olivarez Mason and others worked diligently to help farmworkers by having informational field signs posted in both Spanish and English to ensure workers understood laws, rights, and warnings. In 1986, she became the director of Michigan's Spanish-Speaking Commission (later renamed Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan). She pressed for the passage of the Field Sanitation Standard Bill to ensure "that there are bathroom facilitates and water in the field for the people who are working."[17] As a former farmworker, Olivarez Mason was also concerned with issues regarding pesticide use. She stated, "There were no laws or regulations that said you couldn't spray while the people were working in the fields. Of course, you didn't have to be certified to be spraying…. We'd be working in the fields and they'd be spraying the other field and all that stuff would be coming to where you were

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https://wayne.edu/newsroom/release/2006/11/13/wayne-states-chicano-boricua-studies-celebrating-35th-anniversary-2432, accessed February 17, 2017.

[15] "Presidential Race Gets Second Entry," *Lodi News-Sentinel*, November 30, 1978, 3; "Svetlana on Benjamin Fernández, the Dark Horse," *Washington Post*, August 19, 1979.

[16] In the 1980 Michigan Republican Primary election, Fernández tallied 2,248 votes compared with George Bush's 341,998 and Ronald Reagan's 189,184 votes. State of Michigan, Michigan Department of State Bureau of Elections, *Michigan Presidential Primary Facts and Statistics, Michigan.gov*, last modified November 2015, https://www.michigan.gov/documents/MichPresPrimRefGuide_20863_7.pdf, accessed February 12, 2017; "Benjamin Fernández," *Our Campaigns*, http://www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=19285, accessed February 17, 2017.

[17] Marylou Olivarez Mason Oral History, "A Mexican American from Texas," in *The Sweetness of Freedom: Stories of Immigrants*, ed. Stephen Garr Ostrander and Martha Aladjem Bloomfield (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), 171, [hereafter Olivarez Mason Oral History]

working."[18] She worked to change this, stating, "Now you have to be certified to be able to spray. You can't spray while people are working in the fields. You have to post what kind of pesticides you use, and they have to be bilingual."[19] The first Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards regarding pesticides came in 1992 under the Worker Protection Standards (which took effect in 1995) in large part because people like Olivarez Mason and the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan were actively involved in the political sphere.[20]

A major victory in Flint highlighted the impact of Mexicano involvement in local politics. Paul Vasquez grew up watching his father and his uncle, Arturo Reyes, fight discrimination at General Motors. As Reyes stated, the policy of stereotyping Mexicanos as having "too much fat between the shoulders…was keeping people from having a good livelihood and Paul saw this."[21] According to Reyes, Vasquez "figured if he could get into city hall he could help more people."[22] Consequently, in 1983 Vasquez ran for Flint City Council. He went door to door in Flint's Fourth Ward "introducing himself and telling [residents] what he wanted to do for the community, for the neighborhood, and he let them know he was part of that neighborhood."[23] Though some criticized him for running because he would be taking a seat in a ward that typically provided African American council

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[18] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 171.
[19] Olivarez Mason Oral History, 171.
[20] Lisa J. Gold, *Pesticide Laws and Michigan's Migrant Farmworkers: Are They Protected*? JSRI Report No. 12, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing Michigan, (1996), http://www.jsri.msu.edu/upload/research-reports/rr12.pdf, accessed June 13, 2016; Lisa J. Gold, "The Farmworker Protection Standards Revisited," JSRI Report No. 34, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing Michigan, (May 2004), http://www.jsri.msu.edu/upload/research-reports/rr34.pdf, accessed June 13, 2016.
[21] Arturo and Art Reyes interview by Brett Olmsted, June 28, 2015, Flint, MI, digital file (in author's possession).
[22] Reyes interview.
[23] Reyes interview.

representation, Vasquez won the election and became Flint's first Mexicano City Councilman. He would serve on the council until losing in the 1987 election.

Vasquez desired to leave a legacy and though it was not his only accomplishment, he is primarily remembered for his effort to rename a street in honor of Cesar Chávez.[24] He faced some pushback from area leaders, though. Despite their support of Chávez and the UFW, the UAW was not in favor of the proposal. Vasquez's plan was to rename a portion of Lewis Street to honor Chávez. This upset the UAW because Lewis Street was named for the first president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), John L. Lewis. Vasquez was not deterred. As Reyes explained, "Paul tried to get that done [the renaming] the same time as the MLK holiday was coming into prominence and there were a lot of streets being renamed MLK."[25] Like Vasquez, fellow councilman and future Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley was simultaneously attempting to have a street renamed for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Vasquez knew he would need help from the African Americans on the council for his initiative to pass. However, Stanley also needed Vasquez, so "there was a trading of votes to [have the renaming] coming in as a package."[26] As a result, a portion of Lewis Street became Chávez Drive and a portion of Detroit Street became Martin Luther King Avenue. It was only later, when Chávez himself came to Vehicle City, that he revealed that Flint was the first city in the nation to honor him that way.[27]

However, despite the victories and progress made, many Michigan Mexicanos have noticed some erosion of their gains and lingering inequality in the 1990s and into the new

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[24] According to Reyes, in his opinion, Vasquez's greatest accomplishment was mandating all the junkyards on Dort Highway (M-54) install large fences to hide the eyesore. Reyes interview.
[25] Reyes interview.
[26] Reyes interview.
[27] Reyes interview; United States, House of Representatives, Congressional Record, "Tribute to the First Annual Cesar Chávez March," 110th Congress, 1st Session, (Washington, DC: GPO, March 26, 2007), E642, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2007-03-26/pdf/CREC-2007-03-26-pt1-PgE642-3.pdf, accessed February 10, 2017.

millennium. For instance, though Saginaw Mexicanos were able to have Spanish-style worship and Spanish Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church, an incident in 2004 left the Mexicano congregants feeling alienated once again. As the church prepared for a remodel, Mexicano members had been reassured the statue of La Virgen de Guadalupe, which had prominently been on display since arriving from Mexico in 1961, would be put back after construction was completed. However, members of Las Damas de Guadalupe vividly recalled going to St. Joseph after the renovations and she was not there. They went to ask where the statue was and were told, "It's right there." "There" was a small alcove at the rear side door. They immediately complained and petitioned for her reinstatement to the main sanctuary, but were refused. Tensions ran high. During one service, the priest, "Rev. Ramiro Trejo stormed out of morning Mass without performing communion."[28] According to Damas member Ruth Gomez, "He took the chalice and the plate and he went. People just kind of sat there in shock. Many of them couldn't believe that had just taken place."[29] After this, members of Las Damas, a group that had been active in the church for seventy years, "were blackballed," with the church sending in "babysitters" to watch over the group as they conducted their monthly meetings.[30] It made Mexicanos feel as though they were not a valued part of the church. The women of Las Damas lamented that many left the church because of this situation, greatly fracturing the Saginaw Mexicano community from their Parish.[31] Though La Virgen would eventually be restored to prominence, many viewed it as a slight to their cultural heritage and membership in the church.

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[28] Joe Snapper, "Statue Rift Growing Deeper," *Saginaw News*, June 10, 2004.
[29] Snapper, "Statue Rift Growing Deeper."
[30] Las Damas interview by Brett Olmsted, June 29, 2015, Saginaw, MI, digital file (in author's possession).
[31] Las Damas interview.

In the field of education, the passage of the 1974 Bilingual Act was an important acknowledgment of the additional needs of non-English speaking students, but failed to solve all the problems faced by migrant school-aged children. By 2010, it was estimated that Michigan had more than 28,000 migrant children between 0-12 years, and more than 41,000 between 0-20 years.[32] As a result, education has remained a prominent challenge. According to the 2012 report by the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan, "The percentages of Michigan fourth grader Hispanics not proficient in reading is 80% compared to 63% of whites."[33] In addition, "2009 Cohort five-year dropout rates for Hispanics was 26.02% and 23.40% for Migrants, compared to 10.42% for whites."[34] This disparity was no more clearly seen than in Lenawee County. Emily Martinez worked for the school system as a teacher's aide and as the Multicultural Coordinator for the Lenawee County School District. She spoke of numerous instances of Latino children being left behind and treated as being not as intelligent as the other students. At one point, she began "pulling out" those Latino students that teachers had either given up on or deemed as having a learning disability. The students had been constantly getting sent to office for being troublemakers and scoring "E's" for daily grades. Martinez patiently taught them how to study, and they scored well on their test the following week. Immediately the teacher of the students spread false rumors that Martinez had somehow helped them cheat.[35] She was eventually cleared of any wrongdoing and received numerous awards for her efforts prior to her retirement in

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[32] State of Michigan, Michigan Department of Civil Rights *2012 Annual Report: Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan*, (Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan, January 2013), http://cdm16110.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p9006coll4/id/166981/rec/1, accessed February 1, 2017. [hereafter *2012 Annual Report*]
[33] *2012 Annual Report*, 17.
[34] *2012 Annual Report*, 17.
[35] Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

2010.[36] Despite Martinez's best efforts, her story exposes the continued systemic problems that limit academic success for Mexicano students.

Though the cultural celebrations of the past represented a way of negotiating an ethnic sense of identity, many Michigan Mexicanos lament the modern celebrations due to a perceived decline in historic meaning. Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa claimed that a change occurred because of the commercialization of the events. As they stated, Cinco de Mayo was never that much of a holiday in Michigan, only gaining popularity after the corporate sponsorship of alcohol companies took over.[37] Maria Guadiana provided additional reasons. Her father was a founding member of Detroit's El Circulo Mutualista and helped organize the *fiestas patrias* during 1920s and 1930s. She said she felt the current celebrations (replete with new organizations sponsoring them and a new generation of Mexicanos celebrating) no longer held the same meaning. There no longer is a crowning of a G.I. Forum queen or debutantes, and no one is making sure the Mexican National Anthem is played properly. In her mind, the present celebrations have lost their pageantry and sense of history as the younger generations become further removed and disconnected from Mexico.[38] Mexicanos needed the historic celebrations to display ethnic pride to the larger Anglo community and foster solidarity among co-ethnics. However, the modern participants are more culturally assimilated with their Anglo neighbors and often seem to view the events only as a reason to party and drink.

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[36] David Frownfelder, "Lenawee Chamber Honors Martinez," *Toledo Blade*, April 24, 1995, 9; "Emily Martinez Honored by State for Work with Migrant Farm Workers," Lenconnect, November 24, 2011, http://www.lenconnect.com/article/20111124/News/311249979, accessed September 16, 2015; State of Michigan, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, *Michigan Hispanic Caucus & Cesar E. Chávez Commission Recognizes Outstanding Hispanic Students, Entrepreneurs and Leaders*, *Michigan.gov*, last modified October 2, 2009, http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-10573_11472-223494--,00.html, accessed September 16, 2015.

[37] Cruz and Augustine Zamarripa interview by Brett Olmsted, June 26, 2015, Burton, MI, digital file (in author's possession).

[38] Guadiana interview. Also see Martinez interview; Martinez interview, Chicana por mi Raza.

Saginaw Mexicanos largely agreed with this assessment. As Larry Rodarte and other members of La Cívica Unión prepared for the 2010 celebrations, they grieved at what they felt was a loss of cultural heritage and pride. In their discussions, they realized it had been twelve years since even they had had a queen for the Saginaw fetes. Desiring to return the "pomp…and circumstance" to their events, they hosted an event entitled "The Return of the Reinas" to crown the *dieciséis* queen, Cynthia Anguiano.[39] For them, this was a good start, but obviously did not solve all the problems. As they analyzed the situation they realized a couple of things. First, they noticed a change in the importance of the *fiestas patrias*. Rodarte wrote, "Mexican-Americans in the U.S. make a bigger celebration for Cinco de Mayo than for Mexico's Independence Day…. It really has become an American holiday in communities such as ours."[40] This was a change compared with what was historically significant to Michigan Mexicanos as shown in chapter two. Second, they noted, "Outside the Hispanic community the popularity of Cinco de Mayo is growing…. It's a money-maker [for local bars and restaurants], a marketing tool, to generate more business while honoring ethnic diversity."[41] Rodarte summed what these changes have done, "So here we are, the oldest civic organization with a rich cultural history in charge of what should be a cash cow and yet, as an organization, we struggle to pay the bills."[42] In their view, commercialization had changed the reasons why people celebrated, removing some of the reflective historic quality of the events and replacing it with a time of drinking and revelry.

Finally, while there is no question the economic downtown and loss of automobile jobs hurt all Michiganders in the 2000s, Mexicanos have been hurt disproportionately. The

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[39] "The Return of the Reinas," *Mi Gente*, November 2010, 6.
[40] Larry Rodarte, Jr., "The Cívica, Dow, and the Soaring Eagle," *Mi Gente*, March 2011, 8.
[41] Rodarte, Jr., "The Cívica, Dow, and the Soaring Eagle," 8.
[42] Rodarte, Jr., "The Cívica, Dow, and the Soaring Eagle," 8.

discriminatory hiring practices that lingered into the 1970s and 1980s limited quality employment opportunities. As Art Reyes explained, "the fact it took so long for bigger number of Mexican Americans to get hired into the plants, when the economic downturn happened, seniority came into play, and those who came in later were the first to go."[43] What he meant was that many Mexicanos did not finally obtain these jobs until the 1990s. Unfortunately, the U.S. recession of the 2000s and subsequent U.S. Government Automobile Bailout of 2009 caused many to lose their jobs. At that point, the decision to let workers go was based on seniority. Thus, many Mexicanos were among the first to go. Though it was not discrimination that singled them out for job loss in the 2000s, it was the long-held discriminatory practices that kept many from getting jobs sooner, which would have protected those jobs.

It is vitally important to recover the history of Mexicanos in Michigan. The decline of the automobile industry and overall falling economy has caused Michigan's overall population to decrease during the first two decades of the new millennium. At the same time, Michigan's Hispanic population grew 34.7 percent, accounting for 4.4 percent of the state's total population. Michigan still has the seventh largest farmworker population in the United States consisting of more than 90,000 migrant and seasonal laborers. As of 2010, Latinos comprised fourteen percent of Michigan's overall workforce.[44] Understanding the past is key to providing people a voice and ensuring they have representation, especially in a state few think of as being home to communities of U.S. Mexicanos. The truth is, Mexicanos have long been active in shaping the Michigan landscape. In addition to the topics covered in this dissertation they also developed numerous organizations and groups – the Brown Berets, the

[43] Reyes interview.
[44] *2012 Annual Report*, 16.

G.I. Forum, Mujeres Unidas de Michigan (MUM), and La Sed (who sued Detroit's Department of Social Services for not having bilingual workers), among others – during the Chicano Era to improve their lives in the state, each of which needs more research. In addition, understanding the historic and current needs of Mexicano and migrant school children is crucial to policy-making so another generation will not have to toil in the fields because they slipped through the cracks. Uncovering this will insert Mexicanos in their rightful place in both Mexican American history and the history of Michigan.

Analyzing an area like Michigan as a whole through the lens of leisure and labor poses a vital method in studying immigrant groups. It removes the artificial divisions of rural and urban and instead can focus on the adaptability of individuals and families as they navigated both arenas in order to create a space for themselves. The use of leisure activities as a means to claim belonging is an important analytic tool as it encompasses a greater number of people from within the community and demonstrates how the working class were more than just laborers. The coverage of these activities in local newspapers also reveals much concerning social acceptance within a given area. Examining newspapers for the use or non-use of segregating markers can indicate how and when an immigrant group achieved some level of inclusion.[45] Finally, the use of oral histories ensures that the voice of the people is represented in history, because ultimately, it is people who create and experience history. The story of Mexicanos in Michigan is the story of families who did whatever they needed to in order to improve their lot in life so the next generation could have more than they did. This was their story.

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[45] For more on the use of newspapers, see Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Pablo Mitchell and Haley Pollack, "Making 'The International City' Home: Latinos in Twentieth-Century Lorain, Ohio," in *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, ed. Gina M. Pérez, Frank Andre Guridy, and Adrian Burgos (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

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