

MEXICANS IN THE  
UNITED STATES :  
History, Evolution, and Transformation

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- LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES: A HISTORICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY.* Edited by ALBERT CAMARILLO. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio, 1986. Pp. 332. \$32.50.)
- GRINGO JUSTICE.* By ALFREDO MIRANDE. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987. Pp. 234. \$19.95.)
- THE ZOOT-SUIT RIOTS: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SYMBOLIC ANNIHILATION.* By MAURICIO MAZON. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984. Pp. 163. \$12.95.)
- A WAR OF WORDS: CHICANO PROTEST IN THE 1960s AND 1970s.* By JOHN C. HAMMERBACK, RICHARD J. JENSEN, and JOSE ANGEL GUTIERREZ. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985. Pp. 187. \$29.95.)
- LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES: THE SACRED AND THE POLITICAL.* By DAVID T. ABALOS. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. Pp. 204. \$21.95.)
- THE MEXICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANTHOLOGY.* Edited by RODOLFO O. DE LA GARZA, FRANK D. BEAN, CHARLES M. BONJEAN, RICARDO ROMO, and RODOLFO ALVAREZ. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. Pp. 426. \$25.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)
- MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AND MEXICAN AMERICANS: AN EVOLVING RELATION.* Edited by HARLEY L. BROWNING and RODOLFO O. DE LA GARZA. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. Pp. 256. \$12.95 paper.)
- MEXICAN AMERICANS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE.* Edited by WALKER CONNOR. (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1985. Pp. 373. \$30.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

Latinos are the second-largest ethnic minority group in the United States.<sup>1</sup> They are also the fastest-growing sector. According to the 1980 U.S. Census, Latinos numbered close to fifteen million, and in 1990, they will approximate twenty million. Sometime within the next several decades, Latinos will surpass blacks as the nation's largest mi-

nority group. Consequently, scholars, journalists, and policymakers are increasingly focusing attention on the Latino population in order to understand more about this group and its impact on American society.

The category described as "Latino" is actually made up of several distinct subgroups. Mexican Americans comprise about 60 percent of the Latino population, Puerto Ricans about 15 percent, and Cubans 5 percent of the total. Persons from Central and South America and other "Spanish Americans" are counted together and add up to about 20 percent of the Spanish-origin population.<sup>2</sup>

Although these groups are commonly considered as one ethnic group under the rubric "Hispanic," their histories and experiences in the United States are marked by diversity and division as much as by similarity and common interests. Scholarship on the Latino population consequently has developed around each particular group's experiences. Only recently have scholars begun to analyze the Latino population as a new and emergent whole with a new Latino ethnicity.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, studies on the Mexican-origin population of the United States, the largest of the Spanish-origin groups, dominate the scholarly literature on Latinos. The one bibliography included in the books under review makes this point clearly. *Latinos in the United States: A Historical Bibliography*, edited by Albert Camarillo, provides helpful and lucid annotations of more than a thousand journal articles on Latinos published since 1973, primarily in the humanities and social sciences. With the exception of the first chapter, which includes general materials on Latinos, bibliographic entries are arranged by chapters according to national origin groups. A majority of the abstracts deal with Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Similarly, it is the Mexican-origin population that commands the attention of the scholars whose books are being reviewed here.

The multifaceted nature of the Mexican American experience is readily apparent from even a cursory glance at the eight works under review, which reflect a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the Mexican-origin population. Moreover, they raise a multitude of themes and questions concerning the historical and contemporary status of this population. Collectively, these scholarly works depict a people whose history in the United States reflects both indigenous and immigrant origins, whose experiences are unique as well as similar to other American ethnic groups, and whose communities in the 1980s are undergoing tremendous change and transformation. In sum, these works address various aspects of the history, evolution, and transformation of the Mexican-origin population in the United States.

The four monographs in the group are distinctly different in subject matter and methodology, but they all seek to advance a new per-

spective on the Mexican American experience. Each study is instructive, although they vary in overall quality and in their theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature.

In *Gringo Justice*, Alfredo Mirandé focuses on Mexican Americans and their experience with the U.S. legal and judicial system from 1848 to the 1980s. In tracing Chicano relationships to the legal system over time, he draws heavily on the secondary literature of Chicano history. The book's stated purpose, however, is not to present a history of Chicanos but to advance a new theoretical perspective on a previously neglected but important area of study.

The central thesis of *Gringo Justice*, like its title, is not given to subtlety. Mirandé argues that throughout their history, Chicanos have been subjected to a double standard of justice: one system that has applied to Anglos and another directed toward Mexicans. Anglo-American jurisprudence, law enforcement agencies, and the overall legal system have all upheld Anglo-American interests at the expense of Mexican American rights and interests. Mirandé examines this unequal system of justice in chapters on land displacement, social banditry and vigilantism, immigration law and the Border Patrol, police-community relations, and barrio and prison gangs.

According to Mirandé, "gringo justice" resulted from the imposition of an Anglo-American legal system on Mexicans in the American Southwest after the Mexican-American War of 1848. The new system of law sanctioned and even fostered the transfer of land from Mexican to Anglo ownership by questionable means. Indeed, since the mid-nineteenth century, the American legal system has failed to provide Mexican Americans with constitutionally granted property, civil, and cultural rights. Mirandé asserts that law enforcement has continued the subordination of the Mexican American population. Over time, agencies such as the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Border Patrol have functioned primarily as agents of social control over Mexican communities. When Mexican Americans have resisted "gringo justice," the dominant society has labeled their behavior criminal and has sought to repress it. Consequently, Mexican folk heroes ("social bandits") like Juan Cortina and Gregorio Cortez, the zoot-suiters of the 1940s, and today's "barrio warriors" (gang members) have all endured the wrath of a system they sought to challenge.

Aside from a certain boldness in expression, *Gringo Justice* is not a particularly distinguished work. It offers very little that is new to the study of Chicanos. The analysis tends to be uneven, and the theoretical arguments remain underdeveloped and rather simplistic.

One major contention in Chicano scholarship is that a history of discrimination and subordination provides the essential context for un-

derstanding the Mexican American experience, even in the contemporary period. Mirandé simply extends the subordination thesis to Chicano experiences with the legal system. His thesis of gringo justice is most persuasive when applied to events in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when he basically sustains arguments made by others. For example, his discussions of land displacement, social banditry, and the Texas Rangers have clearly benefited from the strength of previous works by Leonard Pitt, Albert Camarillo, Américo Paredes, and Julián Samora, among others.

In the end, Mirandé's analysis does not go beyond the theoretical and empirical contributions of earlier works. He introduces important sociological concepts (such as mobilization of bias) in his chapters on the border, police-community relations, and gangs, but such theoretical constructs are dealt with only superficially. Mirandé's chapter on gangs is primarily a critique of the social science literature on Chicano youth and crime. The novel characterization of gang members as "barrio warriors" is introduced but is not developed convincingly. The final chapter, "A Theoretical Perspective on Gringo Justice," simply treads all-too-familiar territory in its review of assimilationist theory, internal colonialism, and Marxist theory. This reader kept hoping for explication of a new perspective that goes beyond these schools of thought, but none was forthcoming.

*Gringo Justice* thus leaves the reader with a rather static view of the workings of the legal system. Certainly, the fundamental racial and class nature of the legal system conditions the system's response to disadvantaged groups. But this recognition does not imply that Chicano relations to the legal system have not changed over time in significant ways. A major dimension of the Chicano experience that remains unexplored in *Gringo Justice* is the array of successful efforts waged by Chicanos through the courts to advance their interests in the areas of education (through desegregation) and political enfranchisement (through voting rights, redistricting, and reapportionment). Clearly, "gringo justice" does not always prevail. Mirandé's failure to portray the more complex and dynamic nature of Chicano relations to the American legal and judicial system is therefore a major disappointment.

In contrast, Mauricio Mazón's *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* is a well-written and highly original study of another aspect of Mexican American history. Mazón's analysis centers on the zoot-suit riots that broke out in Los Angeles. In June 1943, Anglo servicemen and civilians engaged in violent confrontations with Mexican American youth. Military personnel roamed the streets of Los Angeles in search of Mexican American boys "draped" in their flamboyant zoot suits. Amidst large crowds of onlookers, the servicemen beat the

boys, stripped them of their clothes, and left them lying on the ground naked and bleeding. This riotous behavior, which involved several thousand people at one point, went on for ten days.

A historian by training, Mazón explores the causes and meaning of the riots in a unique manner. His study departs from other historical works that have characterized the riots as racially based altercations between Mexican zoot-suiters and U.S. servicemen. While acknowledging the racist and xenophobic underpinnings of the riots, Mazón looks beyond the obvious. Employing a psychohistorical approach, he focuses instead on “the latent, unconscious, and irrational processes that describe and identify the underlying assumptions and . . . behavior” of those who perpetrated the riots. *The Zoot-Suit Riots* thus provides a fascinating account of the psychodynamics of wartime America that gave rise to the riots.

Mazón has crafted his analysis by using historical research combined with psychoanalytic theory and concepts. Among the historical documents he examined were previously undisclosed FBI and military records, Los Angeles city and county records, and newspaper coverage of the riots. One chapter analyzes the content of a series of Al Capp cartoons on “Zoot-Suit Yokum,” from the “Li'l Abner” comic strip. Mazón discusses the cartoon strip in light of the social attitudes that it conveyed toward zoot-suiters and its impact on the American psyche.

For Mazón, the key that unlocks the underlying meaning of the zoot-suit riots is the psychosocial climate prevailing at the time. During World War II, the United States was a nation in transition that was marked by “massive psychic and physical upheaval.” On the home front, pent-up frustrations, tension, and anxiety associated with the war exploded into acts of racism and xenophobia. The “emotional push and pull” of wartime thus accounts in part for the racist attitudes and hostile acts directed at Mexican American youth in Los Angeles.

Within this larger social context, Mazón discusses the “latent predispositions” and behavior of the three groups involved in the zoot-suit riots: U.S. servicemen, civilians, and the zoot-suiters themselves. He draws important connections among them. Zoot-suiters and servicemen (basic trainees) were both in the throes of adolescent rebellion. Servicemen and civilians joined together in psychic cohesion against a common enemy, the zoot-suiters. In the end, the meaning of the zoot-suit riots is found in the symbolism associated with the behavior of the servicemen. Military training had depersonalized or “stripped” young recruits of their former identities. As a result, the recruits, compelled by frustration and discontent, symbolically imposed a similar process on the zoot-suiters by removing their identifying clothing, thus “stripping” them of their identities.

The psychoanalytic arguments throughout the book seem plausi-

ble for the most part, but *The Zoot-Suit Riots* is worthwhile reading even for those skeptical of psychohistory. It provides a good understanding of the political context in which Anglo-Mexican conflict in Los Angeles evolved during the 1940s. Of special interest in this respect are Mazón's chapters on the Sleepy Lagoon murder case (a mass trial of twenty-two Mexican American boys) and law enforcement's response to the "Mexican problem" (juvenile delinquency).

*The Zoot-Suit Riots* also represents an important development in Chicano scholarship in the way it advances the integration of Chicano history with U.S. history. Mazón focuses on an incident involving the Mexican community in Los Angeles but places its significance squarely in the context of American social history. As Mazón weaves Mexican American history into the national consciousness, readers end up with a deeper understanding of a period when Americans were at war with each other.

Two decades after the zoot-suit riots, a new political era in the Mexican American experience began to unfold. Reflecting elements of cultural nationalism and radical thought, what is known as *el movimiento chicano* evolved as a social protest movement during the 1960s and 1970s. Four individuals were particularly instrumental in shaping the development of the Chicano movement: Reies López Tijerina from New Mexico, César Chávez from California, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales from Colorado, and José Angel Gutiérrez from Texas.

Reies López Tijerina, an itinerant Protestant minister from Texas, became a leader in the land-grant struggle in northern New Mexico. Through La Alianza Federal de los Mercedes, an organization he founded in 1963, Tijerina fought for restoration of property rights that had been lost by the heirs of Spanish and Mexican land grants following the Mexican-American War. Largely because of his passionate and charismatic leadership, Tijerina's cause evolved into a broader social protest movement that was supported by both landless poor and urban Chicanos in New Mexico.

César Chávez, the founder and only president of the United Farm Workers union (UFW) for over twenty years, is perhaps the best-known of the four leaders of the movement. Trained in the Saul Alinsky tradition of community organization, Chávez's political activism began with the Community Service Organization (CSO) in California in the 1950s. He left the CSO in 1962 to organize on behalf of the rights of farm workers. A soft-spoken man of moral conviction, Chávez proved to be an astute and able leader. Along with Dolores Huerta and other exceptional organizers, Chávez built the UFW into a powerful union in California. His union movement quickly attracted national recognition and support. For Chicanos, Chávez and the UFW were a central component of movement politics throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and José Angel Gutiérrez also rose to prominence during this period. They led social protest movements in different regions of the Southwest, especially among Chicano youth, and both made their mark in electoral politics during the 1970s. Gonzales, a poet, boxer, and political activist, established the Crusade for Justice, a community-based organization in Denver, Colorado. Gutiérrez, while a student at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, cofounded the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). Several years later in 1970, a Chicano third party named El Partido de la Raza Unida was established in Crystal City, Texas, under Gutiérrez’s leadership. Both Gonzales and Gutiérrez assumed key leadership positions in La Raza Unida. Over the years, they were allies, competitors, and adversaries within that organization. Gutiérrez was subsequently elected to a county judgeship in South Texas, a position he held from 1974 until his resignation in 1981.

A significant amount of scholarship has already been devoted to these movement leaders and their political endeavors. Few studies, however, have focused specifically on their rhetoric. To fill this gap, John Hammerback and Richard Jensen, professors of speech communication, collaborated with José Angel Gutiérrez, Chicano movement activist and scholar, to produce a book entitled *A War of Words: Chicano Protest in the 1960s and 1970s*. Concentrating on the rhetoric of Tijerina, Chávez, Gonzales, and Gutiérrez, the authors offer an analysis of Chicano public discourse and its use and influence in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The authors define rhetorical discourse as “persuasive communication designed to induce attitudes and influence actions.” A more appropriate meaning could not be found to characterize the public discourse of the four leaders examined here. As the authors of *A War of Words* point out, a primary resource of each leader was his use of rhetoric—his words—to educate others and move them to action on social and political issues. Through speeches, writing, and organization, each leader mobilized broad constituencies of support for his political cause and for the larger Chicano movement.

Using library archives and special collections, community newspapers, and unpublished and published works extensively, Hammerback and Jensen (the principal authors) describe and evaluate the rhetoric of each leader. Most important, they have incorporated sketches of each man’s background and political career into their analysis. As a result, the reader derives an appreciation for each leader’s rhetoric—its form, content, and style—but also gains insight into the personal motivations, socialization experiences, and political orientations that have shaped the discourse of these leaders.

The chapter on Tijerina, “The Tongue of a Latin Moses,” is perhaps the best. The role of fundamental Christianity in Tijerina’s life is

readily echoed in the “God-given” message that he preaches. The historical background on César Chávez is unfortunately not as well developed as that on Tijerina. Much more attention is given to analyzing Chávez’s rhetoric, with more detail on style but not enough on content. Nevertheless, the authors have successfully captured the essence of Chávez’s discourse. I noted one major omission in the chapter on Corky Gonzales. The authors correctly emphasize Gonzales’s cultural nationalist position on Chicano oppression, but they fail to note his changing ideology during the 1970s. Gonzales gradually assumed a more Marxist political orientation, which created considerable conflict between him and the more pragmatic José Angel Gutiérrez.

The rhetoric of Gutiérrez is featured in two chapters, one of which he wrote as an interpretive essay on the “ideology of contemporary Chicano rhetoric.” Unfortunately, Gutiérrez’s essay touches on too many topics—the U.S. census, religion, the Spanish language, immigration—that remain tangential to his discussion of Chicano rhetoric and its ideology. Despite flourishes of insight into the Chicano experience, his essay suffers from a lack of cohesion and integration of ideas. An essay containing Gutiérrez’s reflections on the origins, rise, and demise of La Raza Unida party and the Chicano movement would have been more valuable.

Another chapter on the rhetoric of “establishment leaders” like Texas Congressman Henry B. González helps highlight the range of Chicano discourse in style and content during the 1960s and 1970s. The authors make the point that not all Chicano discourse during that era was steeped in social protest. In fact, accommodationist politicians launched a “rhetorical counterattack” against the more militant Chicano leaders.

*A War of Words* adds an important dimension to scholarship on the Mexican American experience as one of the few studies to focus on Chicano discourse and its central role in fostering a political movement. The excellent bibliographic essay at the end of the book points out that, unlike the black experience, Chicano discourse has so far “stimulated little intellectual inquiry.” *A War of Words* succeeds in conveying the importance of generating more scholarship in this area.

A distinctly different study of the Mexican American or Latino experience is found in *Latinos in the United States: The Sacred and the Political* by David Abalos. Normative theory lies at the heart of this book. Abalos advances a “theory of transformation” to guide Latinos toward spiritual and political growth and self-determination. While uneven in its analysis, *Latinos in the United States* certainly breaks new ground in its fusion of a “megatheory” of human relationships or “ways of being” with Latino life experiences.

A scholar of religious studies and sociology, Abalos begins by



summarizing the theory of transformation as a conceptual framework for understanding human relationships. This theory about human existence was developed by his mentor Manfred Halpern, a political scientist. Abalos is most effective at explaining the theory's components. In one chapter, he delineates eight archetypal relationships that form the "patterns by which we link ourselves to self, others, problems, and our sacred sources." From these eight relationships emerge three archetypal "ways of life"—emanation, incoherence, and transformation. Abalos outlines the essential nature of these eight universal ways of relating to oneself, others, and the external world. He then explains how each set of relationships fosters a particular way of life or paradigm. A life characterized by emanation or incoherence results in a "less-than-whole" individual, confined to traditional ways of being that prohibit the development of self and meaningful relationships to others. Only a life of transformation, with its attendant relationships, offers a spiritually meaningful, self-empowering, and creative existence.

Having outlined transformation theory, Abalos proceeds to apply it to the Latino experience. Separate chapters explore the issues of Latino ethnic identity, the family, community, religion, assimilation, and the professional middle class. To analyze the Latino experience, the author draws more from his personal life experiences (and those of others) than from empirical studies in the social sciences. Each chapter is an interpretive essay that assesses one particular aspect of the Latino (mostly Mexican American) experience in light of the theory of transformation.

"Transformation" prescribes certain types of relationships and modes of behavior for Latinos. For example, the cultural integrity of the Latino family should be preserved while more equitable gender relations transform its patriarchal nature. Latino professionals should eschew assimilation and commit their skills to the empowerment of their own communities. According to Abalos, transformative relationships like these will end the oppression and inequality that Latinos suffer and allow for creating communities of strength and spiritual vitality.

The strength of Abalos's work lies in his explication of transformation theory. Despite ambitious intentions, however, he is not totally successful in applying the theory to the Latino experience. There is a somewhat uneven congruence between normative theory and his empirical observations. Moreover, his interpretation of Latino reality (for example, Latino family relations) tends at times toward stereotyping or overstatement. Social science studies that qualify or challenge his generalizations do not find their way into his work. Although the book does not purport to be an empirical survey of Latino attitudes and behavior, the danger exists that it may be read that way.

Yet despite its flaws, *Latinos in the United States* is a significant

piece of scholarship. Abalos has constructed a bold and creative analysis of the quality of life in Latino communities, in both the physical and metaphysical senses. His emphasis on the sacred and the political speaks to a concern shared by many Latinos, as evidenced in recent community organizing endeavors. Indeed, community organization movements that have addressed the political and spiritual needs of neighborhood residents have enjoyed much success in Latino communities over the past decade.<sup>4</sup> In the final analysis, Abalos's work may not produce many converts to the theory of transformation, but it will certainly compel the reader to examine his or her own life and personal relationships at the turn of every page.

Multidisciplinary perspectives on the Mexican American experience, particularly in the contemporary period, are found in the three anthologies included in this review. These collections provide a good sampling of current social science research on Mexican Americans. Each anthology explores different dimensions of the Mexican American experience, and as a group, they reveal the Mexican-origin community to be a complex, heterogeneous population undergoing major demographic and social change.

Two publications from the University of Texas at Austin provide a good overview of the historical development and contemporary status of the Mexican-origin community. *The Mexican American Experience: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* and *Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans: An Evolving Relation* speak to the totality of the Mexican American experience. That is, both anthologies incorporate research on the Mexican-origin community by taking into account the status and experiences of citizens, legal alien residents, and undocumented immigrants. Further, the topics of analysis are wide-ranging and include works by historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists, and anthropologists.

Edited by Rodolfo de la Garza, Frank Bean, Charles Bonjean, Ricardo Romo, and Rodolfo Alvarez, *The Mexican American Experience* contains thirty articles, most of which appeared (some in a different version) in the June 1984 special issue of the *Social Science Quarterly*. According to the editors, this anthology was prepared for classroom use. The articles are organized into four major sections on history and demography, labor-market experiences, politics, and sociocultural issues. Introductory chapters to each section provide reviews of the literature that will be especially helpful for the novice. Most of the articles are quantitative studies based on census data and national surveys.

Because the studies in *The Mexican American Experience* are numerous and varied, some undergraduate students may find the articles too disparate, with the theoretical linkages across specific studies not readily apparent. Nevertheless, three major points can be discerned in

this volume. First, despite increasing class differences and other internal group distinctions, the Mexican-origin population continues to occupy a subordinate status in the American political economy. Second, as an ethnic group, Mexican Americans tend to fall somewhere between whites and blacks on numerous socioeconomic indices. Third, the Mexican American experience differs fundamentally from the experiences of white European ethnic groups in the United States and cannot be totally understood in the context of European-based models of assimilation and acculturation.

*Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans: An Evolving Relation*, edited by Harley Browning and Rodolfo de la Garza, is a collaborative effort that was well executed by the Center for Mexican American Studies and the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. The book accomplishes exactly what its title suggests: it examines the distinctiveness of two populations, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, and explores the interconnections between them. Thirteen articles compare these two populations along several dimensions, including population size, income and occupation, household-family structure, political orientation, and cultural and social behavior patterns.

*Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans* is especially effective in outlining critical issues in the immigrant experience and the special nature of the Mexican case. Moreover, the volume avoids the dangerous tendencies of overstating divisions and conflict between citizens and immigrants or romanticizing their common and shared interests. Rather, well-balanced and insightful analyses identify sources of differentiation and bonding among citizens and immigrants as they become integrated into U.S. society.

Somewhat, but not totally, neglected in both volumes is research on women and gender relations and regional variations in the Mexican American experience (outside of Texas). But as research expands rapidly in these areas, future anthologies will increasingly incorporate these concerns.

*Mexican-Americans in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Walker Connor, also addresses contemporary developments in the Mexican-origin community from the 1970s to the 1980s. Concern with the rapid growth of the Mexican-origin population and continuous immigration from Mexico underlies the central issue framed in this book: the nature and extent of Mexican Americans' integration into U.S. society. Twelve distinguished scholars, mostly comparativists in the field of ethnic relations and immigration, assess the case of Mexican Americans in the United States in light of ethnic group experiences in other countries.

The chapters in this volume originated as papers presented at a conference cosponsored by the Urban Institute and the Weingart Foun-

dation, which was held in Los Angeles in 1984. The comparative approach adopted here offers great potential for enhancing our understanding of the Mexican American experience. But unfortunately, this volume as a whole does not move very far in that direction.

For the most part, each chapter presents an excellent overview of the theoretical literature on critical aspects of comparative ethnic relations or immigration or both. The "subprocesses of assimilation" are explained by Milton Yinger; John Stone summarizes key models of racial stratification; Myron Weiner discusses transborder peoples in India and South Africa; and Shirley Brice Heath and Joshua Fishman contribute articles on language and ethnicity. A recurring problem with many of the chapters, however, is the superficial treatment given the Mexican American case in the theoretical discussions. Indeed, the contributions of three specialists in Mexican American studies, Rodolfo de la Garza, Harry Pachon, and Reynaldo Macías (who served only as commentators at the 1984 conference), are essential in providing in-depth empirical treatments of Mexican Americans in this volume. The article that best reflects the book's intent is that by Donald Horowitz, who offers an excellent synthesis of the literature on comparative ethnic relations with analysis of sociodemographic data on Mexican Americans and blacks.

There are some troubling aspects to this book, however. The tone, which is set by the editor in the introduction and reinforced in his conclusion, treats ethnicity as more of a problem than an asset within a social system. Connor's writing implies a fundamental distrust of ethnic diversity. The underlying assumption is that ethnic heterogeneity creates political instability in a social system. It is from this perspective that Connor raises questions concerning the integration of Mexicans into the U.S. body politic.

To be sure, individual articles in the book offer persuasive rebuttals to questions concerning Mexican Americans and their loyalty to the U.S. political system. Rodolfo de la Garza correctly questions the system's determinative role in creating and fostering ethnic conflict through the marginalization of specific groups. Mexican American political mobilization (including the Chicano movement) has sought to further the integration (on equal terms) of the Mexican-origin population into U.S. society while calling attention to the system's failures and weaknesses. As de la Garza puts it, such political endeavors are "as American as tamale pie." While questions concerning ethnic separatism, system loyalty, and immigrant threats to America's social and cultural cohesion are prevalent among policymakers and the American public, they seem misguided in scholarly work on the Mexican American community.

In his conclusion, Connor notes that a consensus exists among the book's contributors that Mexican Americans are following an "inte-

grationist pattern, not qualitatively dissimilar from that followed by earlier immigrant groups." Here again, Connor misses the mark. He persists in likening the Mexican American experience to that of white European ethnic groups. As previously noted, much of the scholarship on Mexican Americans (including some of the articles in this book) have demonstrated that this analogy is fundamentally false. The conditions under which Mexicans have become integrated into U.S. society (as a subordinated group) differ significantly from the European case.

*Mexican Americans in Comparative Perspective* is aimed at policy-makers in an attempt to enlighten them about the Mexican American experience. While it overturns some stereotypes (such as the belief that Mexican Americans are a homogeneous population), the book constitutes a mere introduction to this ethnic group experience. Policymakers would do well to consult some of the other works under review, particularly the other two anthologies, for a fuller understanding of the Mexican-origin population, its history, evolution, and transformation.

Some of the works reviewed here suggest future developments in Chicano scholarship. Certainly more attention will be focused on subgroup comparisons among Latinos, as presented in some of the articles in *The Mexican American Experience*. The emergence of new relationships among Mexicans in the United States, involving the citizen and noncitizen sectors, will also be examined. In need of further clarification are the new relationships produced from the intermingling<sup>4</sup> of these sectors, as seen in the "binational family" and the "ethnic economy," concepts introduced in *Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans*. Finally, the extent to which a new and authentic Latino ethnic identity is developing among Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Spanish-origin groups will be increasingly scrutinized.

## NOTES

1. The term *Latino* is used interchangeably with the term *Hispanic* to refer to all Spanish-origin groups in the United States. The terms *Mexican American* and *Chicano* are used interchangeably to refer to individuals of Mexican origin in the United States.
2. A good overview of the Latino population that emphasizes subgroup differences is found in Joan Moore and Harry Pachon, *Hispanics in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985).
3. See Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); and Padilla, "On the Nature of Latino Ethnicity," in *The Mexican American Experience: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 332–45, one of the books included in this review.
4. In particular, the Alinsky-style social action organizations in Los Angeles, California (United Neighborhoods Organization) and San Antonio, Texas (Communities Organized for Public Service) have enjoyed tremendous success. They emphasize politics, family, and religion in their endeavors. For more information on this topic, see Harry C. Boyte, *Community Is Possible: Repairing America's Roots* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), especially chap. 5 on "empowerment."