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FROM BARRIO BOYS TO COLLEGE BOYS:
ETHNIC IDENTITY, ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS,
AND THE MEXICAN AMERICAN ELITE,
THE CASES OF ERNESTO GALARZA
AND MANUEL RUIZ, JR.

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LAURA E. GÓMEZ

Department of Sociology and School of Law,
Stanford University

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The purpose of the SCCR Working Paper Series is to publish works that significantly advance our knowledge about Chicanos and other Latinos. We invite your comments and critique. Please address your remarks to the author.

STANFORD CENTER FOR CHICANO RESEARCH, Cypress Hall, Rm. E7, Stanford, CA 94305

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Introduction

In his recent book, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, David Montejano explains why he thinks it appropriate to emphasize the role of class in studying the history of the Southwest. "A relaxed class analysis," he says, "...[holds] considerable promise for outlining the structural basis of complex Mexican-Anglo relations. The relevance of the method emerged from the historical figures themselves, from actors who were "class conscious as well as 'race conscious.'"¹ Despite this statement's accuracy, the role of class in studies of Chicanos has been addressed only sporadically.

Perhaps part of the reason has been the challenge of conceptualizing not only these difficult ideas of "class," "race," and "ethnicity," but also the problem of thinking about how they interact. Rather than taking a complex approach, many scholars have seen the interaction in simple terms. A common approach to the issue of class and ethnic identification, for instance, has been to see the two as inversely related--as one rises the other decreases.² The assumption has been that as one's class position rises, one becomes increasingly assimilated --and, thus, decreasingly ethnic. Such a view,

¹Montejano, 1987, p.6.

²Milton Gordon is a good example. See his oft-cited work, Assimilation in American Life.

whether made explicit or simply implied, obscures our understanding of how class and ethnicity function together. Further, such a view contradicts everyday social reality, with its cases of individuals and groups with fierce ethnic ties and heterogeneous class compositions.

The experience of Mexican Americans is illustrative in this respect. Although the vast majority of this population consists of working class people, there is a growing middle class. While this segment of the Chicano population is distinct from the majority of the group, it also continues to distinguish itself (and to be distinguished) from the Anglo middle class. Reaching further back in this century, we know that middle class Mexican Americans founded a variety of ethnic and political organizations. As they became middle class in terms of the larger social structure, these Mexicans continued to maintain ethnic ties and, in the case of those who were leaders in these ethnic organizations, chose to publicly emphasize their ethnic group membership. Simultaneously, the dominant Anglo social structure has been inconsistent in identifying the Chicano middle class as separate from the Chicano majority. So that while we might expect social mobility to have a dampening affect on ethnic identification, at least in the Chicano case, it does not appear to have this affect across the board.

Thus, the Chicano experience raises many questions fundamental to our understanding of class, ethnicity and race, and the interaction of class and ethnicity. This essay attempts to explore some of these questions by examining similarities and

differences in the experiences of two Chicano activists: Ernesto Galarza and Manuel Ruiz, Jr. A comparative, archival exploration of these two men's lives may provide insight into questions about twentieth century Chicano history, Chicano organizational development, the Chicano middle class, and ethnic leadership and ethnic identity more generally.

Ernesto Galarza was born in 1905 in the tiny mountain village of Jalcocotan in the state of Nayarit, Mexico. Eight years later, he found himself living in an apartment with his mother and two uncles in what was then downtown Sacramento. His formal education in the U.S. began that year at Lincoln Elementary school and would not end until 1944, by which time he had earned a B.A. from Occidental College, a M.A. from Stanford University, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Galarza went on to an eclectic career as a labor organizer, a scholar, and a spokesperson for the growing Mexican American population. He died in 1984 in San Jose, California.

As Galarza was beginning his doctoral studies in New York City, Manuel Ruiz, Jr. was notified of his admission to the California Bar. He had received his law degree from the University of Southern California in 1930, the first Mexican American to do so. He had gone to USC as a college freshman, straight from his parents home in the Belvedere Gardens section of East Los Angeles. He opened a private law practice in 1930, specializing in international business law, a great deal of it in Mexico and other Latin American countries. He was active in ethnic, civic and political activities throughout his life, which

culminated in his service as a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission from 1970-1980.

The strategy adopted here is to study the roles of Ruiz and Galarza as ethnic leaders from a broader sociological perspective. In combining historical and sociological approaches, this paper seeks to make some general inferences, from these two individual cases, about the salience of ethnic identity in the twentieth century, the evolutionary nature of ethnic group attachments, and the relationship between class position and ethnic identification.

The concept of "ethnicity" has become increasingly used in the social sciences, yet a coherent and generalizable conceptualization remains elusive. Too often, those who have employed the term in their analyses have settled for unidimensional approaches, limited in their explanatory power when applied to the range of ethnic and ethnic-like group attachments found throughout the world today. Two of the most tenacious of these unidimensional views have been the primordial and interest group explanations of ethnicity. Harold Isaacs's view is typical of the primordial type: one's ethnic group membership is his or her "basic" group identity because it is given at birth and because it is culturally reinforced.³ In sharp contrast, the interest group view is that ethnicity becomes

³Isaacs, 1975.

salient only when it coincides with material or political interests.⁴⁴

Both views are inadequate alone and, further, neither are they mutually exclusive. In his study of the Ilongots of the Philippines, Rosaldo argues emphatically that "ethnicity usually is both instrumental and expressive, and theories that oppose the two perspectives have posed a false dichotomy."⁵⁵ This paper takes the view that both characteristics are present in the case of Chicano ethnicity. Such an approach is well-suited, further, to a study which looks at ethnicity and ethnic identity as it has changed over time. It affords the opportunity to see the ebb and flow of each process in its broader context of historical changes and social forces. At the same time, the instrumental and expressive forces of ethnicity operate at the level of the individual, as we will see in the cases of Galarza and Ruiz.

Even after we choose a conceptual approach in our study, we, as social scientists, are confronted with the problem of how to go about measuring ethnicity and ethnic identity. Neither concept presents us with obvious ways to measure its existence or depth. One way of looking at ethnic identity may be to assess the importance of ethnic labels, or self-referents. Does what people call themselves have something to do with how they think of themselves or how "much" they identify? Several studies have

⁴See Bell, 1975, and Glazer and Moynihan, 1975.

⁵Rosaldo, 1988, p. 162.

suggested that labels may be important clues to identity, if not actual mirrors of that complex psycho-social process.⁶

Michael Miller's study of Texas youth, for instance, found that self-referents were salient in linking ethnic identification to particular political orientations and ethnic organizations. In clarifying the connection between labels and identity, he posits that identity is expressed through labels. In turn, the labels reflect segmentation within the ethnic group, as well as social and historical forces in the larger society. According to Miller,

"ethnic labels tend to be rooted in historical periods--periods discernible first in terms of the predominant definitions and images of ethnic group members have of themselves and their place in the social structure, and second in terms of those definitions conferred by the broader society."

Anthony Smith's analysis of the resurgence of interest in ethnicity in the modern world, which he terms "the ethnic revival," takes a similar approach in emphasizing the subjective nature of ethnic group membership and of the ethnic group itself. He distinguishes between an "ethnic community" and a category of individuals who merely share common attributes or a common structural position. The ethnic group is conscious of its distinctive characteristics or position and can, therefore, act as a group. According to Smith, an ethnic group is

⁶See Miller, 1976; Gutiérrez and Hirsch, 1974; and Nostrand, 1975.

⁷Miller, 1977, p.235.

"a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more distinctive characteristics, and feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity."

"Distinguishing characteristics" include cultural -linguistic markers as well as racial characteristics. In addition, the ethnic group is united by the myth or belief in "a common and unique origin in time and place that is essential for the sense of ethnic community, since it marks the foundation point of the group's history, and hence its individuality."⁹ This definition is broad enough to apply to a variety of political movements, regional conflicts, and subcultural variations throughout the world today, including Chicanos in the U.S.

This paper explores the careers of two individual members of the Chicano group, but with an eye towards trying to understand the broader contours of the evolution of ethnic identity and changes in ethnic boundaries. We are interested in probing the possible connections between the ethnic individual (and, particularly, the ethnic elite) and his or her role in shaping the larger group identity. Where can we find the links between these two processes, the individual's identity and the group's identity? In this paper, I have focused on ethnic organizations as the playing field for the process of ethnic identity formation and transformation.

⁸Smith, 1981, p.66.

⁹Smith, 1981, p.66.

After a brief review of some major historical trends in the Chicano experience and the development of Mexican American organizations, the essay turns to a discussion of Ruiz's and Galarza's roles as elites and as, therefore, having a great deal of influence in the organizations in which they were involved. Quite often, they played the role of ethnic middle-man, functioning with ease in both the mainstream society and the ethnic community. As elites and as activists in their chosen spheres, they also became spokesmen for the growing Chicano group. In these ways, these individuals influenced the ethnic group's development and self-knowledge.

Next, the discussion shifts to an exploration of how they might have shaped the group's ethnic identity through their use of ethnic labels and self-referents. The last section of the paper investigates ways in which Galarza and Ruiz shaped the ethnic agenda, through the character of their organizational affiliations and directly through their activities. In this context, explanations for why they were motivated to be ethnic leaders are explored, including their experiences of discrimination and rejection from the mainstream society and their altruistic motivation to improve their community's position. In this way, the argument that ethnic elites have a profound impact on the ethnic group as a whole is made and supported with archival evidence. The findings suggest some new ways of looking at the process of ethnic identification, at both the individual and the group levels.

The Historical Context

From 1905 to the present, the span of Ruiz's and Galarza's lifetimes, the Mexican population in the United States has undergone some fundamental changes. Alvarez traces some of these changes, which he describes as "psycho-historical," in a seminal 1973 article. By psycho-historical, he intends to capture both the psychological, salience of being a member of this ethnic group, as well as the more objective historical and economic trends which have affected Chicanos over time. Alvarez distinguishes four generations, three of them in the twentieth century, each reflecting "a different state of collective consciousness concerning [the Mexican American group's] relationship to the larger society..."¹⁰

Between 1900 and 1940, the political and economic situation within Mexico and the growth of the agricultural and mining sectors and subsequent demand for labor in the United States, contributed to the northward migration of unprecedented numbers of Mexicans.¹¹ Thus, Alvarez calls this the "Migrant Generation." During this period, their position at the bottom of the American economic ladder dictated a similar experience for the vast majority of Chicanos--in terms of where they lived, how they made their living, how they saw themselves, and how the larger society treated them. In terms of such conditions, the

¹⁰Alvarez, 1973, p.25.

¹¹McWilliams, 1968, pp. 178-79; Barrera, 1979, pp.70-71.

distinction between those born north or south of the U.S.-Mexican border was not relevant during this generation.

In the period between 1940 and 1965, however, Alvarez and others have argued that the distinction between American-born Mexicans and Mexican nationals became increasingly salient within the ethnic group.¹² He labels this period the "Mexican American Generation." As more diverse sectors of the economy opened up to some Chicanos, and as the armed services mobilized this group for World War II, a new Mexican American consciousness replaced the group's identification with Mexico.

As Mexicans in the U.S. became increasingly aware of their rights as American citizens and increasingly unwilling to accept overt racism and discrimination, they formed more organizations and took a more active role in politics. In the context of a more liberal, tolerant climate of the 1960s and 1970s, such an attitude readily translated to a heightened militancy borne of the frustration with the lack of opportunities for Blacks, Chicanos and Indians. The expression of this attitude, says Alvarez, was the wildfire-like spread of the Chicano student movement on college campuses throughout the Southwest which characterized a distinct "Chicano Generation."

Within each of these chronological contours, organizations were formed to address the concerns and interests of various segments of the Chicano population. An understanding of the main

¹²See Alvarez, 1973; Garcia, 1985; and Moore and Pachón, 1985.

features of this organizational development, like the brief overview of the historical evolution of Chicanos in the twentieth century, provides a context from which to explore Galarza's and Ruiz's extensive roles in several ethnic organizations. In a 1985 article which traces the evolution of ethnic goals within the Mexican American group, Mario Barrera describes four stages in the formation of ethnic organizations. His perspective is particularly applicable to this essay because, in differentiating between the stages, he is sensitive to the class forces operating within the ethnic group.

The late 19th century and first two decades of the 20th century saw the popularity of mutual aid societies, mutualistas, to meet the cultural and social needs of Mexicans in the U.S.¹³ The mutualista was fundamentally an organization to maintain (and in the case of young people, instill) a sense of cultural distinctiveness and togetherness in a period in which Mexicans faced harsh and constant discrimination from the dominant society. Such purposes fall under Barrera's mantle of "communitarian goals," which emphasized the maintenance of "the physical and cultural integrity of the Mexican communities."¹⁴¹⁴

The second stage, from around 1920 to 1950, witnessed a shift from communitarian goals to what Barrera calls egalitarian goals. There was the formation of a variety of new organizations

¹³Barrera, 1985, p.5; Sierra, 1984, p.89.

¹⁴Barrera, 1985, p.1.

aimed at securing equal protection under the law and the end of social discrimination against Mexican Americans. The "egalitarian goals" of such organizations as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the G.I. Forum, the Community Service Organization, and the Coordinating Council for Latin American Youth (CCLAY), epitomize this stage. According to Mario García, the propaganda employed by the government for the war effort displayed the contradictions between America's democratic ideals and its treatment of its racial minorities, fueling Mexican organizational and political efforts throughout the country.¹⁵ 15

The story of LULAC's formation is illustrative because it so clearly marks the organizational crystalization of the emerging Mexican American middle class. Richard Garcia argues that the Mexican community of San Antonio experienced a change in leadership from a Mexico-oriented to an U.S.-oriented mentality in the 1930s. During this period, the mantel of ethnic leadership passed from los ricos, the small group of exiled Mexican upper and middle class, to la clase media, a group of bussinessmen and semi-professionals. LULAC was the arm with which la clase media expressed its notion of Mexican American ethnic identity as fundamentally oriented toward full participation in American citizenship and politics.¹⁶

¹⁵Garcia, 1984, p.202.

¹⁶Garcia, 1980, pp. 9, 87-88, 619.

Ruiz and Galarza as Ethnic Elites

If we were to look for la clase media in California in the 1930s and 1940s, Ruiz and Galarza would have to be placed at its center. Their unmatched educational backgrounds and career opportunities served as titles, from the dominant society and from within the ethnic group, to the mantle of ethnic leadership. Indeed, their training as a lawyer and academic, respectively, so distinguished them from even their middle class peers, that a case can be made for their treatment as ethnic elites.

These individuals can be considered elite relative to the vast majority of Chicanos because of their outstanding educational backgrounds and/or leadership positions.¹⁷ By leadership position, we include both subjective and objective measures of influence on the group. Thus, while Galarza and Ruiz were never elected "leaders," they both had unique degrees of influence on their ethnic group by being active participants in the establishment of the organizational goals, and through them, the goals and direction of the ethnic group as a whole.

Their unparalleled educations gave them the training to deal with the people and institutions in the larger, non-Mexican society. It also provided them the rare opportunity to live and work in both the Mexican and Anglo worlds, which, in 1940s and

¹⁷ It is worth emphasizing the study of Galarza and Ruiz as "elite" relative to other Chicanos. It would be an inadequate characterization of their role within the dominant, Anglo society to use such a term in general. It also might lead to a tendency to over-emphasize the extent to which these men were either culturally or structurally assimilated.

1950s America, were indeed two separate spheres. Thus, they were able to play the role, in many of the organizations in which they were involved and in their respective careers, of the "ethnic middle-man."

As the Chicano middle class has grown, it has attracted more scholarly attention, especially concerning the role of the middle class in forming ethnic organizations and the ethnic political agenda. In *Race and Class in the Southwest*, Barrera discusses the Chicano middle class, composed of small businessmen, professionals, and semi-professionals. He defines the middle class in terms of both its relationship to the class structure of the larger society and its position within the Mexican American sub-group. In the first instance, the Chicano middle class is "middle" in that it occupies the middle strata in the larger U.S. economic and social structure. It is also "middle," however, in the sense of serving as a "middle man" between the majority of the Chicano community and the institutions of the dominant society.¹⁸¹⁸ The extensive careers of Galarza and Ruiz in ethnic civic, political, and labor organizations certainly bear out Barrera's middle-man thesis.

Galarza began his career, even before completing his doctorate, as one of the first chroniclers of the Mexican experience in this country. In a report he prepared for the Pan American Union (PAU, the precursor to the Organization of

¹⁸Barrera, 1979, p.92.

American States) in 1944, which received broad circulation in print and as testimony before the House Labor Committee, Galarza described the Mexican-origin population in the United States. The thoroughly documented report concentrated on the labor situation of Mexicans and, especially, the widespread discrimination against Mexicans in all sectors of the economy.¹⁹ In this way, Galarza became a spokesman for Chicanos in the larger society. Simultaneously, his work filled a gap in the ethnic group's own understanding of its history in this country.

Another side of Galarza's role as ethnic middle-man was evident in his work as a labor organizer in California for the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU, previously the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. A review of Galarza's weekly "activity reports" for the the union from 1957 thru 1959 makes it clear that he filled an intermediary role between mostly Mexican workers, on the one hand, and, on the other, labor officials, government officials, politicians, and the media. He wrote of going from meetings with groups of workers and individual workers (involved in disputes of various kinds) which depended on his bilingual skill, to meetings with representatives of the governor in Sacramento.²⁰

¹⁹ Ernesto Galarza Papers, Collection M224, Stanford University Libraries Department of Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 8.

²⁰ Ibid., Box 7, Folder 2.

Like Galarza, Ruiz played similar intermediary roles in several organizations in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. As a lawyer, he had a singular technical ability to write an organization's by-laws and constitutions in a format suitable for approval by agencies such as the office of the California Secretary of State.²¹ In several organizations, in addition to sitting on constitution writing committees, Ruiz's status as an attorney and recognized ability to write formal letters, earned him the position of secretary or executive secretary. In 1940, he served as executive secretary for Cultura Panamericana, an organization which sought to further the tolerance and study of "inter-American culture," a group Ruiz founded with a small cadre middle class Mexican American and Latin American businessmen.²²

Ruiz played a similar role as an officer of the Coordinating Council of Latin American Youth (CCLAY), founded in 1943 to address a wide variety of social and educational issues facing Los Angeles' Mexican community.²³ The CCLAY by-laws, in which Ruiz played a major part in composing, were written in both Spanish and English. This again suggests the dual-role he played: as someone who was both bilingual and a part of the Mexican American community and as someone trained as a lawyer and well-acclimated to the larger society. In his capacity as

²¹Manuel Ruiz, Jr. Papers, Collection M295, Stanford University Libraries, Special Collections, Box 2, Folder 1.

²²Ibid., Box 2, Folder 1.

²³Ibid., Box 2, Folder 11.

secretary, Ruiz handled virtually all correspondence for the organization, in English and in Spanish, and from letters to Los Angeles Police Chief C.B. Horrall to letters of appreciation to local restaurants.²⁴

In at least a third organization, California's Mexican American Political Association, Ruiz filled the shoes of the ethnic middle-man. The first meeting of the board of directors of this organization, which was explicitly dedicated to increasing Chicano participation in electoral politics, was held at Ruiz's Los Angeles office in November of 1963. Ruiz served as MAPA's "consulting attorney" for the first two year's of the organization's existence; his duties included serving on a committee (with two other attorneys) which wrote the constitution, and, in late 1964, authoring the constitution for the establishment of a national MAPA.²⁵

The Relevance of Class Origin

In attempting to make sense of the situation of Ruiz and Galarza as elites in these organizations, it is important to specify what we mean by social class. Social scientists generally look at income, occupation and educational level. These are certainly important elements, ones which we shall consider, but another critical dimension is class origin, a

²⁴Ibid., Box 2, Folders 12 and 13.

²⁵Ibid., Box 7, Folders 16 and 19.

factor especially significant for Mexican Americans and other minorities.

While it is useful to look at the impact Ruiz and Galarza had on Mexican Americans as elites, it is important to evaluate their class status in terms of their family backgrounds. Although the Ruiz papers in the Stanford University Libraries Department of Special Collections are extensive, they lack documents which provide insight into Ruiz's childhood or parent's background. According to the brief biography included in the collection, Ruiz was the model of the successful, all-American boy. In addition to being Valedictorian of the class of 1923, he was a track star, a member of the school orchestra and captain of the debate team.²⁶

But Ruiz stood out from his classmates in an important way. He was one generation removed from his parents childhood in Mazatlan.²⁷ And there are other hints of Ruiz's humble background, including the preface to his book, *The Mexican American Legal Heritage in the Southwest*, published in 1972. According to the introduction's author, Henry Ramirez, a friend of Ruiz's and chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People at that time, "as a teen, [Ruiz] toiled in the orchards of California, picking apricots and

²⁶Ruiz, Collection M295, Guidebook.

²⁷Ibid..

bailing hay."²⁸ It is unlikely that memories of these experiences and knowledge of his parents and grandparents' lives in Mexico would have left him, even as he completed his B.A. and joined the Gamma Eta Gamma law fraternity.

The archival material on Galarza is similarly lacking in details about his family background and early childhood. Fortunately, Galarza's autobiography, *Barrio Boy*, has a great deal of information in this regard. The book focuses on his early childhood and teen years. It is a detailed account of his memories of life in a Mexican mountain village, in the urban barrios of Mazatlan, and the "lower part" of Sacramento. His description of growing up with his two cousins, three uncles, aunt, and mother in a one-room adobe house in Jalcocotan is vivid and full of detail, all told from the point of view of a young boy. In a later chapter, he describes the variety of odd jobs he performed as a teen--from delivery boy, to dancehall musician, to drugstore clerk specializing in bilingual service.

During longer vacations from school and during the summers, he worked in the fields of the Sacramento Valley. He tells of the powerlessness he and the other Mexican workers felt.

"Like all the others, I often went to work without knowing how much I was going to be paid. . .The important questions that were in my mind--the wages per hour or per lug box, whether the beds would have mattresses and blankets, the price of meals, how often we would be paid--were never discussed, much less answered, beforehand. Once we were in camp, owing the employer for the ride to the job, having no means to get back to town except by walking and no

²⁸Ruiz, 1972, p.iii.

money for the next meal, arguments over working conditions were settled in favor of the boss."²⁹

These memories would stay with Galarza all of his life, and they certainly must have been an important part of his college experiences. It is difficult to say how they may have influenced his decisions to join the college debate team, the student newspaper staff, and the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa, but it seems likely that they would have been part of what was pushing Galarza to succeed. Upon graduating, he took a different route than Ruiz when he embarked on an academic career, beginning with a Master's Degree program in Latin American history and political science at Stanford. Seventeen years later, he received his Ph.D. in Latin American history from Columbia, having already worked as a researcher and writer on Latin American and inter-American affairs.³⁰³⁰

So, while it is appropriate to argue that Galarza and Ruiz acted as elites in the context of the ethnic group and in the ethnic organizations to which they belonged, it is important to keep in mind their family backgrounds. We should not overstate the degree to which they participated in mainstream society, nor can we discount the considerable impediments to such participation.³¹³¹

²⁹Galarza, 1971, pp.262-263.

³⁰Galarza Papers, Collection M224, Guidebook.

³¹It is tempting to discuss Galarza's and Ruiz's level of participation as "assimilation," but *I* agree with Rosaldo, in an
(Footnote Continued)

Labels and Identity: The Role of the Mexican American Elite

From our discussion of Ruiz's and Galarza's roles as middle-men between Chicanos and the larger society, it is clear that each man took his commitment to these ethnic organizations very seriously. Furthermore, each man's organizational commitments reflected his personal experience and concept of what it meant to be Mexican American. Their activities can also be seen, however, from the perspective of their impact on the group as a whole. Because they were elites, their personal decisions had repercussions on Chicano organizational and political development and on Chicano identity transformation. Furthermore, these effects can be understood independently from the intentions of the individual agents.³²

They were at once part of and catalysts for an emergent Mexican American identity (in the 1930s and 1940s) and a transforming Mexican American identity (in the 1960s and 1970s). This evolution is evident in a societal-level analysis of changing labels in various historical periods. It is also observable, however, at the individual level. As evidenced through changes in what they called themselves and their ethnic

(Footnote Continued)

essay called "Assmilation Revisited," that such a concept is inadequate to explain the Chicano experience. In addition to the well-documented problems of adequately measuring assimilation, it is of limited utility because it is so often conceived of as a dichotomous process. In contrast, the cases discussed here make a strong case for viewing assimilation or acculturation along a continuum, as involving degrees rather than polar opposites.

³²Rosaldo, 1988, p. 48-49.

group, both Galarza and Ruiz experienced changes in their identities, which were reflected in the organizations to which they belonged. These ethnic organizations, moreover, illustrate the process of a changing ethnic identification for the ethnic group as a whole.

In oral testimony before the President's Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs, Galarza's statement about ethnic labels for the Mexican group leaves the impression that he does not consider distinctions between labels to be salient. Knowing that the label issue is a contentious one, he gives a disclaimer, when referring to "Mexican-Americans, the Spanish-surnamed or however you wish to call them, as of 1967."³³ This statement likely reflects Galarza's wish to avoid initiating a contentious discussion, rather than his rejection of the significance of the terms. It is clear from other testimony, speeches, letters, and reports, that Galarza was conscious of the significance of the various terms.

Distinctions between various segments of the U.S. Mexican population were important, for instance, in Galarza's labor activities in California. In resolutions at state and national NFLU conventions and in his weekly activity reports, Galarza distinguishes between "Mexicans," a reference to American-born Mexicans, and "Mexican Nationals."³⁴ A decade earlier, Galarza

³³Galarza Papers, Collection M224, Box 1, Folder 9.

³⁴Ibid., Box 7, Folders 1 and 5.

appears to have taken even greater pains in choosing appropriate terminology in referring to Mexican Americans. Euphemistic terms for Mexican Americans were at their peak in the 1940s, and Galarza was caught up in that phenomena. In official reports and letters, he used a range of such terms: from "inter-American," to "Hispanic," to "Indo-Hispanic," to "Mexican-American."³⁵ Frequently, the labels were used interchangeably within a single document.

Thus far, we have only discussed Galarza's terminology in out-group contexts, situations in which he is addressing non-Mexican Americans. Do his terms change in in-group contexts?³⁶ Although there is little documentation of an in-group directed terminology in the archival material, a series of correspondence between Galarza and George I. Sánchez constitutes one such example. In this case, the term "mexicano" seemed to be the one most preferred.³⁷ One also gets a sense of Galarza's personal preferences from his autobiography; in the introduction, he refers to himself as "Mexican."³⁸

Later in the book, he uses the term "chicano" to refer to himself and his neighbors in an immigrant Mexican neighborhood in

³⁵Ibid., Box 6, Folder 2; Box 5, Folder 10; Box 9, Folder 8; Box 1, Folder 8.

³⁶See Arce, 1981, for a discussion of the significance of out-group versus in-group contexts on identity for Chicanos.

³⁷Galarza Papers, Collection M224, Box 1, Folder 3.

³⁸Galarza, 1971, p.2.

Sacramento. He describes this term, which gained popularity in the 1970s, among students particularly, as "the name by which we called an unskilled worker born in Mexico and just arrived in the United States."³⁹ He says he and his uncles identified with the Chicanos: "Like us, they had come straight to the barrio where they could order a meal, buy a pair of overalls, and look for work in Spanish..."⁴⁰ Yet, interestingly, this term does not come up in any of his organizational documents. This suggests that Galarza considered it a strictly in-group term, despite its widespread usage generally in the 1970s and 1980s.

For his part, Ruiz spoke openly about his dislike for the term "Chicano." In a 1970 newspaper interview, he made the point that the word "Chicano" was not in any Spanish dictionary. "It is a coined word," he was quoted as saying, "it means what they want it to mean..."⁴¹ Ruiz's preference, in both out- and in-group contexts, seems to have been for euphemistic terms which did not include the word "Mexican." In the earliest document in his collected papers, a 1939 application for civil service employment, Ruiz refers to "the Spanish-speaking element in the United States."⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.201.

⁴¹ Ruiz Papers, Collection M295, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁴² Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1.

In other instances, especially when including himself in the reference, Ruiz took pains to distinguish between American-born and Mexican-born Mexicans in the United States. As CCLAY secretary, he wrote in 1942 to Judge Robert H. Scott, Los Angeles Juvenile Court, to commend him for deciding to drop "the designation 'white' in contradistinction to the word 'Mexican.'" He went on to say that "since substantially all of the boys [who have been in juvenile court] were born in this vicinity and reared in our community, and therefore are in fact Americans, it is even yet unfortunate that they should have to be referred to as 'Mexicans.'"⁴³

Ruiz seemed to be equally concerned about making the distinction between American-born and Mexican-born Mexicans in in-group contexts. The drafting of a document, a resolution dealing with the health concerns of Chicanos, reflects this concern. The resolution was intended for the CCLAY membership and for other Mexican organizations. On the first draft of the resolution, dated October 7, 1945, Ruiz circled the five citations of the word "Mexican," and had written a note to the typist: "Remind me to talk to you about the above; it's important." The revised document had the word "Mexican" only once, in the phrase "among persons of Mexican extraction..."⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., Box 2, Folder 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Box 3, Folder 15.

Furthermore, Ruiz's aversion to the word "Mexican" is not limited to the 1940s, an historical period when the extent of and legal sanction of discrimination against Mexicans made the use of euphemistic terms understandable. According to 1964 records, he used the term "Hispanic surname voters" in an internal MAPA resolution which he authored and which was passed.⁴⁵ In communications with those outside the ethnic group during the 1960s, such as a letter to California Governor Edmund Brown and testimony he wrote for MAPA President Eduardo Quevedo, Ruiz frequently used terms such as "Spanish-speaking Americans" and "Hispanic Americans," and, to a lesser extent, "Mexican-Americans."⁴⁶

It is difficult to say whether the way in which Galarza and Ruiz expressed their identity--through these ethnic labels--was more a statement about their perception of their ethnicity or more a reflection of the social and historical context. Yet it is more important to realize that both these forces were at work than to decide which of them is primary. Each individual's decision about what to call himself and the ethnic group, then, must be understood as the product of an array of considerations, including the out-group or in-group context, the organizational context (i.e., a labor organizing meeting versus a meeting with government officials, though both may be out-group settings), the

⁴⁵Ibid., Box 7, Folder 18.

⁴⁶⁴⁶Ibid., Box 6, Folders 3 and 4.

larger social context, and the individual's own class position. For Ruiz, whose organizational world, like his legal world, was political and formal, those terms which distinguished among various segments of the Chicano population--those which emphasized citizenship, class, and generation. For Galarza, his emersion in farmworker and labor activities led him to emphasize a direct, simple terminology--he was Mexican or mexicano.

Explaining Ethnic Elites

We have shown how Galarza and Ruiz had an impact on Chicano organizations. Their status as ethnic elites gave them a great deal of influence in the organizations in which they were active. In addition to functioning as ethnic middle-men, they helped shape ethnic identity through their own identity, as reflected by ethnic labels. As elites, however, they also took on the broader role of chronicling and re-fashioning the group's experience in this country and knowledge of itself.⁴⁷ In this sense, they have led the ethnic movement, as Anthony Smith describes it.

In his attempt to explain the resurgence of ethnic attachments throughout the modern world, Smith argues that intellectuals, professionals and semi-professionals (these segments together, he labels "the professional intelligentsia")

⁴⁷This is not meant to imply that Ruiz and Galarza consciously took such a role (though they may have), but that the process of ethnic identity and ethnicity generally is conducive to pressures from elites or leaders such as these two men.

have led the ethnic movement. Their educational and occupational experiences gave them the skills to fashion myths of origin, document histories, form organizations, and define political agendas for the ethnic groups to which they belonged.⁴⁸ And their rejection--by more established middle class members and by non-ethnics--fueled their return to their ethnic communities. Smith refers to this as the "radicalization" of ethnic intellectuals and professionals. At the same time, an altruistic force was at work, also leading them back to their ethnic identity.

In the following paragraph, Smith summarizes the cumulative affect of the radicalization and altruism strains on this class's promotion of ethnic identification and ethnic movements.

"There were a number of reasons for the appeal of this 'ethnic solution' of the intellectuals. By identifying their private concerns with those of the wider community, ...the professionals could overcome their lack of a worthy pedigree and claim to speak for the whole collectivity...Yet career aspirations tell us only part of the story. Equally important are the 'ideal interests' of the intelligentsia, their vision of the world as it should be and their ideal of their own situation in it. The ethnic community provides not only the basis of an alternative status system and power centre for an excluded stratum, but a resolution of their identity crisis through a revaluation of their function and purpose."⁴⁹

Radicalization and altruism on the part of the professional/intellectual contributed to the revival of ethnic communities

⁴⁸ Smith, 1981, Chapter 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.125-126.

during a historical period in which many had predicted such primordial ties would lose significance.

Smith's analysis applies to the situation of Chicano elites (intellectuals and middle-class professionals) who have remained (or returned to activism) active in ethnic organizations. In some ways, the notion of the influence of radicalization and altruism is in line with Garcia's and de la Garza's discussion of the factors which affect the strength of Chicano identity: degree of assimilation, social class and experience of discrimination. Experience of discrimination, for instance, applies the same logic as the notion of radicalization. In a study of several hundred Hispanic elected officials and leaders of community organizations, de la Garza and Vaughan asked respondents to rank their reasons for "getting involved in politics." More than half answered that "discriminatory experiences" were the main reason they entered politics.⁵⁰

It seems reasonable to view these factors-- radicalization/experience of discrimination and altruism or obligation to the community--as important in influencing the individual's level of ethnic identification and form of expression of that identity. We can conceive of a continuum of levels of assimilation, affecting a continuum of levels of radicalization. Thus, the individual who has been able to assimilate to a certain degree experiences a like degree of rejection--an

⁵⁰ de la Garza and Vaughan, 1984.

impediment to their further assimilation. We might also envision a continuum of altruism, which might be influenced positively by a physical (residential) and structural (class) closeness to the ethnic group, but also positively influenced by movement away from the group. For instance, those moving "up" from a typical position in the community might feel more of an obligation--an altruistic pull--to the ethnic community from which they came. In evaluating the Ruiz and Galarza cases, we will consider the joint impact of the radicalization and altruistic intentions on the direction their organizational involvement took.

Ruiz's decision to begin his own law practice was not one isolated from the realities of Anglo discrimination against Mexicans in the 1930s. In part, the decision reflected his limited options after he was rejected as a partner in several prestigious Los Angeles law firms.⁵¹ This rejection might also have been a factor in Ruiz's selection of a field of specialization. His private practice was geared towards international business law, a good deal of it in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. This was a decision Ruiz evidently made soon after receiving his law degree, as he was admitted to the Chihuahua Bar in 1932, two years after being admitted to the California Bar.⁵²

⁵¹Ruiz Papers, Collection M295, Guidebook.

⁵²Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1.

Unboubtedly this and other experiences influenced the character of his involvement in Mexican American groups. Ruiz's position as a respected Mexican American professional made him well-suited to be a founding member of CCLAY. On the surface, the organization appeared to concern itself with "the Mexican problem" among youth in East Los Angeles, as the local press and politicians had framed it. The organization entered the scene as a group of middle-class, respectable Mexicans, who had as one of nine goals of "the organization of youth in a constructive delinquency prevention program."⁵³

In carrying out this mandate, however, the CCLAY was careful to reject explicitly conformity to American ways as the answer to the problems of Chicano youth. According to one statement of purpose, the CCLAY would not "indulge in a program of Americanization. . .it cannot support the hypothesis that the American way of living is a solution to the juvenile delinquency problem..."⁵⁴ It is also evident from Ruiz's letters to police officials, editors of the Los Angeles Times, and others that the CCLAY was in no way an apologist for the police, who, even in the wake of the well-publicized Sleepy Lagoon incident, had not lessened their harrassment and physical assault of Mexican youth.⁵⁵⁵⁵ Thus, while Ruiz's middle class perspective suited him

⁵³Ibid., Box 3, Folder 15.

⁵⁴Ib⁵⁴id., Box 2, Folder 11.

⁵⁵Ibid., Box 2, Folders 12-13; Box 3, Folders 7 and 12.

(Footnote Continued)

to the job of representing the Mexican community to Anglo authorities, he did not refrain from criticizing them when he felt is necessary.

By the 1960's, Ruiz's organizational involvement had moved away from the advocacy role he played on behalf of Chicano youth in the CCLAY. His main interest was in electoral politics, at both the state and national level. At the national level, Ruiz appealed to the Republican leadership; he was appointed chairman of the Hispanic Division of the Republican National Committee for the Goldwater presidential campaign.⁵⁶ At the state level, his involvement in MAPA was his enduring organizational activity.

The character of Galarza's expression of his ethnic identity, as reflected in his organizational affiliations, was quite different. A life-long interest in Mexican farmworkers and labor issues, rather than a focus on electoral politics as in Ruiz's case, marked Galarza's ties. As early as the late 1930's, he had decided to concentrate on labor issues. As chief of the Labor Section of the Pan American Union from 1936 to 1947, he conducted numerous field studies of labor situations among Mexicans in the U.S. and workers in Latin America. His international outlook, especially when it came to labor issues, was evident in a 1949

(Footnote Continued)

García, 1984, also concludes that the CCLAY was not as conservative as it seemed, with its range of political and educational activities.

⁵⁶Ibid., Box 1, Folder 1.

report on Bolivian miners and the negative impact American companies had had on their lives.⁵⁷ 57

Although he was based in Washington, D.C. during this period, he made several studies of labor conditions in the Southwest and in the Midwest, chronicling the working and living conditions of Mexican Nationals and Mexican Americans.⁵⁸ 58
 Criticism of the importation of agricultural labor from Mexico, under the Bracero program, was a common motif in Galarza's reports and testimony of this period. The theme came up frequently in his PAU reports, testimony before Congress, and correspondence. His visionary solution to the "catch-22" of the Bracero program, from American workers' point of view, was an international outlook which embraced laborers without regard to national borders. It was expressed in a speech given in Albuquerque in 1950:

"We do not propose to let the diplomats of either or both countries force the workers of Mexico and the United States to share a deepening poverty. We as workers and citizens of the Americas will find the way toward a more decent life for all."⁵⁹

Reflecting on his work as a labor organizer in California, he commented that it was the continuation of the Bracero program which prevented his union from being effective: "From 1948 to 1959 I participated in probably twenty strikes and always that

⁵⁷ Galarza Papers, Collection M224, Box 1, Folder 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Box 1, Folder 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Box 1, Folder 8.

[the presence of plentiful braceros to replace American workers] was the problem."⁶⁰ And yet Galarza, who knew the traumas of coming to a foreign land and of working at back-breaking jobs, expressed a deep empathy for these Mexican workers and labored to improve their working conditions. This view was expressed in an interview Galarza gave in 1974.

"The whole strategy of our union was based upon three concepts. One, we had to bring about the termination of the bracero program. We figured it would take ten years, and it did. Our view was that when that was accomplished that we next would have to undertake a similar campaign to bring to the attention of the country and to bring about legislation concerning wetbacks. . . . Our view was that the so-called wetback is a product of the political and social conditions of Mexico and consequently we favored a campaign of publicity, confrontation, documentation, protest and so on that would zero in not on the wetback as a person but on the Mexican government and its policy that created such terrible poverty conditions that the wetback was natural product of this burgeoning Mexican capitalism...The strategy of the union was cut off half way. We never got to the wetback issue, not really..."⁶¹

As elites, Galarza and Ruiz were subject to the pressures of radicalization and altruism, which gave momentum to their ethnic identification. At times, it seems that their organizational activities were propelled by the discrimination they had experienced. At other times, they seem to have been motivated by a self-imposed obligation to the Chicano community. In both

⁶⁰Ibid., Box 3, Folder 6.

⁶¹Ibid., Box 3, Folder 6.

cases, they had a significant impact on the organizations with which they were affiliated and, thus, on Chicano ethnic identity.

Concluding Remarks

Attempting to combine the method of primary archival research on individuals with a sociological perspective has at times been a bumpy road to travel. There are frequently extreme choices to be made; do we over-generalize to make a sociological point or risk drawing too broad of a significance from an individual case? Yet it is a fertile combination in terms of generating new ways of looking at Chicano history and Chicano ethnic identity. In exploring these topics, some interesting issues have been uncovered and illuminated, and, importantly, many new questions have been raised.

A wide range of Chicano organizations were the setting for the interchange which occurred between Ruiz and Galarza, as elites, and the ethnic group as a whole. Their roles as spokesmen and middle-men were evident in the organizational context. In this same context, we suggested that each individual's identity is expressed through self-referents and ethnic labels he uses to describe the ethnic group. In turn, their personal preferences influenced the terminology used by the larger society, the ethnic community as a whole, and the ethnic organization. Finally, theories about why elites chose to emphasize their ethnicity discussed, focussing on Smith's radicalization and altruistic explanations. It seems that both

these forces were involved in shaping Ruiz's and Galarza's specific organizational affiliations as well as the more general types of ethnic activities they pursued.

Thus, in situating Galarza and Ruiz in both an historical and social context, by emphasizing their position as Mexican American elites, this paper suggests some new ways of approaching their involvement in ethnic organizations. In such a way, we are better able to understand both the social significance of the positions they occupied as ethnic middle-men and the personal stamp each made on Mexican organizations.

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