Chicana/o Language, Culture, and History: Identity Construction and Self-representation of Mexican-Americans

A SENIOR THESIS

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By

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ON MY HONOR I HAVE NEITHER GIVEN NOR RECEIVED UNAUTHORIZED AID ON THIS SENIOR THESIS

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Abstract: The following research concerning Chicana/o identity formation and self-representation was conducted at The Colorado College throughout November and December of 2011, and January and February of 2012. Not only are established theories on identity and culture utilized but research case studies and other ethnographies on the subject of Chicana/o language and culture are also examined in the following project. Along with this review of existing frameworks I examine Chicana/o culture and language through the analysis of various works of Chicana/o literature. Using these assorted resources, I show how Chicana/o language, culture, and history give structure to the identities of Mexican-Americans living in the United States. Research on this specific topic is important because immigration from Mexico is on the forefront of the political arena in the United States. The prevalence of Mexican-Americans living in the United States is encouraging important changes in economic and institutional policies. In order to make these changes, there must be knowledge of the Chicana/o language, culture, and history. How these concepts shape the identities of Mexican Americans is integral in understanding the specific policies that have been, and will continue to affect Chicanas/os all over the United States. My research will help bring this information into the public and academic spheres as well as demonstrate the roles that language, culture, and history play in shaping identity and creating a representation of oneself.

Introduction:

The research presented examines Chicana/o identity formation, specifically through language, culture, and history. This project seeks to explain and analyze the roles of Chicana/o language, culture, and history in shaping the identities of Mexican-Americans. This examination will be conducted through the framework of identity as explained by Stuart Hall and Gloria Anzaldúa. More specifically the concept of how internal forces create a discourse that assist in the process of self-identification. Chicana/o ethnographic studies and various works of Chicana/o literature, addressing linguistic, cultural, and historical elements that shape Mexican-American identity will be analyzed.

This research is important for several cultural, political, and economic reasons. According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau Report, 16.3% of people identified themselves as being of Hispanic or Latino origin (Census Bureau). This category is the highest percentage of non-white citizens in the United States. The Census only records those who fill out the official survey and does not include the thousands of Hispanic immigrants that cross the border into the

United States each year. As the Hispanic and Latino populations grow, issues arise concerning bilingual education systems, racial profiling, and equal opportunities. These political, economic, and social debates not only affect first generation immigrants but also the emerging Chicana/o population. A consideration of Chicana/o identity and self-representation are crucial to creating new policies concerning diversity, equality, and acceptance in the United States. The motivation of this research is to increase a better understanding of the largest non-white populations in the U.S. as well as examine the functions of language, culture, and history in the process of identity formation.

The first section of this paper will primarily address the history of Mexican immigration in the United States. It will also provide an examination of the political propositions, reforms, and debates that have directly affected not only first generation immigrants, legal and illegal, but 2nd and later generation Mexican Americans as well. The second section will begin with a discussion of the significance of identity research in Anthropology and the wider academic field. I will highlight the identity theory and framework. This will focus on the works of Stuart Hall (1996), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1999). Based off of these works, I will present a definition of identity that will be used throughout the paper. In this section the theories that are used in the ethnographies *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs* (2008) by Norma Mendoza-Denton and *¿Qué Onda?: Urban Youth Cultures and Border Identity* (2009) will also be discussed.

The linguistic concept of code-switching is described in the next section. An initial explanation of how and when code-switching is used is presented followed by several academic studies conducted on the concept of code-switching. The section ends with examples of the use of code-switching by specific subjects in Mendoza-Denton's and Bejarano's ethnographic

studies along with observations on the use of code-switching by each ethnographer. Discussion of these ethnographies will highlight the anthropological significance of the original research presented in this paper.

In the following section I examine several works of Chicana/o literature by analyzing the evidence of specific linguistic and cultural elements within each narrative. Novels by Sandra Cisneros, Denise Chávez, and Rudolfo Anaya are reviewed. These works will be analyzed using the identity framework presented in the second section of this paper. I highlight how language, culture, and history in these novels create a discourse for the process of identity formation and self-representation. I then address the relationship between Chicana/o literature, cultural representations, and self-identification. Finally, I explain how this study could be expanded and used in future research regarding Chicana/o identity formation and self-representation.

History

In order to examine and analyze Chicana/o culture and language, the history of Mexican immigration must first be presented. Mexican immigrants have lived and worked in the United States for over 100 years. After the conquistadors of Spain invaded what is now Mexico in 1521, they began to explore northern lands in what is presently the United States southwest. Spanish explorers settled close to Native Americans in hopes of converting them to Christianity. Along with missionary movements, Spanish settlers exploited Native American labor through the establishment of *encomiendas*. Encomiendas were settlements in which Spanish settlers used Native American labor in exchange for introducing these indigenous people to civilization and granting them protection. By 1680 encomiendas were abolished but the Spanish had claimed territories in Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Although life on the frontier provided

more freedom than in colonized Mexico, disease, conflict with the native people, and the harsh environment did not provide for an easy existence. The average life span for settlers was around 40 years (Gonzales 2009).

In 1819, two years before Mexico gained its independence from Spain, the Mexican government granted permission for Anglo foreigners from the southern areas of the U.S. to settle in the northern parts of Mexico, which is presently the state of Texas (Estrada et al. 1981). By 1830, Texas was home to over 20,000 Anglos and was increasing rapidly.

Although these northern territories were filled with Anglos, settlers had to agree to certain terms from the Mexican government to live on their land, causing resentment and hostility towards the Mexican government. This resentment and opposition ultimately resulted in the Texas Revolt of 1835-36 (Estrada et al. 1981). The Texas Revolt created the ambiguous Texas Republic from 1836 to 1845. Although the Mexican government did not recognize the Texas Republic, it set the stage for U.S. territorial expansion and the Mexican-American War in 1846 (Estrada et al. 1981).

When the U.S. recognized Texas as a state rather than a republic in 1845, inevitable war broke out between Mexico and the United States on May 13, 1846 (Estrada et al. 1981). After the war ended in 1848, over half of Mexico's territory was taken including Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming by the United States (Estrada et al. 1981).

On February 2, 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, officially ceding the new territories over to the U.S. and creating new borders between the U.S. and Mexico. Mexicans living in these territories were given one year to decide whether they wanted to stay in the new territories or to relocate south of the new U.S.-Mexico border and remain citizens of

Mexico (Estrada et al. 1981). Those who decided to stay in the U.S. would maintain, "all the rights of citizens of the [United States] according to the principles of the constitution; and in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their religion without restriction" (Estrada et al. 1981: 105). Unfortunately this agreement was rarely enforced.

The land that the United States won from Mexico during the war proved to be extremely lucrative. It was rich in resources, land tracts, and mines making this gain one of the most important for U.S. expansion (Estrada et al. 1981). While the outcomes of the war proved to be very beneficial for the United States, Mexico was left in poverty. The Mexican economy was destroyed and the government needed to sell even more land to the United States to make money (Estrada et al 1981).

This loss of land as well as the broken down economy greatly affected Mexicans living and working in the northern territories. Estrada et al. (1981) explain, "to make matters worse, the social and economic displacement of Mexicans and their reduction to the status of a colonized group proceeded rapidly, in clear violation of the civil and property right guaranteed both by treaty and protocol" (Estrada et al. 1981:105). Essentially Americans used the land and businesses previously owned and built up by Mexicans to gain their own economical success, completely exploiting not only the Mexican business and landowners but laborers as well (Estrada et al. 1981).

Thanks to Mexican business structures, Americans reaped the economical benefits from developments in mining, ranching, and agriculture by using Mexican labor. Mexican workers were displaced from their land and experienced great poverty after the war. This economic situation forced Mexican laborers to work for American business owners for extremely low salaries on land that their own people had previously owned (Estrada et al. 1981). Estrada et al.

write, “By the turn of the century, Mexicans had been largely dispossessed of their property. Relegated to a lower-class status, they were overwhelmingly dispossessed landless laborers, politically and economically impotent” (Estrada et al.1981: 109).

Americans continued to take advantage of Mexicans, who in response, began to resist and defy the American culture and language and to even more strongly identify with the language, family, art, and religion of their homeland (Estrada et al. 1981). Over 20 years of exploitation along with the French invasion of Mexico left the Mexican economy even more depleted than it was after Mexican-American War allowing foreigners to invest and take over many large businesses in Mexico.

Although foreigners greatly benefited from these investments, the Mexican economy barely gained anything. Around the same time that foreign investors were prominent figures in Mexico, agriculture was beginning to become mechanized (Estrada et al. 1981). Both of these factors contributed to the job loss of many Mexican laborers, high inflation, and for those who did work, a decrease in salaries (Estrada et al. 1981). To make matters worse the Mexican population increased by 50 % between 1875 and 1910 (Estrada et al. 1981). These pressures inevitably led to the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Initially the revolution began in 1910 as a revolt of the middle class against the president and dictator Porfirio Díaz (Knight 1980). The revolutionists fought for the rights of peasants and their privileges to own the land that was once their property (Knight 1980). The revolution ended in 1920 with the election and inauguration of Álvaro Obregón as the president of Mexico. Although there was some semblance of peace, uprisings and attempted coups occurred over the next decade (Knight 1980). After years of fighting, the country was devastated and Mexican

laborers could no longer find work within the country (Estrada et al. 1981). Workers began to migrate to the peripheries of the country to find work, much of which was found in the north.

Up north, in the United States southwest, the railroad, agriculture, mining, lumber, and irrigation businesses were booming (Estrada et al. 1981). Due to the struggling land and work situation in their homeland, Mexican laborers were forced to cross the border and take these low-income jobs in order to survive. Many Mexican immigrants had the intentions of only working in the United States until the situation improved at home (Estrada et al. 1981). Because of the rapid emergence of all these business developments, cheap labor was in high demand. Until 1924, the border was completely open due to the inexistence of both the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Border Patrol (Estrada et al. 1981). Between 1900 and 1930, over one and a half million Mexicans immigrated into the United States (Reisler 1976).

Although the influx of Mexican immigrant laborers was extremely beneficial for the United States economic development and expansion, the workers who traveled up from the south of the border did not face a kind welcome. Mexicans were considered to be racially and mentally inferior. Because of their lack of American citizenship, Mexican laborers were unable to join unions in order to receive equal and adequate pay in return for their hard work. Also due to the fact that Mexicans were usually only hired for manual labor and were considered to be easily expendable, they had no chance for economic or social mobility in the U.S.

During this time, with the arrival of millions of people coming into the U.S. from all over the world, immigration was brought to the forefront of government and policy discussions. A special congressional committee focusing on immigration stated,

> Because of their strong attachment to their native land, low intelligence, illiteracy, migratory life, and the possibility of their residence here being discontinued, few become citizens of the United States…In so far as Mexican laborers come into contact with native or European immigrants they are looked upon as inferiors…Thus it is evident that in the

> case of the Mexican he is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer (Estrada et al. 1981: 115).

Throughout the early and mid 20th century the majority of Americans held the view that Mexican immigrants could only be used for their labor but that they were not worthy enough to become U.S. citizens (Reisler 1976).

Mexican immigration to the U.S. slowed down for several years due to the lack of jobs available after the Great Depression but by 1942 Mexican immigration was back on the rise with the implementation of the Bracero Program (Durand et al. 1995). The Bracero Program was established in response to the effects of WWII and the tight wartime labor markets in the U.S. The Bracero Program consisted of an agreement between the United States and Mexico that arranged "annual importation of Mexican farm workers under supervision of the U.S. government" (Durand et al. 1995: 7). Although this program was created in response to the wartime labor market it continued on until 1964 (Durand et al. 1995). The program further deepened the stereotype of Mexican workers being useful as laborers but not as citizens. After the Bracero Program ended, the numbers of illegal immigrants from Mexico skyrocketed (Durand et al. 1995). By 1980, 57% of California's population consisted of foreign-born Mexicans (Durand et al. 1995).

This influx of undocumented Mexican immigrants was so great that the issue was addressed with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. The IRCA "offered two provisions: 1) an amnesty program to regularize the situation of unauthorized immigrants with some time of residence in the United States; and 2) the civil and criminal sanctioning of employers who engaged in a pattern of repeated hiring of these immigrants" (Portes & Rumbaut 1996: 278). Several changes have occurred since the IRCA has been in action including: the militarization of the border, increased hostility between immigrants and citizens, and decreased

the ease of legalization for immigrant workers (Durand et al. 1995). Although the motivation behind the IRCA was to cut down on illegal immigration numbers and make it more difficult for undocumented workers to find jobs, the majority of agriculture and urban employers in the U.S. still favor these laborers (Portes & Rumbaut 1996). Several other laws and propositions have passed in the past 30 years relating to and attempting to regulate immigration from Mexico. For example, Proposition 187 that was eventually ruled unconstitutional by the federal government. Proposition 187 passed in California in 1994 and prohibited illegal immigrants access to public healthcare, education, and other social services (Flores and Benmayor 1997). More recently, in the spring of 2010 Arizona created a bill, SB 107, that required immigrants to show proof of legal residence at all times and could be stopped by law enforcers if they were suspected to be in the country illegally (Archibold 2010). This law created much controversy over racial profiling and was ultimately ruled unconstitutional for undermining the federal government's national immigration laws (CNN 2010).

Directly related to these high immigration rates, the Mexican American population has been steadily rising and creating a significant Chicana/o community. Due to the immigrant status of older generations, Mexican Americans were often subject to racial discrimination and tough upbringings. Beginning in the 1960's, when youth protests were the basis for counter-culture ideologies, Mexican Americans took a stand to unify their community and began the Chicano movement. Muñoz (2007) states, "The Chicano Movement was a historic first attempt to shape a politics of unification on the basis of a nonwhite identity and culture and on the interests of the Mexican American working class. The movement rejected all previous identities, and thus represented a counter-hegemonic political and cultural project" (Muñoz 2007: 22). Further the Chicano movement was a unification of multiple regional movements that shared ideas on

education, political, economic, and gender rights for Mexican Americans (Muñoz 2007). The word 'Chicano', previously used as a derogatory name for a child of a working class Mexican was embraced in order to empower the Mexican American community (Morales 2002). With the creation of La Raza Unida Party, the Chicano movement became rooted in politics supporting Chicano nationalism and neo-separatism (Muñoz 2007).

The Chicano movement was a "cultural awakening" for Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest (Morales 2002: 77). The movement called for the creation of a multicultural and multivocal Mexican American community (Morales 2002). Several supporters of the Chicano movement claimed that the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was illegitimate and that the land of the Southwest truly belonged to the ancestors of the indigenous people who once lived there (Morales 2002). The Mexican Americans who supported this position argued that the U.S. government unjustly took this land from their ancestors and wished to reclaim it as their own. During the Chicano movement, the land in the Southwest became know as Atzlan, referring to the land that was once home to the ancient Aztec people. During the Chicano movement, the term Atzlan not only signified a territory but also an ideology of a multicultural identity (Morales 2002). Further, the movement called for Mexican Americans to embrace these roots in their own self-identification. Along with this empowerment of self-identification came the creation of the concept of "Chicanismo", or being Chicana/o. Chicanismo gave rise to an influx of literature, music, and art that has embraced, perpetuated, and conserved the Chicana/o identity (Morales 2002). With this emergence of Chicana/o self-identification it is important to understand the different theories concerning both general and Chicana/o identity formation.

Identity Theory

Identity and the process of identification have been and are continuously being analyzed and theorized about, specifically in relation to anthropological studies of subcultures and communities of practice. In recent years the ability for people of different cultures, ethnicities, and religions to coexist and cohabitate has dramatically increased. This augmentation of coexistence has created generations of people that identify with multiple cultures. How this identification is formed and portrayed plays an integral role in understanding how people with mixed cultural and linguistic heritage see themselves in relation to other members of the American population.

In this paper the concept of identity that will be used is founded in works focusing on identity formation from sociologist Stuart Hall and Chicana writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa. In this specific paper identity will be understood as a multi-cultural as well as multi-vocal self-projection and understanding of oneself that is never static and is continually in the process of formation. Identities are created within different modes of representation and are constructed through discourse, interactions in everyday life, and personal experience.

Both Stuart Hall (1996) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) highlight the idea of identity containing multiple voices, cultures, and histories. Hall writes, "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions" (Hall 1996:4). Hall generally addresses the multiplicity of identities while Anzaldúa specifically discusses Chicana/o identity formation. She states,

> Chicanos and other people of color suffer economically for not acculturating. This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity—we don't identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don't totally

> identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness (Anzaldúa 1999: 85).

The multiplicity of identity according to Anzaldúa rests in the fact that Chicanas/os identify with neither Anglo nor Mexican culture so must use fragments of both Anglo and Mexican cultures in order to form his or her own identity.

Identity used as a tool of self-projection is a concept that is highlighted by Hall (1996). He claims that identity is grounded in idealization and projection of how an individual wants to be portrayed. Hall explains,

> Actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation (Hall 1996: 4).

This excerpt not only touches on the importance of self-portrayal within identity formation but also how specific resources such as history, language, and culture can be used in self-representation.

More specifically, Anzaldúa (1999) discusses the significance of language in the process of Chicana/o identity formation. She questions what Mexican Americans are supposed to do when they don't identify completely with Spanish or with English. Anzaldúa (1999) proposes the creation of a new language, referring to Chicano English; she expands, "A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni ingles*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages" (Anzaldúa 1999: 77). Language is something that we as human beings constantly practice everyday; consciously or unconsciously forming individual identities. The process of identity formation is never-ending and is always changing because of the constant portrayal of identity using language, history, and culture.

Anthropologist Cynthia L. Bejarano applies Anzaldúa's "border theory" in her 2005 ethnography *¿Qué Onda?: Urban Youth Culture and Border Identity*. The ethnography focuses on Chicana/o and Mexican youth identities and relationships in a southwestern high school. Bejarano defines border theory as "an organic theory that originated from the local and everyday experience of subaltern communities" (Bejarano 2005: 25). The border that she discusses is not just the physical border between the U.S. and Mexico but cultural and linguistic borders that are constructed through personal experience and history. This personal experience, Bejarano (2005) explains, creates a personal multicultural and multivocal identity. She writes, "There is no unified perfectly uniform culture on the border, it is a site where space and place collide to form hybrid identities" (Bejarano 2005: 31). These identities can be created through language use, social groups, and citizenship status. Bejarano claims that each identity is unique to each individual personal border narrative.

Similar to this study, Norma Mendoza-Denton's ethnography *Homegirls* (2008) examines language use in Latina youth gangs in a California high school. In her study she refers to hemispheric localism theory as well as exemplar theory to explain the role that language has in identity formation. Mendoza-Denton defines hemispheric localism as,

> A projection onto the hemispheric political stage of processes that began locally in the history of groups of Latinos in California, and that through processes of symbolic analogy and metonymy this meaning system becomes projected as a wider political analysis. Young people involved in Norte and Sur become political analysts (and actors), organizing their experience through the lens of participation in these groups, synthesizing their understanding of the larger processes of race, language, capital structures, and global power relations, with increasingly larger ideological projections such that the "Global North" and the "Global South" become tangible and explainable (Mendoza-Denton 2008: 87).

That is, the Latina girls that identify with either the Norteña gang or the Sureña gang are organizing and representing themselves within the larger context of the tensions between

Mexicans and Americans that they and/or their families experience on a day to day basis. Personal migration narratives as well as citizenship status play a major role in self-identification among these Mexican and Chicana students. Along with clothing, music choice, makeup preferences, language is one of the most prominent vehicles for hemispheric localism.

Mendoza-Denton (2008) describes how language can be a vehicle for hemispheric localism through the exemplar theory. She defines the exemplar theory as, "a model for language learning and use based on the notion that multimodal, detail-preserving episodic memory underlies the cognitive representation and processing of language" (Mendoza-Denton 2008: 213). The human lexicon does not just store words but specific characteristics of the speaker such as gender and voice quality as well. Language use is intrinsically connected to and influenced by previous social experiences (Mendoza-Denton 2008). An analysis of various identity theories is imperative in understanding the Chicana/o identification process. Because language use is an integral part of self-representation and identity formation it is necessary to present aspects of language use, specifically the use of code-switching in Chicana/o speech in both ethnographic studies as well as in popular Chicana/o literature.

Code-Switching

As seen through the multiple theories pertaining to identity and self-representation, language plays an extremely important role in the process of self-identification, especially within bilingual communities. Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) discusses the idea of a multicultural and multivocal Chicana/o identity that can be manifested through several modes including the creation of a new language combining both Spanish and English, popularly known as *Spanglish*. Although there are multiple linguistic variations spoken by Mexican Americans, Spanglish or

code-switching between Spanish and English is one of the most common. According to Carmen Fought, a linguistics professor, "Code-switching is the alternation of languages within a single discourse or a single utterance" (Fought 2010: 45). Code-switching is common in bilingual communities and is often considered deficient and uneducated from both outsiders as well as members within the community. In contrast to this opinion these specific linguistic variations "are complex and rule-governed, and require a high degree of fluency in both languages" (Fought 2010: 45). The concept of code-switching is crucial in understanding identity formation and self-representation among Chicanas/os.

Within the fields of linguistics and anthropology, several studies relating to code-switching and Chicana/o identity have been published. Among these studies include works by Carmen Fought (2010), Ilán Stavans (2000), as well as Sharon Chappell and Christian Faltis (2007). Through a presentation of the different linguistic varieties used by Mexican-Americans, Fought demonstrates how language can represent the multifaceted identities of Chicanas/os in the United States. She not only describes code-switching but explains Chicano English vernacular as well. In the article Fought highlights the importance that Mexican-Americans put on their own Mexican heritage in creating individual identities through language use (Fought 2010).

In his article, "Spanglish: Tickling the Tongue" Stavans (2000) introduces Spanglish as "a bridge of sorts that unites the Latino community in the United States, and also one that reaches out toward Latin America" (Stavans 2000: 555). He describes the use of Spanglish as a vehicle for communication through various mediums such as television, literature, and poetry. Through these mediums a sense of identity is constructed and perpetuated throughout the Latino community.

Chappell and Faltis (2007) conduct a study on the portrayal of bilingualism and Spanglish in children's books and how this portrayal represents Latino identity. In the study Chappell and Faltis (2007) argue that, "through the lifeworlds constructed in the stories, characters and events convey messages to readers about the nature and value of speaking certain kinds of Spanish, of the relative value of Spanish and English, of separating and mixing language and culture, and of maintaining and serving identity affiliations with the culture of their parents" (Chappell and Faltis 2007: 253). Chappell and Faltis (2007) found that there was not a constant theme throughout the books regarding bilingualism and competing cultures. Some stories promoted a strong Latino cultural and linguistic heritage while others promoted assimilation. This variation in character identification represents the complex attitudes and ideologies present in the U.S. Latino community today.

The theme of code-switching and its use in the identification process of young Chicanas/os and Mexican Americans is presented in Mendoza-Denton's ethnography. One of the major themes in *Homegirls* (2008) is the linguistic difference between the Norteña/o gang and the Sureña/o gang. The Norteña/o gang members speak mainly in English while the Sureña/o members speak in Spanish, each to show their separate allegiances to the United States or Mexico. Although these members claim to speak solely in one language or the other, Mendoza-Denton (2008) acknowledged several cases of code-switching, used both consciously and unconsciously. She notes specific instances of quotative code-switching in which the speaker quotes someone in a different language than the one that he/she is using while telling a story. Mendoza-Denton (2008) also notices accidental slips of English or Spanish along with self-correction in speech. This subtle code-switching is significant in order to understand, "just how much work and ideological fortification it takes to maintain the categories of Spanish and

English as separate and exclusive" (Mendoza-Denton 2008: 109). Even though gang members want to fully identify with either Sur or Norte, it is impossible due to bilingual and cross-cultural surroundings.

Bejarano also observed code-switching in her ethnography *¿Qué Onda?* (2005). Bejarano constantly overheard phrases and sentences in Spanglish, such as "They are Chicanquis. We don't kick it with them because *se creían mucho* [they think they are too good]" (Bejarano 2005: 149). In her ethnography she acknowledges the frequency and usage of code-switching by students who had family that had immigrated more recently than those who had been in the country for many generations. Bejarano explains,

> Chicanas/os' forked tongues and code-switching were pervasive in the school setting, especially for those second-generation youths who spoke both languages relatively well. Third- and fourth-generation students did not code-switch as often but understood Spanish more than they spoke it and said words like *ahorita* (in a while) and *mañana* (tomorrow) at the end of their sentences (Bejarano 2005: 147).

Code-switching is common throughout the Chicana/o community and is used to establish identity and to create and acknowledge an association with an individual's or family's Mexican heritage. This concept of code-switching and its importance in the process of creating Chicana/o identity is a reoccurring theme throughout Chicana/o literature.

Chicana/o Literature

Chicana/o literature is an expansive genre that includes narratives from hundreds of authors from all over the country. Since the Chicano Movement, Chicana/o literature has gained popularity with readers from all backgrounds and cultures. A common theme that appears throughout the genre is the process of and the establishment of a Chicana/o identity through linguistic and historical aspects. Four popular novels from the Chicana/o literature genre will be

examined in detail to gain a better understanding of how language and history are essential and unique to the development of Chicana/o self-identification. The four novels that are analyzed in the following section are: Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984), Cisneros' *Caramelo* (2002), Denis Chávez's *The Last of the Menu Girls* (1987), and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). Each of these novels describe what it is like growing up Chicana/o and experiencing a life that is split between two separate cultures and two separate languages. Each narrative describes how Chicanas/os are able to form an identity that incorporates both Mexican and American cultures as well as Spanish and English.

Sandra Cisneros, an award winning Chicana author and poet, was born in Chicago in 1954. Cisneros, the only female in a family of seven children grew up in the Midwest with her Mexican father and her Mexican American mother. After moving to the southwest in 1984 Cisneros held many different jobs ranging from teaching high school dropouts to working as a college recruiter. Cisneros now lives in San Antonio, Texas and has numerous books within the Chicana/o literature genre including *The House on Mango Street* (1984) and *Caramelo* (2002).

The House on Mango Street (1984) is a series of short memories from the point of view of Esperanza, a 12-year-old Chicana living in the heart of a low socio-economic Latino neighborhood in Chicago. The series of memories covers a year of Esperanza's life beginning with her family's move into the house on Mango Street. Over the year Esperanza and her sister Nenny make several new friends and learn about what it means to become a woman, especially in the Latino community. Esperanza is sexually harassed and observes a friend that is physically abused by her father. She is embarrassed by her poverty and vows to leave her neighborhood and make a better life for herself. She finds the ability to do this through writing and begins to understand the power of language and words. This power is especially apparent when a Mexican

family moves into an apartment down the street. Mamacita, the fat tenant from Mexico refuses to learn English and never leaves her house. Esperanza can see how her inability to speak English is trapping her both physically and socially. Esperanza recounts her own father's language struggle when he first arrived in the United States. He only ate ham and eggs his first three months living in the country until he learned enough English to order something else off the menu. By the end of the book Esperanza knows that she can escape from the Latino neighborhood yet the experiences and the adversaries that Esperanza herself along with her neighbors and friends face will always follow her throughout her life.

Throughout the novel Cisneros draws attention to Esperanza's acknowledgment of her own background and Mexican heritage, as well as that of her neighbors. One specific way in which she draws attention to this is through names. In the chapter titled "My Name" Esperanza describes her name, "In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing" (Cisneros 1984: 11). Esperanza realizes that there are two parts to her name just as there are two parts to her identity, English and Spanish. Esperanza mentions other people in her neighborhood that have two names like the cousin of her friend Rachel who has two first names, one in English and one in Spanish (Cisneros 1984). Even Esperanza's neighbor's dog has one English name and one Spanish name.

Cisneros also uses code-switching in the speech of her characters to demonstrate the combination of languages and cultures in Esperanza's life. Esperanza's parents and the older neighbors use mainly Spanish. This demonstrates how the use of Spanish is more prevalent in the lives of the older generations who still highly associate with Mexican culture and language. For

example in the chapter "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark", Esperanza recalls her father telling her about her grandfather's death, "Your *abuelito* is dead, Papa says one morning in my room. *Está muerto*… "(Cisneros 1984: 68). Esperanza's father, a first generation immigrant, is clearly a connection to Mexican culture for Esperanza. Although she doesn't speak Spanish to her friends and sister, Esperanza's father continues to speak it to her.

In "No Speak English" A man in Esperanza's neighborhood brings his mother, Mamacita, from Mexico to live on Mango Street. Mamacita refuses to learn English and yearns for her home country, while her son begins to get frustrated with her stubbornness. Esperanza overhears a conversation between Mamacita and her son, *"¿Cuándo, cuándo, cuándo?* She asks. *¡Ay, caray!* We *are* home. This *is* home. Here I am and here I stay. Speak English. Speak English. Christ!" (Cisneros 1984: 97). Mamacita uses only Spanish to represent her self-identification as a Mexican even though she lives in the United States. In contrast her son uses English as he identifies with being American and wants to assimilate to the white/Anglo, English speaking American culture. This concept of Spanish being used by older generations is common throughout the Chicana/o literature genre, especially in Cisneros' other works.

Cisneros' more recent novel *Caramelo* (2002) tells the story and history of the Reyes family, a Mexican-American family with roots from Spain, Mexico, Chicago, and Texas. The book is narrated by Celaya Reyes. She begins by describing her annual summer trips from Chicago to Mexico City to visit her grandmother, Soledad. Celaya, as a child, is not very fond of Soledad naming her "the Awful Grandmother". A horrible fight between Celaya's mother, Zoila, and Soledad erupts during a specific summer visit in Mexico, which leads Celaya to uncover the secret-filled Reyes family history. Coming from Spain, Celaya's great-grandfather moved to Mexico City where he married a Mexican woman named Regina. Together they had a child,

Narciso, Celaya's grandfather and Soledad's husband. Soledad met Narciso after being neglected by her own family and taken in by Regina as a maid. Soledad lived with the Reyes family through the Mexican Civil War and eventually was impregnated by and consequently married to Narciso. Throughout their marriage Narciso ignored and neglected Soledad and slept with many other women. Soledad gave birth to three sons and one daughter the favorite of which was Celaya's father Inocencio. Inocencio moved away from his family in Mexico City and headed north to the United States. In the U.S., Inocencio finds himself in jail for a crime he did not commit. His only way out is to enlist in the army. By enlisting, Inocencio becomes a U.S. citizen. Eventually Inocencio finds himself in Chicago where he meets his wife Zoila and starts his life. It is uncovered by Soledad that Inocencio has an illegitimate daughter that his current family knows nothing about. After the story of the family history, Celaya returns the narration back to her present life in Chicago when her grandmother becomes ill and must move from Mexico City to live with Celaya's family. The family moves to San Antonio, Texas with the promise of home ownership and booming business. Celaya is let down when she arrives at the run-down house that her father had bought. Celaya has trouble making friends and is bullied. As she gets older Celaya begins to feel more comfortable in her new home and falls in love with a friend of her brothers named Ernesto. Although Ernesto is a devout Catholic, he and Celaya run away to Mexico City where they hope to escape the pressure of their families. Ernesto ends up deserting Celaya in Mexico City. Celaya must call on her father for help. Inocencio brings Celaya back to the United States. Celaya comes to an understanding with her father about the importance of family and what it means to be a Reyes. Throughout the book Celaya discovers how much history and tradition has dictated the lives of the members of her family, including her own.

Similarly to *The House on Mango Street* (1984), Cisneros uses code-switching in the speech of her characters in *Caramelo* (2002) to represent the older generation's deep connection to Mexico. She demonstrates this gap very clearly with a passage regarding one of Celaya's visits to Mexico to visit the Awful Grandmother. Cisneros writes,

> We like being seen on the roof, like house servants, without so much as thinking what passersby might mistake us for. We try sneaking into the Grandparents' bedroom when no one is looking, which the Awful Grandmother strictly forbids. All this we do and more. Antontieta Araceli faithfully reports as much to the Awful Grandmother, and the Awful Grandmother herself has seen how these children raised on the other side don't know enough to answer--¿*Mande usted*? To their elders.—What? we say in the horrible language, which the Awful Grandmother hears as ¿*Guat*?—What? we repeat to each other and to her. The Awful grandmother shakes her head and mutters, —My daughters-in-law have given birth to a generation of monkeys. (Cisneros 2002: 28)

In this passage the grandmother is upset that her grandchildren don't speak in Spanish. Although Celaya knows Spanish she continues to speak in English to her grandmother. The grandmother, due to her past and the loss of her children to the United States, values the use of Spanish to conserve Mexican culture.

The Grandmother's use of Spanish is related to Mexican history. The Grandmother is still very connected with Mexican history because she lived through so much and experienced wealth and prosperity in Mexico. She explains her life in Mexico to Celaya,

> Well it was all very *divertido*. Like something out of a beautiful movie, you could say, even though we were never wealthy…I'm talking after the war, because in that epoch before the war, the family Reyes was considered *adinerada*—moneyed, that is. The men never dirtied their hands with work, and the women never had to dip their hands in soapy water except to bathe themselves. Because your great-grandfather was a musician, and teacher, remember. He even played the piano at the National Palace for President Porfirio Díaz and for families like los Limantour, Romero de Terrers, Rincón Gallardo, Lerdo de Tejada, *las familias popoff*, as they say. (Cisneros 2002: 120)

The Grandmother is proud to be a Mexican. She refuses to learn English and resents the fact that her grandchildren don't speak Spanish.

Another instance of this generational language gap is when Celaya's brother, Rafa, lives and attends school in Mexico for an entire year at the request of the Awful Grandmother. After Rafa finishes one year of military high school in Mexico, Celaya and her brothers see Rafa for the first time and the siblings experience a linguistic disconnect. Celaya explains, "He tries speaking Spanish, but we don't use that language with kids, we only use it with grown-ups" (Cisneros 2002: 23). Although Celaya and her brothers are spoken to in Spanish they choose not to use it with one another, embracing their American identities through using English with one another rather than Spanish.

Even though Celaya and her brothers disassociate with their Mexican heritage, Celaya meets a Chicana friend, Viva, in Texas that has a different kind of connection with Mexico than Celaya and her family. Viva is older and Celaya believes that Viva knows more about almost everything than she does, until they start discussing Mexico. The two girls have the following conversation:

> —I wouldn't know, I've never been there, Viva says.
> —No way! You've never been to Mexico?
> —Only to Nuevo Laredo. My family's from here. Since before.
> —Since before what?
> —Since before this was Texas. We've been here seven generations (Cisneros 2002: 328).

Like many Chicanas/os Viva finds a connection to Mexico through the country's history. Many Chicano families living in Texas have been there for multiple generations dating back before the United States expanded its borders to include Texas and have strong cultural and linguistic ties to Mexico. Unlike many Mexican immigrants who choose to move to an Anglo, English-speaking America, this 'white' America came to these families living in Texas. This history, as seen in this excerpt, carries over from generation to generation creating a different kind of connection with Mexico than many other Chicanas/os have.

Denise Chávez, another prominent female figure in the world of Chicana/o literature, was born in New Mexico in 1948 and has lived in the state ever since. Chávez is known as an award-winning author and playwright. Chávez published her first novel, *The Last of the Menu Girls*, in 1986.

The Last of the Menu Girls (1986) is a collection of short stories that follow Rocío Esquibel at different points throughout her life. The first story, "The Last of the Menu Girls", begins at age seventeen when Rocío starts her first job as a "menu girl" at Altavista Memorial Hospital in New Mexico. Her requirements for this job include taking lunch and dinner orders for all of the patients at the hospital. She finds the job haunting at first but then develops an interest in the patients. The next short story, "Willow Game", skips back to Rocío's childhood. Rocío recounts her experiences with her sister Mercy in relation to the trees located on the street on which she grew up. This story includes detailed memories of Rocío's family, neighbors and friends. In the following story, "Shooting Stars", Rocío describes her summer childhood visits to Texas to visit her mother's family. Throughout these visits Rocío and her sister are surrounded by their mother's sisters and find warmth in the strong female presence. In Texas, Rocío learns what it means to become a woman. Rocío looks back on her family Christmases in the next story, "Evening in Paris". Rocío recalls a specific Christmas for which she saved her money to buy her mother an expensive perfume set. She is disappointed when her mother is unimpressed by her present and in return Rocío receives a re-gifted wallet with Jesus' picture on it. In the next short story, "The Closet", Rocío finds solace and silence within the closets of her house. In these closets she lets her imagination take her mind away from reality. Rocío is able to preserve the good memories of her childhood while spending time in the closets of her house. She tries to describe the importance of the closets to her sister who cannot seem to appreciate them the way

Rocío does. The final story, “Space is a Solid”, is written from the point of view from not only Rocío but from the perspective of one of her drama students, Kari Lee as well. This story takes place during Rocío’s young adult life when she was a drama teacher and a graduate student at an art school in Texas. In this time of her life Rocío experiences depression and a loss of direction in her life. The narrative ends in New Mexico jumping back and forth from Rocío’s teenage years to the present day describing her family’s relationships with one another as well as with her mother’s compadre Regino. With the help of her mother, Rocío finds a passion for writing and discovers that the people around her and her life experiences can be used as an inspiration throughout her work.

Chávez uses code-switching in a similar way to Cisneros in that the older generations are presented as the main Spanish speakers in the novel. In a specific scene, Rocío remembers the death of her great aunt, Eutilia. She recalls the great aunt yelling out in pain, “’Diooooos,’ she cried in that shrill voice. ‘Dios mío, Diosito, por favor. Ay, I wont tell your mamá, just help me get away…Diosito de mi vida…Diosito de mi corazón…agua, agua…por favor, por favor…’”(Chávez 1986: 19). The use of Spanish demonstrates Eutilia’s connection to her Mexican identity. Rocío’s grandmother is noted as speaking Spanish as well. An example of this is while Rocío quotes her grandmother in an explanation of the houses on her block. She says, “In my mind I floated Down, past the Marking-Off Tree with its pitted green fruit, past five or six houses, house of strangers, ‘los desconocidos,’ as my Grandmother would say, ‘¿Y pues, quién los parió?’” (Chávez 1986: 42).

Also in this novel, much of the younger generation of Chicanos does not speak Spanish. Rocío is able to speak some Spanish and her co-worker expresses jealousy in her ability even though Rocío cannot recall the translation for many words. Rocío’s hospital co-worker, another

high school Chicana the same age as Rocío, says, “You’re so lucky you can speak Spanish” (Chávez 1986: 23). Rocío is surprised that her co-worker says this because she does not think anything of her ability to speak Spanish and hardly ever uses the language.

Chávez presents language use as a representation of self-identification with the speech of Regino Suárez, Rocío’s mother’s “Compadre” and the neighborhood handy man. Regino only speaks in Spanish or broken English and in the eyes of Rocío is a terrible handy man. Rocío does not have very much respect for Regino and tries to avoid associating with him. Rocío remembers a time that she ran into Regino while she was cleaning up toilet paper that someone had covered her house in as a joke. Regino was in the yard finishing up work on a fountain for Rocío’s mother that, as Rocío points out, took forever to make and never ending up functioning properly. Regino began to help Rocío clean up the paper saying, “’The paper, it blowed to me…I saw the paper and I said to myself: “Regino, what’s this? Pretty funny, ¿que no?”’ He chuckled to himself, lifting off a few squares from the nearest branch. “It’s the paper for the toilet’” (Chávez 1986: 171). Rocío specifically recalls Regino’s broken English in association with his unsatisfactory work. It is not just Rocío, a younger Chicana that looks down upon Regino for his speech and lifestyle. Rocío’s father, who is absent until the end of the novel, feels the same way about Regino. While driving Regino home one night, Rocío and her father see Regino’s new house that he pays for from welfare, it is a large two-story house that had recently been built. Rocío’s father says, “Since when do the poor Mexicans live like kings in two-story houses; Christ, it’s a mansion!” (Chávez 1986: 180). Through the eyes of Rocío and her father, Regino is a less respectful Mexican American because he is poor and cannot speak proper English. Rocío and her father who speak in grammatically correct, fluent English and can make more money

because of this ability look down on Regino's life. Rocío and her father identify with their English-speaking American lifestyle through their use of language.

Rudolfo Anaya, another New Mexican native, is considered by some literary scholars to be the father of contemporary Chicano literature. Born in Las Pasturas, New Mexico in 1937, Anaya has lived in New Mexico his entire life. In 1972 his most popular novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), was published. The story follows a young boy, Antonio, who lives in a small predominantly Spanish-speaking town in New Mexico during WWII with his family. While his three older brothers are off fighting in the war Ultima, an elderly powerful healer, comes to live with Antonio's family. Antonio is torn between his mothers wish for him to grow up to become a Catholic priest and his father's dream for him to become a farmer. Not only does Antonio face internal conflict about his future career path, he also questions his faith in the Catholic god opposed to his beliefs about the Golden Carp, which Antonio sees as a more natural forgiving god. Throughout the years that Ultima stays with Antonio's family, Antonio observes a great deal of death, sickness, and hardships to surrounding loved ones and neighbors. Because of these misfortunes Antonio and Ultima form a strong bond with one another. Ultima teaches Antonio about healing, the power of nature, and what it means to be a good person. Once Antonio starts attending school and begins to learn English he faces ridicule and bullying from his classmates about his relationship with Ultima, who many of the townspeople claim is a witch. Finally the death of Ultima and the loss of his innocence help Antonio discover what he truly believes about religion, spirituality, and human kindness.

Anaya addresses the concept of generational language use through code-switching as well as through direct explanations. When Anaya does use Spanish in the novel it is mainly through the older characters such as Antonio's parents and their friends. For example, when a

family friend runs to Antonio's house to announce a death, the conversation between the adults is conducted in Spanish. Antonio recalls Chávez, the family friend running into the house, "'¡Márez!' he shouted, '¡Márez! ¡Andale, hombre!'…'¡Andale, hombre, andale!' Chávez cried pitifully. 'Mataron mi hermano'" (Anaya 1972: 17). Spanish is spoken primarily among the adults.

Throughout the beginning of the novel Antonio is surrounded by Spanish, he explains, "All of the older people spoke only in Spanish, and I myself understood only Spanish. It was only after one went to school that one learned English" (Anaya 1972:10). Antonio is very nervous to start school because he is afraid that he will not be able to understand his teachers. As Antonio gets older he begins to use more English but is still very connected with his mother and Ultima who both use Spanish. Anaya highlights the use of Spanish among the older generation as a connection to Mexico yet after Antonio's first remarks about learning English in school, his perception of language use is not prevalent through the rest of the novel. It is clear that the older generation uses Spanish as a means of representing their Mexican identity but it is unclear with which language Antonio associates, as he gets older.

It is apparent that Antonio's mother has a strong connection with Mexico through her use of Spanish and her family history. Antonio explains, "Then there was a strange, whispered riddle of the first priest who went to El Puerto. The colony had first settled there under a land grant from the Mexican government, and the man who led the colonization was a priest, and he was a Luna. That is why my mother dreamed of me becoming a priest, because there had not been a Luna priest in the family for many years" (Anaya 1972: 31). Not only does this history determine Antonio's first language but influences what might be in store for his future as well.

In each of the novels analyzed, the authors use code-switching or code-choice between Spanish and English in the speech and dialogue of their characters to demonstrate a representation of self-identification. Throughout the novels, the characters that use Spanish or a mixture of Spanish and English are those who are first generation or recent immigrants from Mexico to the United States, and often in this literature are presented as the older generations. This use of Spanish is used to represent the strong Mexican identification that these characters have with their homeland. In contrast, the younger characters in the novels use English in their dialogue with one another. These characters are usually the children and grandchildren of immigrants from Mexico yet don't have as strong of a connection with the homeland of their parents and grandparents. Even though they use mainly English to demonstrate their self-identification with the Anglo English-speaking America in which they are raised, the younger characters do have the ability to speak Spanish and find some sort of connection to Mexico either through the language of their parents and grandparents or their family history. This connection along with identification with an English speaking America creates a Chicana/o identity for this younger generation. These four Chicana/o novels demonstrate the power of language use and choice in the process of self- representation and identification.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of specific Chicana/o novels and ethnographic studies focusing on Chicana/o youth along with a look into identity formation theory it is clear that language, history, and culture play important roles in the process of self-representation. As Hall (1996) and Anzaldúa (1999) describe, identity is constructed within the representation of one's self. More specifically, language, history and culture are used in distinct ways to form a representation of

who one wants to become and how he or she wishes to be perceived. This process is not only apparent within the Chicana/o culture through the analyzed literature but through anthropological ethnographic work as well.

Choices made by characters in language use, particularly in the practice of code-switching were important factors in each novel discussed in this paper. This is also the case for speakers observed in the ethnographies *Homegirls* (2008) and *¿Qué Onda?* (2005). In both the literature and the ethnographies personal and familial history of immigration along with the degree of connection to Mexican culture affected the code choice of the characters and ethnographic participants. One's personal experience and the experience of one's parents or grandparents are integral in creating an identity through representation.

In the works of literature, the authors presented either characters belonging to an older generation or characters that had more recently emigrated from Mexico, both who strongly identify with Mexican culture, as using Spanish in their dialogue. In all four novels the parents, grandparents, or an elderly relative were presented as being mainly Spanish speakers. In two of the novels, *The House on Mango Street* (1984) and *The Last of the Menu Girls* (1987), the use of Spanish is demonstrated in the speech of characters that had recently emigrated from Mexico. In contrast, younger generation characters as well as characters who had assimilated more to an American lifestyle were presented as using mainly English in their speech. In all four books, the narrators, young Chicanas/os, identify with using predominantly English and most identify with an Anglo, white American culture. With this presentation, the different narrators used a bilingual "voice" that incorporated code-switching throughout each novel.

Similarly this language use trend is apparent in both ethnographies. In Mendoza-Denton's study (2008), the two gangs differ in language use. The Norteñas/os, the students that identify

with Chicana/o culture and have been living in the United States for most of their lives, primarily speak English. On the other hand the Sureñas/os, the students that are more recent immigrants and strongly identify as Mexican, mainly speak Spanish. Although, both groups of students code-switch by crossing over into English or Spanish at times. This use of code-switching and code-choice is also noted in Bejarano's study (2005). She acknowledges the tendencies of first and second-generation Mexican Americans to use Spanish as well as code-switching more often than third and fourth generation Mexican Americans.

In both the ethnographies and the novels, Spanish use appeared to be more prominent in people that have recently emigrated from Mexico and/or had a strong connection to Mexican culture while English use was more prominent by people who were younger with less of a cultural connection to Mexico. Language, in these specific analyzed novels and ethnographies, is used as a vehicle for self-representation. Through this representation personal identities are created. As Anzaldúa (1999) explains, language is used by Chicanos to represent important cultural and historical values to older and/or recently immigrated Mexicans. To recent Mexican immigrants to the U.S., the use of Spanish represents the strong value attached to Mexican culture and history. Yet, it is also noted that code-switching and use of Spanish is also used at times by those characters and subjects that don't necessarily identify as Mexicans. This shows that many Chicanas/os, to some degree, place value on their Mexican background along with their identification with Anglo-American culture and lifestyle. This demonstrates the duality of identification that both Hall (1996) and Anzaldúa (1999) highlight in each of their explanations of identity formation and the theory that lies behind this process.

The variations of language use and choice are important in understanding the different cultural values within the prominent Chicana/o population living in the United States. Because

language plays such a crucial role in self-representation as well as identity formation, anthropologists must examine how it is being used among the Chicana/o population due to the influx of Mexican American residents. Understanding the importance of language, culture, and history in the identity formation process could contribute to current political debates focusing on language use in schools, specifically English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It is also important in understanding the importance of language use in the assimilation process in relation to identity formation.

Although this research was limited to an analysis of just two ethnographies and four novels focusing on the theme of Chicana/o culture and language use, further examination could be conducted in the future on this topic. This further research could include a wider variety of resources that concern Chicana/o portrayal including but not limited to, other novels in the Chicana/o genre, poetry, personal narratives, movies, and music, in addition to ethnography.

Ethnographic research on this subject could also be expanded to include ethnographies that follow Chicana/o students both in school and with their families to fully gain knowledge of the subjects' backgrounds and self-representations in and out of the school hallways. Studies could also be conducted with elderly Mexican Americans to understand more about the effect of history on identity formation and language use. Ethnographic work concerning first generation Mexican immigrants would be helpful as well in the understanding of the tension between the desire for preservation of Mexican culture and the forced cultural and linguistic assimilation needed for success in the United States.

This subject of Chicana/o identity formation and language use could even further be expanded through the inclusion of factors not mentioned in this research such as citizenship, gender difference, and geographical proximity to the physical border between the United States

and Mexico. An examination of these factors would contribute to the subject through various lenses that have not been previously approached. This paper has only touched upon a small part of a much more expansive subject that holds a vast amount of importance in the United States today.

The purpose of this research was to identify linguistic trends through specific Chicana/o novels and ethnographic studies. Further, the research aimed to use these trends to explain the role that linguistic, historical, and cultural factors play in the process of identity formation and self-representation. Through this research it is apparent how both personal and familial experiences can be integral parts in creating different identities throughout the Chicana/o population. It is also clear that although many people identify as Chicana or Chicano, what this means personally along with how this identity is represented can vary widely. The Latino population increase in the United States along with the geographic proximity and long, complicated historical relations between the U.S. and Mexico creates the need for insight into the process of identity formation and self-representation of Mexican Americans.

Throughout history, in the U.S. many people have viewed Mexicans and Mexican Americans to be limited in educational, political, and economic arenas on account of their language choice. This false perception has created stereotypical and racist ideas that have in many instances held Chicana/os back from success in many different settings. The completed study as well as recommended future research will help the public overcome these false perceptions of linguistic limitations and create more equal opportunities for Mexican Americans to succeed educationally, politically, and financially.

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