Known as “The Salad Bowl of the World,” California's Salinas Valley became an agricultural empire due to the toil of diverse farmworkers, including Latinos. A sweeping critical history of how Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants organized for their rights in the decades leading up to the seminal strikes led by Cesar Chavez, this important work also looks closely at how different groups of Mexicans—U.S. born, bracero, and undocumented—confronted and interacted with one another during this period. An incisive study of labor, migration, race, gender, citizenship, and class, this book offers crucial insights for today's ever-growing U.S. Latino demographic, the farmworker rights movement, and future immigration policy.

In considering Mexican-American history, one might argue that the debate about the significance or importance of ethnic Mexican people in the American West has reflected the central themes of the social and political history of the region. The most important theme unifying this chapter was obvious concern to represent ordinary working-class Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants as complex, fully formed, and fully functional human beings. Although this might not seem to be a significant point, when viewed in the context of the times this work should be seen as the first stage of a bold project of excavation and
recovery that was designed, at least partially, to upset the prevailing regional social order by demonstrating the extent to which stereotypes about Mexicans were the products of Americans' active, and truly powerful, imaginations. A brief discussion of George I. Sánchez's research helps illustrate some of the ways Mexican-American scholars of this period used their work both to advance objective knowledge and to alter what had become the master discourse used to describe Mexicans in the United States.

**Bound in Tension**
Lori A. Flores

in *Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the attitudes of Mexican Americans toward braceros and “wetbacks” in the Salinas Valley during the period 1947–1960, with particular emphasis on how the tension between them hindered the formation of a larger transnational Mexican-origin community in the region. It considers the concerns of some Mexican American middle-class civil rights leaders about the threat posed by undocumented immigrants on their economic stability and social respectability. It also discusses two particular flashpoints that brought the intraethnic conflict between Mexican Americans, braceros, and undocumented migrants into greater relief: the Immigration and Naturalization Service's “Operation Wetback” of 1954 and the peak of the Bracero Program in 1956. The chapter shows that the Mexican American agricultural working class felt betrayed by the state for creating a Bracero Program and immigration system that served at the pleasure of agribusiness instead of protecting them as worker-citizens.

**Racial Meeting Grounds and Battlegrounds During Wartime, 1941–1947**
Lori A. Flores

in *Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter
This chapter examines the conflict between Mexican Americans and a white mainstream that denied them equal treatment, and between Mexican Americans and braceros in a militarized, masculinized agricultural context, in the Salinas Valley during the World War II years (1941–1947). It considers the ways that Latinos negotiated their relationships with other racial groups—and with each other—during wartime as well as the impact of the Bracero Program on the region's labor and power landscapes and race relations. It also explains why the activism of Mexican Americans living in agricultural California appeared weaker, or progressed at a slower pace, than that of urban Mexican Americans. It argues that the intraethnic conflict between four groups of Mexican-origin men—military servicemen, braceros, U.S.-born farmworkers, and “zoot suiters”—created tension in the larger Latino community which, along with the Bracero Program, slowed the evolution of a postwar Latino civil rights movement in the Salinas Valley.

Corazón De Dixie
Julie M. Weise

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: May 2016
Publisher: University of North Carolina Press
DOI: 10.5149/northcarolina/9781469624969.001.0001
Item type: book

When Latino migration to the U.S. South became increasingly visible in the 1990s, observers and advocates grasped for ways to analyze “new” racial dramas in the absence of historical reference points. However, as this book is the first to comprehensively document, Mexicans and Mexican Americans have a long history of migration to the U.S. South. Their experiences there provide critical lessons to better understand the South’s recent changes as well as the larger histories of the United States and Mexico. Corazón de Dixie recounts the untold histories of Mexicanos’ migrations to New Orleans, Mississippi, Arkansas, Georgia, and North Carolina as far back as 1910. It follows Mexicans and Mexican Americans into the heart of Dixie, where they navigated the Jim Crow system, cultivated community in the cotton fields, purposefully appealed for help to the Mexican government, shaped the southern conservative imagination in the wake of the civil rights movement, and embraced their own version of suburban living at the turn of the twenty-first century. These migrants remained invisible in prior written histories because they left little trace in U.S. archives and local memories. Corazón de Dixie uses U.S. sources creatively, but critically depends on archives in Mexico, oral history interviews, and family photographs to unearth not just the facts of Mexicanos’ longstanding presence in the U.S. South but also their own expectations, strategies, and dreams.
Introduction
Lori A. Flores

in Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter

This book investigates the history of the Salinas Valley to show how agriculture-centered environments and economies affected the politicization of U.S.-born and immigrant Mexicans in twentieth-century California. Located in Monterey County on California's central coast, the Salinas Valley occupied a central place in debates over agribusiness, labor, and immigration policy during the 1960s. Today, the valley's multibillion-dollar agricultural industry, and U.S. agriculture more generally, remains heavily dependent on Latino (mostly Mexican immigrant) labor. This book argues that the Salinas Valley, as an agricultural empire, was a microcosm of key transitions and moments in America's labor, immigration, and Latino history. It examines how Mexican Americans navigated their social place and political identity in an increasingly corporatized agricultural setting, especially in the face of a large influx of Mexican guestworkers brought by the government-sponsored Bracero Program (1942–1964). It also considers how people “became Mexican American” and articulated that identity in agricultural settings, as well as how these Mexican Americans then became Chicanos. Finally, it traces the Chicano Movement's evolution in California.

The Community Service Organization, 1953–1963
Lori A. Flores

in Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on a local Community Service Organization (CSO) in the Salinas Valley and how it operated in the agriculture-centered environment of the region in the years 1953–1963. It first provides an overview of the beginnings of the CSO chapter in Monterey County, founded by Fred Ross as a platform for Mexican Americans to prove their
good citizenship while asserting their right to equal treatment. It then considers the CSO's membership, goals, and trajectory as well as its impact on California's Mexican-origin population and members' attitudes toward braceros and the Bracero Program. It also highlights the CSO's successes and failures, with particular emphasis on its inability to create interracial alliances, involve the larger Mexican-origin community in specific protests, maintain stable leadership, and risk its cultivated image of respectability.

Chicano Labor and Multiracial Politics in Post-World War II Texas: Two Case Studies

Max Krochmal

Focusing on two ordinary Chicano workers who became prominent labor, civil rights, and political organizers, this chapter demonstrates that workplace struggles and multiracial alliances with whites and African Americans stood at the center of the broader Mexican American and Chicano movements. The two union organizers, Francisco F. “Pancho” Medrano of Dallas and Arnold Flores of San Antonio, fought discrimination at work and in their unions as well as in the cities in which they lived. They joined and transformed local chapters of well-known ethnic Mexican civil rights organizations, actively supported the African American freedom struggle, and became driving forces in building powerful multiracial coalitions. Their life stories transcend the whiteness arguments and generational framework that have dominated Chicano historiography.

Introduction

Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue

Mexican Americans are unique in the panoply of American ethnoracial groups in that they are the descendants of the largest and longest lasting immigration stream in U.S. history. Today, there are approximately
24 million U.S.-born Mexican Americans, many of whom are multiple
generations removed from their immigrant ancestors. Contrary to
traditional assimilation theories, which predict that ethnicity and ethnic
distinctions will disappear by the third generation, Mexican Americans
exhibit a persistent and durable ethnicity with regard to their ethnic
identity, culture, and networks. However, there is much heterogeneity
within the population which ranges on a continuum from symbolic
ethnicity to consequential ethnicity. We argue that one of the reasons
for the group-level durability and the within-group variation is due to
the existence of a strong ethnic core, the importance of which has been
overlooked in previous assimilation theories.

Mexican American
Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue

in Durable Ethnicity: Mexican Americans and the Ethnic Core

This chapter assesses whether U.S.-born Mexican Americans feel
American or a part of American society, even though they have been
portrayed as threats to Americanism and have had their allegiance
questioned. It also considers how their ethnic identity affects their
sense of Americanness. For the respondents, they in no way perceive
their ethnic and national identities as being mutually exclusive; to
the contrary, they find these identities to be highly compatible and
complementary. They define Americanness in terms of birthplace,
political loyalty, and economic opportunities; they define Mexicanness
in terms of culture, family, and ancestral background. Moreover, the
vast majority of the respondents view national identity as their primary
identity, something that is constant, natural, and unquestioned, whereas
their ethnic identities vary in intensity, depending on the individual and
the situation.

The Farmworker Movement in the Post-Bracero Era
Lori A. Flores

in Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the
California Farmworker Movement
This chapter examines the farmworker movement in the Salinas Valley after the termination of the Bracero Program. It first considers the rise of Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) and the lawsuits filed by Salinas farmworkers with the help of the California Rural Legal Assistance. It then explores how the continued importation of braceros in what was supposed to be a post-bracero era affected Salinas's farmworkers, the majority of whom were Mexican Americans. It also discusses the legal actions and victories of Salinas farmworkers against growers who sought to continue importing braceros and prevent their employees from joining the UFWOC. These legal actions and victories, the chapter argues, were evidence of the farmworker movement's revival in the Salinas Valley.

A Migrating Revolution
John H. Flores

in Workers Across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: May 2011
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines immigrant political culture, the phenomenon of transnational social movements, and the formation of binational identities through a study of a Midwestern Mexican American immigrant community during the first half of the 20th century. It reveals the relationship between international and local politics by reconstructing the history of a segment of the Mexican population of Chicago, which is termed here the “Revolutionary Generation.” These political activists, whose ranks included men and women, white-collar workers, blue-collar laborers, and rural folk, formed liberal, conservative, and radical associations in Chicago. As diverse and divisive as these immigrants were, the chapter groups them together as a political generation because their collective ideology was shaped by their experience and understanding of the Mexican Revolution (1910–20). After migrating to Chicago, they began adapting their particular understanding of revolutionary politics to the city with the aim of shaping the identities and influencing the political outlooks of Mexicans residing within the United States. Although various revolutionary factions eventually made their way to Chicago, the chapter focuses on the liberal and radical wings of this political generation and compares them as they evolved outside the borders of the Mexican nation-state.
From the 1960s through the 1990s, millions of Mexican immigrants, Tejanos, and Mexican Americans journeyed through the rural U.S. South as agricultural migrant workers and tens of thousands settled there. Chapter Four argues that Mexicanos of this generation arrived to southern Georgia’s agricultural areas with diminished expectations of citizenship in the Americas’ neoliberal era. Though locals initially treated them as objects of curiosity or hostility, soon influential white employers and church leaders both Catholic and Evangelical framed Mexican migrants’ lifestyles as archetypical examples of upright working poor who merited the opportunity to stay in town, earn wages, attend school, and receive charity despite their foreign accents and racial difference. Mexicanos reciprocated the interest, and did not become involved in labor or political organizing, albeit for their own reasons. In this way, a fragile peace around immigration issues settled over southern Georgia and much of the rural agricultural South through the end of the 1990s, even as farmworker organizing and populist anti-immigrant backlash took hold elsewhere in the country during the same period.

Attitudes About Immigration
Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue

This chapter addresses Mexican Americans’ attitudes about Mexican immigrants in the context of mass immigration. In addition to the boundary that exists between persons of Mexican heritage and non-Latinos, there is another important social boundary operating that highlights Mexican Americans’ understandings of their own ethnicity and American identity—the boundary between Mexican immigrants and themselves. Study respondents displayed a broad range of attitudes toward immigrants, illustrating the internal diversity of the Mexican American population, which runs contrary to their treatment in the media as a homogeneous ethnic group in terms of attitudes, politics,
and voting. This chapter also demonstrates the underlying ideologies, philosophies, and rationales that respondents used to justify their immigration positions: whereas many framed their views based on American ideals, only a small minority framed them in terms of their ethnicity, basing their perceptions in an understanding of Mexican immigrants as co-ethnics.

A Blossoming of Red Flags
Lori A. Flores

in Grounds For Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2016
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee's (UFWOC) 1970 strike in the Salinas Valley and the various groups of UFWOC allies and detractors involved. It first considers the circumstances that led to the strike before discussing the strike in more detail. In particular, it analyzes the battle between Cesar Chavez's supporters, including farmworkers, and opponents as hundreds of incidents of violence erupted between the UFWOC and Teamsters Union during the strike's initial weeks. It also explores the various tactics employed by growers in response to the strike, the racial violence that erupted, the involvement of women such as Ethel Kennedy and Coretta Scott King, and the unprecedented cooperation seen between Mexican Americans and Mexicans.

Mexican American
Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue

in Durable Ethnicity: Mexican Americans and the Ethnic Core

Published in print: 2019 Published Online: August 2019
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines Mexican Americans’ understandings of their ethnic identities, including the meaning and importance they attribute to them and the relevance of ethnicity to their lives. It reveals how their ethnic expressions generally involve a mix of symbolic and consequential ethnicity but how ethnicity often manifests differently than the symbolic or optional expressions of ethnicity experienced by
many later-generation European Americans. Many of the respondents, to varying degrees, had experiences of lacking choice regarding their ethnicity, having to negotiate both Mexican and American communities, having a sense of linked fate to co-ethnics, and being stereotyped or discriminated against—all of which signal a consequential aspect to their ethnicities. The chapter also illustrates how the full Mexican American Study Project sample is distributed along a symbolic-consequential ethnicity continuum and how these distributions vary by factors such as urban area, gender, skin color, and generation.

Spanish Language
Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue
in Durable Ethnicity: Mexican Americans and the Ethnic Core
Published in print: 2019 Published Online: August 2019
Item type: chapter

This chapter explores Mexican American identity and ethnicity through the prism of the Spanish language, which is perhaps the central characteristic in ethnic culture and identity among Mexican Americans. However, whereas virtually all U.S.-born Mexican Americans speak English, not all speak Spanish. More precisely, Mexican Americans are distributed along a continuum of language competence that ranges from English only to complete fluency in both English and Spanish, with the majority of individuals falling somewhere in-between. For the respondents, English is their primary language, whereas the use of Spanish varies greatly, depending on the situation and each individual’s linguistic abilities. Thus, regardless of actual linguistic ability, language as a concept raises a number of issues regarding Mexican Americans’ own ethnic identities and their relationship to members of the ethnic community.

¡Ya Basta! Latino/a Protestant Activism in the Chicano/a and Farm Workers Movements
Paul Barton
in Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States
Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter
This chapter examines the responses of los Protestantes in the US Southwest to the Chicano/a and farm worker movements, illuminating their role in the public arena during the last thirty-five years. The primary goals are: firstly, to highlight the catalytic ability of a cadre of Chicano/a “mainline” Protestant leaders to move their churches and ecclesial organizations to endorse and support the Chicano/a and farm worker movements in Texas from the 1960s until the early 1980s; and secondly, to examine the three basic responses of Latino/a Protestants to these social justice movements (solidarity, ambivalence and indifference, and opposition). As the Chicano/a Protestants led their church co-faithful into the public struggle of these popular movements, they caused a realignment of loyalties among a number of “mainline” Latino/a Protestants. Ethnic affiliation became as important to them as their denominational affiliation. Additionally, they promoted a theological understanding of the Gospel that embraced the oppressed and viewed the kingdom of God as a goal to strive for in contemporary society.

Conclusion
Edward Telles and Christina A. Sue

in Durable Ethnicity: Mexican Americans and the Ethnic Core

Published in print: 2019 Published Online: August 2019
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190221492.003.0006
Item type: chapter

This chapter summarizes the study’s findings regarding how U.S.-born Mexican American respondents negotiate the ethnic and American aspects of their identities, as well as the Spanish language, and their attitudes on immigration. Almost without exception, the American identity of the respondents remained constant, whereas the strength and meaningfulness of their ethnic background varied by individual and context. The chapter then expounds on the concept of the ethnic core as necessary for understanding the experiences of Mexican Americans, as well as other groups, and why it fills explanatory gaps left by theories of assimilation and race. Finally, it assesses the likelihood that ethnicity will remain durable for Mexican Americans in the future based on a variety of factors.
“The Lord Requires Justice”: Lessons on Leadership from the African American Church for Mexican American Catholics
Alberto López Pulido and Santos C. Vega

In Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States

Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011
Item type: chapter

Publisher: Oxford University Press DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195162271.003.0015

In an attempt to understand the relationship between religion and political leadership for Mexican American Roman Catholics, this chapter compares and contrasts a Mexican American Roman Catholic Church with an African American Baptist Church to demonstrate strategies for political and civic engagement implemented by the African American Church. These experiences serve as examples and teachings that Mexican American Roman Catholics can learn in order to foster and increase civic and political involvement in their communities. The chapter presents a structural, historical, and theological analysis of both religious institutions. It concludes by underscoring the important role and function of the national parish in the history of the American Catholic Church, the Cursillo and National Encuentro movements. It recommends these institutional strategies as viable avenues for political and civic engagement for Mexican American Roman Catholics in the United States.