

CHAPTER III

EXTRINSIC THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Cultural Identity Theory

3.1.1 Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a social theory focuses on how identities are constructed, negotiated, and understood through the process of representation and social contexts. Hall, in his book *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (2017), argued that cultural identity is constructed through historical and cultural processes rather than only inherited or given in our genes. It is formed by nature through interactions with others and is shaped by the cultural and historical contexts in which individuals find themselves (Hall, 2017:127). Cultural identity associate with sharing the same language, common customs, physical feature, traditions, ethnos and social values. Those can create a bond and a sense of belonging of a person within an ethnic group.

Cultural identity does not merely emerge from the historical construction of a nation; it is also shaped by various discourses and systems of representation. Hall assert that identities such as English, British, American, or Jamaican by the way shared meanings are represented and shaped within national cultures throughout different historical periods (2017:137). As a symbolic community, a community has an ability to create identity and foster loyalty. In this context, Mexican immigrants as a nation created a new identity which is known as Chicanos. This

identity is a blend of Mexican nationalism and their experiences in America, resulting in a new national identity.

3.1.2 Family Values

History can shape a person's identity. Without the past, we cannot claim that we have an identity. Hall states that cultural identity is not a fixed essence since it shaped and transformed historically and culturally (2017:127). As societies become more interconnected, family values can also change over time due to the influence of globalization, modernization, and social changes. Family values include gender roles, family structure, religion and beliefs, parenting styles, customs and moral values, the importance of family in social life, etc.

3.1.3 Sense of Belonging

The sense of belonging refers to how a person feels emotionally connected in a group not only because of sharing the same language and customs, also because of an ethnos. Ethnos is a form of cultural identity whereas the people in an ethnic are connected by sharing cultural identity, history, traditions and social values (Hall, 2017:107). Hall describes ethnos as “kith and kin,” based on “blood and soil” is part of cultural identity, which brings a strong sense of culture as a home—a place of origin where they are connected through constructed bonds (2017:107-108). In this context, ethnos as a heritage creates a strong bond, where sharing history, traditions, experiences, and common values develops a sense of belonging within an ethnic group.

3.1.4 Cultural Acculturation

Besides being influenced by history and culture, cultural identity can also be formed through cultural differences. Hall argues that cultural differences create a cultural identity that is more diverse and complex. The differences (such as culture, identity, values, etc.) are produced and adapt through hybridization; as a result, new identities emerge from the mixture of various elements and the outcome of an ongoing process of adaptation (2017:117). In this context, "difference" refers to the way cultural, social, or individual identity is formed through the interaction and intersection of various cultural elements. As a result, many new identities are emerging specifically from these hybrid and fragmented points of difference. This hybridization is evident in various aspects of life, such as food, music, language, social practices and values.

3.2 The History of Mexican Immigrants in the United States

The history of Mexican immigrants in the United States has been influenced by economic, social, and political factors. After Mexico lost its northern territories following the Mexican-American War with the signing of the 'Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo' in 1848, Mexicans began migrating to the United States. The discovery of gold in 1848 prompted an influx of up to 20,000 skilled miners from Sonora and Zacatecas to California, though many were forced out of the mines by the early 1850s. Despite a significant number returning to Mexico, this migration likely represented the largest movement northward to California compared to any

previous migration during the Spanish (1771–1821) and Mexican (1821–1848) periods.

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, Mexicans continued crossing the border, with most settling in the mining towns of southern Arizona or on ranches and farms in southern Texas, where they remained close to their homeland. This massive wave of immigration was driven by political and economic instability in Mexico during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. By 1900, these two states alone were home to more than 80 percent of the 103,393 Mexican-born residents in the U.S. Although the gold rush initially brought a substantial number of migrants to California, the 1900 census recorded only 8,086 Mexican-born individuals living in the state. During this period, California—previously receiving relatively few Mexican immigrants before 1900—witnessed a sharp increase in the number of new arrivals.

After 1900, the expansion of mining operations in these states, Mexicans also played a vital role in building and maintaining railroad networks in the Southwest, which also facilitated their movement for work. However, the greatest demand for labor came from the rapid expansion of agriculture, especially in California, where irrigation transformed dry land into highly productive farms. By 1929, California led the Southwest in fruit and vegetable production, with Mexicans replacing Japanese workers as the primary agricultural labor force. The need for workers grew as Asian and European immigration declined due to restrictive policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and subsequent immigration laws. As a result, U.S. employers increasingly turned to Mexican labor, and although immigration

restrictions were eventually introduced, they were often delayed or ignored due to pressure from southwestern industries (Sanchez, 1993:18-19).

In 1917, the U.S. Congress passed an immigration law that made it harder for people from Europe and Mexico to enter the country. The law required immigrants to pass a reading test, undergo medical exams, pay a head tax, and prove they would not become a financial burden. To avoid these rules, many Mexicans began crossing the border illegally for the first time. The U.S. Border Patrol reinforced the idea that Mexicans were 'the others' or 'the alien' and often treating them unfairly. Some immigration officers were even members of the Ku Klux Klan, a racist group active in the El Paso area. Officials frequently discriminated against Mexicans, even those with legal documents. As a result, crossing the border became a difficult and humiliating experience, highlighting the growing divide between the U.S. and Mexico (Sanchez, 1993:55-58).

After World War II, Mexican workers became essential to the U.S. economy, especially in agriculture. For many Mexicans in Los Angeles, farm work was their first job, while others combined it with industrial labor to maintain a steady income throughout the year. Over time, experienced Mexican workers became familiar with the regional job market and used this knowledge to improve their economic situation. As one recruiter complained, "I get tired of hearing that twenty-nine cents is 'muy barato' [too cheap]." This shift in attitude challenged the stereotype of the "lazy Mexican," as workers increasingly refused low-paying or hazardous jobs (Sanchez, 1993:68-69).

After 1940, the segregation of Mexicans increased again as European ethnic groups left East Los Angeles, making room for Mexican immigrants. By 1960, residential segregation had become much more pronounced than it was in 1880. However, during the years in between, Los Angeles underwent rapid economic changes, and competition for housing and jobs among European, African American, and Asian newcomers temporarily lessened strict racial segregation. Instead, the city, divided by social class, developed a clear residential divide between its central and eastern areas and the rest of Los Angeles. The East Los Angeles "barrio" was never more ethnically diverse than it had been during the first four decades of the 20th century (Sanchez, 1993:76-77).

3.3 The Family and Community of Mexican-Americans

In a historical context, Mexican families are depicted as hierarchical, firmly patriarchal, and grounded in ancient traditions. A previous body of sociological literature portrayed the Mexican family as dysfunctional. This is influenced by psychoanalytic perspective, these studies stemmed from longstanding stereotypes that framed Mexicans as a "problem." They described Mexican families as authoritarian and controlled by male-dominated, which was seen as obstructing individual success and independence while encouraging passivity and dependence on family.

Moreover, Mexicans family also portrayed as problematic. First, they fail to acknowledge the diversity between Mexican immigrant families. In fact, there are diverse backgrounds, migration patterns, and ways in which they acculturate and adapt to American life. Second, Mexican families experienced both conflict and

agreement, with individual members sometimes disagreeing on decisions. These roles and opinions could shift over time as new situations emerged. Adolescence, for example, might bring tension, while crises like a parent's death or a marriage could strengthen family unity.

In addition, every Mexican immigrant adapted to life in the U.S., with families adjusting in different ways based on their circumstances, developing strategies to navigate change, and continuously shaping a new identity. There is the shift in Mexican immigrant family, where in order to maintain stability and tradition, the oppression of women was neglected. Chicano social scientists who examine the dynamics of Mexican immigrant families describe *la familia* as warm and affectionate, providing a supportive and stable environment even in hard times. In addition, Mexican families adapted and acculturated into American life in various aspects (Sanchez, 1993:130-131).