

THE LATIN COMMUNITY
ON MILWAUKEE'S NEAR SOUTH SIDE

by
John Gurda

Summer, 1976

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PREFACE

The Observatory is pleased to publish this manuscript on the Latin community of Milwaukee's South Side. It was written by John Gurda, a 29-year old native of Milwaukee. While Mr. Gurda is solely responsible for the contents of the document, the Observatory takes pride in being the instrument via which the contents become part of the knowledge base of the community.

As Mr. Gurda indicates, the Latin community on the South Side is the largest foreign-language community still in existence in the greater Milwaukee area. Contacts between that group and the larger community are constantly expanding. Contacts like these become easier and more meaningful when opportunities for mutual understanding and appreciation are expanded.

This document affords such an opportunity. It furnishes a backdrop against which both needs and contributions of the Spanish-speaking can be better understood. The Observatory would like to thank the author for his efforts. Mr. Gurda has worked for three years at a South Side community center and spent four years in research projects in the Milwaukee area. He is currently a graduate student in geography at UW-M, and plans to continue research on Milwaukee's ethnic groups, especially those who settled and developed the South Side. We look forward to those other manuscripts.

Miriam G. Palay
Program Director

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Milwaukee is the story of its ethnic groups. The city's founders and all of its first generation of settlers came here from other places, some from the eastern states, a handful from other parts of North America, and the overwhelming majority from Europe. There were so many immigrants by the late nineteenth century that Milwaukee was the most "foreign" city in the United States. The greatest number of residents were German, but the Poles, Italians, Greeks, Norwegians, Bohemians, Irishmen, and a number of other groups formed distinct and cohesive communities of their own. To an outsider walking through Milwaukee's neighborhoods in the 1890's, the city might have seemed like a loosely knit collection of European villages, each with its own language, customs, smells, sounds, and physical appearance.

We are now two generations removed from that period in Milwaukee's history. Many descendants of the immigrants live in the neighborhoods built by their forefathers, and ethnic identity remains important to a large number of Milwaukeeans, but all of the European groups have changed considerably. The languages have been lost, for the most part, intermarriage with other groups is common; and ethnic foods are prepared only on special occasions. There is only one neighborhood in which a foreign language is commonly spoken, in which the customs, smells, sounds, and physical appearance give the outsider a sense of what the various urban villages in nineteenth-century Milwaukee might have been like, and that is among the Latins on Milwaukee's near South Side.

This research report describes the Latin community in general terms, and it treats the community as one of the most recent chapters in the ethnic history of Milwaukee. The community's residents have a unique combination of backgrounds, but their experience has been similar in

many ways to that of the earlier European groups. They live in the same kind of physical isolation, they have the same internal diversity (based largely on place of origin), and they feel the same pressures to become "Americanized." The Latin community offers an opportunity for the study of cultural processes which have been an important part of the Milwaukee experience, and it is the only community in which the processes can be studied at first hand.

The report is divided into two principal sections. The first section describes the Latin community from an external viewpoint, and provides information about the community's history, geography, and demographics. This section attempts to indicate the degree of homogeneity in the Latin neighborhood - the degree to which the area's residents are alike. It is based largely on documentary sources - historical records, census data city directories, newspaper clippings, and published reports.

The second section offers a "view from within," a look at some of the cultural aspects of the Latin community. It attempts to indicate the cultural solidarity of the community, and is especially concerned with the presence of diverse groups among the Latins on the South Side. This section is based entirely on field work, including in-depth interviews with community leaders, informal interviews with community residents in a variety of settings, and direct "witnessing" in parks, taverns, playgrounds, public hearings, and restaurants.

A final section summarizes the major elements of the report and draws conclusions about the homogeneity and cultural solidarity of the Latin community.

(A note on terminology: A number of terms are popularly used to identify the cultural groups within and outside the community. Most

residents refer to themselves as "Mexicans" or "Puerto Ricans" in normal speech, rather than "Mexican-Americans" or some other hyphenated term. They less frequently refer to themselves as "Latinos," which indicates all Spanish-speaking groups. In terms of the Mexican community, a distinction is often made between natives of Mexico and natives of Texas. The latter are called "Chicanos" or "Tejanos." "Chicano" can also refer to a political activist who is working for greater Latin self-determination. Non-Latin Caucasians are popularly referred to as "whites" (gueros--"fair-skinned," blancos--"whites"), even though "white" genes are an important element in the Latin racial heritage. "Anglo" is also commonly used, especially by younger people and community activists. In this report "Latin" is used as shorthand for "Spanish-speaking," and "Anglo" as literal shorthand for "English-speaking." "Mexican" and "Puerto Rican" are used in the popular sense, but "Chicano" is used when it is important to identify natives of Texas.)

II

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE:

HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF THE LATIN COMMUNITY

The documentary research and the interviews both indicate that the Latin community has been rather isolated from the cultural mainstream of Milwaukee from its earliest years, and that this somewhat insular condition persists to the present, especially in terms of residential clustering and population characteristics. The history, geography, and demographics all suggest a high degree of homogeneity in the community. Each element will be discussed separately.

Historical Background

The area which houses the greatest concentration of Milwaukee's Latins was known as Walker's Point in the city's earliest days. It was named after George Walker, a fur trader-land speculator who came to Milwaukee from Virginia in 1834 and established a trading post in the vicinity of South First and Florida Streets. Walker's Point was one of three settlements in pioneer Milwaukee, competing for settlers with Kilbourntown and Juneautown, located on the west and east banks of the Milwaukee River near today's Wisconsin Avenue. Although settlement progressed slowly at first, Walker's Point was a rather prosperous neighborhood by the late 1850's. The earliest residents were Yankees, Germans, and Norwegians. Much of the housing stock in the area dates back to this period, and Walker's Point is considered the last relatively intact nineteenth-century neighborhood in Milwaukee. A historic preservation effort was organized in the late 1960's by the Junior League of Milwaukee, a rather affluent women's group, and was incorporated independently as Historic Walker's Point in 1973. George Walker's name is preserved in a few business establishments, a street, a junior high school, and the community's only park.

The earliest residents of Walker's Point had migrated to newer housing south and west of the area by the late nineteenth century, and they were largely replaced by a new wave of European immigrants, including Bohemians, Irishmen, Slovenians, Poles, and more Germans.

The first Latins in the area arrived in the early 1920's. They were Mexicans who were brought here to work in the Pfister and Vogel tannery at the southern end of the Sixth Street viaduct. Most were young males, and a number of them were from the village of Tangancicuaro in the state of Michoacan. There were at least 100 men in the original party, and they were recruited for several reasons. In the first place, restrictive immigration laws passed in the 1920's cut off the flow of cheap labor from southern and central Europe, but allowed relatively free immigration from other sections of the western hemisphere. A less significant factor was the depletion of Milwaukee's labor force during World War I. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Mexicans were needed to break a strike by European immigrants working at the tannery.

This first group was housed in a dormitory set up in one of the company's factory buildings, and the conditions were not unlike those of a prison camp. Access to the outside world was severely restricted, and conflict with the European workers occurred frequently. In time, however, members of the group were joined by their families and filtered out into housing located near the tannery, initiating a new stage in the cultural succession of the neighborhood.

The Depression forced many of the original Mexicans out of their jobs, and relief agencies commonly paid their fares back to Mexico. The influx resumed when economic conditions improved, and the Mexicans were joined by itinerant farm workers from the Southwest who dropped out of

the migrant stream and took factory jobs. Tanneries and foundries offered the principal employment opportunities, a situation which continues to the present day.

The first Puerto Ricans arrived in Milwaukee in the late 1940's. Like the Mexicans, most of them were single men or men who were working to support families who had not emigrated with them. The greatest number had worked on sugar plantations in Puerto Rico, and most of them found jobs in tanneries, foundries, and factories. Many of them intended to return to Puerto Rico after they had accumulated enough money in Milwaukee. Their initial settlement was less concentrated than the Mexican colony. Most of them were spread out along State Street from Jefferson Street to Thirty-fifth Street, with the greatest concentration east of the Milwaukee River. There were, however, enough Puerto Ricans on the near South Side to form the nucleus of an independent community.

The Mexicans, arriving during a time of labor unrest, were not received with open arms, but the Puerto Ricans, for some inexplicable reason, were given a rather warm reception, at least by some segments of the community. In 1952 a "temporary Puerto Rican committee" of Anglo community leaders was formed to ease some of the newcomers' adjustment problems. The committee published pamphlets on Milwaukee's "customs," churches, and schools for the Puerto Rican community, and attempted to inform the police that such behavior as sitting on street corners and playing guitars was a Puerto Rican custom and not a willful disturbance of the peace. A police inspector whom the Milwaukee Journal described as "sympathetic" suggested that the Puerto Ricans wear identification cards to avoid trouble with the police. One group even held a dance for the young Puerto Rican men, with hostesses recruited from Milwaukee colleges and church groups. In 1953 the Marquette University Department of Sociology conducted a reasonably complete survey of the

Puerto Rican community, some of whose findings are described in the preceding paragraph. (This marks the only time that either of the major Latin groups were studied in any detail.) This attitude of neighborly concern was apparently short-lived, for there is nothing in the historical record of the last twenty years to suggest that the Puerto Ricans were accorded special treatment in any sense after the first round of welcomes.

Most of the Puerto Ricans who have settled here since the 1950's have apparently come directly from the island, although a smaller number have spent time in the large Puerto Rican colonies in New York and Chicago. Many are natives of Arecibo, a fairly large city on the northern coast of the island.

The Mexican and Puerto Rican segments of the Latin community on the South Side have both grown steadily since the first years of settlement. Economic opportunity continues to be the principal motive for immigration to Milwaukee, coupled with the presence of relatives and friends who already have jobs here. The conditions which favored the establishment of a separate Latin colony still exist today, and the stream of in-migrants continues.

Population Geography

The historical background of the Latin community suggests that the community's members came to Milwaukee for similar reasons, and other data suggest that they settled in similar locations. The greatest number of Milwaukee's Latins live on the near South Side, close to the employers who provided jobs for the first in-migrants. (The next largest Latin community is on the near North Side, around the intersection of Holton and Center Streets, and is composed largely of Puerto Ricans. There are smaller concentrations of Latins on the near West Side of Milwaukee,

between Twentieth and Fortieth Streets and between North Avenue and the Menomonee Valley.)

The exact number of Latins on the South Side is difficult determine. The 1970 Census found 3818 "persons of Spanish language" in an area extending from Lake Michigan to Sixteenth Street and from the Menomonee Valley to Lapham Street. The distribution map of Spanish-surnamed households prepared for this report indicates that there are approximately 5300 Spanish-surnamed persons living in the same area. Individual informants estimated the total Latin population in the area between 5000 and 20,000. The census data and the map prepared for this report are probably both low estimates, for various reasons, and it is probably safe to place the Latin population on the South Side between 8,000 and 10,000 persons.

The geographic borders of the Latin community are easier to define than the size of the population. The 1970 Census provided data on persons of Spanish language (i.e., persons living in households in which Spanish was the mother tongue of the head and/or the spouse) for tracts in which there were at least 400 such persons. The only tracts in the Milwaukee area which met the minimum requirements were the five tracts extending from South First Street to South Sixteenth Street, and from Florida Street to Lapham Street.

Residents interviewed during this project substantially agreed with the census findings. South First Street and Florida/Pierce Street are "given" borders because the areas east and north of those streets are non-residential. South Sixteenth Street was identified as the western border of the community by most informants, although a smaller number identified South Twenty-Seventh Street. Definitions of the southern border varied, but the average response was approximately Mitchell Street. All informants found it easy to think of the community in geographic terms and all stressed

the continuing growth of the Latin population. Most said that Latins could be found with some frequency as far west as South Thirty-Seventh Street and as far south as Oklahoma Avenue.

In order to check both the outdated census data and the subjective responses of my informants, I prepared a distribution map of Spanish-surnamed households in relation to other households for 1975 (following page), using city directory data for the area identified as Latin by the 1970 census and my informants. There are certainly problems involved in equating surnames with cultural background, but this is perhaps the most reliable technique short of a complete survey.

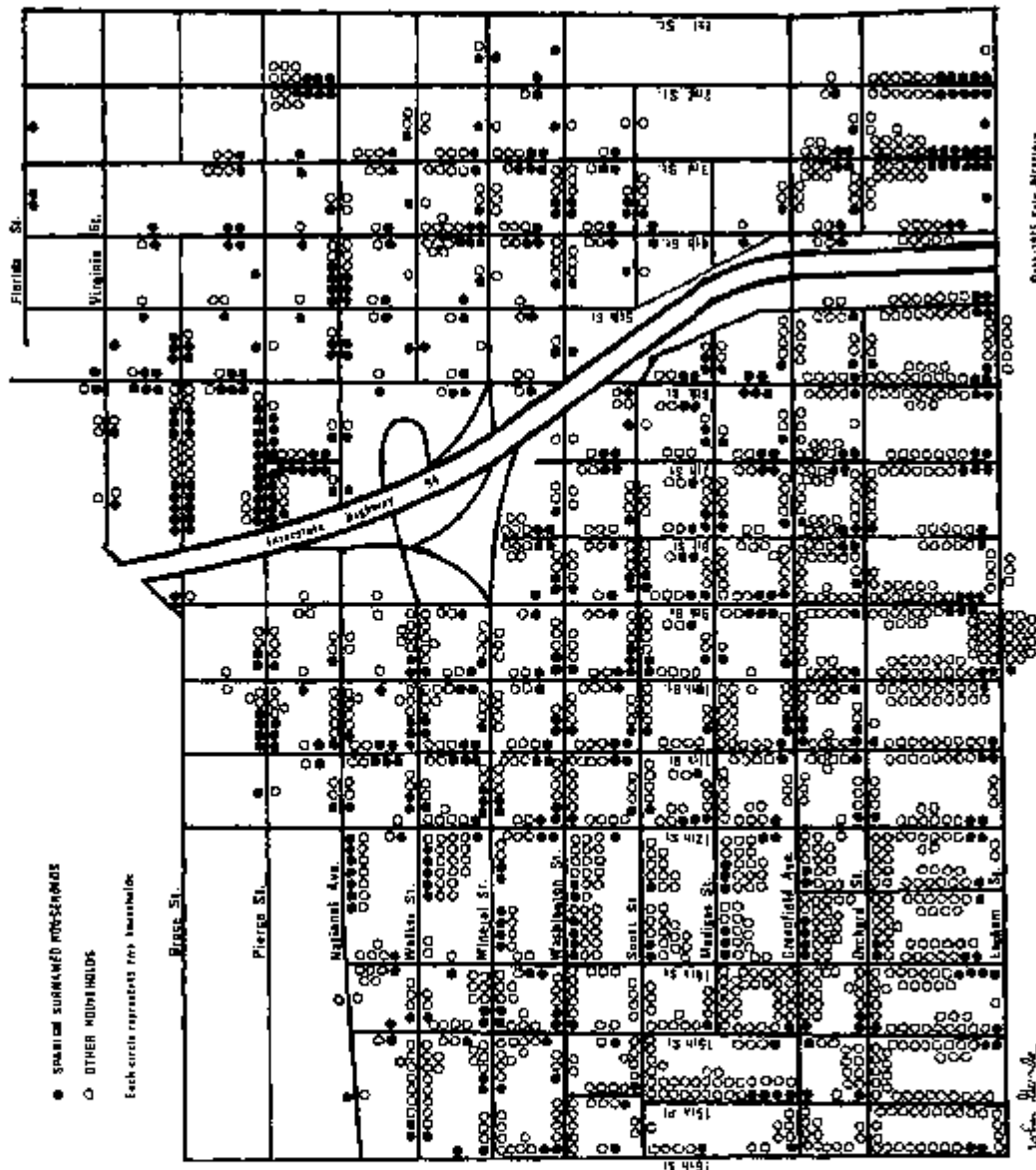
The map suggests a number of things about the Latin community. First of all, the area east of the freeway is heavily non-residential. The intersection of Sixth and National is the heart of the business community, and small businesses are spread out in all directions from the intersection. Factories, warehouses, and trucking terminals cover the northern and eastern sections of the area, and schools and playgrounds account for some of the gaps in the central section of the area.

The area east of the freeway has the densest concentration of Spanish-surnamed households. There is a secondary concentration on the other side of the freeway, east of Twelfth Street and north of Greenfield Avenue. The density declines rather rapidly to the south and west of those streets. The southwest section of the area is the most heavily settled residential district, and non-Spanish-surnamed households are in the majority there.

It is important to note that the census data, the distribution map, and field observation all strongly suggest that Latins are a minority in the area generally designated as Latin. They predominate in the area east of the

SPANISH-SURNAMED HOUSEHOLDS

IN RELATION TO OTHER HOUSEHOLDS, 1975



freeway, especially in the vicinity of the tanneries on the southern edge of the Menomonee Valley, but their density decreases rapidly to the southwest. The fact that Latins still consider the entire area their own territory may indicate the strength of their self-image as a community.

Demographic Characteristics

The 1970 U.S. Census, as described earlier, collected data for persons of Spanish language residing in the area outlined by the distribution map. The data are more than seven years old and are probably based on an undercount, but no comparable studies have been done since the census was taken. Despite its shortcomings, the census information strongly indicates that the Latin community differs sharply from the Milwaukee norm in a number of important socio-economic variables. The percentages and medians listed below are based on a total of 3818 persons of Spanish language and 717,099 residents of the City of Milwaukee.

Latins on Milwaukee's South Side have received much less education than most city residents. The Latins in the five census tracts included in the distribution map had a median of 7.3 school years completed in 1970, compared with 11.9 for the city as a whole. Only 12.3% of the Latins over twenty-five years of age were high school graduates, in comparison with 49.2% of all Milwaukee residents.

The South Side's Latins also tend to have larger households and lower incomes than most Milwaukeeans. The average number of persons per household in the Latin community in 1970 was 5.01, compared with 1.96 for the City of Milwaukee as a whole. The median annual family income was \$7731 for the Latins and \$10,262 for all Milwaukeeans. 19.88% of the Latins were subsisting below the federally established poverty level, and 11.4% of all city residents.

The pattern of blue-collar employment established in previous decades persists for today's Latins. 71.4% of the Latin males on the South Side had blue-collar jobs in 1970, in contrast to a figure of 40.4% for all Milwaukee males in the labor force. Milwaukee has a higher ratio of blue-collar workers than most other American cities, and the Latins are considerably above the city average.

Latins are also more mobile than other Milwaukeeans. In 1970, 58.7% of the Latins on the South Side had moved in the previous five years, compared with a figure of 47.3% for the city as a whole. Most of the movement took place within the City of Milwaukee, and one informant noted that there was a great deal of "jumping around" within the neighborhood itself.

The statistics indicate that the Latins are extremely disadvantaged educationally, economically, and occupationally, and that the presence of larger households may tend to stretch incomes beyond their limits. The situation is most severe for Latins living north of Scott Street and east of Fifth Street. The two tracts which comprise that area (the most densely populated Latin tracts in the city) ranked at the bottom of the scale consistently, even in comparison with the adjacent Latin tracts. These population characteristics indicate that the Latin community is indeed separate from the rest of the city, and that virtually all demographic comparisons are unfavorable.

III

THE VIEW FROM WITHIN: CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE LATIN COMMUNITY

The information included in the previous section suggests the relative homogeneity of the Latin community on the near South Side. Latins come to the same place for the same reasons and live under the same conditions. This section will describe some of the cultural aspects of the Latin community in greater detail. It is based entirely on field work, and the data will be organized according to five separate categories: tangible culture (language, diet, celebrations, place of origin, and returns there), attitudinal culture (attitudes toward family, religion, and work), groups (the presence or absence of subgroups in the population), neighborhood orientation (spheres of activity, shopping patterns), and external relations (Latin-Anglo contact, and indications of prejudice and acceptance).

Tangible Culture

Language--70% to 80% of the Latins on Milwaukee's South Side are bilingual. Approximately 20%, most of them new arrivals and elderly people, speak only Spanish, and a much smaller ratio speaks only English. No one is perfectly bilingual, and age is the principal factor determining the dominance of one language or the other. Adults who came to Milwaukee in their maturity tend to use Spanish in the home, but young people, especially those born in the United States and educated in American schools, tend to be more comfortable with English. This is generally more true of grade-school children than teenagers. One informant complained, "When I speak Spanish to my kids, they answer in English. When my sister comes to visit from Mexico and they have to speak Spanish, they do it in a broken tongue." His comment was echoed by several other Latins.

Diet--Traditional foods remain a basic part of the diet of most Mexican and Puerto Rican households. "Every family eats rice and beans every day," said one native of Mexico, but other informants suggested that "American" foods are a regular part of their diets. "It's meat and potatoes and salad one day, and tostadas the next--it depends on the husband," said one woman who has lived in Milwaukee for twenty-seven years. Puerto Ricans tend to be somewhat more Americanized in their culinary habits than Mexicans. One native of Puerto Rico said, "Sure we eat rice and beans, but my kids like hamburgers." Generally speaking, traditional foods are an important part of the diet of most Latins, but not to the exclusion of non-Latin foods.

Celebrations--The highlight of the year's social calendar for many Mexicans is the Independence Day Parade on September 16, commemorating the birth of Mexico as a free state. Cinco de mayo (May 5) is a celebration of the overthrow of the Napoleonic army by Mexican troops. In years past it was celebrated at the South Side Armory (demolished in the 1960's) with dancing, speeches, and poetry reading, but the holiday has diminished in importance in the recent past. The major Mexican religious feast is for Our Lady of Guadalupe, a December event commemorating the appearance of the Virgin Mary to a Mexican peasant.

Puerto Ricans celebrate Grito de lares on September 23 in commemoration of a battle with European forces on the island. It is popularly known as Independence Day, even though Puerto Rico has been a United States "commonwealth" for many years. The principal religious feast is in honor of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Puerto Rico, and is observed on June 24.

Both groups have strongly Christian backgrounds, and they celebrate Christmas and Easter with as much enthusiasm as Anglo-Americans.

Place of Origin--65% of the Latins on Milwaukee's South Side are Mexican, 35% are Puerto Rican, and a small fraction are from other countries in the Caribbean and South and Central America. Within the Mexican group, natives of Texas (Chicanos) outnumber natives of Mexico,

Many Latins return to their ancestral homes as often as possible, on a yearly basis if finances allow. The vast majority have relatives in Mexico, Texas, or Puerto Rico, and are in regular contact with them. It is also common practice for relatives to visit Milwaukee for extended periods of time.

Attitudinal Culture

It is evident that many tangible elements of Latin culture have survived in Milwaukee. The situation is only slightly less clear for some of the intangible, attitudinal cultural aspects of the Latin community.

Family--"Unity" is a word that Latins use repeatedly to characterize their family lives. "The family is our basic unit," said one Puerto Rican, and "family" extends to aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and in-laws. There is a great deal of mutual support in times of crisis, and social visits are frequent and spontaneous. A native of Mexico whose father married a Polish woman during an early sojourn in Milwaukee was greeted with indignant surprise when he "just dropped in" on his Polish relatives in Milwaukee. The elderly are also treated with more respect than in many Anglo families, and it is virtually unthinkable to send an elderly relative to a nursing home.

Latin families tend to be somewhat man-centered, especially Mexican families. A woman is traditionally expected to stay at home, and it is considered inappropriate for another man to visit her when she is alone, even if only on business. The father metes out punishment, and expects good

behavior from his children, especially his daughters. One Mexican father has virtually disowned his teenaged daughters because they "listened to their friends instead of me" and led active social lives. "A girl should go one place with her man. She goes here and there, to Puerto Rican dances, to this one's house and that one's house--how does that look? Terrible. For a man it looks good, but for a girl...terrible."

Religion--The vast majority of Latins, particularly the Mexicans, have been raised as Roman Catholics. The church still occupies a role of central importance in many families, and religious observance is often considered a woman's role. Mothers lead their children in prayer at bedtime, and pray the rosary during sacred feasts. There are indications, however, that the ecumenical movement and the growing laxity of many American Catholics have somewhat diminished the piety of many Latins. Several informants stated that church attendance was declining and that some strict Catholics were "loosening up" considerably.

Work--The Latins interviewed during this project indicated that members of their groups were good workers and generally took pride in their jobs, but that they were not as compulsive about work as many Anglos. One Chicano stated that his people "take time" for their family and friends, and that they viewed work as a "necessity for survival." A Mexican who worked his way up from tannery laborer to superintendant prefers Mexicans to Anglos or blacks because "they work harder" and because "they're easier to move around." He considers them less likely to complain when their shifts or assignments are changed, and less likely to invoke the union when a dispute arises.

Groups

This phase of the research for this report yielded a great deal of data about

the presence of separate and distinct groups in the Latin community. The principal factors determining the nature of the groups are age, politics, and place of origin.

Age--There appears to be a rather distinct "generation gap" in the Latin community. Young people who were born in Milwaukee or came at an early age tend to become acculturated much more quickly than their parents. They are in continuous contact with the English language, American foods, and Anglo classmates in the public schools, and they have a steady intake of non-Latin television programs. As a result, they speak English more readily than their parents and are socialized in patterns somewhat different from those of their parents. By the time they are teenagers, many young Latins begin to challenge the strict supervision which characterizes many Latin families. Young women, who in the previous generation would have been escorted to dances by their parents and lived at home until marriage, make their own friends and sometimes resent the intrusion of their parents. Perhaps the majority of Latin parents accept the situation and adjust accordingly, but some, like the man described earlier who disowned his daughters because they were disobedient, cannot adjust, and their homes are torn by generational conflict. At any rate, the more rapid acculturation of the young people puts an unwelcome pressure on many Latin families.

At the same time, paradoxically, the young people tend to be more openly (even stridently) proud of their heritage than their elders. Patches with "Mexico" or "Puerto Rico" blazoned across them are commonly seen on teenagers' coats, and many young people refer to their heritage frequently in normal speech. This seems to be especially true of the Puerto Ricans. At one youth center, a number of Puerto Rican teenagers habitually sign "P.R." after their names on the nightly attendance sheet. No such practice exists for the Mexican teens.

Politics--Generally speaking, the political climate of the Latin community is marked by disunity and indifference. There is very little participation

in traditional party politics, voter registrations are below average, and Latins run for public office only infrequently. Two Puerto Ricans called their people "passive," and several other Latins said that members of their community had no reason to participate actively in a system which has given them so little.

At the same time, a number of community leaders are working actively for causes which they feel are of special interest to the Latin community. The Latin American Union for Civil Rights (LAUCR) is the focal point of political organization in the community. In the past, LAUCR and similar groups have protested police brutality, harrassment by immigration officials, budget cuts in social service programs, and the educational policies of the public schools and local universities. Many of the political organizers are adept at confrontation politics and are veterans of numerous marches and demonstrations.

Widespread support exists for some issues, e.g., bilingual education, but some Latins consider the local politicians a vocal minority. LAUCR is identified as a Chicano organization. This keeps some Puerto Ricans away. Further, other Latins, older ones particularly, are as distrustful of the militancy of such groups as Anglo middle-class parents were of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 1960's.

At any rate, the political scene is considerably quieter now than in previous years. La Raza Unida, a Chicano political group which has polarized some communities in Texas, is only minimally organized in Milwaukee. A few informants said that the local political leaders were "looking for something to do." One executive of a Latin social service agency felt that traditional authorities have become more flexible and that there is less need for confrontation.

Place of Origin--Although age and politics are responsible for some divisions in the community, place of origin is by far the most important factor in determining the nature of Latin group life. The three major cultural groups--Mexicans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans--are different from each other in some aspects of tangible culture, they maintain separate institutions, and they occasionally find themselves in conflict.

There is, first of all, what might be termed the "hometown effect." Individuals from all three groups sometimes tend to live near people from their own localities in their homelands, and to socialize with them regularly, especially in taverns. One native of Tangancicuaro in the State of Michoacan said, "If you're from Montgomery, Alabama, and you're here five or six years, you don't know anyone. Then you meet three or four guys from Montgomery. You talk about what street you lived on and things about your home, and you're friends. It's human nature." This dynamic applies especially to Mexicans.

In terms of the larger groups, there are significant differences between Mexicans and Chicanos. Most Chicanos were raised in the United States economic system, and they are both more conscious of the prejudice of the larger Anglo society and more likely to assimilate its culture. Mexicans tend to be more traditional in their attitudes and behavior. This difference is reflected in the dialects of the two groups. Mexicans speak Spanish "clean," in the words of one informant, and Chicanos speak what is sometimes called "Spanglish," a hybridized mixture of Spanish and English.

Although Chicanos are numerically dominant on the South Side, there are occasional signs that Mexicans consider themselves more "pure" than their Texas counterparts. "The Tejanos aren't really Mexicans like we are," said one native of Guadalajara. "They're kind of half-and-half." Later she called them "a lower class of Mexicans."

There are differences between Chicanos and Mexicans, but the word "Mexican" is usually applied without differentiation to both groups. They have more in common with each other than either group has with the Puerto Ricans, and the distinction between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans is the most important element in Latin group life on the South Side.

There are, first of all, some rather tangible differences between the two major groups. Mexicans commonly distinguish between their Spanish-Indian backgrounds and the black strain in many Puerto Rican families. This is said to account for curlier hair among the Puerto Ricans. There are also linguistic differences. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans often use different words for the same things, speak at different rates of speed, and inflect some words differently. An initial "r" for example, is sounded as "h" in the Puerto Rican dialect. In terms of diet, the two groups use similar ingredients but prepare them differently. "We don't smash our beans," said one Puerto Rican, "and our rice isn't so soggy." Puerto Ricans also use different spices (generally less "hot" than Mexican seasonings), are more inclined to eat stews, and they use fruits, especially bananas, more frequently in their dishes. The tortilla is almost exclusively a Mexican food. There are also differences in musical tastes. La salsa, which one informant described as a "spiced-up rhythm-and-blues," is a typically Puerto Rican musical style, and sounds strange to most Mexicans.

All of these differences, which amount to the difference between a Caribbean culture and a mainland Latin culture, are sometimes stated so strongly that the groups appear to have little in common. "Mexican and Puerto Rican is like Polish and German," said one Mexican. "Two different nationalities." The result is a rather clear separation between the two groups. Taverns, softball teams, churches, and social service agencies are all commonly identified as "belonging" to one group or the other. One Puerto Rican bartender easily named eight Puerto Rican taverns on the near

South Side, and estimated with less certainty that there were ten or twelve Mexican bars in the same area. Although the distinctions are not formalized and crossovers are fairly common, nearly every Latin bar on the South Side is either "Mexican" or "Puerto Rican." The same situation is true of the churches. Holy Trinity--Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church is predominantly Latin, and most of its Latin members are Mexican. St. Patrick's Catholic Church, only eight blocks away, is still primarily Anglo, but its 140 Latin families are almost all Puerto Rican. Mexicans and Puerto Ricans also patronize different grocery stores and restaurants, and are even somewhat separated residentially. Puerto Ricans are concentrated west of the expressway, especially in the section of the Latin community north of Scott Street.

Not surprisingly, the two groups tend to have somewhat uncomplimentary attitudes toward each other. The Mexicans arrived in Milwaukee first and are numerically dominant, and they tend to look down on the Puerto Ricans as "newcomers." "They just came here because they had nothing to eat," said one Mexican who came to Milwaukee in 1946. And a Mexican woman whose daughter is dating a Puerto Rican boy said, "I hope nothing serious develops. Then I'd have a Puerto Rican son-in-law." The Puerto Ricans, on the other hand, tend to consider themselves more tolerant and easy-going than the Mexicans, and they express pride in the fact that all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth and don't have to cross any borders to find jobs in the States. Although Puerto Ricans, as noted earlier, make up 35% of the Latin population on the South Side, the community's formal organizations are usually dominated by Mexicans. The Latin American Chamber of Commerce supposedly exists for all Latins, but one of its major activities is organizing the Mexican Independence Day parade.

The differences between the two groups and the existence of somewhat prejudiced attitudes occasionally result in open conflict. An old Serbian

gentleman sat next to me at a bar on Fifth and National and said, "Mexicans don't like Puerto Ricans, Puerto Ricans don't like Mexicans. They fight like Serbians and Croatians." Tavern brawls have occurred as a result of Mexican-Puerto Rican differences and there are reports of occasional fights on school yards.

There is a danger, however, of exaggerating the differences and the conflicts between the two groups. Most informants agreed that the groups are less antagonistic now than they were several years ago, and there are instances of shared effort. The activist elements of the Latin community have presented a united front in some political campaigns, and cooperation between Mexican and Puerto Rican community leaders is generally very good. The young people of the community seem to be less conscious of the differences between their groups than their elders, and in some schools the Latins, both Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, are as cohesive a group as the "freaks" and "greasers" among the Anglo students.

In an earlier day on the South Side, Poles and Germans found themselves at odds in the same neighborhoods, but as time passed many of their differences were submerged in a "white" identity. The South Side's Mexicans and Puerto Ricans maintain separate and sometimes antagonistic identities today, but their ultimate unity as a "brown" people may prove more important in the long run.

Neighborhood Orientation

As noted in the section on population geography in the first part of this report, none of the Latins interviewed had any difficulty in defining the borders of their neighborhood. They generally agreed that the neighborhood extends from First Street to Sixteenth Street, and from the Menomonee Valley to approximately Mitchell Street. The fact that this area

is designated as Latin but is dominated numerically by non-Latins is rather strong evidence of a viable Latin subculture on the South Side. It is possible for a Latin to live in the area, shop in the stores, visit relatives, socialize in the taverns, and even work in a tannery without speaking a word of English. Accordingly, many Latins spend practically all of their lives within the confines of the neighborhood. They buy groceries at the small Latin stores scattered throughout the area, or at the larger supermarkets near Mitchell Street. (A Mexican woman said, "My husband came home from the A&P yesterday and said 'The place isn't American any more. Everyone was speaking Spanish!'") Clothing, furniture, appliances and other "shopper's goods" are generally purchased on Mitchell Street or from the second-hand stores near Sixth and National. Several informants said that Latins were beginning to "get outside the neighborhood" more frequently in recent years, for shopping, recreation, and even housing, but at the present time most Latins live fairly close to home.

External Relations

The preceding sections of this report give some indication of the internal dynamics of the Latin community, but the research for this report was also designed to indicate the nature of the relationship between Latins and Anglos: how much contact there is between them, and what attitudes prevail when they meet.

An important aspect of Latin-Anglo contact is the use of Anglo expertise by the Latin community. Virtually every community group and political organization in the area has received financial and/or technical assistance from Anglos, and there are even some community projects which are directed by Anglos. Historic Walker's Point, Inc., an architectural preservation project, is recognized as a predominantly Anglo program. It is not universally

known in the community, but those Latins who do know about it have generally favorable attitudes. The only person who expressed negative feelings about Historic Walker's Point during the interview phase of this project was a political activist, who said, "Save some old houses? What for? It doesn't solve the housing problem."

For the average Latin who is not involved in community programs, contact with Anglos takes place in a variety of settings. There are Anglos in every block in the Latin community, and more often than not they outnumber the Latins. Anglo caseworkers visit the homes of families who receive public assistance. Anglo teachers are responsible for the education of most of the children. Most of the businesses in the area are owned by Anglos. Most of the policemen who patrol the neighborhood are Anglos. There is ample opportunity for the two cultural groups to observe each other. Despite the frequent contact, the average Latin's primary group usually consists of other Latins.

In terms of the prevailing attitudes of the Anglos, there is no question that the majority of Latins on the South Side have had direct experiences of prejudice. This ranges from hearing "You Mexican!" when a teenager crosses an elderly Anglo's yard to losing a job for no apparent reason. The local office of the Commission on Community Relations receives more complaints of job discrimination than any other issue. Merchants are also criticized for their prejudicial attitudes. One Puerto Rican girl said, "I always know I'm being watched when I'm in a store," and an older Mexican woman was fingerprinted when she paid for a purchase with a personal check, even though she could show four credit cards and the amount of the check was only six dollars. Most experiences of prejudice are more petty than these. Virtually every Latin on the South Side has heard the word "spic" often enough to know what it means.

Many Latins, in turn, are somewhat suspicious of Anglos. Some of the more embittered young people use the word "honky" when referring to Anglos. (The use of "honky" rather than "gringo" may indicate the influence of black street culture.) There was a great deal of Latin-Anglo conflict at Kosciuszko Junior High School in the early 1970's. An Anglo girl who graduated from the school during this period told a younger sister who was about to enroll at Kosciuszko: "Don't touch them, don't talk to them, don't even look at them, or they'll jump on you." The younger girl found the situation more tolerable than it had been in her sister's time.

Among the adults, I encountered less hostility in some of the reputedly "tough" bars I visited during this project than I did in contacts with some of the identity-conscious Latin activists, one of whom called me an "infiltrator."

It should be noted that, although prejudice certainly exists, many Anglos are relatively tolerant, especially when their attitudes toward Latins are compared to their attitudes toward blacks. When one Anglo factory worker who is vocally anti-black was asked about his attitudes toward Latins, he said, "They're no different from us. They're just like any other man." Several Latins stated that they encountered indifference more often than prejudice in their contacts with Anglos, and many friendship groups, especially among the younger people, are thoroughly integrated.

IV

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research conducted for this report was to describe the Latin community both externally and internally. The first section of the report indicated that the community, viewed from outside, has a high degree of homogeneity--"Latins came to the same place for the same reasons and live under the same conditions." The second section, the view from within, indicates that the similarities are often overshadowed by the differences. There is more cultural diversity and separatism in the Latin community than an uninformed observer might imagine. Not only is the acculturation process affecting language, diet, values, and behavior patterns in different ways in different segments of the community, but there are also marked differences among the three major cultural groups: the Chicanos, the Mexicans, and the Puerto Ricans. It is easy for an outsider to note the use of the Spanish language, the presence of generally similar physical characteristics, and the residential segregation of the Latin community, and to surmise from these observations that the South Side's Latins form a self-contained, monolithic community. The grouping of statistics under categories like "Spanish-language" and "Spanish-surnamed," feature articles in the newspapers, and even the statements of Latin political leaders promulgate the same myth of unity. This report indicates that the reality is considerably more complex. The Latin community does have a high degree of homogeneity, but its overall cohesiveness is apparent primarily in its dealings with the larger society and only rarely within the community itself.

There is no doubt that the Latin community is growing. Itinerant farm workers drop out of the migrant stream and begin new lives in Milwaukee, and emigration from Puerto Rico has been continuous. The community is young, and it is expanding into areas of the South Side previously

dominated by Anglos. The pastor of an ethnically mixed congregation said, "My funerals are all Anglo, and my weddings and baptisms are all Latin."

The constant infusion of "new blood" into the community has enabled the South Side's Latins to retain a great deal of first-generation freshness. There are strong indications, however, that the Latin community is undergoing the same process of acculturation which caused such a large change in the earlier European ethnic communities. Some practices and attitudes are discarded, others are retained, but most are modified by the challenge of life in a new environment. Many young people are already losing their hold on the Spanish language and rejecting many of the traditions of their parents. The Latin community will continue to grow, both in numbers and in area, but what will it be like in a generation or two? Will the Latins remain a separate entity, an independent collection of subgroups, or will the Americanization process finally cause a dilution of Latin culture, a greater desire for upward mobility, and dispersal throughout the larger community? In the answer to that question lies the future of the Latin community and, to some extent, the future of Milwaukee's old South Side.

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