Summer 2011 Research Proposal

**Primary question:** How did the development of permanent Latino American communities or “places” contribute to the development of Chicano/Latino identity? And how did other factors such as generational placement, ethnic/national origin, citizenship, and gender (for example) affect the formation of these identities? (A related theme is membership in community and access to community spaces)

I am interested in looking at the Chicano/ Latino American generation, or the generation that began to actively identify itself as both American and Latino in the 1960’s and 70’s. I will be focusing on the Northwest, specifically a mix of large and small urban populations. I’m interested in focusing on El Movimiento, or the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, but with a cultural focus. Politically, but also culturally, the children of Latino immigrants began to develop a separate identity, complete with its own specific label, during this period. I want to track this cultural development: what places, if any, were associated with this movement; how did the members of this movement distance themselves from their parent’s generation through music, literature, identity myths and storytelling; how did the development of these places facilitate the development of these cultural markers etc. At the same time, I strongly expect that the public Chicano movement did not encompass the whole of the natural born citizen group. I want to look for evidence of other ways in which the less vocal, less publicly active sectors of the community (women, those without formal education, etc.) created a group identity, and where this happened. However, this will be a secondary focus.

To find research material and answers to the questions above, I would like to focus on places where the “Chicano” identity might have been formed. These may be impermanent, but I expect to find more examples of permanent places. These places could include factories and unions, community centers, church communities, neighborhoods and markets, and schools. I’m particularly interested in looking at the Colegio de Cesar Chavez in Mt. Angel, Oregon, El Centro de la Raza in Seattle, and the Tierra Educational Center in Portland.

In researching this subject, I believe that fluency in Spanish as well as the skills I have learned in research-based, social history classes will provide me with important tools for historical analysis. As for this project’s relatedness to my own academic goals, the way in which identity is constructed through shared history and memory has become a topic I would like to focus on for my senior History thesis. I am particularly interested in how history and memory are used for political ends, especially by marginalized groups like the Latin American community. Knowing what material to look for, where to go for answers, and how to contextualize these findings relative to existing scholarship will greatly help my senior thesis research process.
Bibliography


Archives
Oregon State University, Colegio César Chávez Collection, 1978-2005
Queen of Angels Parish, Mt. Angel
Oregon Historical Society