

A Strange Proximity:
Navigating Assimilation in Small-town Oregon

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In 1978, the town of Mt. Angel, Oregon, in preparation for its annual Oktoberfest, printed an advertisement in booklet form that was distributed throughout the state.¹ As part of this annual celebration of Mt. Angel's German Catholic heritage, the booklet contained German recipes, descriptions of German traditions, translations of German words, and pictures of traditional German dress. Most striking, however, was what appeared on the back of the booklet. Published at the tail end of an homage to German heritage was another advertisement for a very different cultural institution: Colegio Cesar Chavez, a college run for and by Chicanos and situated not far from the very center of Mt. Angel. The Colegio ran a bilingual advertisement that intentionally and carefully highlighted the similarities between those people of European and Mexican descent in the town. By turns subtle and blatant—for instance, the advertisement includes a picture of a little Anglo boy in a cowboy hat playing with Mexican children in traditional Mexican garb—the Colegio's advertisement sought to paint a picture of a community in which those of Latino and German backgrounds lived as equals and partners. To do so, the advertisement tapped into the very heart of the Oregonian narrative. Invoking such terms as "Old West traditions," "freedom," and "advancement," the advertisement drew a strong and direct link between the Anglo, European immigrant-pioneers of the past century and the new "pioneer," the migrant, Mexican American farm worker. Both groups, the advertisement read, remembered and valued "family, religion, and hard work," whereas "mainstream" Americans did not. Finally, listing the labor of those who planted next to those who provided the tools, the advertisement placed the Mexican farm worker beside the Anglo land owner as equal co-owners and co-producers of the harvest. As both groups shared equally in the production of the harvest and in the values that the Oktoberfest celebrated, the Oktoberfest was an event full of meaning for the whole community.

¹Colegio César Chávez Collection, 1978-2005, Oregon State University Special Collections, Corvallis, Ore.

By co-opting symbols so central to the Oregon and Mt. Angel narratives, the Colegio made an attempt to write itself, along with the whole of Oregon's Chicano community, into that narrative, thereby legitimizing their presence in the state. It was an attempt based on the assumption that finding and emphasizing common values and experiences between ethnic and cultural groups, rather than focusing on perceived differences like race, might lead to a more equal status for Chicanos. It was based on the assumption that Anglos in Mt. Angel still identified with German-ness, with Catholicism, and with their immigrant history before their American-ness. It is understandable that the Colegio might have made this assumption. Because they were still outsiders, the town would have appeared to them as it does to most tourists who venture to the Oktoberfest: quintessentially German Catholic. However, the appeals in the brochure would not have resonated with the Anglo community in Mt. Angel because, by the 1970s, they had formed a fundamentally different understanding of what it was to be an immigrant and an American citizen engaged in the process of assimilation. Even while performing particular markers of European ethnicity, they also saw themselves as mostly assimilated into "mainstream" America, a privilege that their white-ness allowed them. Unlike the Colegio's community and the greater Chicano Movement, Mt. Angel's Anglos did not see themselves as embattled immigrants living in opposition to American culture.

The assumption that immigrants must share a similar ethos and experience has been made by many immigrant groups, and by not a few historians, who ask, with so much in common, why do different ethnic and immigrant groups fail to stand in solidarity with each other? At its root, it is a question of assimilation and the way that different groups perceive the notion of assimilation. Two opposing narratives of assimilation dominate the conversation. In the works of Oscar Handlin and Nathan Glazer, assimilation is the generally positive and inevitable teleological end

point of every immigrant's story, while in the works of Rodolfo Acuña and José Antonio Burciaga, it is the cruel fate of every immigrant to lose the unique culture that defines them to the destructive pressure of the dominant culture.² Until the 1960's, assimilation had traditionally been considered a positive force, but with the rise of both the Civil Rights Movement and the ethnic pride movement of the 1960's and 1970's, critics and activists came to define assimilation as one of the tools of oppression of the dominant systems of power. It follows that those who have most recently immigrated and those of minority religions and races who feel oppression most strongly would, in their rhetoric, reject the notion of a positive assimilation, while those who benefit from the systems of power would accept it. In the works of Peter Skerry, Victor Nee, and Richard Alba, however, assimilation, as a result of multiple cultures coming into contact with each other, is a process more complicated than this positive-negative, all-or-nothing binary would allow.³ It is a process of change and adaptation,³ and is not in itself inherently negative or positive. The extent to which a person or population is assimilated lies on a full, complex, and ever-changing spectrum. To attach value to either being fully assimilated or fully identified with one's home culture ignores the experiences of individuals who fall somewhere between the two in a third space of lived culture.

The histories of the Colegio have tended to look at the Chicano school in isolation to its surroundings, ignoring, for the most part, the relationship between the Anglo, German American, Catholic town and the Chicano college in order to focus on the affect of the greater National Chicano movement on the Colegio's ideology and history.⁴ However, to ignore the micro context

² Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981). José Burciaga Antonio. *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo*. Santa Barbara: Joshua Odell Editions, Capra Press, 1993.

³ Peter Skerry, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, (New York: Free Press, 1993).

⁴ Glenn Anthony May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011).

within which the institution existed is to simplify and generalize the process of assimilation; though communities may be separated by culture, and even physically separated by economic status into gated communities and ghettos, town living ensures that the narratives they speak will have a profound, changing effect on the other. Conversely, a historical case study of Colegio Cesar Chavez and Mt. Angel, Oregon illuminates the way in which assimilation is performed and resisted as communities interact with each other on a day to day basis. The town of Mt. Angel was the particular setting in which a number of populations crafted and negotiated a third culture somewhere between their home culture and their host culture through the telling of narratives. As these narratives were often at odds with each other and with the reality experienced, in illuminating those discrepancies, this article will explain why the Anglo community of Mt. Angel did not easily accept the presence of the Colegio in its midst. The Colegio, in its mission to improve the lot of the Chicano, developed an approach to assimilation that largely rejected the traditional assimilation narrative privileging white American-ness in favor of an approach that encouraged Latinos to protect their home culture against a destructive host culture. On the other hand, by the 1970's, the Anglo community had rewritten its history and adopted a third space of culture that privileged their assimilated American-ness over their immigrant roots. While the Oktoberfest and the Catholic institutions in the town, as well as the narrative that the town told about itself, might lead an outsider to believe that they still clung to a German Catholic, immigrant ethos, the reality was much more complex. As such, they could not understand the narrative of assimilation that the Colegio told about itself or the way in which the Colegio acted out their own third space of culture in the local setting of Mt. Angel.

In order to better understand the tensions apparent in Mt. Angel in the 1970's, this paper will first explore how Mt. Angel's Anglo residents understood assimilation, beginning with a short history of the town itself and a historiographical treatment of the traditional immigrant histories that informed the way in which Anglo residents constructed their own history. This exploration will be followed by a close analysis of personal interviews and primary documents that illuminate the nature of that history and the Anglo understanding of assimilation in Mt. Angel. This paper will then explore how the Chicano leaders and students of the Colegio understood assimilation, beginning with an overview of the National Chicano movement and the historiography of the immigrant histories written by the Chicano Movement's participant historians. This discussion will be followed by an overview of the Latino experience in Oregon and the history of the Colegio itself. This paper will then explore how the Colegio constructed its identity and the identity of Chicano Oregonians through analysis of various primary documents that were produced by the Colegio, as well as analysis of interviews with Colegio leaders. Finally, in order to understand how the Anglo conception of assimilation shaped their reaction to the Colegio, this paper will conclude by putting the two previous sections in conversation with each other. That is, the final section will explore how immigrant populations comprised of dominant and minority groups change through proximity to each other based on what they perceive to be the similarities and differences in their collective experiences and identities.

As primary sources, I use documents distributed at the public level by the Colegio, such as newspapers, handbooks, advertisements, and press releases that provide insights into how the Colegio viewed itself and wished to be viewed by others. I also engage with a set of interviews conducted by Dr. Glenn Anthony May of the University of Oregon with Sonny Montez, Jose Romero, and John Little, and an additional interview with Montez and Little conducted by

myself. My research into the Anglo community at Mt. Angel consists of several interviews with Mt. Angel Anglo residents as well as various documents meant to be read and circulated publically that demonstrate how Mt. Angel residents view themselves and their history. These voices are individual and cannot represent every resident of Mt. Angel or their experience, but they still provide insight into the town's rhetoric as their individual voices are inevitably shaped by their community's voice.

The vocabulary I use follows the most recent wave of scholarship on the history of Latinos in the United States that consistently includes a discussion of the terms used to describe the historical actors and their identities. As do nearly all authors of scholarly works done on Latinos in the United States, I find it necessary to clarify the terms I use to describe this population. I use the term "Anglo" to describe European American whites. I use "German Catholic" when discussing how Mt. Angel Anglo residents described themselves in their historical narrative. I use the term "Mexican American" to reference pre-60's events and lives, the term "Hispanic" as it was used by the Anglo community of Mt. Angel and the United States in the 1980's, and "Chicano" to describe the Chicano Movement era, which in Oregon includes the years from the mid-1960's to the early 1980's.⁵ In referencing current events, I use the term "Latino," even while recognizing that to use the term, a reference to the Latin-based Spanish language, obscures the presence in the United States of many non-Spanish speaking indigenous and Creole immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶

The German Catholic Narrative of Assimilation in Mt. Angel

⁵ Glenn Anthony May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 7.

⁶ Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza. *Mexicanos in Oregon : Their Stories, Their Lives*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010).

The town of Mt. Angel, established in 1850 and with a population hovering around 3,000, lies in the fertile Willamette Valley, in the foothills of the Cascade Range. At one time, the town provided factory employment through a creamery and a flax mill, but Mt. Angel is mainly a farming community, though the nature of its agriculture has undergone many changes.⁷ In the 1950's and 60's, with the rise of the corporate farm, many of the smaller, family-owned subsistence farms were subsumed into large, though still locally-owned, cash-crop farms. For most of the town's existence, it has played host to Mt. Angel Abbey and a Benedictine Monastery, and until the 1950's, most residents were Catholic and of Central European descent. With the establishment of large production farms, however, Latino migrants and immigrants looking for farm work, began to settle in the upper Willamette Valley, the migrant stream having already been established through the Bracero Program of the 1940's and 1950's.⁸

In 1881, a group of Benedictines from Engelberg, Switzerland came to Oregon, and in 1888, they moved into their newly constructed convent in the 30-year-old town of Mt. Angel, Oregon.⁹ The convent was of the Benedictine Order, a Catholic religious order rooted in *The Rule of St. Benedict*, a monastic code of law written in the 6th century, A.D. by St. Benedict that emphasizes such values as maintaining one's health so as to be of greater service to God and one's community.¹⁰ In Mt. Angel, the Benedictines were predominantly involved in their community through the school they established, but also by participating in festivities such as the Oktoberfest. Later, the sisters would run a migrant assistance facility, offering night classes in English among other services. The school the Benedictines established went through many

⁷ Alberta Dieker. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 24, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

⁸ Erasmas Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

⁹ Alberta Dieker, *A Tree Rooted in Faith: a History of Queen of Angels Monastery*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007).

¹⁰ Benedict, and Francis Aidan Gasquet. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966).

manifestations. The first Academy became the Mt. Angel Normal School in 1915 and was accredited by the Northwest Association in 1933. It then became the four year Mt. Angel Women's College, mostly turning out teachers, in 1947 before becoming the co-educational Mt. Angel College in 1958.¹¹ The religious motto of the Benedictines is *ora et labora*, or prayer and labor, and novitiates take vows of stability, conversion of morals, poverty, chastity, and obedience.¹² These twin values of hard work and Catholic morality would help to form the collective consciousness of the town and inform the narrative that Mt. Angel would tell about itself. As one resident notes, it used to be that the town centered exclusively around the parish and the performance of Catholicism, and although this no longer seems to be true, a certain cultural Catholicism still defines Mt. Angel.¹³

Mt. Angel German Catholic immigrants, then, experienced and performed a process of assimilation in a particular place and time, motivated and shaped by historical factors, and by the 1970's had crafted their own specific understanding of assimilation and of their culture as both Americans and as German Catholics, though privileging their American-ness. As their understanding of their own culture, history, and of the process of assimilation would necessarily shape the way in which Mt. Angel residents understood their Chicano neighbors, this paper will first turn to a description and analysis of the historical and contemporary narratives that Mt. Angel told about itself. The way in which Anglo residents told their own history gives insight into the way in which they would have understood other immigrant groups and the particular processes of assimilation that they underwent. In many ways, Mt. Angel's Anglo residents told a

¹¹ Ivo Bauman and Jim Flory. *St. Mary's Parish, 1880-1980, Mt. Angel, Oregon*, (1979), 126.

¹² Dieker, *A Tree Rooted in Faith*, 65.

¹³ Fran and Carol Piatz. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 24, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

history that was modeled upon the greater traditional immigration historiography. As such, it is necessary to first explore that historiography and situate the Mt. Angel narrative within it.

An invocation of Oscar Handlin, it is often repeated that to tell the history of the United States is to tell a history of immigration.¹⁴ The great American myths of meritocracy, Manifest Destiny, religious freedom, liberty, and the melting pot are intimately connected to the idea that the United States is a land that welcomes immigrants, those "huddled masses," offering them the opportunity to achieve wealth and happiness. These positive myths, functioning in the present, are predicated on the idea that the history of immigration has been a progressive, positive narrative. In this narrative, assimilation is a process available to all immigrants who choose to use it, who choose to participate fully in being American. Through assimilation, one becomes American and gains access to those traits and resources that lead to wealth and happiness. To be assimilated is to have access to the American Dream. Immigrant histories, especially those written before the 1960's Civil Rights Movement, present a traditional assimilation narrative that reifies these American myths.¹⁵

An example of a narrative that presents the myth that assimilation is experienced in the same way by all immigrants. *Beyond the Melting Pot*, written in 1964 by Nathan Glazer, makes an analysis of the Puerto Rican and German immigrant population of New York. Glazer writes that German ethnicity vanished because no appeals were made to the German vote, that there were no German politicians, and a lack of political involvement means an absence of group ethos.¹⁶ This analysis points to assimilation as a totalizing process whereby one culture will disappear completely. He also maintains that the religious identity of a group will serve as the

¹⁴ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted; the Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).

¹⁵ Stephen J. McNamee, Robert K. Miller, Jr, *The Meritocracy Myth*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 25.

¹⁶ David M. Reimers, "Historiography of American Immigration." *OAH Magazine of History* 4 (1990): 10-13.

basis of sub-community and subculture, and because German Americans were fractured along religious lines, they were not able to maintain their ethnicity, a claim which, as a German Catholic community, seems to be disputed by Mt. Angel itself and is too universal to hold true in all cases.¹⁷ He also makes the claim that, except when "color," or race, is involved, the specifically national aspect of most ethnic groups rarely survives the third generation, seeming to point to an inevitability and teleological endpoint of assimilation, which is full American-ness.¹⁸ Glazer finishes by writing that the "American nationality is still forming: its processes are mysterious, and the final form, if there is ever to be a final form, is as yet unknown."¹⁹ In this, he seems to suggest that there is a mysterious externality to the process of assimilation and formation of nationality, rather than individual immigrants acting out those processes. His statement also, again, seems to suggest that there is a final American nationality to be achieved, if and when immigrants no longer make their way to the United States.

Though these myths are presented most consistently in histories written before the 1960's Civil Rights Movement and the advent of social history and minority history, the traditional assimilation narrative persists in later histories as well.²⁰ La Verne J. Rippley's history of German-American immigrants, written in 1987, points out multiple times that German-Americans were excellent assimilators, proud of their German background but not overly so.²¹ Their history is one of assimilation and "progress" as they moved farther away from their language and religious roots. That German-Americans were among the groups that were able to maintain their language the longest is secondary to their business savvy and ability to "make it"

¹⁷ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan. *Beyond the Melting Pot; the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T., 1963), 311.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 315.

²⁰ Victoria-María MacDonald, "Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or "Other?": Deconstructing the Relationship between Historians and Hispanic-American Educational History." *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (2001): 365-413.

²¹ La Vern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

in American society. These kinds of contributionist narratives that emphasize the value that an immigrant group brings to the dominant group are problematic in that they support the American meritocracy myth, which says that if immigrants educate themselves, learn English, and work hard enough, they will have access to economic prosperity, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religion. Narratives that ignore the discrimination, complexities, tensions, and pressures that lead to the assimilation of one culture into another, and which shrink down the years necessary to achieve it, do harm to the immigration narrative.²² To jump immediately from arrival to assimilated ignores the difficulties faced by immigrant populations. In the Pacific Northwest, for instance, the German-American population faced great economic discrimination in the form of lower wages and employment in the most dangerous jobs.²³ Many German Catholics faced discrimination because of their religion and as a result of the nativist backlash of the first and second World Wars, which led to the "purging of "Germanisms" from the English language and "crushed the vibrant foreign-language press in the U.S."²⁴ Rippley's contributionist history, and others like it, obscure the darker underside of immigration in favor of a positive narrative of assimilation that fits much more smoothly into the American Dream mythology.

The narrative that Mt. Angel's German Catholic community told about itself and its past is a reflection of this broader immigration historiography. This shows through most clearly in a history book about Mt. Angel that the Anglo residents of the town wrote, edited, and published in celebration of the centennial anniversary of St. Mary's Parish.²⁵ It is important, here, to note that the editor of the Centennial book was Ivo Bauman, the same progressive Colegio César

²² Tamar Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot: the New Immigrants and What it Means to be American* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 10.

²³ Elspeth H Brown, "Erasing the Hyphen in German American," *Reviews in American History*. 33 (2005): 527-532.

²⁴ Patricia Kollander and John O'Sullivan, *"I Must be a Part of this War": a German American's Fight Against Hitler and Nazism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

²⁵ Ivo Bauman and Jim Flory. *St. Mary's Parish, 1880-1980*, (Mt. Angel, Oregon, 1979).

Chávez Board of Trustees member who supported the move to make Mt. Angel College a Chicano college. As such, the book depicts the ethos of a particular group of Anglo Mt. Angel residents, and generally the more progressive faction. Still, intended to be read mostly the residents of Mt. Angel, the centennial book is one key to understanding what the writers wished or thought to be true about Mt. Angel, and the history gives insight into the town's understanding of assimilation through those aspects of the town's history it includes and excludes. Occupying their own third space of culture that existed somewhere on the spectrum of assimilation, they wished to present Mt. Angel as an ethnic population connected to its German roots and fundamentally Catholic. However, in the 1970's, the town identified most closely with the American culture within which it existed. As Anglo Americans who benefited from the racialized system of power and inequality in the United States that favored English-speaking Anglos, Mt. Angel residents understood assimilation as a natural and positive process. They may still have proudly remembered those parts of their immigrant history that align with the traditional assimilation narrative, or at the least do not contradict it, but they also deemphasized, ignored, or forgot other parts of their history, such as religious discrimination and xenophobia, that might contradict a positive narrative of assimilation.

For Anglo residents, Mt. Angel's Oktoberfest, a marker which seems to suggest a strong identification with German culture, is not a manifestation of a real identification with their ancestors' experiences of immigration, but rather, a celebration of the American immigration mythology that obscure that history. Residents remember that the Oktoberfest began in 1966 after a Mt. Angel couple returned from a trip to Germany and decided that Mt. Angel should have a festival that celebrated its German roots, presenting the idea to the Chamber of

Commerce.²⁶ Though the Oktoberfest began in 1966, one woman pointed to the parish dinners that took place before the annual festival as the precursor, saying that though she herself was no German cook, "the women around here were wonderful German cooks. So we always had big German dinners." The Oktoberfest, then was an attempt to crystallize the informal cultural markers of German-ness in the form of a annual festival in an attempt to maintain that German-ness. The town's Glockenspiel, the most overt manifestation of its "German-ness," is also a recent addition to the town, being erected in 2006. The Glockenspiel was described by the *Oregonian*, Oregon's largest newspaper, as follows:

"A Kalapuya man is the first figure that appears when the hour strikes. Then the Zollners, the first German Catholic settlers, who appear as their fifth generation descendant plays the violin. Next, Mathias Butsch "Father of Mount Angel," followed by Prior Adelhelm Odermatt who established the Benedictine monastery in 1882. He turns to a Gregorian chant sung by the abbey monks, then Sister Bernadine Wachter backed by the Benedictine sisters living nearby, and Papa Oom Pah with his tuba. Finally, two children swing into view to "Edelweiss" sung by St. Mary's students who auditioned."²⁷

The German Catholic settlers, the narrative of Catholicism, the Benedictines, and the somewhat comical characterization of the Bavarian culture are part of an "external veneer" that Mt. Angel wears for the benefit of its annual influx of tourists.²⁸

Another indispensable part of the narrative of German-ness is the consumption of alcohol, especially in connection to the Oktoberfest. Residents of Mt. Angel love to joke that while the nearby town of Silverton has more than 20 churches and just one tavern, Mt. Angel has only one church and three taverns. Another joke surrounds a resident nicknamed "Mr. Oktoberfest" who, when asking his wife to where she would like to

²⁶ Margaret Hoffer. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 2, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

²⁷ Sullivan, Julie. "Woman saw need for housing and revived her hometown," *Oregonian*, December 25, 2007.

²⁸ Frantz, Fanon and Constance Farrington, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1968),160.

retire, asked only that there be easy access to a priest and beer. Dieker's history also makes note of the town's reaction to prohibition. She writes that "it must have been confusing to them to have beer, a standard drink for German-speaking people, be forbidden by law."²⁹ The repetition of these jokes and "particularisms" helps to ferment the stereotypes often associated with German-ness in an effort to maintain the appearance of ethnicity.³⁰ Not every Mt. Angel resident, however, accepted the stereotype. One resident, for instance, remembers that, in that 1966 meeting, a deeply religious man, when they gave their presentation that they were going to have beer in a tent, he "really gave them quite a quiz," an anecdote which points to a deeper discomfort with alcohol that is characteristic of Protestant American sensibilities.³¹

However light-hearted the narrative is or however tied to tourism, this focus on German ethnicity also seems to suggest that the town of Mt. Angel experienced a "white ethnic revival" characteristic of the late 1960's and early 1970's.³² This revival, coinciding with the increasing ethnic diversity of Mt. Angel as Vietnamese, Latino, and Russian immigrants settled in and around the town, may have been part of the "legitimizing ideology of white resistance" in response to the perceived threat of these ethnicity, or motivated simply by the decreasing resistance to Catholicism and German-ness in the aftermath of World War II and with the election of Catholic president, John F. Kennedy.³³ In any case, this narrative of white ethnic revival is what remains of Mt.

Angel's German roots. Left out of the narrative are the setbacks, the contradictions, and

²⁹ Dieker, *A Tree Rooted in Faith*, 118.

³⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 160.

³¹ Margaret Hoffer. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 2, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

³² Russell A Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: the Paradox of German-American Identity*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 259.

³³ Shaun A. Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy versus Nixon 1960*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009).

the discrimination that Germans experienced in Oregon and in the greater United States during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Although individuals might remember instances of resistance, for the most part, the history of systematic resistance against German Americans is obscured and forgotten in the collective consciousness of Mt. Angel's Anglo community.

As an example, Bernard Seiler tells the story of his father who came to the United States from Germany in 1905 when he was 10 years old. He traveled with his sister, who would later become a Benedictine sister, and a nun who had been their neighbor in Germany and whose brother was the abbot at the Mt. Angel monastery. At this point, Seiler has difficulty remembering what his father did upon arriving in Mt. Angel, saying, "I don't really know how he survived. But he did." Eventually he started working on the farms and married into an established settler family in Mt. Angel. He lost two brothers, still German citizens, to World War I, and it was not until just before World War II, when he could see another war coming on, that he took steps to become a citizen. Seiler remembers him going to Silverton to take classes in citizenship every week, saying "he always wanted to be a citizen, and he always considered himself a citizen."³⁴ Though the resident knows the series of events that made up his father's life, events that hint at the pressures that an impoverished German immigrant would have faced in the United States, he does not connect those events to a larger history of systematic resistance to German Catholics and immigrants in general.

First, his narrative demonstrates the connections that German immigrants maintained with their home country, somewhat complicating the notion that German immigrants "lost" their

³⁴ Bernard and May Anna Seiler. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 24, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

culture because of distance while Mexican immigrant populations maintained closer ties based on their proximity to their home culture. Germans looking to emigrate used the connection forged between the Catholic Church in Germany and the German American Catholic institutions in Mt. Angel to gain greater social mobility just as Latin American immigrants have. Once settled, those Germans in Mt. Angel drew other family members to the area. Those connections served as a means of mobility for Germans living in difficult economic times. This might especially true for single women like Mr. Seiler's aunt who, because they could not so easily pick up and travel to better their economic situation, gained a certain amount of independence upon entry into the convent.³⁵

The place of class, immigration, and ethnicity in a small town is also illuminated in Mr. Seiler's story. Historian Richard Lingeman points to marriage as a means of upward mobility for immigrant women while only by "becoming acculturated, which meant rejecting many of his parents' values, could he rise on the...class ladder."³⁶ In this case, however, it was Mr. Seiler's father who, rather than bettering himself through education or by means of his own merit, married into the established middle-class, settler narrative in order to better his economic position. The citizenship classes that the resident's father chose to take in the wake of World War II also indicate the nativism backlash that targeted German immigrants as a result of German aggression in both World Wars. The resident attributes his father's decision to take citizenship classes because he "always considered himself a citizen," implying that it was out of patriotism. However, it is possible that his father, like other German immigrants, experienced pressure to naturalize in order to avoid "[signaling] even an attenuated cultural relationship to the Old

³⁵ Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-century Women Poets and their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*, (Baltimore, MD ; London : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008),123.

³⁶ Richard R. Lingeman, *Small Town America: a Narrative History, 1620-the Present* (New York: Putnam, 1980, 404).

Country."³⁷ Finally, though Mr. Seiler's story doesn't necessarily speak directly to language, John Little remembers that, as in many German-speaking communities, in Mt. Angel language was perpetuated through parochial educational institutions, but also through civil institutions.³⁸ Mt. Angel schools conducted classes in German for many years, there were bilingual teachers up until the 1920s, Mt. Angel conducted city council meetings in German until 1928, and there were German Masses in the 1940s and the early 1950s after Vatican II made it unnecessary to give Mass in Latin.³⁹ It took the community three to four generations to become monolingual.

Taken together, these contradictions to the traditional immigration narrative speak to the way in which that narrative obscures individual, historical experiences. The threads of this personal narrative point to a multiplicity of experiences rather than one common experience, to economic mobility based on chance and shaped by external systems of power rather than on merit, to an extended reliance on separate educational institutions and native language rather than immediate acquisition of English, and to discrimination perpetrated by a dominant culture. As a historical process, assimilation in Mt. Angel was often a harsh one and one that was full of multiplicities, and to tell only a contributionist history obscures the lived experience of German immigrants.

Besides German-ness, Mt. Angel also emphasizes its Catholicism in the centennial book. Known for its far-reaching parochial education system, the Catholic Church's role in educating its parishioners took on new meaning when paired with the theme inherent to the immigration

³⁷ Elspeth H. Brown, "Erasing the Hyphen in German American". *Reviews in American History*. 33 (2005): 527-532, 1.

³⁸ Richard V. Lopez, "Bilingual Education: Separating Fact from Fiction" National Association for Bilingual Education, 1995. Chicano Surveys.

³⁹ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

experience in the United State of education as a means of betterment and social mobility.⁴⁰

Linking culture and education to the presence of Catholic institutions in Mt. Angel, the editors of the centennial book wrote that "education in the area was limited almost entirely to the 3 R's. Life was basic." When "into this simple rural environment dropped a band of highly educated musicians, scientists, and scholars of all sorts," Mt. Angel, along with "the whole state of Oregon," was raised to a new level of culture and learning as "the Abbey stimulated a number of artisans and professional people."⁴¹ According to the Mt. Angel narrative, the dominant American and Protestant culture benefited from the contributions of the German Catholic population in Mt. Angel. This contributionist history is typical of pre-Civil Rights immigrant historiography.⁴² It is an attempt to legitimize the presence of German Catholic immigrants by detailing the ways in which their culture's specific traits augment the host culture. Contributionist histories are an act of agency in that they provide the minority culture with potential access to and acceptance into the historical narrative of the host culture, but in this case, it also obscured the difficulties that German Catholics experienced in the very state that they professed to have helped develop. When only supplied with the positive experiences of immigration, it is not a stretch to think that future generations would find it more difficult to empathize with other immigrant groups facing similar resistance.

The reality in Oregon and elsewhere in the first half of the 20th century for German Catholic immigrants could be characterized by hostility from the host culture. Partly because of its association with immigrant populations, Catholicism was targeted by a United States nativism

⁴⁰ Elena Bradunas and Brett Topping, *Ethnic Heritage and Language Schools in America* (Washington: American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1988).

⁴¹ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish*, 23.

⁴² Wilson J. Moses, "African American Historiography and the Works of Benjamin Quarles," *History Teacher* 32 (1998): 78.

that favored Protestantism.⁴³ For example, Sister Alberta Deiker, the archivist at Mt. Angel Benedictine Abbey, remembers experiencing discrimination as a child. "I remember sitting on the porch," she says, seeing where "the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross into the hill on the side of the house, when everything was dry as dust." She also recalls experiencing institutional discrimination while teaching at Eastern Oregon University where she was told by one of the faculty members, who was not a Catholic, that the president said he would never knowingly hire a Catholic.⁴⁴ Faced with resistance, Catholic immigrants often made choices that fed the process of assimilation but also increased their access to the same privileges that the host culture enjoyed. For instance, during World War I, prompted by a fear of anti-German retaliation, the Catholic hierarchy in Oregon strongly encouraged sisters of German birth to begin the process of naturalization as a sign that they were loyal and patriotic Americans.⁴⁵ However, these same Catholic immigrants also chose to fight oppression on other occasions. Soon after the end of World War I, the convent had to deal with anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant Oregon legislation that made public school, as opposed to parochial school, mandatory. Behind the legislation was the extremely active Ku Klux Klan in Oregon who "paraded in the streets, ignited crosses on hillsides, nailed American flags to the doors of Catholic schools, and intimidated African-Americans."⁴⁶ The sisters fought the case in court, and in 1924, it went to the state Supreme Court and was declared unconstitutional. The case then went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which agreed with the lower court's ruling. However, in 1923, the Oregon legislature passed the "Garb Bill" that forbade anyone teaching in a public school from wearing religious clothing or

⁴³ MacDonald, "Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or "Other?" 365-413.

⁴⁴ Alberta Deiker. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 3, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Oregon Blue Book Online. "Oregon History: Mixed Blessings," Oregon State Archives, <http://bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history24.htm>

symbols.⁴⁷ The sisters teaching at the local school were forced to resign, though Sister Dieker's history of the convent notes that "the local people were Catholic, for the most part, and were dissatisfied with this piece of legislation [and] urged the sisters to dress in lay clothes in order to continue their "good work."⁴⁸ This legislation was only recently repealed in 2010, and the rhetoric surrounding the repeal extended to include other minorities, including Muslims, who had not originally been the primary target of the law. This demonstrates the cyclical nature of immigration, and how history can be used by immigrants as a means of reminding the dominant population of its past in order to secure equal treatment.

These stories of oppression at the hands of the dominant culture and resistance on the part of Catholics are only vaguely remembered in Mt. Angel, and are not at all remembered in public histories that point to a collective consciousness. As such, these stories cannot and do not inspire the town's residents to empathize with their neighbors, the new waves of immigrants, who might be feeling the injustices often perpetrated by the dominant culture. Mt. Angel's residents obscure their history, in part, because to put any emphasis on the negative history of being Catholic in the United States would necessarily disprove the myths of equality and religious freedom that are so central to the American immigration myth, a myth that is, quite literally, foundational in its invocation of the Mayflower's pilgrims who established their settlement in the pursuit of religious freedom. For Mt. Angel's Anglo's, to disprove such myths with their own history would threaten the consistency of the traditional immigrant narrative that, as Anglos in a position of racial privilege, now benefited them.

The Colegio: Performing Assimilation

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dieker, *A Tree Rooted in Faith*, 122.

While the micro context in which the Colegio existed made its experience of assimilation necessarily different from that of other Chicano communities, it is still important to recognize the role of the National Chicano movement in the Colegio's history. As a part of the larger Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, the Chicano movement constituted an ideological shift toward a new way of thinking about Mexican American identity and history, which was made possible by "incremental improvements in educational, economic, and social mobility that the generations of the sixties and seventies had access to through the legal and social successes of the black Civil Rights movement and of the Farmworkers movement."⁴⁹ However, this shift was not homogenous. Historian Manuel G. Gonzales points to the Chicano movement's fractured nature as one of its defining characteristics. Included under the umbrella of the National Chicano movement were the student movement, the Farmworkers' movement, the community movement as manifested in the activities of the Brown Berets, and the feminist Chicana movement, all articulating a slightly different idea of how Chicanos ought to go about securing their rights. There were some who promoted a more militant approach, some who championed non-violent resistance, and some groups who advocated working within the system to change it. There were also Mexican Americans who altogether rejected the movement and continued to live their lives as they formerly done.⁵⁰

From among these ideologies and approach, when fashioning Oregon's Chicano Movement in the 1970's, Colegio César Chávez drew mainly from the tenants of the student

⁴⁹ Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans, American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 28.

Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 199

movement.⁵¹ First, critical education, often based on the model of Paulo Freire, was hailed as the place of identity formation.⁵² Emphasizing community involvement, the movement sought to engage the community from the bottom up.⁵³ At the same time, in order to consolidate political power, the movement's leaders also tended to paint a homogenized picture of the movement and Chicano identity, an identity that often excluded women from leadership roles, the notable exception being Dolores Huerta, the co-founder of United Farmworkers of America. It was not until the early 1970's that the Chicana movement was able to assert its place in the overall movement.⁵⁴ The movement also reclaimed language; for instance, the term "Chicano" itself was a new take on a Spanish word that Mexican Americans had formerly used to describe the recently immigrated, or the "lowest of the low."

The reworking and glorification of Mexican American history also became a central theme of the movement. The Civil Rights era's "participant" historians, that is, historians who intentionally used history as a means of promoting the Civil Rights and cultural movement about which they wrote and often identified with, began to question the myths associated with the American dream and immigration. The first comprehensive attempts to write the history of Mexican Americans originated in the Chicano movement, and, as a result, were characterized by intensely politicized narratives written by participant historians. These histories were both an attempt to generate a political response in the present and a backlash against histories that had portrayed Mexican Americans as passive and unmotivated; as responsible for their own suffering; in a romanticized vision of idyllic *ranchero* life; or that disregarded their place in American history all together. The Chicano movement defined itself in opposition to the

⁵¹ Maldonado, *Colegio Cesar Chavez, 1973-1983*.

⁵² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993).

⁵³ Gonzales, *Mexicanos*, 213.

⁵⁴ Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 2011).

assimilationist rhetoric of the 1950's and earlier. That is, they rejected the traditional narrative of what assimilation is, namely that it is a positive, unavoidable force whereby a minority and often considered inferior ethnic group is subsumed into a dominant, superior group. In this view of assimilation, both groups are more or less homogenous. Scholars, as well as political actors, such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), saw assimilation as a natural process inherent to immigration populations. Assimilation was also couched in ethnocentric terms. Immigrant cultures lost their "inferior" culture as they became assimilated into the superior Anglo culture. Assimilation was often identified in such cultural changes as learning to speak English and adopting Protestantism.⁵⁵

For many Chicano historians telling the history of Mexican Americans, assimilation was an inherently destructive and negative process. In this narrative, assimilation, the process of acculturation through which a minority culture becomes indistinguishable from a dominant culture, is forced upon the minority culture through the labeling of that culture as "foreign," "inferior," and even "dangerous." Assimilation is a coercive, corrosive process of subjugation that does violence to one people's legitimate way of life.⁵⁶ Historians sought to differentiate and make special Mexican-American history and show that it was equal to, but unique from, Anglo history.⁵⁷ However, this type of history and definition of assimilation ignores how the performance of assimilation can often be an act of agency. There is a certain danger in espousing an entirely negative definition of assimilation that judges those immigrants who choose to adopt aspects of the dominant culture as a strategy for social mobility.⁵⁸ Furthermore, this definition

⁵⁵ MacDonald, "Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or "Other?" 365-413.

⁵⁶ Acuña, *Occupied America*.

⁵⁷ Burciaga, *Drink Cultura*.

⁵⁸ Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, 8.

assumes that there exists a static, homogenous dominate culture into which the equally homogenous subordinate culture becomes assimilated.⁵⁹

In attempting to create a unified identity for Chicanos, the movement also tended to homogenize differences between the various regional manifestations of the Chicano Movement. Partly because of this tendency, the history of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest, for instance, has been largely underdeveloped. Latino history is dominated by works on the regions of the Southwest and California for the simple reasons that Latinos have long been present in these regions in large populations. However, to conflate the histories of these distinct regions, to subsume the history of Latinos in the Pacific Northwest into the greater national narrative without giving attention to regional differences, is to generalize and obscure the specific history of Latinos in Oregon. In many ways, the Chicano movement in Oregon was defined by the Colegio as it served as a public space for activism and resistance and as a bridge between two major Latino organizations in Oregon. The institution drew its leaders and supporters from the Oregon Valley Migrant League (VML) and producing the future founders and leaders of Oregon's current farmworkers union, *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste* (PCUN). As such, the Colegio should not be studied in isolation, but rather, as part of the Latino experience in Oregon.

The VML came about as a result of the welfare spirit of the 1960's and President Lyndon Johnson's pledge to fight a "War on Poverty" across the country. This war was waged through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), which dispersed funds to those organizations, both governmental and not, that demonstrated ability and commitment to give "agency to the poor."⁶⁰ Established in 1965 by leaders from around the state who had been involved in migrant

⁵⁹ Manuel A. Machado, *Listen Chicano!: An Informal History of the Mexican-American* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978).

⁶⁰ May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, 47.

assistance in the past, the VML offered summer and night school, organized clubs and activities, and worked to solve "health, vocational, and housing problems."⁶¹ However, the VML was not without internal problems; it was characterized by a culture of patronizing, top-down assistance rather than a culture of empowerment. The leadership of the organization was Anglo, and certain factions felt that the VML was "unsympathetic to the interests of the population served."⁶²

In 1966, the VML hired Sonny Montes, a Chicano and a future leader of the Colegio, as a career opportunities low-level employee. From there, Montes rose through the ranks to become one of the five area coordinators employed by the organization. His appointment to this position was a function of the direction and leadership change that occurred in 1967 with the passing of several resolutions aimed at involving more Mexican Americans in leadership and decision-making roles, as well as with the appointment of the progressive community organizer John Little as director. Both Little and Montes' involvement with the VML is important to note. John Little's views on the empowerment of underrepresented populations would shape both the direction of the VML and Montes' own methods and ideology. Little espoused the philosophy that an activist identifying with a majority population, when advocating for a minority population, should "work himself out of a job." That is, a leader should provide the necessary leadership tools and training to the population that is being served in order to be able to step away and pass the leadership responsibility on to that population. For Montes, his involvement gave him access to a network from which he would later be able to draw from and rely on in his role as recruiter at the Colegio. It also gave him and other Chicanos the opportunity to experience leadership roles, often for the first time in their lives. In an interview with May, Montes says that, "We had been conditioned not to think that we could be directors, even as we

⁶¹Ibid., 49

⁶²May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, 52.

were pushing for these changes, there was still doubt...We knew we were ready to take that risk."⁶³ The confidence and experience gained in these roles would make the Colegio seem like a possibility, or at least a risk worth taking, in 1973.

The VML also offered Montes and others the opportunity to connect with the National Chicano Movement. In 1969, Montes and 35 other Mexican Americans went to Los Gatos, California to attend a conference on the Chicano movement organized by Jose Garcia, a former area director for the VML. "Jose," says Montes, "was good at making you see what was going on...[at] explaining what was going on in people's minds when it came to race."⁶⁴ This was the first time that Mexican Americans in Oregon had been exposed to facets of the Chicano movement other than the farmworkers movement.⁶⁵ Through the discussions on racism and activism, and organizations like the Crusada Para la Justicia, the Alianza Federal de Mercedes, and the Mexican American Youth Organization, Montes and the other Oregonians gained a national context and community in which to understand and place their own experience. Much of the philosophy and the rhetoric that is apparent in the primary documents of the Colegio are taken from the National Chicano Movement, a connection which was made at Los Gatos.

Although the VML lost funding and was forced to close its doors in 1980, an event which traces back to the nationwide "conservative revolution" and turn away from welfare services, the work that the VML did while it existed should also not be ignored; for almost two decades, it served the material and relational needs of one of Oregon's most vulnerable populations. Of more importance to the trajectory of Latino history in Oregon, it also provided a training ground in

⁶³ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Glenn May. Tape Recording. Portland, Oregon, January 38, 2003.

⁶⁴ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Glenn May. Tape Recording. Portland, Oregon, January 38, 2003.

⁶⁵ May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, 105.

which future Chicano leaders in Oregon first experienced leadership roles and made connections, both at a personal level and at a state, regional, and national level.⁶⁶

This practical experience would allow Montes and Little to take full advantage of the opportunity that would present itself in 1973 to reshape the identity of Mt. Angel College. The conditions whereby this opportunity came about had been fermenting since the college first became the co-educational Mt. Angel College in 1958. This was the start of major changes within the college. Lay-people began to serve on the board of trustees, more non-Catholic students were admitted, and in 1965, the college took on a mortgage debt of more than \$1 million in order to expand campus facilities. The move to expand came at an inopportune time; private college enrollment was dropping across the nation as the United States federal government put massive resources into developing the public school system, and Mt. Angel College was not immune to this trend. As enrollment fell and tuition money stopped coming in, the college was forced to make even more changes to raise funds. The college began to recruit more out-of-state students — "hippies from San Francisco," as residents remember them— and in 1971, the college hired Sonny Montes as Director of Ethnic Affairs, hoping he would be able to recruit students of color who would, in turn, bring in government funds through subsidized tuitions.⁶⁷ He was able to place sympathetic Anglos and Chicanos on the Board of Trustees, recruit Chicano students, and push for more progressive events and a curriculum that would attract students of color. However, the institution continued to struggle financially, facing accreditation problems and pressure from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for loan payments. When Montes, John Little, the then-president Father Christian Mondor —who was "very sympathetic" according to Montes— and Board president and Mt.

⁶⁶ Maldonado, *Colegio Cesar Chavez, 1973-1983*.

⁶⁷ May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, 137.

Angel local Ivo Bauman—who Montes says was instrumental to the process—began to lobby the board to convert the college into a Chicano college, the Board voted to do so.⁶⁸

Mt. Angel College became Colegio Cesar Chavez on December 12, 1973, the Catholic feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of the Americas and the particular heroine of the Chicano movement and Latin America. The symbolism was very much intended. The story of the Virgin Mary appearing to a young, Mexican peasant is a story in which the weak and lowly triumph against the rich and powerful. In the same way, the establishment of the Colegio was a triumph for the subjugated Chicano population of Oregon. Yet, the struggle was not over. The Colegio inherited a litany of problems from Mt. Angel College. Faced with the loss of accreditation, and having assumed the sisters' million dollar debt to HUD, the Colegio's first years were characterized by struggle. In a double bind, in order for the college and students to receive federal funding, the Colegio had to be accredited, while in order to be accredited, the Colegio had to demonstrate financial stability. Lack of experience in college administration and high faculty and administration turn-over rates were another stumbling block. However, when Montes and Jose Romero stepped down from their positions as director of administrative affairs and director of academic affairs, respectively, in 1977, they had successfully negotiated down the HUD debt to 250,000 dollars paid each by the sisters and the Colegio, and they had also managed to gain candidacy status for accreditation. In doing so, they relied on the support of César Chávez, as well as the support of the Chicano community.

After 1977, however, the climate of the Colegio changed. When, out of exhaustion, Montez and Romero stepped down, a new administration stepped up. Irma Gonzales was appointed acting president by the Board of Trustees, and soon after, she and her supporters on the Board began to make changes in the college that included the establishing core curriculum of

⁶⁸ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Glenn May. Tape Recording. Portland, Oregon, October 18, 2002.

traditional academic courses, bringing greater structure to the College Without Walls program — which had allowed internships, prior formal education, and work experience to be counted as college credit— and recruiting top students rather than reaching out to students with farmworker backgrounds. Now board members, Montez and Little, and their supporters, felt that this approach was a betrayal of Oregon's Chicano community and of those students who could only flourish in a college like Colegio Cesar Chavez, as well as a disappointing move away from the ideology of *familia* and bilingual-biculturalism. At the same time, many of Gonzales' changes were meant to bring more money to the college, and could be considered as a necessary act as the college would default on its HUD loans and finally close its doors by 1983. Nevertheless, Gonzales' methods mark the end of the Colegio's emphasis on the multi-culturalism adapted to the Oregon setting from the Chicano movement, and as such, define the temporal extent to which this paper will comment on the Colegio's history in Mt. Angel.

The Colegio under Montes and Romero followed the ideology of the National Chicano movement in many ways, rejecting certain "American" values in order to build a sense of community and solidarity with the greater movement and to preserve their own culture. Their definition of assimilation was, therefore, in line with the National Movement. Yet, within the narrative proffered by the national movement, or even by the Colegio, there was a lived space which often qualified and contradicted that theoretical definition. The Colegio often used, accepted, and reworked certain American values and ideas that a wholly negative view of assimilation —that is to say, a view that only emphasized "Mexican-ness"— would have them categorically reject. This "cultural coalescence" was a mechanism of resistance and agency that allowed them to exist more effectively within their particular geographical, practical, and

ideological context.⁶⁹ Both mechanisms suggest that minority groups act on and within the process of assimilation rather than are passive victims of the process. Thus, navigating between these two narratives and cultures, the Colegio found a third cultural space that could be defined as multi-culturalism.

The Colegio's self-introduction in the *Chavista*, speaks directly to its understanding of assimilation as a theoretical process. The *Chavista*, a bilingual newspaper published in 1975 by the Colegio, appeared in a series of monthly issues.⁷⁰ Named in honor of Cesar Chavez after asking for input from the Chicano community, the paper includes a serially published overview of Chicano history, an opinions section, and news articles covering everything from health and women's roles to immigrant rights and bilingual education. Although published by students and staff at the Colegio, the paper was not the official mouthpiece of the institution. However, in an article entitled, 'Message from Colegio Cesar Chavez' the Colegio introduced itself to the greater Chicano community for whom the newspaper had been created.⁷¹ The *Chavista* also ran an opinion piece entitled "Beyond the Melting Pot," by Caren Caldwell that spoke directly to a definition of assimilation.⁷² Taken together, these two articles form a clear definition of assimilation that is very much in line with the narrative of the National Movement. The self-introduction describes assimilation as an inherently "evil" process. The article posits that assimilation is an "immoral" process if it leads one to become "ashamed of yourself, [hate] yourself, [and become] confused about what is right and wrong." Thus, it is an unethical process, or, at the very least, it is not unethical to refuse to assimilate. According to the article, assimilation is also an "academic process" in that it is endemic to the education system and has

⁶⁹ Viki Ruiz, "Confronting "America"" *Chicano Studies: Survey and Analysis* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co, 1997), 70.

⁷⁰ Ybarra-Fausto Collection, 1943-1988, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.

⁷¹ "A Message from Colegio Cesar Chavez," *The Chavista* March, 1979.

⁷² Caren Caldwell, "Beyond the Melting Pot" *The Chavista*, November, 1978.

its roots in the education system. The Colegio, therefore, as a Chicano, bilingual-bicultural institution is the only college system that can protect the Chicano from "forced change" as a result of political pressure and an "integrated" but Anglo-centric education system. At another point, the writer speaks of Chicanos "who won the game" and are now "ready for the serious business of learning," thereby rejecting the meritocracy myth and developing the idea instead that upward social mobility is a game of chance. The title of the opinion, "Beyond the Melting Pot," is itself a possible reference to the immigration history of the same title written by Nathan Glazer, an example of the traditional, pro-assimilation narrative which Caldwell defines her argument in opposition to. She rejects the "melting-pot" myth, the idea that immigrants lose their ethnicity completely in the process of assimilating into Americans. Her argument hinges on this question: "Which groups are expected to adapt to their surroundings and which is expected to merely absorb the other group?" Assimilation, for Caldwell, is not a benign process that works on all groups equally. Her question assumes that assimilation always works one way, that one group is absorbed into the other. The melting pot myth, that is, assimilation as it was understood by traditional immigrant narratives, "is actually the rationale dominant culture uses to eliminate and subjugate the minority culture."

However, the lived process of assimilation that is apparent in the Colegio's own institutional documents often contradicted this purely negative definition. For instance, language, considered a measure of the extent to which an immigrant group has been assimilated, was a battleground upon which the Colegio negotiated their multi-culturalism.⁷³ Rather than reject English completely, the Colegio's handbook states its commitment to bilingualism: "We express

⁷³ David Wood Stewart, *Immigration and Education: The Crisis and the Opportunities* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993).

ourselves in two languages, we learn in two languages."⁷⁴ Each language, Spanish and English, was considered equally as important to the growth and education of students. Efforts to mandate bilingual education formed one of the main stages of activism in the national movement and the movement in Oregon.⁷⁵ This goal is apparent in both the *Chavista* in the number of articles that appeared on the subject and in the Colegio's handbook. The Colegio's handbook was created by staff and students to attract recruits and to generate interest and participation in the Chicano community. As such, it necessarily presents a more polished, idealized version of the Colegio. Yet, because of this purpose, it also presents a particularly complete overview of the ideology that drove the Colegio and gives insight into the narrative that the Colegio told about itself.

The handbook, as part of the Colegio's commitment to bilingualism, presents its information in both Spanish and English, although the title of each section is in Spanish. It states that "because of the nature of the teaching style of Colegio, a different standard for graduation/success of student is required. The student should come out with a working knowledge of English, Spanish, and 'pocho' Spanish." The inclusion of Pocho as nothing less than a requirement for graduation is breathtaking in its symbolism. Pocho, derived from the Spanish *pocho* that typically describes fruit that has become rotten, is a term that had been used by Mexicans to describe Chicanos who were perceived to have forgotten or rejected their Mexican heritage, often manifested in the loss of their Spanish speaking abilities.⁷⁶ The Chicano speaks pocho Spanish, and rather than discipline or diminish the pocho speaker, the Colegio elevates that dialect. Thus, they legitimize the experience of every "Americanized" Mexican, that is, every Chicano who identifies with both "American" culture and Mexican culture. In language,

⁷⁴ Colegio César Chávez Collection, 1978-2005. Oregon State University Special Collections, Corvallis, Oregon.

⁷⁵ Dolores Delgado Bernal, *Chicana School Resistance*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1999.

⁷⁶ Arthur L. Campa, "The Spanish Language in the Southwest," *Chicano Studies: Survey and Analysis*, (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1997), 225.

this experience of ethnic pluralism comes out in words like *pocho* and *Chicano*. Co-opted, this language, once derogatory, now becomes a place of agency, a term of self-identification rather than a label to accept passively. This type of language also appeared in the *Chavista*, and most overtly in its self-introduction. Even in its English language version, the article uses colloquial Spanish terms that have no exact translation in English, or are such that the English translation could not fully encapsulate the connotations that the Spanish terms carry for Chicano readers. These terms are "carnalismo," a Pocho word for "blood ties" which invokes values such as loyalty, courage, and love for ones brothers, and "carinosamente," meaning "lovingly," and used in this context, expresses brotherly or humanistic love. To use these terms is to create a space, not accessible to English speakers and adapted from "pure" Mexican Spanish, that is definable by a love for ones Chicano community. It is a space of tension that is only understandable and livable for Chicanos.

The leaders of the Colegio experienced this tension in their own lives. Montes remembers one incident from the Los Gatos conference he and other members of the Oregon Valley Migrant League attended in Santa Cruz. This was Jose Garcia's Chicano movement training conference, the conference that introduced the future leaders of Oregon's Chicano movement to the trajectory of the national movement.⁷⁷ The tenor of the conference was one of activism and not a little anger. Montes recalled that the conference started in Spanish:

"All we were talking about el Movimiento, and they began a discussion about why younger people forget Spanish. Every time someone would start to speak in English, they would say 'Español, Español' until a kid stood up and said, 'Look, I'm very proud of being Chicano. I don't speak Spanish, not because I don't want to, something happened to me that I forgot how to speak Spanish. My heart is brown, I want to be part of this group, just because I don't speak doesn't mean that I shouldn't belong.'"

⁷⁷ May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*, 108.

Montes remembers that after this speech, the conference continued in both English and Spanish, with translations when necessary.

This incident highlights the tension between the official ideology and the narrative of the Chicano movement and the lived experiences of Chicanos. While the negative assimilation narrative rejects "American-ness" and those cultural markers that come with it, such as English, the Colegio's documents suggest instead that acceptance and knowledge of English was important and necessary. In immigrant histories, English acquisition is seen as fraught with generational tensions as there is a "typical second-generation shift toward English dominance."⁷⁸ However, the Colegio's documents suggest otherwise.⁷⁹ In the *Chavista*, for instance, an article entitled, 'Bilingual education: right or privilege?' declares that the "Majority of non-English speaking parents (88.4 percent) and students in grades 7 through 12 (97.9 per cent) feel that bilingual education is needed." Montes also maintains that as a recruiter for the Colegio, the parents he spoke to reacted only favorably to the possibility that their children might be more educated in both English and Spanish. This particular article also includes a discussion of other contemporary immigrant groups in Oregon facing similar difficulties, namely Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Russian, showing solidarity with other non-English speakers. The article states that Russian immigrants need bilingual education most of all as they "adhere strictly to traditional Russian culture" whereas "Spanish speaking pupil's...parents allow them to speak English at home." Whether the author of this news article thinks this is a positive or negative characteristic is ambiguous as allowing children to speak English in the home might mean that they lose their own culture. Yet, because the article advocates for bilingual education, it seems to

⁷⁸ Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot*, 135.

⁷⁹ "One Nation, One Language?" Headden, et al. September 25, 1995, U.S. News & World Report. Chicano Surveys.

be an example of immigrant cultures accepting values of the dominant culture as a means of gaining agency and leverage in the dominant culture.

Along with the language in which education took place, the content of that education also became a place of negotiation between two cultures. In addition to bilingualism, the Colegio defined itself as bicultural, taking "the best from both cultures" in order to "give the best of [themselves] to both cultures." The biculturalism had its roots in the "modern culture" of the United States and in the "Indio culture" of pre-colonial Mexico. The Colegio utilized and reworked the historical narratives of both their home and host cultures, of both Mexico and the "colonized" Southwest, and of Oregon, respectively, to legitimize and historically situate themselves in those narratives.

The Colegio resisted assimilation by rejecting certain "American" values and emphasizing and teaching instead those values that they saw as inherently Chicano or Mexican. For example, in the section entitled *Filosofía y Objetivos*, or "Philosophy and Objectives," the focus of the philosophy is the *familia*, the "bonds of kinship found in the nuclear family, in the extended family, and in the community at large." It is *carnalismo*, Mexican slang for brotherhood. *Familia* is the "building block of community" and "integrates life experiences," including those found in the community. These values are the antithesis of the dominant culture with its emphasis on individualism; they are "inherently" Chicano. In fact, *familia* can only be described and defined using words that are inherently Chicano.⁸⁰ The concept of *familia* extends family to include the entire Chicano community, a concept which the Colegio acted on. Romero comments that, even from 1971, the Colegio made the campus available for anniversaries, texmex musical groups, community dances, lectures, dance groups, the popular Chicano theater

⁸⁰ Richard T. Rodríguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/A Cultural Politics*, (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2009).

troop, Teatro Campesino, the VML's summer school, and served lunch for migrant workers out of the cafeteria. Romero maintains that it was through opening up the campus to Oregon's Chicano community that the Colegio was able to generate its support. "We opened it up to the community to make it feel like it was theirs" says Montes, "because it was theirs." Physically, the Colegio became the public space of the Chicano community, rather than a private institution. The concept of private, individual ownership rather than communal space is very much an American value that the Chicano community rejected in order to build their support base.⁸¹ Their choice to reject this value is an instance of agency and an example of the choices that a minority population makes within the process of assimilation. The Colegio was also public in a symbolic manner. Rather than having meaning for a contained group of individuals, the Colegio was the location of agency for the entire Chicano community. It was the face of the Chicano movement in Oregon; it was where César Chávez and the national movement came into contact with Oregon Chicanos; and it was the cause around which the community mobilized.

Like the National Chicano Movement, the Colegio also sought to rewrite the history of Latinos in the United States. The *Chavista* ran a series of history lessons that taught the counter-history typical of the Chicano Movement. These lessons focus on the accomplishments of the Maya and Aztec Empires, demonstrating that these cultures were not only equal to European cultures but superior in the range of rights they gave peasants. A lesson entitled "Ancient Mexico" even goes so far as to explain away slavery and human sacrifice as cultural peculiarities in order to prove that these cultures were no more savage than "civilized" Europe. It also blames current poverty in Mexico on European conquest. Here, history becomes a tool with which to resist assimilation by proving that the minority culture is no less worthy than the majority

⁸¹ Alma Mancilla, "The Perceptions of Religion in Mexican Public Space by the Leaders of Minority Religions: Caught Between the Desire for Recognition and the Demands of Participation," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 39 (Apr 2011): 80-94.

culture, and therefore, those of the minority should not be obliged to assimilate based on this factor.

Yet, the Colegio also chose to integrate itself into the Oregon landscape and history rather than align itself completely with the National Movement. For instance, the rhetoric of the handbook is an effort to balance the Anglo narrative of assimilation with the ideology of the Chicano movement through interpreting those narratives to more successfully overcome the Chicano's unequal status in Oregon. Even while pre-colonial art graces the pages of the Colegio's handbook, the rhetoric demonstrates an attempt to co-opt certain phrases and ideas that would allow the Chicano community to stake a place in Oregon's history. In its opening page, for instance, the handbook invokes the image of the "Generations of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters [who] turned the soil" in the Willamette Valley. Ambiguous in regards to the race or nationality of those sons and daughters, the meaning behind the phrase could be in reference to either the presence of the Chicano farm workers in Oregon or to the pioneer homesteaders of the "legitimate" Oregon narrative. Because of this, it draws implicit parallels between the experience of the Chicano farm worker and the Anglo pioneer. In the 1970's, this experience of labor and hard work was retroactively valued by Anglos while simultaneously devalued as it pertained to the Chicano farm worker. By emphasizing the value that Anglos placed on hard work, especially the hard work of their ancestors, the Colegio ascribed that value as understood by the Anglo community to their own experience. The introduction continues to state that the idea of the Colegio "germinated on the West Coast." This reflects the emphasis on the Colegio as a community grounded solidly and historically in Oregon rather than in the Southwest, placing the Chicano experience in its Oregon context and adapting the Manifest Destiny narrative of the

Anglo to include the Chicano. The thread of inevitability that runs through the passage, once again, naturalizes the presence of Chicanos and of the Colegio in Mt. Angel.

Out of this history, Chicanos created a third culture, building an identity characterized by specific values that were a categorical rejection of many American values, yet, also choosing in some instances to emphasize those values that they saw themselves sharing with the dominant culture in order to create a connection with that culture. Caught between two narratives of assimilation, one positive and one negative, Chicanos, in their lived experiences and institutional and regional situations, forged their own network of symbols taken from the narratives offered by both the host culture and the minority culture in order to create a space for agency. This co-opting was an attempt to compromise the demands placed upon them by both cultures, and indeed, led to the creation of a third, all-together new culture and conception of assimilation that was neither completely negative nor completely positive, but a lived process that defied the binary.

The Colegio and Mt. Angel in Conversation

This paper has thus far explored two definitions of assimilation. The first, that of the traditional immigration history, describes assimilation as a fundamentally positive process, and in doing so, obscures those parts of the process as most often experienced by immigrants that were deeply traumatic. The second, that of the Civil Rights and National Chicano Movement, describes assimilation as a fundamentally destructive and negative process, and in doing so, refuses to admit that immigrants often perform assimilation as an act of agency, thereby refusing that agency to immigrants themselves. The most recent immigrant histories posit a third definition. Historians and sociologists are coming to see assimilation as neither a positive or negative process in and of itself, but as a highly complex process that contains negative and

positive elements. This case-study is situated within this new theoretical framework that seeks to rethink assimilation, outside of a binary.

The re-occurring theme of assimilation in immigrant histories, even after the Civil Rights era, indicates that there is still value in that framework. Richard Alba and Victor Nee present a take on assimilation as a sociological framework for analyzing the immigrant experience in the United States.⁸² Rather than reject it completely because of its historically ethnocentric tendencies, or to even assign it a negative or positive meaning, they work to redefine it. Whereas assimilation has almost always been thought of as a one-directional phenomenon, they posit that assimilation also works on the host culture and that the host culture changes as a result of interactions with the immigrant culture.⁸³ This theory, first, problematizes the assumption that the two cultures are homogenous and that the dominate culture is static. "For most Americans," historian Stanley Crouch writes, "identity has never been static."⁸⁴ This theory further questions whether any sort of "authentic" American identity exists, or whether it is something that is constantly evolving as new groups are brought into it, bringing their own culture and influence with them in the process. Both the dominant and minority groups have profound effects on each other; neither exists in a vacuum. This theory also avoids the trap of assigning a positive or negative arc to the story of immigration.⁸⁵ This argument brings the two cultures, each existing in the same place, into conversation with each other rather than analyzing the experience of just one group. Assimilation, rather than an external force—either solely wielded by a dominant group or a natural, historical force—that acts on a minority group, is a process in which the

⁸² Richard Alba and Victor Nee, "Rethinking assimilation theory for a new era of immigration," *International Migration Review* 31 (4, Special Issue: Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in the Making of Americans) (1997): 826-874.

⁸³ Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁸⁵ William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* (1992): 1347-1376, 78.

minority group also takes part. This framework for assimilation allows the minority group agency and a space in which to create a cultural understanding and identity that is neither fully the dominant culture in its perceived static homogeneity nor their home culture.

Thus, by bringing Mt. Angel's German Catholic community into conversation with the Colegio's Chicano community, a task which historians of Latino history in Oregon have only attempted to do in passing, this paper adheres to this new framework and asks how two cultures acted on each other, their respective identities and cultures changing as a result of their "strange proximity" to a community of a different race, culture and with a drastically different understanding of assimilation.⁸⁶ Though Montes and Romero cite the support of their community as the single most important factor in whatever successes the Colegio achieved, remembering at one point that what "motivated us to continue the struggle was the support we had from everyone," they also qualify their statement by saying "with the exception of Mt. Angel," as "they were pretty consistent...were pretty resistant from day one."⁸⁷ Clearly, there was friction between Mt. Angel's Anglos and the Colegio's community. Instances of resistance and discrimination perpetrated by the Anglo community against the community of color at the Colegio occurred both overtly in institutional frameworks, but also in the more pervasive and subtle form of micro-power relationships.⁸⁸ This section will first establish the fields of resistance and discrimination that existed in Mt. Angel and Oregon in the 1970's, and demonstrate the way in which those fields of resistance were constructed historically through differing understandings of assimilation.

John Little remembers very clearly the institutional discrimination ingrained in the higher education system in Oregon. When he tried to enroll a monk from Mexico at Chemeketa

⁸⁶ May, Maldonado, Gonzalez,

⁸⁷ Montes, Sonny; Little, John; Romero, Jose. Interview by Glenn May. Tape Recording. Portland, Oregon, 2006.

⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

Community College, they were told that the college could not take the monk that year as there was a thousand-person waiting-list. However, when they tried again at Chemeketa's Woodburn extension, the college enrolled the monk without hesitation. This incident is indicative of the overall state of higher education in Oregon during the 1970's; the reality was that four year colleges were, functionally speaking, still closed to Chicanos because of their race and economic status.

As for Mt. Angel, the Anglo and the Chicano community viewed education and its role in the experience of the immigrant in two conflicting manners. Although the history of Mt. Angel College is detailed thoroughly in the centennial book, the Colegio as an institution of higher education was conspicuously absent from the centennial book's discussion of education. While the Chicano community saw education at the Colegio as "protection" against mainstream colleges which had all "miserably failed" as part of the "an academic process" of victimization and forced assimilation, the Mt. Angel community saw education as a means of betterment that provided access to "American-ness."⁸⁹ This mindset is evident in the centennial book at the point where Mt. Angel directly confronts its developing diversity. In this section, the parish's Vietnamese, Russian, and "Hispanic" populations all receive a page detailing how they contributed to the Mt. Angel community, and specifically to the parish, in an example of contributionist history. These pages suggest how the Anglo community viewed the various cultures around them. In the page devoted to the Hispanic community, the book emphasizes the value that Hispanics place on education as a way of legitimizing their presence in the town. The "sons and daughters of migrants have become an important part of the community," as "one third of the children in Mt. Angel elementary are Hispanic," and "many are finishing high school and

⁸⁹ "A Message from Colegio Cesar Chavez," *The Chavista* March, 1979.

continuing into specialized education."⁹⁰ These phrases suggest that, through the pursuit of education in Mt. Angel's schools, a pursuit which Mt. Angel residents considered of utmost importance to the advancement of immigrants, Hispanic children were on their way to becoming legitimate, productive citizens of the town.

As long as integration was the rule, rather than separation, Mt. Angel could accept the presence of "Hispanics" in their schools where the systems of inequality were perpetuated in a way beneficial to Anglos. This is the double bind of integration. For Chicanos activists, to integrate Spanish speaking Chicano students into the mainstream Anglo school system was to subject them to an inherently unequal education that forced the process of assimilation.⁹¹ Yet, segregation had also been used as a method of subjugation, and Anglo policy-makers around the country often used this history to ignore calls for bilingual education that appeared to "separate" students. In Mt. Angel, Anglo residents and the Colegio's staff and students understood integration and separation in very different ways. The Anglo community in Mt. Angel placed great importance on the integration and involvement of citizens in the numerous civic and religious groups to the point that, when asked about their personal involvement, residents are quick to defend anything that may be perceived as under-involvement on their part.⁹² The centennial book includes a large section devoted to the various civic and religious groups in Mt. Angel, and also notes that "The little town...takes pride in being called "The Cooperative City," a city focused on civic life."⁹³ Mt. Angel residents, then, understood involvement in civic life to be a requirement of citizenship and American-ness. Conversely, Mt. Angel residents saw the

⁹⁰ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish*, 114.

⁹¹ Dennis J. Bixler-Márquez, *Chicano Studies: Survey and Analysis*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co., 2001, 266.

⁹² Margaret Hoffer. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 2, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

⁹³ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish*, 80.

Colegio as "invaders" who "kept" themselves separate from the town. In the *Chavista*, Caldwell wrote that Anglos condemned Colegio Cesar Chavez as "a school for 'them' and a move to segregate Anglo and Latino cultures." Anglos saw the Chicano community as refusing to integrate themselves into civic life as citizens should. To Chicano residents, however, the Colegio was not an example of segregation but of integration because it allowed Chicano students to become "skilled, socially and politically aware" citizens.⁹⁴ A separate, bilingual-bicultural education prepared students to become better integrated into the host culture.

The media —another institution of "cultural production" which is especially effective because of its claim to authority and its ability "to perpetuate the belief that their decisions are based not in external, particular economic constraints, but in the transcendent norms of which they are the guardians," such as truth— was slanted in its treatment of the Colegio as well and helped to ferment Anglo resistance.⁹⁵ Montes recalls that when the Colegio staged a march from Mt. Angel into Gervais, a local newspaper labeled the marchers as North Vietnamese sympathizers and wrote, erroneously according to Montes, that the marchers carried North Vietnamese flags with them.⁹⁶ This rumor would have had special potency for the conservative Anglo community at Mt. Angel that was largely sympathetic towards the military efforts of the United States. The centennial book, for instance, dedicates two pages to the servicemen that Mt. Angel lost in major conflicts, including Vietnam, as well as to the overall war efforts of the town.⁹⁷ This sympathy points to a trend among immigrants of taking part in military conflicts in order to legitimize their citizenship, especially among German and Japanese Americans during

⁹⁴ Caldwell, "Beyond the Melting Pot."

⁹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*. New York: New Press, 1998.

⁹⁶ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

⁹⁷ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish*, 80.

World Wars I and II.⁹⁸ Sacrificing one's life for one's country became the ultimate test of citizenship and demonstration of unquestionable patriotism, and the centennial book made it very clear that the loyalty of Mt. Angel's German population had lain with the United States in its struggle against the evils of German fascism. Given this history, Mt. Angel's Anglos would not have understood the Colegio's, as well as the greater Chicano Movement's, protest of and resistance to the Vietnam War.⁹⁹ Racial and economic factors meant that the percentage of Latinos going into the military was, per capita, much higher than the percentage of Anglos, and the Chicano Movement made this a point of protest during the 1960's and 1970's. The Anglo population understood that resistance to be unpatriotic.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and local law enforcement as institutions also demonstrated a deep distrust of the Chicano community through what Romero calls their "constant surveillance" of the Colegio's community. The FBI did follow the activities of the leaders of the Chicano movement, including César Chávez who visited the Colegio a number of times. What is more, the FBI had long had an interest in Sonny Montes; two agents had approached Father Christian Mondor, the president of Mt. Angel College until its close, and warned him not to hire Montes.¹⁰⁰ Romero remembers FBI agents trespassing on the campus, and remembers particularly strongly the "J. Edgar Hoover convert" they spent an afternoon with after he snuck into the school through the back door, carrying a gun and looking for weapons or signs of subversive activities. He was Chicano, a fact that seemed to disturb Romero, who remembers telling the young man that he didn't need to use his gun, saying "you could hurt

⁹⁸ Patricia Kollander and John O'Sullivan, *"I Must be a Part of this War": a German American's Fight Against Hitler and Nazism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

Eric L. Muller, *Free to Die for Their Country: The Story of the Japanese American Draft Resisters in World War II*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁹⁹ Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Si!! guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ May, *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon*.

someone or somebody could hurt you. We're not going to accost you; you're going to be part of our family." According to Romero, they "asked him to remember his childhood, as a young boy in Texas, the kind of racism that existed in there the role of the rangers, the kind of thing that happened in his neighborhood." He explained that they were trying to educate their community rather than be communists or radicals, or "subvert the system." The young man never came back again, although he was told he could, though, this time, "through the front door."¹⁰¹

These incidents speak to the climate of fear that pervaded the United States during the 1950's and 1960's in response to the Cold War and communism. To the Mt. Angel community, the FBI's interest in the Colegio would have been a confirmation of their fears. The term "hippie" that the residents use in a derogatory manner to describe the Colegio is also a term associated with the subversive counter-culture of the 1960's, Vietnam War protests, and the communist scare. In many cases and regions, Chicano activism was linked to these movements, but at the Colegio, according to Montes and Romero, rumors of communism at the Colegio were just that, rumors.¹⁰² However, as a fundamentally conservative population already predisposed to suspect the Colegio based on factors such as race, Mt. Angel residents readily bought into the rumors that existed on a national scale and that were reinforced by the presence of the FBI. As such, the Benedictine sisters allowed the sheriff's office to "camp out...with telescopes" across the street in the fourth floor of their convent and keep a trailer in the parking lot across the street. The rumor had spread that there were people coming up from California, "radicals bringing guns," a rumor that Montes, Little, and Romero deny, but this rumor was enough to further perpetuate the gulf

¹⁰¹ Montes, Sonny; Little, John; Romero, Jose. Interview by Glenn May. Tape Recording. Portland, Oregon, 2006.

¹⁰² Shifra M. Goldman, "A Public Voice: Fifteen Years of Chicano Posters," *Art Journal* 44 (1984): 50-57.

between the two communities. This rumor, and other gossip like it, served to enforce conformity and defined normal behavior versus deviant behavior.¹⁰³

Thus, the institution of the Catholic Church as represented by the Benedictine Sisters also demonstrated resistance towards the Chicano community. The centennial book speaks to the role of religion in the two communities, and, once again, it shows an Anglo misunderstanding of the Colegio's experience of Catholicism. Again, the book depicts the ethos of the most progressive faction of Mt. Angel, and accordingly, with the "Hispanic" section, Bauman and his collaborators attempt to legitimize the presence of the Chicano community by emphasizing their strong demonstration of religion. In many ways, this section does what the Colegio had also attempted to do in emphasizing those characteristics of the Chicano community that were most closely aligned with the values of the Anglo community, religion especially being at the forefront in Mt. Angel. The photos included show Hispanic children taking their first communion and participating as altar servers in the mass. According to the centennial book, religion for Hispanics was "so totally a part of their culture," and it notes that "devotions to the Queen of the Americas bring out large numbers of Hispanics" who are "participating in the total life of the parish."¹⁰⁴ Through their Catholic devotion, Hispanic residents are depicted as worthy parishioners and residents of Mt. Angel.

This depiction belies the highly complex role of the Catholic Church as experienced by subjugated minority groups. A hierarchical institution, the positions of power in the Church are held exclusively by men, and heavily dominated by white men of European descent. The racial inequalities that are present in secular society are replicated in the Church, but because of the

¹⁰³ Richard R. Lingeman, *Small Town America: a Narrative History, 1620-the Present*. (New York: Putnam, 1980), 438.

¹⁰⁴ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish, 1880-1980*, 114.

Christian edict to "love one's neighbors," they are often more subtle.¹⁰⁵ The racism, resistance and oppression that existed in Mt. Angel, a town dominated by religious institutions and "under surveillance," was also characterized by subtlety. Of the Hispanic page, Montes notes that it is "very typical of the mentality of the Church, where they give us handouts and think that they're doing us a favor, offering us an hour and a half Mass in Spanish." He states that "it is very typical of how our church operates," that Latinos, as a member population of the Catholic Church, are "the most loyal and biggest in the world," and that the Anglo hierarchy should begin to reach out to these members "beyond the piecemeal approach" in order to make them equal partners.¹⁰⁶ In an example of this "handout" mindset, the centennial book further notes that an "increase in needs and the complexity of problems challenged united efforts of the various civic and church groups to share the Christian concern for those in need."¹⁰⁷ The rhetoric of Christianity, identifiable with the "white savior" rhetoric, served to place the Latino migrants and others whom the town saw as needy in the position of the other to which the town ministered.¹⁰⁸

As for the Colegio itself, the school was secular. Montes maintains that the Church played only a very small role there; the archbishop came in to bless the school at one point, they held a small number of masses, and the president of the Catholic University of Portland helped the Colegio's administrators conduct an institutional self-study mandated by the Northwest Accreditation Association. While, according to Montes, the majority of Chicanos on campus were Catholic, their connection to the Church was of a different nature than that of the Anglo.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Nathaniel J. Klemp, *The Morality of Spin : Virtue and Vice in Political Rhetoric and the Christian Right*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

¹⁰⁷ Bauman, 108.

¹⁰⁸ Lorine M. Getz and Ruy O. Costa. *Struggles for Solidarity: Liberation Theologies in Tension* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁹ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

Even among Latinos, there was tension between those who followed the teachings of an Anglo-dominated hierarchy with little questioning and those who, in the tradition of Liberation Theology and as activists, rejected the reactionary, traditional faction, often to be found in the hierarchy of the Church, which espouses a version of religiosity that would relegate them to second-class participants. For instance, Montes expressed surprise that an article entitled "A woman's view" espousing the traditional, supportive role of the Chicana would have appeared in the *Chavista*.¹¹⁰ The article states that if Chicanas "are willing to help, [they] can help a man realize his own dreams" and that "La Mujer Mexicana/Chicana knows that providing support is very important." Upon hearing that the article displayed strong religious undertones that depict the Virgin Mary as the ideal of passive, supportive femininity, Montes was able to point to a number of Colegio staff, affiliated more closely with the Church, that might have been responsible for the article. The Chicanas he knew, Montes recalls, were not the Chicanas depicted in the article. Maria Lanice and Jan Chavez, in particular, he remembers as being opinionated, intelligent women who would "disagree with [him], argue sometimes, hug sometimes, and work together." Of these women, Montes says, "that's the kind of Latinas that I knew at the Colegio because those were the only type of people who could have survived. It was tough. You had to think and produce on your feet, and develop your credibility."¹¹¹ Thus, the type of Catholicism practiced at the Colegio not only defied the expectations of Mt. Angel's Anglo residents, but also the expectations of the faction of Chicanos who clung to a set of values rooted in traditional Catholicism.¹¹² Unaccustomed to an activist take on Catholicism and unable to understand why Chicanos might reject those aspects of the faith, such as an Anglo-dominated

¹¹⁰ Ybarra-Fausto Collection, 1943-1988, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington.

¹¹¹ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

¹¹² Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2005).

hierarchy or "hand-outs," that relegated them to passive, secondary roles in the Church, Mt. Angel's Anglo residents could not connect with the Colegio through their shared religion. Whereas for Mt. Angel's Anglo residents, the Catholic faith had always been a place of community and solidarity, especially when pitted against Protestant discrimination, Chicanos experience of the organized Catholic religion in the United States was one characterized by inequality perpetrated on the basis of race.

Resistance and discrimination also existed unconnected with institutions. Little, who "knows the Mt. Angel people," says that the Mt. Angel Anglo community succumbed to rumors and misunderstandings because they were not interested in really understanding the Chicano community. "They didn't want to know" he says, "They didn't try to find out, didn't go over to meet any of the people."¹¹³ The font of this more subtle form of resistance is more difficult to trace, but all the more important for understanding the micro-power relationships active in Mt. Angel. Systems of race and class function covertly at this level, and further hidden under a Christian rhetoric, are particularly difficult to trace in Mt. Angel.

Racism goes almost unmentioned in Mt. Angel by "well-meaning" Christian Anglos. When asked about changes to the town, Anglo residents may speak about the "Spanish" in connection to the new "low-income" housing, or remember that "in those days we had the hotel, but we didn't have the low income housing," but they are then quick to mention that they have lived next to a "wonderful Spanish couple" or make the innocuous comment that "we have quite a Spanish group now."¹¹⁴ Yet, racism, however subtle or overt, existed in Mt. Angel in the 1970's as is evidenced by the "ethnic" pages of the centennial book. As a product of the progressive and

¹¹³ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

¹¹⁴ Fran and Carol Piatz. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 24, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

Christian factions of Mt. Angel, these pages are an attempt to mitigate and reshape the racial stereotypes that more conservative, traditional residents held.

First, it emphasizes the long history of Hispanics in the area:

"Most of the Hispanic families have been longtime residents of the United States. The great-great grandfather of the young Rodriguez children was born in Rio Grande, Texas. Not many Anglo families living here can boast of having lived five generations in the United States."¹¹⁵

Explicit in this text is the assumption that Anglos will find the presence of the Rodriguez family in Mt. Angel to be more justified because of their long history in the United States. If they do not, the editors remind Anglo residents that, as descendants of immigrants themselves, not many of their own families can claim this to justify their own citizenship over another's. Also at play in this quote are the particular history of Texas and the narrative of the Chicano movement in regards to the United States' imperialism in the southwest. It is probable that the great-great grandfather of the Rodriguez children was born in Rio Grande, Texas after it became a state. It is less probable that Mt. Angel residents would have been struck by or even aware of the possibility, so often noted ironically by Chicano historians, that his ancestors might have lived in Rio Grande before it was either a part of Texas or the United States. In 1980, the Anglo editors justify the citizenship of their Hispanic neighbors based on their longtime presence in the United States southwest. This in contrast to Chicano participant historians writing in the 1960's who often cited the presence of Latinos in the southwest, *before* it became a part of the United States, as a justification for the full equality of Chicanos.¹¹⁶ The editors also observe that Schmidt and Buhr, names with "obvious German roots," now appear on the parish record next to names like Reyna, Martinez, and Guerrero, providing these names with a certain status of their own. In Mt.

¹¹⁵ Bauman, *St. Mary's Parish, 1880-1980*, 144.

¹¹⁶ John R. Chávez, *The Lost: the Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

Angel, where the street one lives on is named after the neighbor's great-grandfather and where the phrase "she's a Piatz" or a Bauman or a Zollner is used to describe residents, having a family history in the area is a point of pride, and sometimes of power. By ascribing that same status to names of Spanish origin, the editors sought to grant that power to Chicano residents and co-opt for them the same longevity and legitimacy that the name "Bauman" invoked.

That the editors of this book, a book meant to be read by the Anglo residents, felt the need to make such an effort to profile and extol the virtues of the different ethnic groups in the town suggests that there indeed existed friction between the two groups. Still, this book is an attempt by the more progressive faction of the town to build bridges, and does not necessarily reflect the reality as much as the narrative that Ivo Bauman and other residents wished to be true. The centennial book was also written as a history of St. Mary's Parish and maintains a religious rhetoric of inclusion and good-will towards one's neighbors. Therefore, the extent to which the town was racialized is not apparent from the book. Montes remembers, for instance, going into Tiny's Tavern in Mt. Angel and being confronted by Mt. Angel residents who called him "Mexican" and complained about his presence there. Montes explained this instance of resistance by saying that they had a "beer or two in their systems" and that it was "nothing unusual for that day."¹¹⁷ Another indication of the way in which Mt. Angel Anglo residents thought about race, although the Centennial book is a history from 1880 to 1980, the existence of Colegio César Chávez, which began operating in 1973, is conspicuously absent. The existence of the Colegio also seems to be conspicuously absent from the memories of most Anglo residents. Residents who do vaguely remember the Colegio said that they thought it had been "full of hippies" from

¹¹⁷ Montes, Sonny; Little, John. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, March 1, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

San Francisco rather than a school for "the Spanish."¹¹⁸ The town seems to have had already condemned the college after its earlier transformation into a more liberal institution, yet, given the size of Mt. Angel and seeing as the college existed for ten years as a Chicano college, it seems difficult to believe that Anglo residents would have been unaware of the racial makeup of the Colegio. It may be that the Anglo residents, who's "hearts were in the right place," as Montes maintains, are more comfortable remembering that they and their town resisted the Colegio because they disagreed with their politics and "hippie" culture rather than as a function of racism.

The *Chavista* article "Beyond the Melting Pot," again, demonstrates the tensions between integration as a process of assimilation and integration as a process of equalization, and also gives a clue as to the language that Mt. Angel residents might have been using at the time. Caldwell makes several comments about what the German American, Anglo community might have felt, and most likely expressed, about the Colegio. Caldwell notes that a common mindset among Anglos, pointing to the Mt. Angel community specifically, is that "The German immigrants adapted to our society. Why can't the Mexicans?" This question encapsulates the Anglo community's greater and fundamental misunderstanding of the way in which the Colegio was performing assimilation as a racialized and subjugated population. Mt. Angel expected Mexican immigrants to assimilate into the American culture in the traditional or "normal" manner in which they remembered their ancestors to have done, an expectation that they could only develop through suppressing and obscuring parts of their own history in which their ancestors also experienced discrimination. When the Colegio acted out a process of assimilation that moved them towards an articulation of a third, Chicano culture, Mt. Angel resisted and

¹¹⁸ Fran and Carol Piatz. Interview by Kimberly Hursh. Digital Recording. Mt. Angel, Oregon, February 24, 2012. Willamette University Libraries.

rejected it, not recognizing it through their understanding of assimilation based on the traditional narrative.

Conclusion

According to historian William Cronon, humans are story-tellers, and the historical narratives they tell follow the same narrative tropes and patterns as those stories we typically think of as "fiction" tend to follow. The "characters" and "setting" that a historian chooses to include or exclude; whether the historian chooses to tell the narrative as a tragedy or a triumph; and where the historian chooses to begin and end his narrative, are all narrative decisions that contribute to the overall affect that the story will have on the recipients of the story.¹¹⁹ The nature of those tropes and the way in which they are used have real affects on the story's recipients living in the present as "fiction becomes historically material and of consequence as persons live it," and as identities are constructed "only within a discursively constituted history"¹²⁰ Thus, the narrative rise or fall of the story of immigration, as a process of assimilation, has had real consequences for the descendents who identify with the actors in that story. Assimilation as understood as a positive process and teleological narrative obscures contradictions to that positive story arch such as racial or religious discrimination. Assimilation as a negative process and equally teleological narrative also obscures contradictions to that story arc, such as immigrants making the choice to assimilate in order to better their situation. In order to avoid obscuring any part of the process of assimilation as performed by both the dominant and minority cultures, a third type of narrative must be established in which assimilation is neither an inherently positive or a negative process, but is a discourse about change that is used by

¹¹⁹William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History* (1992): 1347-1376, 78.

¹²⁰ Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, (1987): 133-150, 73

dominant cultures to enforce and control minority cultures, but that is also used by minority cultures as a means of adapting and gaining agency. This definition maintains that assimilation, as a process of change, affects both dominant and minority cultures. It allows for multiplicities of cultures, both those labeled as dominant and minority, to exist, and denies that the cultures that are undergoing the process of assimilation are homogenous or static.

This theoretical perspective puts the story of the Colegio and its presence in Mt. Angel in a different light. Narratives, discourses of power, converged in this particular town of Mt. Angel that fundamentally opposed each other, creating friction.¹²¹ Mt. Angel Anglos, though presenting themselves as an ethnic population connected to their German and Catholic roots, actually told a historical narrative about themselves that belied the reality. In the 1970's, they identified most closely with the American culture within which they existed. As highly assimilated "Americans" who benefited from those systems of power in the United States that favored English-speaking Anglos, Mt. Angel residents understood assimilation as a natural and positive process. They may still have remembered those parts of their immigrant history that align with the traditional immigrant narrative, but they also deemphasized, ignored, or forgot other parts of their history, especially at the collective consciousness level of public history as presented in the rhetoric of the Oktoberfest and the centennial history book, that might contradict that positive narrative of assimilation.

This positive narrative fundamentally opposed the negative assimilation narrative of the National Chicano Movement, a narrative that used history in such a way that "the nuances and ambiguities of the past [were] lost beneath the rhetoric of a present that [screened] ambiguities of

¹²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

its own"¹²² The Colegio under Montes and Romero followed the ideology of the National Chicano movement in many ways, rejecting the positive assimilation narrative. Yet, the Colegio often used, accepted, and performed assimilation, often through a rewrite of the historical narrative, that a wholly negative view of assimilation, that is to say, a view which only emphasized "Mexican-ness," would have them categorically reject. This co-opting was a mechanism of resistance and agency that allowed them to exist more effectively within their particular geographical, practical, and ideological context. In navigating between these two narratives and cultures, the Colegio developed a rhetoric of and relationship to assimilation that could be defined as multi-culturalism, embracing aspects of both cultures in an effort to leverage a better position in the Willamette Valley. Whether this third way of understanding assimilation will allow Latino populations in Oregon to remember their history as opposed to German Catholics who seem to have forgotten theirs will be questions for future historians.

A long-time leader and activist in Oregon, John Little has been involved in a number of groups advocating, in front of state legislators, senators, and governors, for bilingual education. Not surprisingly, he has faced resistance from these mostly Anglo Oregonians, but also these Oregonians with their own migrant, pioneer, and immigrant histories. He knows them well, he believes, having lived in the state for most of his life, and he says that one of his persuasive strategies when speaking to this particular audience is to "remind them of their own background," in order to "overcome their simplistic view of what their history is." According to Little, Oregonians have lost the ability to access their past, and in doing so, have lost the ability to understand the often difficult process of change, called assimilation, that new immigrant populations in Oregon are experiencing. His strategy, therefore, is to educate them about their

¹²² Michael G. Kenny, "A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (1999): 426.

own past, because Little understands intuitively that knowing oneself, ones narrative and past, enables one to better access and understand and empathize with other people and their experiences and cultures.

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