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Cultural Hybridization in the United States: The Case of Chicanos/ Mexican-American Music

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Cultural Hybridization in the United States: the Case of
Chicanos/Mexican-American Music

Keywords: Chicano, Music, Identity, United States, Mexico, Corrido

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[Abstract]

How do immigrant communities in the United States maintain aspects of their culture when they have to navigate between an American culture and their own? This study will center Chicanos, who fit this description by being Mexicans who have to navigate between having roots in Mexico and a new cultural environment in America. More specifically, an analysis of corrido music (and their corresponding music videos) produced by a Chicano band in the 21st century will be important to understanding how a hybrid identity is communicated through that medium. Lyrics, Slang, Styles of Dress, Instruments and Rhythms will be used as points of analysis to distinguish between which elements are highlighting or referring to a Mexican or American identity. Research reveals that these elements construct a hybrid identity, because the band maintains their working class Mexican roots while demonstrating an influence of other styles of music, particularly African-American hip hop. The implications of this study are how we can understand the way that immigrant communities in the United States maintain their cultural roots through music. Music offers a unique way of understanding cultural hybridization, as scholars can apply the case of Chicanos to other immigrant communities in the world. For further research, we need to consider the perspective of women Chicana artists, as the corrido genre explored in this thesis is predominantly performed by men.

Introduction

Understanding Chicano Identity through Their Music

Similar to other immigrant communities that share a “blank”-American identity, Mexican Americans are no different when it comes to the complex nature of their identity. Whether to identify as more Mexican or more American is a difficult task, however this is not the case for the community of Mexican Americans who tend to embrace both sides. Members of this community have adopted a name that sets them apart from being simply Mexican-Americans—they refer to themselves as Chicanos. What does it mean to be a Chicano? One of the ways to explore the hybrid identity is through their music, which is something that inspired me to understand their lifestyle and culture. I had some friends who were Chicanos themselves recommend some of the popular Regional Mexican music they were familiar with. Regional Mexican music encompasses many different Mexican genres and their variants, ranging from corrido, norteno, banda, ranchera, mariachi and many more. Mexican Artists such as Eslabon Armado, Peso Pluma, Grupo Frontera and more were mentioned and immediately I understood what the widespread appeal was. Catchy rhythms, melodies, instruments and relatable lyrics in Spanish all coalesced to produce popular Mexican music of the 21st century. Some were fast in the same way that urban hip-hop is (party songs), whereas others were slow and emphasized pain and romance. These artists had songs for every mood, and ultimately they served as a point of inspiration for the thesis.

Regional Mexican music serves as the starting point for understanding a Chicano identity, as some of the Mexican artists are based in California. The main thesis I want to explore is the following: Through an analysis of lyrics, visual elements, and how ideas are expressed, a hybrid

Mexican-American identity is communicated in the songs produced by Chicanos. Some elements are exclusively Mexican; such as their slang, rhythm or instruments, whereas others are exclusively American such as dress, using English, and references to American culture. Some are a mix between the two, such as ideas or objects that were formed by the Mexican American community once they established themselves in the United States. The present thesis seeks to understand the larger theme of how immigrants maintain their cultural roots in the process of incorporating themselves into a new nation.

First a brief history of the Chicano community in the United States will be explained. The Chicano Movement, the Mexican American War, and the Mexican Revolution are significant events in the formation of the community, as they have all contributed to waves of Mexican immigrants migrating to the United States in addition to maintaining their Mexican culture from their language, food, and music. Then, I will delve into a method which consists of describing the multiple layers of analysis for the two songs I have carefully chosen. The main section will contain the analysis and discussion of the examples that will follow. Finally, the conclusion will highlight the main takeaways in order to understand Chicanos and how they fit into a larger theme of immigrant communities and their hybrid identities in the United States.

Background

What are Chicanos?

Scholars have broadly defined Chicanos as communities and individuals of Mexican origin who either have descent or emigrated to the United States.¹ However, we need to be careful when comparing them to Mexican Americans, because not all Mexican Americans consider themselves Chicano. This is due to the complicated history of the term, some scholars

¹ DeSoto, Aureliano Maria. "Chicanos: An Overview." In *Encyclopedia of American Studies*, edited by Sharon P. Holland. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021.

have understood the term Mexican American to be one of an assimilationist ideology in which Mexicans claim a socially and politically white identity.² It was a popular term used in the 1920s, and “Chicano” had not been used in dominant vocabulary as of yet. Chicano is a group identifier term that rose out of the Mexican American community during the Chicano Movements of the 1960s. During this time of high political and social tension in America, Young Mexican Americans and activists had rejected the label Mexican American because it was indicative of their second class as hyphenated Americans³ and used the term Chicano to form group consciousness to critique the dominant social and political institutions in American society. Up until this point the Mexican community in America had thought of itself as racially white⁴, and Chicanos had sought to proclaim a non-white identity. This idea formed one of the key principles for the movement: Mexicans form a separate race from whites. Chicano was not the only term that was used in dominant discourse during the movement, there were other forms of language that sought to unify the community such as *la raza* (the people), *huelga* and *carnalismo* (brotherhood).

However, the Chicano Movement was not simply one unified movement that sought to empower Mexican Americans under the banner of “Chicanismo”. It was composed of different organizations that pushed for various political and social reforms. Some of the significant organizations who helped promote the empowerment of Chicanos include the Brown Berets and the Crusade for Justice. The Brown Berets used Marxist-Leninist ideas to shed light on the unequal living and working conditions that Chicanos experienced in the United States.⁵ They had led numerous demonstrations and protests in the LA area, and offered military protection for

² Lopez, Ian. “Protest, Repression, and Race: Legal Violence and the Chicano Movement.” JSTOR, 2001.

³ Chávez, Ernesto. “Chicanismo and the Chicano Movement.” In *Encyclopedia of American Studies*, edited by Sharon P. Holland. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021.

⁴ Lopez, Ian. “Protest, Repression, and Race: Legal Violence and the Chicano Movement.”

⁵ Chávez, Ernesto. “Chicano Movement.” In *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, edited by Patrick L. Mason. Gale, 2013.

Chicano students to walk out of their schools to protest these unfair conditions. Crusade for Justice was founded by Rodolfo Gonzalez and advocated for “Chicano nationalism based on strengthening the Mexican American family and promoting cultural awareness”. One of their significant developments was the creation of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlan) which had echoed the key principle of separating Chicanos from the white race/oppression. There were some divisions between the organizations however, some of them did not believe in a Chicano label; they believed that there is no difference between ethnic Mexicans in the US and those in Mexico.⁶ Overall, the efforts brought forth by organizations such as the Brown Berets and Crusade for Justice helped distance Chicanos from a history of being assimilated into American culture and reminded Mexican Americans of their Mexican roots and marginalization within the United States. The Chicano label is a product of group identity formation under the hand of social political and economic oppression.

History of Mexican American/Chicanos

Chicanos have a complex social and political history that’s been shaped by 3 significant events: the Mexican American War, The Mexican Revolution, and the 1960’s Chicano Movement.

Although a Chicano group consciousness had not been developed yet, The Mexican American War was one of the first events that created the first communities of Chicanos. The disputed territory of Texas was the main target that both the US and Mexican government were fighting for. Under the principle of Manifest Destiny, newly elected US President James K Polk sent diplomats to purchase the northern region of Mexico, however their efforts failed because the Mexican government was facing much pressure to keep Mexico intact.⁷ In May of 1846, Polk

⁶ Chavez, Ernesto, “Chicano Movement”

⁷ Greenberg, Amy S. "Mexican-American War." In *The Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, edited by Michael Kazin. Princeton University Press, 2010.

submitted a request for war with Mexico because he had discovered that Mexicans killed “Americans on American soil”. Congress had approved the United States to go to war, and the United States had emerged victorious after a series of intense conflicts. The Treaty of Guadalupe was the result of the Mexican American War and its two main doctrines were the following: The Mexican government must cede their Northern Territory to the United States (Mexican Cession), and American officials had to grant American citizenship to Mexican citizens within the Mexican Cession.⁸ By extension, the Mexican citizens who were also considered American citizens during this time formed one of the earliest Mexican-American communities. It was especially important for them to band together due to the fact that they were part of a minority group and had to assimilate into American society. Although Mexican Americans were granted citizenship, they were still viewed as racially and culturally inferior to white Americans, and this laid the groundwork for the community to gain more consciousness of their Chicano identity over time.

Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution 1910-1920 was a tumultuous time in Mexican history that caused the movement and displacement of thousands of Mexicans northward to the United States. During Mexican President Porfirio Diaz’s 30 year dictatorship, the Mexican economy was able to grow because of the expansion of capitalist industry and jobs. However, large numbers of peasants and urban workers were never able to experience the benefits of the growth because the wealth was concentrated among Diaz and his elites⁹. Social economic and political oppression set the stage for these marginalized Mexicans to express their grievances through protest and

⁸ Little, Robert. "MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR (1846-1848)." In Encyclopedia of Free Blacks and People of Color in the Americas, by Stewart R. King. Facts On File, 2012.

⁹ Leonard, Thomas M. "Mexican Revolution." In Latin American History and Culture: Encyclopedia of Modern Latin America (1900 to the Present), by Thomas M. Leonard. Facts On File, 2017.

revolt which were all repressed by Diaz's military forces. The tipping point that threw Mexico into a full scale war between the Porfirato and revolutionary forces was the Plan of San Luis Potosi proposed by Francisco Madero. The Plan denounced Diaz's authoritarian rule and called for a return to the democratic principles of the 1857 constitution.¹⁰ Even long after Diaz had been ousted, wars and battles between the government and revolutionary forces had been fought for years due to the unfavorable presidents that replaced him. As for the effects on war on the local population, statistics are demonstrative: During the main 10 year period of revolution the population dropped by 1 million Mexicans with many of them dead and an additional quarter million migrating north.¹¹ Importantly, the Mexican Revolution caused many Mexicans to find social, economic and political stability in the United States and resulted in the creation of more Mexican American communities in the southwest in addition to other cities like Detroit, Chicago and more.

Location, Economic Status and Language

Chicano Locations

Due to its close proximity to the southwest of the United States, states such as California, Texas and Arizona are the primary places where Chicanos reside. According to statistics from Pew Research Center, there were an estimated 37.4 million Hispanics of Mexican origin living in the United States in 2021, and they account for 60% of the US Hispanic population in general (Pew Research). The states that house the most Mexicans are California (34%), Texas (26%), and Arizona (5%) with Illinois and Colorado housing around the same population as Arizona.¹²

¹⁰ Schroeder, Michael J. "Mexican Revolution." In World History: A Comprehensive Reference Set, edited by Facts on File. Facts On File, 2016.

¹¹ Schroeder, "Mexican Revolution"

¹² Moslimani, Mohamad. "Facts on Hispanics of Mexican Origin in the United States, 2021." Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, August 16, 2023.

Data on Economic Status

Mexican American communities in the United States share a similar socioeconomic status to African American communities, although Latino communities have slightly higher positions. Indeed they fall in between the spectrum of White and Black wealth:

While the median net worth of whites is two times greater than the median net worth of Mexican Americans, Mexican Americans have greater median net worth than African Americans (\$322,000, \$131,000 and \$91,000 respectively). (3856)¹³

In addition, the factors that influence the wealth gap between the different groups are similar: such as being “educationally disadvantaged, concentrated in low wage work, and residentially segregated” (3856). Poverty among Latinos in the United States also suggests economic marginalization and lower classes: “According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, 16.8% of Latinos - 10 million - nationally lived in poverty in 2022”. That number is similar to the percentage of Mexican Americans who lived in poverty in 2021 - 18%.¹⁴

One of the factors that influences poverty and low income is the degree of educational attainment among Mexican Americans. Because Mexican Americans have systemic educational disadvantages, there is a strong correlation between their low levels of education and income. Statistics from the Pew Research Center show that 20% of U.S Hispanics 25 and older have obtained at least a bachelor’s degree, compared with 15% of Mexicans. In addition the median personal earnings for US Hispanics and Mexicans was \$30,000.¹⁵ Rates of Homeownership are also lower than whites: almost 75 % of whites own a home¹⁶ while 54% of Mexican Americans are homeowners.¹⁷ Overall, the statistics between these sources demonstrate the general lower to

¹³ Salgado, Casandra D., and Vilma Ortiz. "Mexican Americans and wealth: Economic status, family and place." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46.18 (2020): 3855-3873.

¹⁴ Mohamad, “Facts on Hispanics of Mexican origin in the United States”

¹⁵ Mohamad, “Facts on Hispanics of Mexican origin in the United States”

¹⁶ Korhonen, Veera. “Home Ownership Rate by Race U.S. 2022.” Statista, July 3, 2023.

¹⁷ Mohamad, “Facts on Hispanics of Mexican origin in the United States”

middle class positions that the majority of Mexican Americans occupy - in all categories white people have the advantage, and African Americans share a similar percentage to Mexican Americans.

Language

After signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the Mexicans that remained and immigrated to the United States did not have to learn English because there were communities that only spoke Spanish. For about a century the proximity to Mexico and waves of immigrants in different periods of time have helped maintain and revitalize Mexican culture and use of Spanish. In the twentieth century however, English became more useful for them because the later generations of Mexican Americans needed to communicate with English Speakers in their jobs. In addition to Spanish being their native language from Mexico, many Mexicans have picked up the English language; 69% of Mexican adults say that they are proficient.¹⁸ This is directly a result of schools in the United States that teach later generations of Mexican Americans English, as English is a fundamental part of the curriculum in American schools.

Mexican American Spanish has features that distinguish it from traditional Spanish. There are differences in the standard pronunciation of words, for example *soldado* to *soldau* or *usted* to *uste*.¹⁹ In addition to a change in pronunciation, Mexican Americans have incorporated the use of English words in their Spanish; while in standard Spanish *camion* means truck, Mexican Americans use *Troca*. Finally, the author makes note that *calo* is still very prevalent among young Mexican Americans which is a variation of Mexican Spanish that employs slang from Mexican Spanish, American English, and African American English. The more contemporary groups of Mexican Americans are more keen on Speaking English, which enables

¹⁸ Mohamad, "Facts on Hispanics of Mexican Origin in the United States"

¹⁹ Englekirk, Allan, and Marguerite Marin. "Mexican Americans." In Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America, edited by Gale. Gale, 2014.

them to communicate across both Spanish and English Speaking groups (code switching), a phenomenon that will show up in their music.

The Corrido and its History

The music genre *corrido* from Mexico has been revitalized by Chicanos in the United States in the twenty first century. It has a long history that stretches back into the colonial period when Spanish explorers were arriving in Mexico. This type of corrido was known as a *romance corrido*, and it became very popular among the Spanish Soldiers and settlers because it was known for romanticizing the events or scenes encountered in the expedition. A tradition of being a ballad in the colonial era had contributed to “a living ballad tradition” which is defined as a practice of creating and performing narrative song in response to events affecting local communities.²⁰ During the nineteenth century, the romance aspect of corridos had been dropped because there was a switch of singing about Spanish nobility and colonial exploits to singing about heroes and villains of the time and place. In place of being called romance corridos, scholars (Richmond) referred to the new form as *Mexican corrido* to distinguish between the two. According to Kristen and Rodney Richmond, there are five characteristics of Mexican corrido that make it distinct from its predecessor the romance corrido, there are: 1) greetings by the artist, 2) introduction of the protagonist, 3) a message or moral of the story, 4 and 5 are farewells by the artist and the protagonist. Another fundamental difference between romance and the Mexican corrido is the musical component; while romance typically used poetry without instruments, the Mexican corrido typically used one or more guitars and eventually incorporated

²⁰ Mcdowell, John Holmes. "CORRIDOS." In Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture, edited by Michael S. Werner. Routledge, 1998.

full norteno bands.²¹ The Mexican Revolution was a significant moment of development and popularity for the genre because musicians had used corridos to convey political messages about the struggle and support for the revolution. For example, artists such as Los Hermanos Zaizar sung about the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata who played an important role in mobilizing forces to fight in the revolution.²² The corrido had maintained an identity of discussing local heroes and events up until the middle of the twentieth century. Due to a simultaneous rise in the drug trade between the United States and Mexico and the and rising interest in a Narco Cultura²³, the contemporary narcocorrido shifted the themes of traditional corridos to themes about drug trafficking, violence and life in the cartel. The present article will seek to understand the style and messages of contemporary corridos (2020-present), placing them in dialogue with these older forms (particularly those from the Mexican Revolution period).

Review of Literature

Recent scholarship on Chicano Music and their identity largely focuses on Chicano Rap and how it constructs a Chicano identity through the male perspective. Chicano Rap coincided with the rise of African-American hip hop during the 1980-1990 period, but it switches the perspective from an African-American to a Chicano. Additionally, there are a few sources on corridos and a Chicano identity, however the scholarship focuses on the corridos from the late 20th century (none writing about 21st century corridos). The corrido genre mirrors the construction of a Chicano identity through the male perspective, although in contrast to Chicano

²¹ Richmond, Kristen L., and Rodney G. Richmond. 2014. "Corridos, Drugs, and Violence: An Analysis of Mexican Drug Ballads." *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 6 (2): 156–218.

²² Richmond Kristen and Richmond Rodney, "Corridos, Drugs and Violence: An Analysis of Mexican Drug Ballads"

²³ A culture obsessed with drugs, violence and death

Rap, the corrido has its roots in Mexico. The scholarship is a foundation for understanding how contemporary corridos produce a Chicano identity as Chicano Rap and older forms of Corridos expressed a Chicano identity during their times. Their frameworks of a lyrical analysis will be one of the various methods for my main case.

In “Machismo: the role of Chicano rap in the construction of Latino identity” (2011), Jonathan Hernandez sets out to define what Machismo is and what effect it has on Chicano Males. Through an analysis of Chicano Rap lyrics and visuals, Hernandez argues that the genre promotes hyper masculinity while also producing negative side effects that harm the dominant depiction of Males. Hernandez uses Chicano rapper Lil Rob as a case study to establish these connections between Chicano Rap and a complex Chicano Identity. Examining the lyrics of two songs by Lil Rob, Hernandez finds that many of the typical hyper masculine images are present: “stories of gang life, sex, drugs, alcohol.. Lowrider cars and cruising with women”. Based on this depiction of Chicano males, Hernandez makes the argument that machismo is one of the primary factors to blame for this depiction of Latinos. Hernandez’ views machismo is damaging to the image of Latino males and is the cause of many stereotypes that are brought against them (abusive, alcoholics, unintelligent, etc).

Along a similar vein, Diane Mausfeld also examines the connection between Chicano Rap and Chicano Identity in her work titled “These Stories Have to Be told: Chicano Rap as Historical Source” (2019). However, Mausfeld takes a slightly different approach to the topic by focusing on a different Chicano artist named Kid Frost and highlighting the main points of development in Chicano Rap. The author provides an overview about the beginnings of the genre with influences of hip-hop and the lived experiences of the mixed African-American and

Mexican American populations in LA. Mausfeld echoes Hernandez's article on the analysis of Chicano Rap: through lyrics and visuals Frost embodies an image of a machismo Mexican American male while at the same time remaining loyal to the Chicano Movement. Mexican folk music such as mariachi, corrido norteno was merged with hip hop to allow Frost to tell his story over authentic Mexican beats. The main point of inspiration for the genre seems to be the marginalized status of Mexican Americans, which Mausfeld will connect to Frost's lyrics: "On a socio-political level, Mexican Americans were subjected to racism and language discrimination in the state of California due to federal and international policies such as Proposition 187, Operation Gatekeeper and NAFTA. (175)". The song titled "La Raza" was the primary source Mausfeld analyzed and describes its Chicano features. It uses a sample from another song called Viva Tirado, one of the "most famous authentic Chicano sounds of the Chicano Youth Power Movement" (Saldivar 1997). In addition to this element, Frost doesn't just rap in English, he adds Spanish and Chicano street slang to the mix (178). Many word references are made to promote a Chicano identity and the song is very much in support of the Chicano Movement.

Pancho MacFarland also delves into Chicano Rap and Masculinity in his work "Chicano Rap Roots", but places more of an emphasis on Chicano Rap's foundations with the African American style of Rap. More specifically, he discusses two important identity processes that have led to the formation of Chicano Rap: Mestizaje and Mulataje. Mestizaje is defined as a "Process of cultural and biological racial hybridization" with European and Indian cultures being the ones that are mixed. As it allows for certain cultural aspects to be maintained during the hybridization process, Mestizaje was a very important element during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and is one of the cornerstones of Chicano identity. Similarly, MacFarland uses the term Mulataje to refer to the African diaspora component of the Chicano experience: "African

Diasporic cultures and peoples have been the central components of syncretism and hybridization in Mexican societies". The shared socioeconomic experiences of African Americans and Chicano people living in low income neighborhoods and marginalized had set the stage for both groups to express themselves in the form of song; African American Rap and Chicano Rap. It was noted by MacFarland that Chicano Rap was greatly influenced by hip-hop records such as Rappers Delight and Artists such as Dr. Dre, Sugar Hill Gang and others. As a result, the mid to late 1990s saw an explosion of new recorded Chicano Rap that had expressed a "Chicano nationalism that celebrates resistance, ethnic pride, and social banditry". Akin to Mausfeld's work on Chicano Rap and Identity, MacFarland uses Chicano Rapper Kid Frost as a case example. There are explicit examples of songs that show this connection between the two: Frost's "two CDs" Hispanic Causing Panic and East Side Story". The author concludes his work by once again emphasizing that Chicano Rap was created from a hybrid of experiences: the marginalized Mexican and African American lifestyle contributed greatly to Chicano Rap. From instrumentals, structure, vocabulary, and various themes, Chicano Rap has used the African American style of Hip Hop to Express their Chicano Identity (particularly Chicano men).

Other scholars focus on the specific genre of Corridos such as Kristen and Rodney Richmond who wrote "Corridos Drugs and Violence: An Analysis of Mexican Drug Ballads". First they establish what narcocorridos are: the genre is considered to be a new form of corrido that explicitly discusses the stories of "drug traffickers who rose above poor socioeconomic conditions". After providing this definition of narcocorridos, the authors spend ample time talking about the reality of narcocorridos. There is a lot of cartel and gang violence in the northern part of Mexico with prominent cartels being from Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Chihuahua.

In their review of the literature section, the history of Mexican violence is covered from the colonial period to significant historical events (such as the Mexican Revolution) along with the origins of Corridos. More recently, during the 1970's there has been an evident shift in the lyrics of Corridos; many artists started to discuss drug trafficking and violence in their songs that were released around the time. One example Richmond briefly notes is the music group Los Tigres Del Norte, which are considered to be one of the main groups who had started the new tradition of narcocorridos. However there are other artists who are discussed further such as Enigma Norteno, Roberto Tapia and Los Tucanes de Tijuana; each were used as a primary source to analyze their lyrics. One song from each artist all tell a similar story of a protagonist starting from a poor socioeconomic status and ending with greater status because of the drug trade.

Continuing with the Corrido line, Chris Muniz's "Narcocorridos and the Nostalgia of Violence: PostModern Resistance En La Frontera" (2013) elaborates on the role of narcocorridos among Mexican Americans since the 1990s. Although some scholars have characterized narcocorridos as a negative stereotypical image of Mexican Culture (Creechan and Garcia), Munoz argues that there is a positive side of the genre as it relates to cultural identity: "Narcocorrido specifically enacts a postmodern fantasy that serves to counter hegemonic US discourse". In other words, although most Mexican Americans won't live a lifestyle that comes with drug trafficking, they can still express themselves and attempt to counter the dominant discourses about their communities. For some Mexican Americans, the drug trafficking and violence is a real and dangerous part of their lives. Similar to Richmond's work on Corridos, Munoz covers the history of the corrido - from talking about heroes of the revolution and bandits, to the more contemporary narcocorrido (economic struggle, alienation, oppression, drug-smuggling). Munoz and Richmond both mention Los Tigres del Norte as one of the

prominent figures to record and promote narcocorridos. There are some important points that Munoz incorporates in his work by other authors; such as discussion about the relationship between the narcocorrido genre and identity of Chicanos. For example, Amanda Morrison conducted a cross genre analysis between narcocorrido and gangsta rap and concluded that while they both have “exaggerated and spectacular imagery of life in the hood”, the genres were able to be a form of identity politics for young Mexican Americans that could relate to it in some ways. Morrison writes, “this new reality was a form of identity politics that allowed Mexican American consumers to celebrate their roots by listening to regional Mexican music, imaginatively allying themselves with working class peasants of their ancestral homeland”. Muniz agrees with Morrison and uses her work to claim that narcocorridos serves an important role by connecting Mexican Americans back to their homeland while also being a way to express dissatisfaction about their poor conditions.

In Victor Viesca’s work titled “The Battle of Los Angeles: The Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Music in the Greater Eastside”, the author delves into the Chicano music scene of East LA which is considered to be a Mexican American hotspot. More specifically, Viesca argues that music has played an important role in the formation of the Chicano community in East LA, and different genres of Chicano music shed light on their marginalized socio-economic and political status. Before connecting the music to politics, Viesca provides an demographic overview of LA: more than 70 percent of Latina/os are of Mexican origin, many musicians and their audiences are predominantly bilingual. There is a huge population of Chicanos in LA, however their marginalized status as poor or second class citizens enables them to respond to these challenges through music. One quote in particular illustrates this point: “The conditions of oppression and disenfranchisement that characterize the new economy have enabled a particular counter

response; impact on globalization on low-wage workers and aggrieved racialized populations”. In Viescas view, one of the main counter responses to these hegemonic structures was the Chicano music scene in the late 1900’s going into the 2000’s. This view is akin to other authors such as McFarland , Violeta and Hernandez in that they all claim Chicano Rap served as a way to counter those oppressive socio-economic structures and give them a sense of purpose and collective identity. The drug trade and massive unemployment in the African American and Latino communities had led to the creation of genres like Gangsta Rap and Narcocorridos which offer similar ways of expressing this reality. One of the points of differences between Viescas and the other authors is the discussion of Banda music. He claims that many of the rural Chicano immigrants have responded enthusiastically to banda music because the music and the artists lean into the Mexican way of life more than other genres. According to Viesca, “Banda artists presented themselves in the vaquero style of dress, hats, boots and jeans” and would often “sing of life on the ranch and the experiences of crossing the border”. In addition to this, it is important to note the way in which Viesca contrasts the political ideology of older Chicano music to new Chicano music. While he acknowledges that some forms of Chicano music (Chicano Rap in particular) have been predominantly masculine and patriarchal, the new music attempts to promote gender equity and respect for different sexual orientations.

Method

Through a multilayered analysis of the contemporary corrido “Sabor Fresa” by Chicano band “Fuerza Regida” , I want to examine how a hybrid Chicano identity is created or expressed through their music. Using the frameworks presented by scholars above as foundation, the analysis will expand beyond simply understanding how lyrics contribute to creating a hybrid

Chicano identity - it will involve analyzing popular slang, instruments, rhythms, and styles of dress. A chart created on Google Docs will categorize these elements according to which nation or culture it relates to more - Mexican or American (or maybe both). Aspects that are Mexican and aspects that are American will be compared and contrasted to older styles of corridos (and their artists) to understand how the genre has evolved as a result of Mexicans bringing the corrido into the United States. Ideas relating to the portrayal of machismo, socioeconomic status and the particular influence of hip-hop are three prominent topics that these elements elucidate.

Main Case / Fuerza Regida - “Sabor Fresa”

Due to the fact that Fuerza Regida is a Mexican American band that is based in San Bernardino, California, the group shares a similar geographic location to most Chicanos. Jesus Ortiz Paz, the lead singer of the group is originally from Sinaloa Mexico, but spent his life growing up in California. General information about Sinaloa points to reasons why Mexicans would choose to migrate: “40% of men are unemployed and around 40% of the *total* population chose to migrate out of Sinaloa for work related reasons”²⁴. Multiple factors also demonstrate a rural society; Sinaloa has a substantial indigenous population and specializes in agricultural production ranging from wheat, rice, cotton as well as fishing²⁵. California is where the most Mexican-Americans reside in the United States with 34% percent of Mexican Americans residing in the state alone.²⁶ To emphasize their population numbers, the percentage of Mexican-American is 67.6% in the city of San Bernardino, which represents a majority of the population that shares a similar identity to Fuerza Regida. The target audience for their music not

²⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI). “INEGI.” Panorama sociodemográfico de México.

²⁵ “Sinaloa.” Encyclopædia Britannica, November 24, 2023.

²⁶ Moslimani, Mohamad, “Facts on Hispanics of Mexican Origin in the United States, 2021.”

only exists within their immediate local city of San Bernardino, but in California and the southwest in general.

¶One of their hit songs titled Sabor Fresa (Strawberry Flavor) was released in June 2023 under the music labels of Rancho Humilde, Street Mob, and Sony Music Latin. Running about 2 and a half minutes long, it is around the average duration for a song in this contemporary era of music (tends to be around the 3 minute mark). Jesus Ortiz Paz is the lead singer and he is accompanied by his bandmates²⁷ who play the guitar, sousaphone and tololoche. The style takes a similar form to hip-hop, as lines are sung in a rap-like fashion in addition to rhyming the last words between two lines. An example of this is scheme is found here:

Como la ve mi camarada
Si nos vamos pa' la albercada?

The words camarada and albercada share the same “ada” ending and were intentionally put line after line to rhyme with each other. Indeed, Jesus affirms his music’s close relationship with hip-hop while being Mexican: “It’s [like] trap music, but we brought our roots into it.”²⁸. The affirmation of the influence of hip hop on his corridos is one of the biggest themes I will use to connect to a hybrid identity of being Mexican and American at the same time (Chicano). For the overall themes, the fast-paced contemporary corrido mainly focuses on praising women’s bodies that have received implants as well as celebrating a life of luxury.

²⁷ Fuerza Regida consists of the five members Jesus Ortiz Paz, Samuel Jaimez (six stringed guitarist), Khrystian Ramos (requinto guitar); Jose Garcia,(sousaphone), and Moises Lopez (tololoche).

<https://www.billboard.com/music/latin/latin-artist-on-the-rise-fuerza-regida-8549681/>

²⁸Mier, Tomas. “Mexican-American Band Fuerza Regida is Making Music ‘for the People’” *Rolling Stone*, 30 Dec. 2022.

Machismo: A Brief History

In order to understand the Machismo aspects of Sabor Fresa, it helps to understand what Mexican Machismo is. Machismo is a patriarchal ideology that emphasizes the differences between men and women by placing men as the dominant gender. In literature, scholars have been divided on whether to characterize it as a negative or positive trait, but the majority think that it is associated with negative traits, such as “attitudes of male dominance and sexist attitudes” leading to gender-based discrimination across Mexico and the United States.²⁹

In relation to music, scholars such as Mendoza (a scholar inside of Paredes) have argued that Machismo dates back to Mexican folk songs where the man was characterized by “true courage, presence of mind, generosity, heroism and bravery” (18)³⁰. This earlier conception of Machismo is illustrated in an example by Los Hermanos Zaizar³¹. In their song titled *corrido de la muerte de Zapata*, the brothers narrate the good deeds performed by the Mexican Revolutionary Emiliano Zapata:

Es que ya murió Zapata y era Zapata un valiente It's because Zapata died, and he was a brave one.

El gran Emiliano amaba a los pobres, quiso darles libertad The great Emiliano loved the poor, he wanted to give them freedom

Por eso los hombre de todos los pueblos con el fueron a luchar For that, the men of every town went with him to fight

Mendoza's idea of Machismo is captured by these lyrics from the brothers; there are connections to being brave and being a hero for the community. In other words Zapata would have been considered a “Macho” man according to these early ideas of Machismo. These earlier corridos focus on the attributes that make a man, and set the stage for corridos in the second half of the twentieth century to take on a new form. In contrast with this old style of corridos and

²⁹ Segrest, Sharon L., Eric J. Romero, and Darla J. Domke-Damonte. “Exploring the Role of Machismo in Gender Discrimination: A Comparison of Mexico and the US.” Equal Opportunities International, February 1, 2003.

³⁰ Paredes, Américo. “The United States, Mexico, and ‘Machismo.’” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 8, no. 1 (1971): 17–37.

³¹ A band that is composed of David and Juan Zaizar formed during the late 1940's

machismo, the contemporary corrido has a particular emphasis on the domination of women or their bodies.

Newer corridos, especially those produced by Chicanos from the 1990s to the present are more concerned with promoting sexual images of women and a dominant power structure of men over women. Segrest et al in their work on Machismo comments on the idea of “Playboy Macho” which is useful for understanding Machismo in the present song:

“The second archetype is the Playboy macho, which is based on a sense of a man’s biological, social and intellectual superiority over females. According to Andrade (1992) researchers who studied the Mexican family, found strong evidence for this type of machismo. According to this stereotype, males are permitted to act in a sexually suggestive manner toward females and to even abuse them sexually, physically, or mentally. This attitude of superiority allows men to immerse themselves in pleasurable sensations such as chasing women and committing adultery.” (18)

The definition of “Playboy Macho” is a useful tool to apply to the case of Sabor Fresa, where Jesus was placing an emphasis on the objectification of women and his ability to control their looks (by buying them their body). A gender hierarchy that is seen through these elements sets the standard for how other men should behave toward women, and consequently continues the tradition of Playboy Machismo. From the type of lyrics he uses to describe women, to the way in which they are presented in the music video, these aspects are important to illustrate machismo and a hybrid Mexican-American identity.

Machismo and Mexican Slang

Similar to hip-hop, Strawberry Flavor and other contemporary Corridos include a lot of slang, especially in regard to how male artists refer to women. Fuerza Regida incorporates the use of *Mexican* slang in the first verse of the song:

La morra es de Calidad

The woman is of quality

Con una cinturita les gusta perrear With those hips they like to twerk³²
 Morra is a popular slang term used by Mexicans that translates to “sexy young woman”, and it is dominantly used by men. The term has its origins in Northern Mexico, particularly in states like Sonora, Baja California and Fuerza Regida’s home state of Sinaloa.³³ It started to gain popularity in the 2010’s due to its usage from bands in Northern Mexico, and it was further popularized by Mexican Rap and hip hop artists.³⁴ The use of the Mexican “Morra” signals a shift from using Traditional Spanish words like Bella (pretty), Bonita (beautiful) and highlights an influence of popular slang words from American hip-hop culture such as “Baddie” or “Babe”. According to the Rap Dictionary which posits itself as “An A-Z guide to hip-hop” defines Baddie as “A very attractive girl or women” with Babe being a synonym³⁵. Therefore, “Morra” and “Babe” are essentially interchangeable words that both represent an attractive woman in Spanish and English. Coincidentally, JOP also uses the English variant in another part of the song: “Where all the babies at though?”. The fact that JOP uses both forms speaks to a Mexican-American identity in which Mexican slang terms are related to American hip hop slang. The influence to deviate from traditional Spanish words is a result of being influenced by hip hop, which similarly deviates from traditional English words.

As “Morra” and its English Counterparts are terms used to praise the appearance of women, there are undoubtedly connections to machismo. First, the terms along with other lines that discuss the body of women shows the type of perception JOP has of them; he is focused on glorifying their bodies and nothing else. In other words, Morra and its counterparts are objectifying in themselves because it focuses on the sexiness of women and how those women can serve men sexually. Secondly, the term also promotes an important element of Machismo -

³² Urban Dictionary: When a girl dances really close to a boy with her back toward him

³³ Bradley, Rachel. “Morrita.” *Dictionary.Com*, 19 Jan. 2021.

³⁴ Bradley, Rachel, “Morrita.”

³⁵ “Baddie.” Rap Dictionary, July 18, 2022.

which is the need to be heterosexual. As per the “Playboy Macho” concept outlined above, Morra allows men “to act in a sexually suggestive manner toward women”, by referring to them in an informal way. Since Jesus is clearly heterosexual by showing interest in women, he is setting the standard for heterosexual men; Morra is one of the ways that heterosexual men should refer to women. Here we see an intersection between a display of Machismo and a hybrid identity: While Fuerza Regida maintains a Mexican identity with a word from his home state of Sinaloa, they simultaneously promote a sexual image of a woman that is seen in the language of hip-hop as well. Mexicans and Chicanos will know what the word means in the context of a song like Sabor Fresa, with it being used in an informal fashion. English Speakers will also be able to understand the message because of the English slang used in hip hop

Machismo and the Paradox of Natural vs Artificial Bodies

Another lyric that highlights a Machismo element is the following: Puras Fresitas Operadas translates to "Pure strawberries operated on". By standard Spanish definition, this phrase would not make sense because it would describe a strawberry (fruit) having received a surgery. In contrast, Fuerza Regida uses the phrase to make an analogy to a woman's behind that has been modified by surgery. The contours of the strawberry match the contours of a woman's lower body with wide hips and slim legs (See Figure 1).



Figure 1, Screenshot of “Sabor Fresa” from Youtube

An icon of a strawberry, as depicted here in the word “Sabor” is intentionally drawn to resemble a woman’s behind. The connection is made clear with the strawberry being shown with a woman in the background. Following this introduction which captures the main theme of the song, there are points in the video where the artist Jesus roleplays as a plastic surgeon to operate on women’s bodies (1:52). He is dressed as a doctor in a lab coat and is wearing a diamond watch, diamond rings and a gold chain. There are two nurses in the room who are helping him perform the procedure on a woman that is laying down on a gurney, and this woman is wearing nothing but a bikini. The music video alternates between this operation being done in a hospital setting to a houseparty that features Jesus and numerous women dancing around him. Since the party scene was shot around a pool, most of the twenty five women are wearing bikinis; though there are a few that are wearing tight dresses that still accentuate their features (2:08). The roleplay element and the numerous women in the video who are shown to be half naked in bikinis are images of what Macho men look for in women: curvy bodies that are a result of plastic surgery.

The lyric “Puras Fresitas Operadas” comments on a paradox of natural vs artificial process behind women’s beauty. In the context of Sabor Fresa, Pura or Pure is referring to a

woman's body when she has not undergone surgery, a state where she is still natural. An image of this natural look is encountered in the beginning of the video where there are women sitting in a waiting room to receive a surgery (0:30). There is also one filling out a form which is likely an approval form to receive the surgery (0:35). Jesus's imagery of operating on a woman in addition to the word "operadas" show a stark contrast to being natural. Although there is an ironic aspect between these two images, the song nevertheless approves of the new artificial look. To demonstrate, before the main part of the song starts, there is an important dialogue between doctor Jesus and one of his woman patients. Having received the surgery to enhance her body, The woman asks him "Como me veo" How do I look? Jesus sarcastically responds with No te ves bien / You don't look good. The woman finishes the dialogue with Me encanta mi nuevo cuerpo / I love my new body. With both Jesus and the woman affirming the "good look" of an artificial body, they both contribute to the standard of beauty that is normalized by a macho perspective.

Similarities can be drawn to the over-sexualized depiction of women in hip-hop culture. According to scholars who discuss Hip Hop and sexuality, "Through flashy clothing and visual image, women in hip hop videos are portrayed with heightened and exaggerated sexuality" (15)³⁶. Through an analysis of contemporary hip-hop music videos, Clark et al recognize the influence that hip-hop culture has on shaping attitudes in regard to violence and sex. The Chicano corrido Sabor Fresa presents a similar case where the women are overly sexualized with the way they are dressed and used as objects to be operated on. A point about objectification is a recurring theme between both: "Women in hip hop videos are often portrayed as sex-crazed objects willing and ready to do anything for money or the attention of a man, while men are

³⁶ Clark, Joshua, Kamaria Glover, D. McClain, Morgan Steele, Desira Jemison, Ahmad Brantley, Malcolm Brockton et al. "An analysis of violent and sexual content in hip hop music videos." *Journal of Undergraduate Ethnic Minority Psychology* 1, no. 7 (2016).

power figures who use violence to gain power” (16).³⁷The visuals that accompany the dialogue in Sabor Fresa reinforces this standard of a man being in control of the way that women value themselves and seek attention through their bodies.

Socio-Economic Status

Along with promoting Machismo values, Jesus touches upon another important element of Chicano identity: their socioeconomic status. Within some lyrics, there is a description of a change in economic status from the typically low-income or poor Chicano to a lifestyle of living lavishly. An example of this is in the hook of the song where Jesus wants the women that surround him to take off their expensive clothes:

Que se quiten la ropa cara Let them take off their expensive clothes
With a clear reference to expensive clothes that they wear, the lyrics connotes a new wealth that enables Jesus to purchase luxury goods for women. It is considered a new wealth because another song produced by Fuerza Regida illustrates a socioeconomic status in which he didn't have as much wealth. The song is titled “Billete Grande” and it features another Chicano Artist by the name of Edgardo Nunez. Its central topic is about life before the worldwide success and the challenges that they went through living through poverty. Jesus paints an image of this in the following:

No todo se me dio facil / Not everything came easily to me
Tambien le sufri bastante / I also suffered a lot
Caminando por la calle descalzo / Walking down the street barefoot
Soy de Familia pobre alguien tenia que buscarle / Im from a poor family, someone had to look for him

The imagery of “being barefoot” and coming from a poor family offers a contrast from the high end images portrayed in Sabor Fresa. Poverty and Suffering are realities that lower class Mexicans and Chicanos know well, as the group has a lower economic status similar to African

³⁷ Clark, Joshua, et al. "An analysis of violent and sexual content in hip hop music videos."

Americans: “According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data 16.8% of Latinos - 10 million nationally lived in poverty in 2022”³⁸, compared to 19.5 percent of African Americans.

Specifically in California however, we observe that the poorest community are Latinos: about 51% of poor Californians are Latinos³⁹. Since Mexican-Americans have the highest population numbers in California and the Southwest in general, many Chicanos who are poor are able to resonate with Jesus’ message of struggle; as scholars suggest corridos has its largest following of listeners who are from the working or lower class. Nevertheless, Billete Grande establishes the fact that Jesus and his bandmates were once a part of the lower and working classes either in Mexico and or the United States. Poverty and being part of the working class are realities that are much closer to the lives of Chicanos, wealth and luxury only are held by a few.

To reinforce the point of acquiring a “new wealth”, the following line in Sabor Fresa claims that Jesus and his fellow Mexicans were able to find success through their music and a new wealth along with it:

Afirmale, carnal, logramos coronar Affirm it, my brother, we were able to become kings ¶ By definition, Coronar means “to crown”, which is the act of putting a crown on someone; usually an emperor, king or queen. For the song, it has a metaphoric meaning where Jesus uses the verb to talk about his new wealth and success; although there isn’t a literal crown, he and his bandmates were able to acquire wealth and a social status they believe kings have. A display of new power is at the heart of these two lines, and illustrates a transformation from a lower or middle class lifestyle to a life of luxury and things of a higher class. A 2020 report on Hispanics in California suggests the socioeconomic status of Chicanos in the US: “Socioeconomic status among US-born Hispanic residents still falls lower than that of the non-Hispanic white and Asian

³⁸ Contreras, Russell. “Latino Poverty Rate Falls but Remains above U.S. Average.” Axios, September 28, 2023.

³⁹ Bohn, Sarah, Caroline Danielson, Sara Kimberlin, Patricia Malagon, and Christopher Wimer. “Poverty in California.” Public Policy Institute of California, December 14, 2023.

American/Pacific Islander communities"⁴⁰ While there was a significant change in socioeconomic status, Chicano JOP used to share a lower to middle class identity similar to how most Chicanos live in the United States.

The Mexican slang word “carnal” is used to refer to a close friend or my brother. It takes direct inspiration from the root word ‘carnalis’ which means “of the flesh”⁴¹. Similar to the term Morra, mostly young Mexican men use it in their vocabulary: “The speakers of [Mexican Slang] are very largely adolescents and young men of Mexican descent who move in lower class social circles”⁴² Barker was speaking in regard to Mexicans who live in the Southwest, in states like Jesus’ state of California, Texas and Arizona. Consequently, Carnal and Morra highlight an intersection between both class and national identity with reference to terms that Mexicans of a lower class use in Mexico and in the United States. With these terms used throughout Sabor Fresa, Jesus presents himself as a Chicano who maintained his Mexican roots and illustrates a once shared identity.

Instruments

Instruments are another element of the song that mixes the sounds of Mexican and American music. Using the earlier example of Corrido de la muerte de Zapata by Los Hermanos Zaizar, we can observe that traditional Corrido songs used primarily the guitar⁴³:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KwePvRqTy6HtXDOShhwszm11OE1tO1qo/view?usp=drive_link

⁴⁰ McGhee, Eric. “California’s Hispanic Community.” Public Policy Institute of California, November 2, 2023.

⁴¹ Rupert. “‘Carnal’ – Meaning in Mexican Spanish.” Spanish Unraveled, September 15, 2023.

⁴² Barker, George. “Pachuco: An American-Spanish Argot and Its Social Function in Tucson, Arizona.” University of Arizona Press.

⁴³ The guitar has a history that stretches back to Spain around the fifteenth century, however it did not become popular until the 1800s. A six-stringed guitar design is considered one of the closest ancestors to the modern guitar that Los Hermanos Zaizar used in their traditional corridos in the 1900s.

The guitar was (and is) a popular choice used in many different styles of Mexican music, and it unequivocally has a history with the corrido genre. It was one of the sole instruments to accompany the narrative stories in the traditional era of corrido, and often was not accompanied by other instruments. For this reason, the use of the guitar by older corrido artists is significant in the fact that it established a baseline for the new generations of corrido artists to refer to.

While maintaining a Mexican tradition of using the guitar in corridos, Fuerza Regida doesn't use it as a primary voice anymore. The group goes beyond only using the guitar - it is a band playing a combination of Guitar, the Sousaphone and the Tololoche. The sousaphone is a brass instrument in the tuba family that has its origins in America, as it was created by John Philip Sousa to replace another brass instrument.⁴⁴ The tololoche is a stringed bass instrument from Southern Mexico that is a variant of the European double bass (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. Photograph of a Tololoche⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Sousaphone." In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, edited by Don Michael Randel. Harvard University Press, 2003.

⁴⁵

<https://camposmusicusa.com/es/products/handcrafted-tololoche-black-gloss-aztec-double-bass-pickup-installed>

Its role is to keep the beat while the guitar and sousaphone are layered over it to create melodies. To illustrate this, a youtube video displays a man playing the tololoche part of Sabor Fresa with the other instruments in the background⁴⁶. As is the case with any other song, keeping the beat is essential for all the other instruments in the mix to play together in harmony. The tololoche fulfills this role by setting the rhythm and tempo for other instruments and remains consistent throughout the entire song.

In addition to the use of instruments from both American and Mexican roots, the contemporary corrido distinguishes itself from the traditional corrido with the use of digital sound effects and newer technologies to enhance the music. With the help of digital tools like Digital Audio Workstations and audio effects such as echo and reverb, the producers of contemporary corridos have multiple ways to make the overall mix sound brighter and make transitions between different parts of the song smoother. For example, there is a “whooshing” sound in between the end of the first hook and the interlude at 1:58. The whooshing sound to transition into the interlude is likely a reversed white noise that was made on a computer or made by recording an object that produces a whoosh like sound. In regard to what identity the sound effects connect to, it is hard to tell for certain. Computers and technology are prevalent in many areas of the world, especially the United States and urban areas of Mexico. The effects more so speak to the bands desire to be up to date and use the current tools to enhance their work. Nonetheless, We see a break from a Mexican tradition of relying on only the guitar to an expanded diversity of instruments from Mexico and America in addition to digital tools like the computer

⁴⁶ Bacillo Requinto - <https://youtu.be/39dwuLR49Oo?si=5x9dNzEQvDO013sC>

Rhythm

Along with the hybridity of instruments used in Sabor Fresa, the rhythm combines elements of corridos with other styles of urban music. Because there is an influence of genres like reggaeton and trap (new hip-hop) in the production of these new corridos, the new name that is used in popular discourse is corridos tumbados, which according to Bryan Cantero highlights a fusion of the two: “Corridos tumbados (urban regional corridos) is Mexican/American Chicano, their version of what they think corridos should be”⁴⁷. The rhythm of each instrument shines through in the mix: the tololoche rhythm is similar to an 808 rhythm pattern found in many new hip hop songs, the sousaphone rhythm is combined with the tololoche to create the main beat that is consistent throughout the whole song. However, the guitar is in and out of the mix, as it's mostly used to create variety and reduce repetitiveness. What's interesting is that the guitar and sousaphone trade places as the sound that's in the foreground; for example in the first minute, the staccato like sousaphone takes center stage to introduce the song whereas in the next few bars the guitar replaces the sousaphone as the main voice while reflecting the rhythm played by the sousaphone. This tradeoff between the instruments continues for the rest of the song; it never places the guitar as the principal instrument unlike the traditional corrido. The overall aesthetic of the rhythms by each of the instruments match the fast pace of modern hip hop and do not resemble the slower pace waltz rhythms heard in traditional corridos.

African American Hip Hop Visuals

Another indication of a cultural mix is in the video visuals, particularly the clothing the main singer Jesus Paz chose to wear during the shoot. The attire that is worn by Jesus Paz is similar to attire worn by Hip-hop artists: a white tracksuit with red stripes that is made by

⁴⁷ Cantero, Bryan. “How Urban Corridos Became the Soundtrack to South Central L.A.” Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, August 2, 2021. <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/urban-corridos-south-central-la>.

designer brand Prada. To complement the tracksuit Jesus is shown to be wearing different forms of bling from neck chains, rings and watches (See Figure 3).

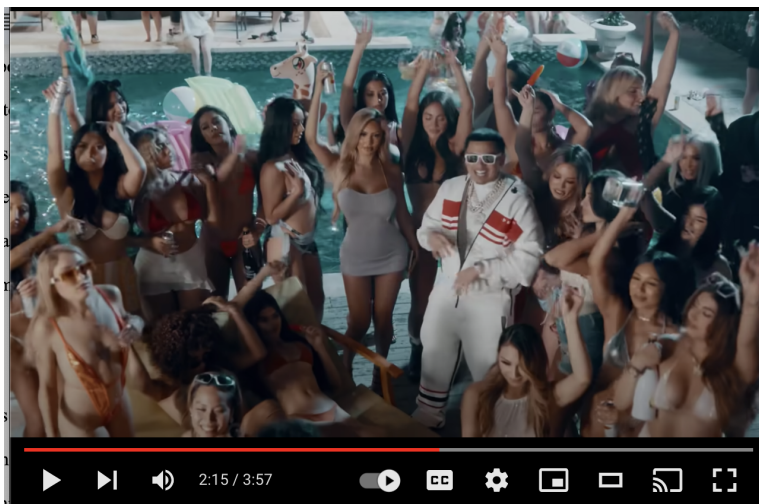


Figure 3. Screenshot of Jesus Ortiz Paz and Women (Youtube).

For footwear, though it is not crystal clear, he seems to be wearing Jordans, a popular type of shoe that is worn and promoted by hip-hop artists but has its origins in basketball culture.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, Jesus takes much inspiration from hip hop culture as these styles of dress reflect dominant images of what rappers wear. According to an article by Caroline Shackelford, “the fashion reflected streetwear that kids in the Bronx already had in their possession, like bomber jackets, tracksuits, and sneakers”⁴⁹. Much of the streetwear remains the same since the origins of hip-hop in the 1970s, and the American tradition is continued through Mexican-American artists like Jesus as shown in the photo.

To contrast the American-style of wear to traditional Mexican styles, the album cover of *Algeria Y Sentimiento Del Corrido* by Los Hermanos Zaizar is shown (Figure 4).



⁴⁸ Further Reading on the Connect
<https://www.thezoereport.com/fas>

⁴⁹ Shackelford, Caroline. “The Ev

e Spoke Style, February 25, 2022.

Figure 4. Los Hermanos Zaizar in their Album: “Alegria y Sentimiento del Corrido”⁵⁰

We see the two brothers wearing sombreros, an important symbol of Mexican clothing.⁵¹ Indeed it has its origins in Mexico because workers needed a way to shield themselves from the hot sunlight. For their pants and shirts, the musicians are wearing what is called a charro outfit which typically includes “tight pants to prevent snagging on bushes” in addition to “[short coats] to give better access to weaponry and movement”⁵². It became an important element of Mexican culture after the Mexican Revolution, which explains the choice of the brothers to wear it for their album cover. Overall, the brothers traditional Mexican styles of dress provide a contrast from Jesus’ American style of dress and further reinforces the idea of hybrid Chicano culture that is influenced by American culture.

LOW-RIDER CAR

Objects, such as cars, can also highlight a Mexican-American identity; an expensive lowrider was featured in the music video. After showing a shot of Jesus in a mansion with women, the video shows Jesus driving a pink lowrider with three women in the car (1:15). The lowrider is an important symbol of Mexican-American culture, because Mexicans have taken “the car, a general feature of American culture, and customized it into a lowrider” (Bright 583). It's designed to ride low and slow and usually feature specular paint jobs in addition to hydraulic pumps that make the cars lift up and down. According to Brenda Bright, the low-rider has been designed to counter a dominant Anglo culture because of the way it served as a political symbol for Chicanos: “lowriders merge regional ethnicity, working-class ideologies and Chicano nationalism... in order to claim a place and a unique identity for themselves” (586) Lowriding

⁵⁰ <https://www.amazon.com/-/es/Hermanos-Zaizar/dp/B0063UR9UA>

⁵¹ Further Reading on History of Mexican Clothing: <https://historyplex.com/history-of-mexican-clothing>

⁵² Cavazos, Hector. “A Small History into the Charro Outfit.” Details and Traditions, March 12, 2020.

was coined in California in the 1960s and has been an important part of Chicano popular culture throughout the Southwest. Chicanos have used lowrider cars to build and maintain social networks from close family ties to open organized car clubs.














When Jesus showcases a Pink lowrider, a style that is distinctly Chicano, the audiences will associate that with a Mexican American identity. While other elements such as style of dress or rhythms are clear reflections of hip-hop culture, the lowrider helps to remind the audience that Jesus is a Mexican-American and not strictly an American. Instead of using brands such as Audi or BMW⁵³, he uses a local popular icon in the Southwest to distinguish himself from a generic American hip hop video that doesn't feature lowrider cars. Hence, the lowrider shown in Sabor Fresa is a testament to a pure hybrid identity since it is a product of the Mexican American community.








Reception of the Song

An analysis of the comment section under the music video gives insight as to what listeners appreciate and how the song resonates as Chicano culture. The majority of the 16,125 comments are in Spanish, although there are few instances of comments that are in English. The English comments are praises of the song, although the users don't speak Spanish. For the Spanish Speakers they praise the song too, however they specifically refer to the band, Mexico, and/or the cultural impact of the corrido tumbado. Below are examples of comments extracted from the Youtube comment section of the music video, with all of the comments ranging between one or two sentences:

- Some users affirm the identity of the song as a corrido tumbado, which as discussed above is a hybrid genre within itself:
 - “estos si son corridos tumbados ♥” (user-xw4vc1ih2l).

⁵³ <https://www.caranddriver.com/features/g26087850/cars-in-rap-hip-hop-songs-music/>

- “Como Dominicano que soy no me canso de excuchar esos corridos tumbados”
(A.pulmooneyRd)
- Several Posts emphasized Mexico, rather than Mexican-American or Latino identity.
 - “Exitos y bendiciones Fuerza Regida  Viva Mexico” (MultiLoba69)
 - “Mexico Representando        ” (melani.sanchez756)
 - ¡A que apoyar este género tan bello! Arriba México!!!    

(robertoarmenta7301)
- Some posts indicate that they come from different parts of the Latin American world
 - “Soy Argentino y pienso que México tiene la cultura más potente del mundo entero!! Respeto y admiración” (cumbiasparabailartodalanoche68) a good number of the comments are from Argentina
 - “La música mexicana conquistará el mundo. Un abrazo de Brazil. Algún día conoceré este increíble país, con una cultura rica y canciones increíbles  ”
(MageMusicas-ut5gp). A good number of the comments are from brazil
 - Bendiciones y saludos desde      (carlosjuniorsnicker7615) good number from the DR too
 - Other Comments from Uruguay, DR, Chile, alongside naming their country, most of them use flags to indicate where they are from

These are just a few examples that highlight each of these aspects of analysis, there were many more that also could fit in one or many of the categories. Regardless, the affirmation of the song as a “Corrido Tumbado” by fans connects with the idea that Cantero mentioned in his article. Since the Corrido Tumbado is what Mexican-Americans consider their corridos to be, the comments support this new version of the corrido. It is a shift from simply referring to it as a

“corrido”, which would connote the more traditional Mexican version without the influence of new urban styles of music. The label suggests that people from around the world accept the new hybrid music genre and consequently support a part of Mexican American culture. However, there are comments that only emphasize a *Mexican* identity and do not directly consider an American influence in the music. The comments above focus on praising both Fuerza Regida and Mexico and use Mexican Flags to further show their support for the country. There is no sign of any reference to the American side of the band's Chicano identity, only to their place of origin. In contrast to affirming the genre as a hybrid genre, other people strictly focus on the Mexican elements, which only speaks to one side of the Chicano identity.

The numerous comments from different parts of the Latin American world demonstrate an influence beyond the local Chicano communities in the United States and Mexicans in Mexico. Argentina, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic are the top 3 countries that people said they were from, and usually would incorporate their country's flag to further emphasize their place of origin. As for their contents, they reflect the aforementioned praise of only Mexico and the influence of its culture, no direct references to a hybrid Mexican-American identity.

In regard to connecting the comments to the main themes of the song (machismo, women, luxury) none of the posts outright echo the Machismo values. While none of them echo the language that JOP uses to describe women, there is still a complicity that the fans communicate with their positive comments. By not recognizing the gender hierarchy and objectification of women present in the lyrics and visuals, their comments reflect a standard culture of perceiving women in that way. In other words, the messages that JOP sends about how men should look at women or how women should present themselves to men are normal gender perceptions that exist worldwide.

Synthesis / Discussion

Due to the language, diversity of instruments and rhythms used in Sabor Fresa, Fuerza Regida demonstrates a complex hybrid Mexican American culture that positions the band as belonging to the working class. The imagery of over-sexualized women is a theme that is consistent through both the corrido and hip hop, which show a male power structure akin to machismo. Machismo values are not only reflected in the visuals, they are also reflected in the language used to talk about women to objectify them (Morra and Babe). In addition to Mexican Machismo that the band promotes, Original Mexican Slang terms such as Carnal and Morra speak to a Mexican national identity but intersect with working class Mexicans *and* Chicanos because the terms have been popularized in the North of Mexico and the Southwest of the United States. The choice to wear attire that is usually worn in hip hop demonstrates an influence from the American genre; and it provides a contrast to traditional styles of Mexican wear. A combination of instruments used from traditional Mexican music such as the guitar and tololoche and the American sousaphone illustrate a hybrid of musical instruments from both countries. The choice to incorporate all of these aspects to create Sabor Fresa by Fuerza Regida highlights the maintenance of Mexican roots along with a fusion of American hip hop culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sabor Fresa by the popular Mexican American/Chicano Artist Fuerza Regida demonstrates the complex nature of being in between two identities. Machismo and the over sexualized portrayal of women are images that both corridos tumbados and hip hop share; which points to a continuation of Machismo from Mexican culture, in addition to an influence from how hip-hop has casted women in their videos. Socioeconomic status is discussed in both Sabor Fresa and Billete Grande, however in two entirely different ways. Sabor Fresa boasts the

luxurious lifestyle with mansions, expensive clothes and diamond chains in the music video while at the same time the lyrics discuss a new success that the artists did not have before. Billete Grande, on the other hand speaks more toward the poverty and struggles of being a Mexican or a Mexican American and illustrates a picture that many Chicanos had gone through and still are going through.

As for elements that are exclusively Mexican, along with singing in Spanish, slang that has originated from the country is maintained in his vocabulary. Carnal and Morra are two among the expansive list of slang terms that working class Mexicans use, both in Mexico and in the US. Instruments such as the guitar, tololoche and the accordion are a few instruments that the Chicano artists had brought from Mexico, as they are commonly used in the history of Mexican folk music. Rhythms from the old style of traditional corridos that were slow and waltz-like are also incorporated into some of the contemporary songs such as Billete Grande. In addition to this, the tradition of narrative storytelling through their Mexican corridos is kept in Billete Grande, which contrasts with the more Americanized Sabor Fresa.

As for elements that are exclusively American, lyrically and visually Sabor Fresa had more references to American culture, specifically African-American hip-hop culture. I cannot emphasize enough the amount of influence that hip-hop culture had on the making of Sabor Fresa, ranging from the tracksuit and bling Jesus wore, the way in which women were dressed for the video, to the fast paced melodies and instruments designed to mimic a fast hip hop (trap) song. The similarities are undeniable. A few lines of English were sung at the end of Sabor Fresa - which also of course is a nod to learning the language in America. As for Billete Grande, it didn't emphasize hip-hop as its main focus, however there are still references to American popular culture. It featured similar American fashion with hats from iconic American baseball

teams and expensive clothing from European brands. There was only one prominent element that seemed to be a pure combination of being Mexican and American, and that was the lowrider.

In summary, music is one of the ways in which we can understand the hybridized socioeconomic status of immigrant groups, and I hope that this thesis was able to serve as a stepping stone in the way that we understand how identity is expressed through music - even hybrid identities like Chicanos. Some of the limitations were the inclusion of Women Chicana artists, as the corrido genre has historically been dominated by men, and this is a trend that continues to this day. Without the perspective of women to contribute to the Chicano/a identity, there are ideas, language, styles and other aspects that male corridos don't demonstrate on their own. In addition, the perspective of one Chicano band that specializes in Corridos does not account for the experiences of Chicanos in other genres. Chicano Rap, Chicano Rock, Chicano Pop are other music genres that seek to explain and promote the Chicano identity to the world in their own styles. It was my intention to incorporate these genres into the thesis, but it was outside the scope of this paper.

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