

DEFINITIONS OF SELF AND OTHER
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE
OF NATIVE AMERICANS AND CHICANOS

by

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B. A., Hastings College, 1968

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1974

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**1. A Comparison of Populations--Native Americans,
Chicanos, Blacks, and the Total Population of
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...because no man is better than
another, any more than every man
is equal, simply because we are
all different from each other.

José Villarreal

with gratefulness to Lyle
and Charlie and Dr. Rohrer

I. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this inquiry is to identify and comparatively examine definitions of self (those attitudes and values which constitute one's self-concept) and other (the attitudes and values of Anglo-Americans) as delineated in selected writings by Native Americans and Chicanos and as institutionalized in academic literature. Because Native Americans and Chicanos are subordinated in our society, it will be profitable to analyze some of their writings as self expressions. Minority definitions of self and other are vital because, as Shibutani observed, "To understand what men do we must know something about what each person or group means to himself" (Shibutani 1961:248). One aspect of one's self-concept is his concept of the larger group with whom he shares membership; definitions of Anglo-Americans proposed by Native American and Chicano poets will provide a subordinate view of the superordinate population.

The basis for this analysis rests in five assumptions: 1) that "Art...including literature, does not exist in a vacuum, and reflects--and helps to shape--the lives of those who produce it" (Henderson 1973:4); 2) that, via social interaction through the medium of language, man has created for him and creates for himself his conception of "Who I am," his self, and his conception of the others with whom he interacts; 3) "that cultural