



Man strolling through his avocado orchard in Rancho. Photograph by Marcia Farr.



Woman using machete on pine boughs to decorate chapel for annual Saint's Day in Rancho. Photograph by Marcia Farr.

CHAPTER

2

*¡A Mí No Me Manda Nadie!*  
Individualism and Identity in Mexican  
*Rancho* Speech<sup>2</sup>

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Mexican migration to Chicago has always been predominantly from Western Mexico (Año Nuevo Kerr, 1977), notably including the states of Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato. These states also are known to be notably *ranchero* in identity, constituting a distinct subgroup among the larger category of rural Mexican *campesinos* (peasants). Because of the importance, and predominance, of this identity in Chicago's Mexican neighborhoods, and because of close transnational ties between Chicago and innumerable *ranchos* (rural hamlets) in western Mexico, understandings of Mexicans in Chicago can be enriched by research that explores this group's origin, not only in terms of geographic space, but also in terms of cultural and ethnic identity as Mexicans. This chapter, then, attempts to delve into *ranchero* identity, focusing in particular on how the cultural attributes of this identity are constructed in speech.

Only recently have a few Mexican researchers (Barragán López, 1990, 1997; González, 1974) begun to distinguish *rancheros* from other Mexican *campesinos*. Most research literature in both the United States and Mexico has long ignored the differences among *campesinos*, either assuming "peasant" to be the significant category or distinguishing only between

*indígena* (Indian) and *mestizo* (racially mixed)<sup>4</sup> peasants. All *mestizo* peasants, however, are not alike. *Rancheros* own (or wish to own) their own land individually, even relatively small parcels, and it is the valuing of such private property that is central to their identity. They do not own land communally, as do Indian communities, or as do *ejidatarios* (co-owners of agricultural cooperatives that resulted from land reform after the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920). *Rancheros*, in fact, disdain both Indians and *ejidatarios*, and the *agraristas* (agrarian reformers) who worked to create the *ejidos*, or communal properties, and have been known to refuse, out of pride, government offers of free land (Gledhill, 1991). Private property is highly valued, but it must be earned through one's own efforts.

A liberal individualist ideology is the central underpinning of *ranchero* identity. This ideology generally is shared by both men and women, although both age and gender affect the cultural practices in which it is embedded. *Rancheros* are "ranch" people, able to control horses, shoot guns, kill chickens, and, in their view, create their own destinies through hard work. In defining themselves this way, *rancheros* distinguish themselves from those identified as *indígenas* (indigenous Indian Mexicans) on the one hand (whom *rancheros* view as communally oriented), and from *catrines* (city people whom *rancheros* see as fancily dressed, and acting, "dandies") on the other. *Rancheros* view Indians as working hard, but not progressing, and they view many city people as not really working because "real" work involves manual labor. In contrast to these other identities, *rancheros* espouse an individualist, upwardly mobile ideology constructed in a verbal style, or "way of speaking" (Hymes, 1974b), characterized by *franqueza* (frankness).

The history of the origins and development of *rancheros* in western Mexico after the Spanish conquest describes the socioeconomic conditions in which this way of life, and its ways of speaking, developed (Farr, forthcoming). Briefly, *rancheros* originated from the lower ranks of Spaniards who mixed with some Indians and Africans, and who handled the cattle, imported from Spain, on large haciendas. They were the original cowboys of the western hemisphere, always on the frontier of the colony, domesticating land (smaller *ranchos* based on less desirable land not part of, but often surrounding, large *haciendas* [plantations]) and dominating indigenous populations. They are known as *hombres de a caballo* (men on horseback), because the land on which they lived (and on which some still live) could be traversed only on horses (González, 1991). This history of isolation and geographic movement made their housing perennially

provisional and developed a culture in which mobility, both geographic and socioeconomic, was valued and achieved through hard work, autonomy, and toughness, particularly for men, but also for women. In light of this tradition of mobility, migration to the United States can be seen as only the latest chapter in their history, part of their continuing strategy to progress, or move "up," in the world.

A history of frontier isolation and mobility also facilitated the development of strong ties of reciprocity for mutual support in hostile conditions, and common ways of living, dressing, and speaking. Although self-reliance was, and is, of utmost importance, so were, and are, ties of kinship, both real and fictive (*compadrazgo*). This valuing of both autonomy and affiliation undermines the often-invoked dichotomy between "Mexicans" (characterized as communal, or group-oriented) and "North Americans" (characterized as individualistic, or self-oriented). Instead of being only one or the other, *rancheros* evidence both orientations, as discussed more fully later.

In traditional *ranchero* society, an antigovernment attitude coexisted along with a social system based on honor which depended on one's word (*la palabra*), and the legitimation of violence to settle conflicts. *Franqueza* as a way of speaking is particularly emblematic of the *ranchero* identity that developed under these material conditions. *Franqueza* is direct, straightforward, candid language that goes directly to the point. *Rancheros no se andan con rodeos* (don't beat around the bush), and their language can be blunt and rude (in the sense of uncultured), sometimes peppered with obscenities.

An example of *franqueza* follows, excerpted from a tape-recorded conversation between a mother and her daughter at home when I was not present.<sup>5</sup> This family is headed by the mother, who was widowed when her youngest of six daughters was 1 year old. The family had migrated to Chicago partly because the father wanted a better education and future for his children. Yet at the father's death, the mother was stranded in a new land and devastated that her husband (whom she still talks of as the love of her life) had suddenly developed stomach cancer and died, possibly as a result of his years as a supervisor in industrial agriculture back in Michoacán.

To make a long and painful, yet inspiring, story short, the mother pulled herself together, went to the city of Chicago to obtain a permit to sell food on the street, and found herself being interviewed for a city construction job. Her first paycheck, based of course on male salaries, seemed so large to her that she thought it was a mistake. Eventually, through her hard work and perseverance (and the mentoring of a Puerto Rican man on the job),

she bought first one house, then another (located in a better neighborhood farther south in the city), constructed one back in the *ranchito* (and is now retired there), and helped to support various of her daughters through high school, college, and even graduate school. The upwardly mobile progress (*el progreso*) of this family illustrates the importance of these values to *rancheros*, both male and female.

In this particular conversation, the mother is criticizing some young Mexican American acquaintances who are not direct and straightforward in their speech, nor candid in how they represent themselves or their relationships with others. Specifically, the mother objects when *novias* (girlfriends, traditionally considered engaged to be married) of many years are introduced as *amigas* (friends), even when the young people in question are presumably (these days in Chicago) intimates. The daughter, born and raised in Chicago, points out that people certainly are not going to introduce their girlfriends as lovers because that is not her mother's business. The mother denies that she is interested in knowing their "business," saying that knowing about her own love life would be sufficient. The daughter quickly picks up on this and says, "What love life?" (the mother is a widow), to which her mother replies, "Well, you beat me to it" (saying it before I could). At this point the mother recycles her claim that it is insincere and false not to be frank about one's relationships and oneself. She criticizes some Mexican Americans, especially those who look very Mexican,<sup>6</sup> for Anglicizing their names (e.g., Chon changed to Shawn). In her view, one should be honest and candid about one's identity, as well as one's relationships in life. (Rural dialect features in the transcript are marked with an asterisk.)

- 1 Daughter: *Ma* [?!]. *O eso de que tú* Ma [?!]. Or like when you [say], "Ah, now they  
2 *[dices]* "Ah ya se le cambia—ya change—now they changed the names of the  
3 *le cambiaron los nombres a las* girlfriends [?!]."  
4 *novias* [?!]."  
5 Mother: *Pos sí* Well, of course.  
6 Daughter: *Te van a andar diciendo* They're going to go around saying, "Look,  
7 *"Mira, este es mi* this is my lover" [sarcastic tone].  
8 *amante*" [sarcastic tone].  
9 Mother: *Pos sí ¿qué tenía eso?* Well, yes, what's wrong with that?  
10 Daughter: [Laughing] *Ay ¿qué te interesa* [Laughing] Well, what business is that of  
11 *a ti eso?* yours?  
12 Mother: *¿Pa' qué les cambian de* Why do they change the name?

- 13 *nombre?*  
14 Daughter: *La vida amorosa de otra* The love life of another person [?!].  
15 *persona* [?!].  
16 Mother: *No-o-o, ¿yo para qué qu'ero* No-o-o, why would I want to know about  
17 *saber la vida amorosa de otra* someone else's love life?  
18 *gente?*  
19 Daughter: *Pero sí, pero está diciendo—* But yes, buy you're saying—  
20 Mother: *Con que me die—supiera la mía* As long as—knowing my own [love life]  
21 *era lo suficiente.* would be sufficient.  
22 Daughter: *¿A cuál ya?* What [love life] now?  
23 Mother: *Pero—me ganates.\* Si hubiera* But—you beat me [to it]. Had this been a  
24 *sido una torta te la des—* sandwich—you would have eaten it, and I  
25 *[hubieras] comido tú y yo pura* would have had pure shit.  
26 *chingada.*  
27 Daughter: [Laugh] [Laugh]  
28 Mother: *Pos sí. A ver ¿pa' qué andan ahí* That's right. Well, why do they go around  
29 *con medias copas, pudiendo ir* beating around the bush, when they could  
go directly?  
30 *directamente?* "Ay, su "Oh, her friend" ... bah, now  
31 *amigo," bah, ya les cambiaron de* they changed the name. After all these  
32 *nombre. Después de tantos* years ... with the same name and now, now  
33 *años con el mismo nombre ya* they changed them to make them shorter  
34 *'ora ya les cambiaron* and more decent. Wealthy is what they are  
35 *pa' hacerlos más cortitos y* acting like.  
36 *más decentes. De centavos b'ían*  
37 *de ser.*  
38 Daughter: *Como ese, ¿cómo se llama?* Like that guy, what's his name?  
39 Mother: *Pinchi\* muchacho indio mocoso* Damned snotty Indian kid and "Shawn."  
40 *y "Shawn."*

As this excerpt shows, the mother, a woman in her fifties, uses and claims to prefer a direct, "no bull" approach to communication. This style, of course, is not the only style in which *rancheros*, including this woman, speak. But it is a predominant style that evokes a deeply held ideology of *rancheros* tied historically to the ecology of *ranchos*, rural hamlets traditionally isolated from large urban centers of sophistication and schooling. In these rural hamlets, men and women have coped for centuries in Mexico, creating their own housing, growing their own food, raising their own livestock, and making their own cheese, clothing, and many other items of necessity. Now, of

course, many *rancheros*, like those in this study, are producing food for commercial purposes (and/or working for wage labor both in the United States and Mexico), and buying their own food at nearby markets. Nevertheless, the deeply ingrained *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977) of the independent rancher persists, and this *habitus* includes a propensity to use direct, frank language. This style of language, here called *franqueza*, constructs an identity for *rancheros* that contrasts sharply with other identities in their region of Mexico.

Primarily, *ranchero franqueza* contrasts sharply with the stereotyped image of the *humilde peón* (humble peon), standing with head bowed and hat in hand before a powerful landowner/boss, in many popular representations of Mexican peasants. In contrast to this humble image, which is found in both popular fiction and research literature, *rancheros* enact a proud stance, with heads held high and gazes direct, even when interacting with those who are more powerful than they. The directness of this verbal style also serves to contrast *rancheros* with more educated and "cultured" urbanites, who consider people rude if their language does not conform to *cortesía*, an elaborate and often indirect verbal politeness style (Haverkate, 1994). *Cortesía* in polite society requires verbally elaborate greetings and leave-takings, for example, whereas the *franqueza* of *rancheros* usually is much more concise, allowing people to (appropriately) leave with a simple *Ya me voy* (I'm leaving now).

In what follows I explore the construction of *ranchero* identity in informal verbal performances within the homes of the performers. Performances "stand out" in the flow of ordinary conversation because the audience orients attentively to the performer, who often is telling a story or joke (Bauman, 1984; Hymes, 1975, 1981). Such verbal performances are especially important occasions for constructions and interpretations of identity because they are instances of heightened aesthetic experience, and since they are intended for display. Instances of *ranchero* direct verbal style, or *franqueza*, in such performative talk from a large corpus of tape-recorded discourse illustrate how language and ideology are intertwined in the construction of individualist *ranchero* identity.

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The *rancheros* in this study are a transnational network of Mexican families living in both Chicago and their village of origin in Michoacán, Mexico with whom I have become close during a 10-year ethnographic study. The focus of this study has been on culturally embedded ways of using oral and

written language (see chapter 11 in this volume, as well as Farr, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1998, Farr & Guerra, 1995; Guerra, 1998; Guerra & Farr, 2002) within the framework of the ethnography of communication (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989; Hymes, 1974a).

Members of these families first migrated to Chicago in 1964. First, men came, then their wives and children, and, eventually, single women. In Chicago, they work in factories and construction. Most of the women work in food preparation, glass painting, and other factories, and almost all the men work in railroad construction. Chicago is, as one woman put it, *para mejorar* (to improve [our lives]). They are part of a transnational community (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992) because they regularly return to and communicate continuously with people in their village, and because they maintain social, emotional, economic, and political ties with network members on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. Many families live for years in Chicago, then move back to Mexico, either to retire or to raise children through their teenage years. Some then move again to Chicago. Especially for the adults in this network, it can be said that they form the fabric of each other's lives. That is, they form a dense and multiplex social network (Milroy, 1980) because not only are they related by kinship and *compadrazgo* (coparenting fictive kinship), but they also work, live, and socialize together. True to their beliefs, most of these families have used the money they have earned in Chicago to buy houses in Chicago, and to buy land (and construct or improve houses) back in Mexico. On the land bought in Mexico, they have planted avocados, selling them commercially.

A note on methodology is in order. I am fortunate to have been accepted and included within this network of families during the past 15 years. Our acquaintance, which began with this ethnographic study, grew into deep friendship, starting in Chicago and soon including their *ranchito* in Michoacán, which has become my "home away from home." I am especially close with the women in these families, both those my own age and those with young families, although I also count several men as close friends. My participant-observation with these families has been, then, intense and long term. In Chicago it has of necessity involved more visiting than "living with," but in the *ranchito*, I stay with families, sharing bedrooms, and even beds, when space is tight, with other women and children. I spent a year there (1995-1996) as a Fulbright scholar, and I have visited for a few weeks or a month on many other occasions, often during fiestas. I have carried items and papers back and forth for others in the network,

like everyone else, and a number of the women have helped me in my research, and have been paid for this through my research grants. Their work has included recording discourse for me, transcribing tapes, making maps, and carrying out interviews. In short, it has been a very collaborative and satisfying endeavor at the human level. It is important to note that this depth and quality of participant-observation is essential for understanding the discourse style I discuss because it occurs in the interstices of everyday life, which I have shared with them.

### RANCHERO IDENTITY

Identities are clearest in their contrast with others. In fact, they are constructed against these others: "we" are not "them." The region in which the *rancho* is located, northwest Michoacán, has a large indigenous (Indian) population, and the *rancho* is nestled up against the edge of the *meseta tarasca* (Tarascan tableland). Identity as a *ranchero* is important in these families, and this frequently is expressed as a primarily non-indigenous (non-Indian) ethnic identity. In northwest Michoacán, *rancheros* and *indígenas* (indigenous or Indian Mexicans) distinguish themselves from each other, sometimes fiercely. Although the *rancheros* have some indigenous "blood," they continuously construct a nonindigenous identity, although not without some ambivalence. As Barth (1969) noted, it is "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (p. 15). Otherwise, over time, ethnic groups in interaction, as *rancheros* and *indígenas* have been for centuries in Mexico (Barragán, 1997), would tend to exchange "cultural stuff." In fact, such exchange has occurred in both directions, including the movement of individual people, and yet the boundary between these two groups has remained distinct. Thus whereas *rancheros* can be distinguished for their deeply held beliefs in individualism, private property, and progress, it is how these beliefs contrast with their perceptions of their indigenous neighbors that lends them salience.

Talk about such ethnic identity is frequent in these families, in both Mexico and Chicago, and this talk makes it abundantly clear that a primarily nonindigenous identity is central to their self-definition, especially among the older generation. Among the younger, formally schooled, generation, such talk entails more ambivalence and acknowledgment of their own (partial) indigenous heritage because they are taught in school that *todos somos indios* (we are all Indians). Yet in practice, comments about

the indigenous, whether positive or negative, always make it clear that they are different, and usually relegate them to lower status. My field notes and tapes are full of comments such as the following, made by different men and women across a range of contexts:

"You see, I'm so healthy because I have some Indian blood." (The reverse comment is never made, indicating that the assumed "default" mode is Spanish/European.)

"The indigenous are very intelligent! They can make textiles, pottery, many things!"

"In our family, two brothers were sent over by the King of Spain to retrieve the bones of a dead priest. They looked around, saw how rich the land was, and decided to stay. Of course, then they mixed the bloods."

"Yes, there are people with darker skin [*morenos*] here in the *rancho*, but they're not indigenous."

"With the indigenous, one can't have *confianza* [trust]; they change on you, and they are very closed."

"The indigenous, they don't progress" [unspoken: as we do, in going to Chicago, making money, buying land, and planting avocados as an entrepreneurial enterprise].

*Rancheros*, however, not only distinguish themselves from indigenous Mexicans. They also distinguish themselves from other (non-*ranchero*) *mestizos* who are seen as "really" *mestizo*. Comments refer to such *mestizos* as people, basically indigenous, who have acculturated to Spanish ways of living (e.g., by wearing "regular" clothes), in contrast to the indigenous Tarascan or, in their own language, *purhépecha* people in this region. In nearby *purhépecha* villages, many women, and even young girls, still wear distinctive blouses, skirts, belts, and shawls to indicate their ethnic identity, although most men no longer wear the traditional male Indian peasant garb of white pants and shirt. A local joke in the *rancho* tells of people in a nearby, heavily indigenous *mestizo* town who are said to have learned to dance with their arms around each other, European style, and then to have announced, "Okay, now we're Spanish."

The *rancho* from which the *rancheros* in this study originate is situated in a microregion in which there never have been large landowners with *haciendas* (plantations), unlike other regions in the state and nation. In regions where *haciendas* have long existed, relations of domination and subordina-

tion are presumably more deeply established, with ruling families expecting and receiving verbal and bodily deference from their workers and other landless peasants dependent on them for material resources. The land in this particular microregion, comprised of rolling hills on a high plateau, apparently was not conducive to the large-scale agriculture of *haciendas*, which were located in flatter, and more easily exploitable, expanses of land. The shape of the land in this microregion, then, may have contributed to the predominance of *ranchos* here. It has always been *ranchero* territory, that is, the province of small landowners rather than *hacendados* (plantation owners). Thus the microregion does not have an entrenched tradition of a *patrón* (boss), usually from a dominant family, to whom workers owe deference. This fact may partly explain why these *rancheros* do not publicly assume a humble, deferential stance toward more powerful others, especially not on their own turf. In contrast, an interview with an older man living one half hour's drive away, over the hills to the west in the flat expanse of land that had been part of an *hacienda*, contains the frequent deferential use of *el patrón* and *la patrona* in reference to male and female family members who owned the hacienda until the revolution.

In the status hierarchy of this region of northwest Michoacán, the indigenous Tarascan or *purhépecha* Indians are at the bottom, the *rancheros* in the middle, and the urban elite at the top. Yet except when doing business (e.g., receiving medical services) in cities that have an urban elite population, *rancheros* can avoid most contacts with those "above them" in the regional status hierarchy with whom they might feel uncomfortable. (Even in interactions with the urban elite, however, I have observed these *rancheros* enacting self-assertion and *franqueza*.) Nevertheless, most of the time, their interactions are with other *rancheros* or *indígenas*. When interacting with other *rancheros*, their demeanor and language is egalitarian. In interactions with the indigenous, in contrast, *rancheros* expect, and often receive, deference, at least publicly. Friedrich (1977) noted the extreme hostility toward these *mestizos* on the part of the indigenous *purhépecha* of this region, suggesting that their public deference to *rancheros* is a form of resistance, a "weapon of the weak" (Scott, 1990). An interview of the indigenous woman who sells bread as well as other corn and wheat products daily in the *ranchito*, walking door to door, confirms the resentment of the indigenous toward the *rancheros*, who are seen as "the same" as the indigenous themselves, except for the fact that "they look down on us."

*Rancheros*, then, distinguish themselves from other rural peasants by the importance they give to private property, especially land ownership,

and to an upwardly mobile notion of *progreso* (progress). In the popular imagination in Mexico, they have played an important role in this regard, because *rancheros* were valorized as epitomizing *lo mexicano* (true Mexicanness) in the Golden Age of Mexican cinema during the 1940s and 1950s. Some contemporary scholars view this use of *rancheros* rather critically as a conservative promotion of capitalism and nationalism, but there is no doubt that the film stars who portrayed *rancheros* (e.g., Jorge Negrete in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (Over on the Big Ranch) still represent the values, demeanor, and status that many contemporary *rancheros* hold dear. For despite the historical (and contemporary) positive image of *rancheros* in both film and music, the term *ranchero* also evokes negative connotations in some parts of contemporary Mexico, as well as among some members of Mexican communities in the United States (Cintron, 1997). As rural Mexicans, *rancheros* are stereotyped as backward (not "modern"), shy, and uneducated. This is epitomized in the expression *no seas ranchera!* (Don't be so backward/ungracious!) used in social situations among the cultured elite in urban areas of Mexico. Moreover, there is a long tradition in Mexico of equating rural with Indian and urban with Spanish (e.g., Bonfil Batalla, 1996), especially because during the colonial period and afterward, many Spanish *hacienda* owners lived in cities while lower status Spanish and *mestizo rancheros* lived on *haciendas* as administrators (Barragán López, 1997). The *rancheros* in this study quickly acknowledge the higher education of people in the cities, and when in a city, are quite aware of their own difference. On their own turf in the *ranchito*, however, they do not hesitate to ridicule "cified" people, especially men, who, if they do not work with their hands, do not really work. Clearly, then, these two identities are sharply differentiated by both the urban elite and the *rancheros*. Linguistically, the difference between the two is captured by contrasting *franqueza* and *cortesía* as verbal styles. Whereas *franqueza* is frank and direct, even blunt and rude at times, *cortesía* is cultured, elaborate, and indirect (Haverkate, 1994). In the following discussion, I explain in more detail the ideology that *franqueza* both expresses and constructs.

## LIBERAL INDIVIDUALIST IDEOLOGY

Studies of Mexicans in the United States have characterized them as "collectivist" (Delgado-Gaitán, 1993) or "deeply familistic" (Valdés, 1996), and thus more committed to family and other reciprocal relationships than many members of the dominant Anglo "individualist" culture that,

according to LeVine and White (1986), has been inculcated by mass schooling. While encapsulating some truth, these contrasting characterizations of "collectivist/familistic" versus "individualist," too often are perceived as a simple dichotomy. In my ethnographic experience with *ranchero* Mexicans, however, such a dichotomy dissolves into a "both," rather than an "either/or." *Ranchero* Mexicans generally evidence a very individualist orientation, although they do so within a context of familism and networks based on reciprocity. That is, although the family and human relationships are of central importance in social life, individuality also is highly valued, both within and beyond the family. It is possible, then, to be both individualistic and collectivist/familistic, to be autonomous without being isolated. What is significant, then, may be the differences between U.S. Anglo and Mexican *ranchero* individualism, the latter coexisting with an emphasis on familism. *Rancheros* see themselves as differing from other Mexicans in terms of such individualism, particularly those identified as indigenous or Indian Mexicans.

A variety of recent studies indicate that although *rancheros* across Mexico vary in their relative wealth, they share cultural practices, beliefs, and the frequent use of a frank verbal style. They can be rich or poor, dominant or "middle class" (i.e., sandwiched between an elite dominant class and those on the bottom of the status hierarchy; Jacobs, 1982; Lomnitz-Adler, 1992). Yet no matter the size of their land holdings, and thus their relative wealth and influence, they share certain cultural values (Brading, 1994), including the overriding importance of hard work and autonomy, ideally living off their own land on livestock and other food products, and being their own bosses (Barragán López, Hoffman, Linck, & Skerritt, 1994). A popular *ranchero dicho* (saying) expresses this: *¡A mí no me manda nadie!* (No one orders me around!) *Rancheros* historically are frontiersmen and women, the "ranch" men and women of Mexico, although many Mexicans who no longer live in isolated *ranchos* in Mexico, and now live in cities either in Mexico or the United States, still retain *ranchero* values. In addition to pride in hard work, individual efforts at entrepreneurship are highly valued and practiced by both men and women (e.g., in Chicago, men fix up and rent apartments in the backs of the houses they own, and women sell Tupperware and other commodities, apart from their regular factory or construction jobs. One teenager recently airbrushed and sold tee shirts while still in high school in Chicago, a fact proudly announced by aunts and other family members, who reported that he was "doing really well" at this endeavor. Another teenager worked part-time in a candy store

throughout high school in order to buy a used car so she could drive her mother and siblings around, as well as drive herself to community college.

The social order in the *rancho*, then, is based on a liberal individualist ideology (Cosío Villegas et al., 1995, pp. 114–115) in which people are believed to be equally free and able to work their way up in the world through their own hard labor and enterprise, rather than have their social status determined at birth. Lomnitz-Adler (1992) traced the *ranchero* discourse that constructs this ideology to liberal individualism from late 19th century Mexico. Barragán López (1997), in contrast, claimed that *rancheros* have been socially, economically, and geographically mobile for centuries within Mexico, from soon after the conquest to the contemporary migration to the United States. Whatever its origins, however, upward mobility and a belief in progress are centrally important to these *rancheros*, and Chicago has figured significantly in this drive toward progress.

As indicated earlier, this belief in progress and upward mobility provides the basis upon which the *rancheros* in this study distinguish themselves from others. Many *ranchero* families from this area, in fact, trace their ancestry back to Spain (and one prosperous family in the *rancho*, with professional members in Guadalajara, has a Spanish coat of arms on the wall of their architect-designed house), although most people readily acknowledge that their ancestors (and those only a few generations back, after the Revolution of 1910–1920) "mixed the blood" with indigenous Mexicans. Genetically, although they presumably are *mestizo*, many individuals, and even entire families in this *rancho*, are quite "white." That is, many people have blue or green eyes, blond or light brown hair, and light skin with freckles that turns red, not brown, in the sun. Others look more evidently *mestizo*, with tan skin and some indigenous features. Despite their acknowledgment of *mestizaje* (the mixture of "races"), however, these *rancheros*, especially the older generation, maintain clear distinctions between themselves and the indigenous, whom they say "do not progress." This discourse thus creates clear ethnic boundaries that separate the *rancheros* in the current study from nearby lower-status indigenous Mexicans, with whom, at least in the recent past, they have shared extreme poverty.

A final note on *ranchero* individualist ideology is in order. An important aspect of the social order in *la sociedad ranchera* (*ranchero* society) is that it is patriarchal. De la Peña (1984) described kinship ideology of traditional *ranchero* society in this region of Mexico as extremely patriarchal, with a "bearded patriarch" an unquestioned authority heading a multigenerational cattle-raising and agricultural "organization." Although this ideology

