Little Mexico in the Black Hills: A Study of Mexican Migration and Settlement From 1970-1990s

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LITTLE MEXICO IN THE BLACK HILLS: A STUDY OF MEXICAN MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT FROM 1970-1990S

By

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B.A., University of South Dakota. 2020

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1970s, the members of the small-town Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, Michoacán, in Mexico, began migrating to the United States to escape poverty. As they continued to work in the fruit fields of California, some of them decided to follow the fruit, which eventually led them to the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota, where their Mexican community expanded through the late 1990s.

In this thesis, I argue that without following the fruit, Mexicans would not have found the Black Hills and job security as loggers. The environmental similarities between the Black Hills and Ojos de Agua de Ocampo influenced Mexicans to settle in the location, and their community grew as Mexican women migrated into the area. Following the fruit permitted full-time employment for Mexicans in the United States. However, some Mexican men traveled to Montana, where their relationships with local women connected them to the Black Hills timber industry. Their success in the work field of timber influenced two waves of Mexican migrant men to the Black Hills during the 1980s and 1990s. Mexican migrants found it easy to adapt and settle because of the matching environment to their mother state in Mexico. Nevertheless, the third wave of Mexican migrants missed their language, culture, and partners, and thus, introduced Mexican women into the Black Hills community. Mexican women brought culture and traditions into the community, and the community began growing as more Mexicans migrated into the Rushmore State.

My research for this thesis offers new sources for the field as it relies heavily on oral history. Mexican American history in the Great Plains requires development and adding the Mexican American account to South Dakota reassures Mexican immigrants that their stories hold importance.
Acknowledgements

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Introduction:
Mexican Pigeons in the Black Hills

Mexican migrants desired only to improve their lives and the lives of their loved ones by traveling to the United States. They endured the physical demands and mental trauma of the journey to cross the southern border of the United States. Many Mexicans entering the United States resided in rural Mexico, where poverty crippled agrarian communities. Mexican immigrants left their homes to seek labor in another country with no other option to remain in Mexico to work. While working in American agriculture, Mexican immigrants sent their hard-earned money back to Mexico for their loved ones, only using the bare minimum of their paychecks for themselves. After spending some time in the United States working, some Mexicans began thinking about settling permanently in the U.S. with their partners and family. Driven by the fear of Mexicans, Americans branded immigrants with outlandish stereotypes, all while Mexican immigrants continued to build and contribute to the American economy. To settle the American uproar against the Mexican settlement, congress members compared Mexicans to pigeons. Congressional meeting reports in the early 1900s, during the first large wave of Mexican immigration, stated that Mexicans shared the brain capacity of pigeons or other “birds of passage.”¹ Such language insinuated Mexican immigrants and migrants felt an instinctual need to return to Mexico “to roost.” Mexicans did not think like pigeons; instead, they settled in the United States and began forming vibrant Mexican communities.

Mexican settlement in the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin), specifically

South Dakota, fueled this thesis. South Dakota's history needs to incorporate the inclusion of Mexican labor that contributed to building the Rushmore state's economy and agricultural value. My thesis aims to start filling in the gap within the state's history by examining the Mexican community's grassroots in the Black Hills, South Dakota, during the early 1970s-2000s. The scope covers from the mid-1960s through the late 1990s and primarily navigates the history of the Mexican community in the Hill City area, including Custer and Keystone. The Black Hills are located between South Dakota and Wyoming, and while a vivacious Mexican community resides in the Black Hills of Wyoming, I examine the Mexican community in South Dakota, which I collectively call the Black Hills.

The Mexican-American community established themselves in Hill City, South Dakota, known as the Heart of the Hills because of its central location within the Black Hills. Living in Hill City allowed Mexican men shorter travel distances for work. The Mexican men who started the Hill City community all resided in the same state and town in Mexico, Michoacán. Many of them planned to leave Mexico at age 17 to secure employment. Through my research, I have concluded that Mexican men secured the location of the Black Hills, but Mexican women built the community. Mexican men began identifying with settlement by finding and securing work in the timber industry within the Black Hills, as timber was in high demand during the early 1970s. Through labor and job security, the community flourished by gaining citizenship, maintaining relationships with their loved ones in Mexico, finding a new Michoacán in the Black Hills, opening businesses, starting families, and practicing their religion and culture.

My research questions center on factors that pushed and pulled this Mexican community to immigrate to the Black Hills: How did Mexican men of the community find the Black Hills? What pushed Mexican men to work in the timber industry? When did a distinctively Mexican
community take form in the Black Hills? I also explore the different ways Mexican men and women formed the foundation of their Black Hills community.

The literature covering Mexican American and Mexican immigrants in the Midwest grew from research done by regional, labor, immigration, and Latin American historians. The literature largely excludes South Dakota. The Great Plains make up a portion of the Midwest, and as historians developed the field of Latinos in the Midwest, their work also contributed to the Hispanic history of the Great Plains. Rubén O Martinez, an emeritus sociology professor researching the impacts of ethnic identity and ethnicity, in his book, *Latinos in the Midwest*, stated that the work of George Edson, Manuel Gamio, and Paul Taylor placed a solid presence on Mexican immigration and labor in the Great Plains States.\(^2\) Martinez offered his readers a timeline of prominent historians that contributed to the field of Latinos in the Midwest. Edson, Gamio, and Taylor's work focused on Mexican farmworkers from the early 1920s through late 1930 (4). The Bancroft Library at the University of California holds the physical documents of Edson's research. His work analyzed the Mexican farm workers in Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Indiana, and Illinois. By the 1940s, historians Norman D. Humphrey and John Thaden explored Mexicans in Michigan. Barbara Macklin's research for her Ph.D. dissertation explored structural stability and cultural change in a Mexican American community in Toledo, Ohio, in the late 1950s. According to Martinez, “During the 1960s, more and more scholars were conducting research on Latinos in the Midewest,” such as the work of Lyle Shannon, Julian Samora, and Richard Lamanna.\(^3\) More recent work helped influence my thesis as they had similar themes.


\(^3\) Martinez, *Latinos in the Midwest*, 4-5.
The work of Zaragosa Vargas, Dennis Nodin Valdés, Anna V. Millard, and Jorge Chapa helped form the themes of my thesis. Vargas's work, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*, focused on Mexican labor after World War I until the Great Depression. Mexican migrants moved north to work in sugar companies, railroads, and manufacturing industries.\(^4\) Religion and assimilation, two of the main themes in Vargas's book, also appeared in my research. She believed the Catholic church provided Mexican men “spiritual guidance with a patriotic undertone”; her work suggested to me that the Catholic church in the Black Hills Community might be important.\(^5\) The Catholic church in the Black Hills allowed Mexicans to practice their cultural traditions but played a key factor in why Mexican felt comfortable in the Black Hills and eased the settlement process. Valdés's book, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century*, contributed to the history of Chicanos by exploring their spaces in the Midwest, specifically the West Side of St. Paul, Minnesota.\(^6\) *Barrios Norteños* held similar themes of assimilation, continuing cultural traditions, and community building. Chapas and Millard researched Latino factory workers in the rural Midwest and their relationships with Anglo Americans in their book *Apple Pie & Enchiladas: Latino Newcomers in the Rural Midwest*.\(^7\) Mexicans in the Black Hills interacted with white loggers and worked alongside them. Although the relationships between Mexicans and white loggers need further development, they played a crucial part in Mexicans' success in the timber industry. Jim Norris’s *North for The Harvest* on

\(^5\) Vargas, *Proletarians of the North*, 74.
Bracero Workers in North Dakota, influenced some of my research questions, and sparked an interest in Mexican labor in South Dakota.\(^8\) Academic institutions, such as the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska, and the University of Notre Dame, have continued contributing to the creation of a coherent history and source material for Latinos in the Midwest by hosting annual conferences for the new scholarship and research on Latinos in the Midwest as the Hispanic population grew.\(^9\)

The Latino population in the Midwest has steadily increased over the 20th century. By the early 1930s, the Hispanic population in the Midwest grew to 80,000 and by the 1970s, the recorded Hispanic population for the twelve-state region was just over 1 million, growing to 1.25 million by 1980. By 1990 it had reached 1.5 million.\(^10\) Acquiring jobs within the Midwest's agricultural labor secured Latino communities' growth. Job opportunities also caused the Latino communities and Mexican subcommunities in the Black Hills to grow. Nonetheless, secondary sources remained limited for Mexicans in the Midwest, especially in South Dakota.

This thesis relies heavily on oral histories. The advances in digital technology have created endless possibilities for historians to conduct oral history interviews with clear audio and new means to transcribe and preserve interviews. The growth of oral history has urged historians and society to explore multiple perspectives of historical events, movements, and narratives. The craft of conducting successful oral history relies heavily on the interviewer, for they must ask important, yet broad, questions and secure a safe place where the interviewee feels comfortable

to share their story. An interviewer must also learn when to stay silent to give the interviewee a chance to think and collect their thoughts.

Persistence reassured the members of the Mexican community in the Black Hills that it was time to share their stories and plant their importance in agricultural production in the Rushmore state. At the beginning of my research, securing interviews seemed impossible. In order to open the door to interviewing first-generation immigrants from the community, I needed to solidify a relationship with their children. I interviewed the second generation of the community and explored various themes within their experience trying to practice their culture while living in America. More often than not, their parents began chiming in during the interviews, which allowed them to trust the interview process and ensure their safety. The social climate or rhetoric regarding Mexicans, migrant workers, and immigrants propelled the interviewees' reluctance. In order to secure the safety of their family and their status, many decided to keep their identity hidden by using the protection of a pseudonym or remaining anonymous to readers. Having concrete sources to voice the experience and grassroots of the Mexican community in the Black Hills, other sources such as media outlets created an information base to analyze how the local people in the community felt towards Mexicans.

Mexicans have worked in South Dakota since at least early 1940. In that decade, state-wide newspapers published many articles and photos documenting Mexican immigrants and migrant workers. The Bracero Program resulted in one of the state's first strong presence of Mexicans. Newspapers, such as the Argus Leader, acknowledged Bracero workers' work ethics and culture. The United States and Mexican governments agreed to the Bracero Program (1942-1964) when the U.S. labor force declined after the U.S. entered World War II. Mexican workers entered the United States with written labor contracts that detailed their work location, working
conditions, and pay rate; the U.S. approved over 4 million Bracero Program participants. South Dakota became one of the many states that welcomed Bracero workers, focusing on agricultural production during World War II to aid local farmers in meeting agronomic demands.

Newspapers placed Mexicans within their communities by acknowledging their culture and their job roles. One article, “Sugar Area Asks Labor,” stated that agriculture productions in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, would benefit the community if farmers contracted Mexican migrant workers.\textsuperscript{11} Carl Andergen from Kingsbury county stated, “Instead of walking over to pick up a stray bundle in the field, these Mexicans run after it.”\textsuperscript{12} The article also made it apparent that American farmers put in the effort to learn Spanish by using Spanish-American dictionaries provided by the South Dakota Extension Service that oversaw the Bracero Program. The dictionaries became a tool to build a strong sense of community between Mexicans, farmers, and locals. Additional articles explained Mexican traditions, culture, and dishes. Thus, Mexicans have helped build South Dakota but have yet to be recognized.

Other Mexican communities, in Yankton and Sioux Falls, have flourished within the same time frame of this thesis in South Dakota. I discovered that Mexican communities began growing in Yankton and Sioux Falls because meat and agricultural production attracted immigrants who desired work, much like Hill City. Labor became the single reason why Mexicans in the Black Hills migrated, a common pull factor in immigration history.\textsuperscript{13}

Immigration policies and border control impacted immigrants differently. Several immigration acts aimed to control (or limit) the number of immigrants that entered from a

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\textsuperscript{11} “Sugar Area Asks Labor,” \textit{Argus Leader} (Sioux Falls, SD), March 3, 1942.
\textsuperscript{12} Ray Antonen, “Farmers Are Amazed Over Willingness,” \textit{Argus Leader}, (Sioux Falls, SD), September 05, 1944.
\textsuperscript{13} Emma Aguila, \textit{United States and Mexico: Ties that Bind, Issues that Divide} (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 325.
\end{flushleft}
specific country or ethnicity. Mexican historian Rafael Alarcón identified the Chinese Exclusion Act as the first period in the history of Mexican immigration to the United States, as this act excluded migration from Asia and pushed for Mexican inclusion. Congress followed the Chinese Exclusion Act with various laws in 1917 to keep the American population educated and white. These laws implemented literacy tests, fees, and hygiene inspections that aimed to restrict the entrance of “prostitutes,” “convicts,” “anarchists,” “epileptics,” “lunatics,” “idiots,” those “liable to become public charges,” and contract laborers.¹⁴ However, the act excluded Mexican immigrants from the literacy test and all entrance fees. These exclusions quietly encouraged Mexicans to immigrate or migrate to the United States. The driving labor force of Chinese immigrants in America dwindled as Mexico became the key sending country of labor to the United States. American employers aimed to recruit Mexican workers, thus influencing the phrase: “From Chinese Exclusion to Mexican Inclusion.”¹⁵ The U.S. emplaced labor recruitment systems, such as recruitment centers in Cuidad Juarez, also known as Paso del Norte (main entrance port to the U.S.).

According to Alarcon, 1921-1942 was the second phase of the history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. The National Origins Quota System introduced the deportation of Mexicans and restrictions on immigration. American nativists assembled the National Origins Quota to create and secure a predominately white society by pursuing a white-only immigration system. Rather than using recent census data, Congress used the 1890 census. Congress purposely chose to model the act with the numbers of a census 34 years old to propel and limit

¹⁴ Hernández, City of Inmates, 132.
quotas for specific countries. The quotas for each country were based on 2% of the United States population in 1890, allowing 34,000 British immigrants to immigrate annually. The Quota Act started in 1921 and was reissued from 1924 until 1942. The 1924 act created stricter quotas for specific countries, like China or countries in South America. The Immigration Act of 1924 made Europe the only valid root of immigration through the national Quota Act. Days after passing the new act, Congress emplaced the U.S Border Patrol to enforce U.S. immigration law and the boundaries the Immigration Act instituted between whites and nonwhites in the United States. As mentioned before, Congress made yet another exception for Mexicans.

Yet again, another act to secure an all-white America emphasized the importance of Mexicans and their labor in the United States. Mexican labor played a vital role in securing a stable American economy. In order to keep the National Quota System, the nativists in Congress made a “painful compromise.” American companies across the southwestern United States vehemently rejected the quota system. During this time, U.S immigration authorities annually counted 100,000 Mexicans who crossed the southern border into the United States. The desired quota system would have severely limited the number of Mexicans crossing the border. If Congress passed the act, only a few hundred Mexicans would enter the United States. The Western industries depended almost entirely on Mexican labor. The members of Congress from western states refused to vote for a comprehensive quota system. The western congress members' rejection resulted in nativists having to choose between accepting a Mexican quota exemption or passing no immigration law. Relief hit western states when the Immigration Act of 1924 excused all immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, specifically Mexican immigrants, from the quota

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16 Hernández, City of Inmates, 146.
17 Hernández, City of Inmates, 133.
system. The “painful comprise” allowed a Mexican immigrant boom.\textsuperscript{18} The Great Depression, however, soon encouraged deportation in which “nearly half a million Mexicans were deported to Mexico. Four hundred and fifty-five thousand were actually deported. In addition, other Mexicans decided to go back to Mexico” due to the lack of employment.\textsuperscript{19} The next mass Mexican migration occurred as the United States entered World War II with programs that influenced Mexican migrant laborers to sign into agriculture and railroad maintenance contracts until the late 1960s. After World War II, “the Era of Undocumented Migration” surged throughout the United States, ultimately bringing Mexicans to South Dakota.\textsuperscript{20}

The history of South Dakota holds numerous vibrant immigrant perspectives, and the state’s population boomed when the government encouraged immigrants to settle into the state to increase production. The Homestead Act pulled hundreds of immigrants to prairie lands to build their future on free, surveyed land that the U.S. claimed as public domain. The intentions behind the Homestead Act aimed to civilize and occupy the land between the Mississippi River and California.\textsuperscript{21} Some northern industrialists did not support the Homestead Act because industrial plants would lose cheap labor if employees moved West. Prior to the U.S. Civil War, southern states objected to the Homestead Act because they feared the legislation would endanger the plantation system and open more free states that opposed slavery. Despite opposition, President Abraham Lincoln signed and passed the Homestead Act on May 20, 1862.

The Homestead Act of 1862 provided 160 acres of free land to settlers at least 21 years old and heads of households. Homesteaders needed to be United States citizens or declare their

\textsuperscript{18} Hernández, \textit{City of Inmates}, 136.  
\textsuperscript{19} Hernández, \textit{City of Inmates}, 146  
\textsuperscript{20} Alacrón, “History of Mexican Immigration to US Final CVIIC Webinar.”  
intentions to become one. Homesteaders had to pay a ten-dollar filing fee and live to cultivate the land for at least five years. Homesteaders could also pay $1.25 per acre and occupy the land for six months. All were encouraged to homestead except those who had fought against the U.S. government, such as Confederate soldiers. Homesteaders filed some two million claims and settled two hundred seventy million acres and allowed immigrants and U.S. citizens a new beginning in the West. However, issues would derive from the widespread occupation of so-called “free” land. The act failed to conserve the land, and eventually, the land fell victim to over plowing, destroying the soil's nutrients. Ultimately, the Homestead act contributed to the pre-existing, ongoing U.S. dispossession of Indigenous lands.

South Dakota's complicated history among Indigenous peoples, European, and U.S. settlers continues to grow as scholars further explore the displacement Lakotas and other Indigenous nations endured at the hands of settlers and the American government. Historians, such as Jeffery Ostler in *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Grounds* have synthesized the record of presence of Indigenous peoples of the Black Hills of South Dakota. American settlers and officials often stated that Lakota peoples never lived in the Black Hills to justify their taking of the land, disregarding Lakotas’ claims. Lakota people have had sacred connections to the Black Hills for centuries before the settlement of colonists. The strong connection to The Hills fueled Lakotas’ stance on keeping the sacred location away from settlement or resource extraction.

During the 1840s, Americans held no interest in the northern Great Plains, and it was not until the 1860s that violence arose among Indigenous tribes, overlanders, and the United States government. Lakota leaders began noticing overlanders entering their land and hunting grounds and were at a standstill. Some Lakota leaders negotiated and accommodated emigrants, while
others took “a more militant approach and were willing to take up arms to roll back the treat
from U.S. expansion” to the Black Hills, the Powder River country, and along Yellowstone.\textsuperscript{22}
The Oregon Trail made it apparent to the Lakota that American expansion was on the rise, and
by 1849, the U.S. government established the military garrison of Fort Laramie. The rapid flow
of overlanders scared the buffalo, the main hunting game for Lakotas, and damaged the plains’
vegetation as overlanders’ oxen, horses, and sheep overgrazed the grasslands, further displacing
buffalo from their natural environment. Many Indigenous tribal chiefs wanted a solution to keep
their people safe.

The United States Superintendent for Indian Affairs, David D. Mitchell, and his aide,
Thomas Fitzpatrick, suggested a peace treaty between the region's tribes and white settlers to
avoid further conflict. In the summer of 1851, fur traders and government agents roamed the
region to persuade the tribal leaders to sign a peace treaty. Numerous tribe leaders agreed
because they wanted to resolve the tensions between white settlers and their people and aimed
for peace. By early September, over 9,000 Indigenous people met thirty-five miles down the
Platte to discuss the peace treaty. With the aid of translators, Mitchell stated that the President of
the U.S. wished for Americans to travel freely along the Platte River trail. The proposal also
promised restitution for 50 years for the loss of buffalo, grass, and timber damaged by settlers
only to those who signed the treaty, and it set permanent tribal boundaries.\textsuperscript{23} On September 17,
the Treaty of Fort Laramie finalized the agreements to secure amicability as overlanders
continued travelling to the Pacific, or so they hoped.


\textsuperscript{23} Ostler, \textit{The Lakotas and the Black Hills}, 38.
The treaty was tested as the environmental damage intensified as Americans continued traveling to the Pacific, resulting in further decline of the buffalo population. Indigenous chiefs awaited their promised compensation, but the United States government failed to hold their end of the treaty, although “the treaty provided annuities for fifty years, when the Senate considered the terms in May 1852, it whittled the annuity period down to ten years. The president could renew the annuities for another five years, but no more.”24 June 1853, Oglala and Brulé bands camped at Fort Laramie, awaiting their agreed compensations. Tension grew and broke out in acts of violence.

Chiefs grew upset as the treaty failed to help Indigenous people. Lakotas throughout the northern plains began planning to hold a council meeting known as the Bear Butte Council to consult the threat Americans posed to their way of living. Over 5,000 Indigenous people attended. The Bear Butte Council decided that bands would continue to accept treaty annuities, militants would fight to return their way of life, forcefully move into the best-remaining buffalo ranges, defend the heart of Lakota territory (specifically the Black Hills), and would continue to allow outsiders to travel between Fort Laramie and Fort Pierre, but refuse entrance to military parties. At this council meeting, the Lakota vocalized the fear that the Black Hills gold would attract Americans to the area.25 Government-led expeditions to explore the Black Hills, such as the expedition led by Lieutenant G.K. Warren. Warren and his men encountered a large group of Lakotas. The Lakotas warned them to leave, and Warren quickly ended the expedition. However, it was too late, for Warren had found gold.

24 Ostler, The Lakotas and the Black Hills, 41.
By 1865, Lakota leaders Lone Horn and Bear’s Rib agreed to discuss a new treaty, specifically treaty annuities, because their hunting game was scarce. A new pledge to secure safe travel for Americans and the well-being of Lakota tribes. After reassuring the Lakota that the American government held no intentions of settling or using Lakota lands, another agreement was struck. However, a few days later, the Lakota witnessed Colonel Henry B. Carrington and 700 U.S. soldiers march to Fort Laramie and construct new forts along the Bozeman trail. The following summer, the U.S. soldiers built three more forts in Lakota territory. Violence spread between parties, and by December 1866, the Lakota organized the Fetterman Massacre—the U.S. government decided not to punish Lakotas for the massacre because they wanted peace as the country recovered from the Civil War. Congress created a special Indian Peace Commission in June 1867—the Indian Peace Commission controlled negotiation treaties with tribes. Chiefs like Red Cloud lost faith in the U.S. government and held little interest in reaching new agreements. As the U.S. army abandoned the forts along the Bozeman trail, more chiefs began considering creating a new treaty.

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, “superseding the Treaty of 1851, established a framework that continues to govern relations between the Lakota nation and the U.S.”²⁶ This treaty established Lakota ownership of the Black Hills. However, Ostler stated that the accompanied provisions of the treaty hindered Lakotas and endangered the integrity of their country—specifically Articles 2, 16, and 11. American interests in settling Lakota territory grew because they hoped the Black Hills offered regional economic and political development, and rumors of gold began circulating in eastern South Dakota. The curiosity of settlers prompted
discourse for expeditions to explore the Black Hills. However, the U.S. government reminded Americans that the treaty remained, and that entering Lakota land was trespassing—the U.S. army offered no protection to trespassers. By late 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant prohibited all expeditions to the Black Hills. Nevertheless, this did not hamper the American's need to explore, and multiple associations for investigating Lakota territory and mining in the Black Hills formed in Sioux City, Iowa, and Cheyenne, Wyoming.\(^\text{27}\) The Dakota Territorial legislature sent two petitions to Congress in 1873. The first called for a scientific expedition of the Black Hills to evaluate the mineral resources, and the second urged Congress that the Lakotas be contained to a small portion of their reservations away from the Black Hills because they believed the Lakota did not use the land to its full potential. Despite the creation of the treaty aimed at protecting and respecting the Lakota's reservations, including the Black Hills, the army's commanding general, William Tecumseh Sherman, and Lieutenant General Phil Sheridan eagerly waited for the treaty to end as the army focused on eliminating “the material conditions that supported autonomous Indian communities.”\(^\text{28}\) Congress gave the U.S. army control of establishing agencies and distributing rations and annuities under the 1868 treaty. The Oglalas and Brulés wanted their agencies closer to the Black Hills, and to make this happen, they tried diplomacy.

In 1870, a group of Oglala and Brulé leaders traveled to Washington in hopes of discussing with President Grant over the 1868 treaty. Red Cloud called for the abandonment of Fort Fetterman in the Dakota territory, a new location for their agency, and no road constructed into the Black Hills. The Interior Secretary Jacob D. Cox and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ely S. Parker responded by pulling the treaty document out, with interpreters present. They

\(^{27}\) Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 68.

\(^{28}\) Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 70.
covered the critical sections of the treaty with Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, and other Lakotas. The treaty allowed for the construction of roads through their territory, keeping all existing forts, placing all agencies on Missouri, offering protection only to the lands listed as their reservations (under Article 2), no permanent title hunting grounds (under Article 11) and unceded territory (under Article 16). The Lakotas left this meeting heartbroken by the deeply demoralizing treatment. Nonetheless, the Washington trips offered the small victories of establishing the Oglala and Brulé agency closer to the Black Hills but not too close to avoid tempting Americans to the area.

In October of 1873, President Grant received General Phil Sheridan's suggestion to send a military expedition to make surveillance of the Black Hills's topography, fauna, flora, and geology. The expedition gained government approval despite objections from humanitarians, the secretary of the interior, and the commissioner of Indian Affairs because they believed it went against the 1868 treaty. Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer led the large expedition in hopes for the expedition to gain positive news coverage. In July of 1874, the start of the Black Hills Gold Rush occurred as 600 miners trespassed into the Black Hills, and by August, the number of miners grew to fifteen hundred. The U.S. Army followed steps to prohibit Americans from violating the treaty by patrolling the region between Missouri and the Black Hills and sending expeditions to locate trespassers and order them off Lakota land. Their attempts did little to discourage miners from traveling into the Black Hills.

Once again, in May of 1875, the United States government brought “a delegation of Oglala, Brulé, and Minneconjou leaders to Washington” to discuss the possibility of renouncing

the Black Hills. Red Cloud and Spotted Tail did not entertain the idea and quickly focused on the inadequate quality of their treaty rations. As the delegation of Oglala, Brulé, and Minneconjou leaders left Washington, Government officials ordered a commission to Lakota country. President Grant decided he “would not rescind orders banning non-Indians from the Black Hills, by he would quietly drop even the pretense of using troops to keep them out.” Settlers rushed into the Black Hills as they noticed the troops withdrew from monitoring the area. Tensions grew as the Lakotas and Cheyenne attacked miners, pretexting a military campaign against nontreaty bands. Ultimately, the government demanded that the Lakota agency sell the Black Hills at a nonnegotiable price or starve as the government would end rations. The United States government gave the Lakotas living outside the permanent reservations until January to report to the agencies, or American troops would forcefully relocate them. The Lakotas would not relinquish their sacred lands easily.

After the American defeat at the Battle of Little Bighorn on August 15, 1876, Congress passed legislation that stated the Lakotas to give up all claims to lands outside their permanent reservations, including the Black Hills. If they refused, all appropriations would end. As Congress abolished creating new treaties in 1871, many Congress members thought it inappropriate to permit the seizure of the Black Hills; Congress facilitated the fallacy of the Lakota agreement to give up their sacred grounds or parish as they became dependent on the American government as the buffalo population declined due to Americans sport hunting and damaged environment. By September 22, Commissioners read the agreement, and the process of gaining Lakota leaders' signatures began.

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As Gold Fever and continued migration spread throughout the Black Hills, so did sawmills to provide lumber to construct towns and support the mining infrastructure and the growth of new towns aiming to represent permanent settlement. The construction of sawmills in the Black Hills at the end of the Gold Rush began in earnest as settlers poured in to work in industrial mining and the trades and professions of small towns. These new towns catered to continued settlement under the Homestead Act and the growth of animal and crop agriculture. The call for timber steadily rose as more Americans and immigrants began settling in the Black Hills. Although the timber and lumber industry grew throughout the Black Hills, this thesis strictly focuses on the growth of the timber industry in Hill City, Custer, and Keystone.

According to the South Dakota local historian Martha Linde, businessmen built the first sawmills in Custer in 1878. Shortly after, sawmills began operating in Hill City. According to Linde, “By 1890, Hill City was a thriving mining town with gold and tin mines providing its economic backbone. As the mining operations came to an end, the industry was replaced with lumber operations which ever since have been the town's main occupation.”

The Hill City area became the home to many sawmills. By 1903 the T.W March sawmill produced over 300,000 feet of lumber annually. By 1904, four sawmills were up and running in the Hill City and Keystone area. Each sawmill produced an estimated 400,000 feet of lumber annually after 1904. However, sawmills commonly closed after a few years of operation. Linde believed many sawmills were unaccounted for in the Black Hills area because of their short production life. The short life of many sawmills inspired a poem in 1908 that spread throughout the Black Hills. “For Sale—One Sawmill” opens with a good sawmill opening with “Half-mile

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of dirt road/ The rest of it mud./Six bridges, all condemned/ But otherwise good.”

The poem proceeds with the never-ending labor performed by the sawmill, a critique of overproduction and over-cutting the timber. The sawmill ages as it produces lumber quickly and soon breaks down. The poem ends with the owner attempting to sell the sawmill because “There's a mortgage on the land/ That's now past due./ And I still owe/ For the machinery too./ But it you want to ger rich,/ Here's the place to begin,/ For it's a darn good layout/ For the shape it's in.”

Linde's work shows a gap in sawmill production from the 1920s through the mid-1930s, but she believes more likely existed than the surviving evidence suggests.

The Mexican American community of modern South Dakota is closely related to a lumber firm founded in 1936, the Neiman company, which began its timber work in the Black Hills of Wyoming. By 1968, the multi-generational sawmill officially entered the timber industry in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The Neiman family opened their sawmill, Rushmore Forest Products, a few miles west of Hill City. The Rushmore Forest Products sawmill created many jobs in the timber industry within the Black Hills. The Neiman sawmill created a steady work environment for local contractors and self-employed loggers. Mexican men joined the timber industry in the 1970s because it offered year-round job security.

Through my research, I have established that Mexican men who labored in the timber industry secured an opportunity for a community to grow in the Black Hills. Many of them had logged in Mexico, prior to immigration to the United States; with the familiar job role and similar terrain to their hometowns, the Black Hills became a suitable home away from home.

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Without job security in the timber industry, the Mexican community in the Black Hills would have settled elsewhere, or the community simply would not have existed.

* * *

Chapter one of this thesis covers the intriguing migratory stories of Mexican men and the dangers that often go unnoticed by American society. These men’s migrations are rooted in what immigration historians call push and pull factors. Push factors define the reasons why people leave their motherland, and pull factors explain what attracts individuals to settle in a new country. Chapter one concludes with the arrival of the founding families that built the permanent Mexican community in the Black Hills and the labor and lifestyle they experienced before working in the timber industry of the Black Hills.

Chapter two focuses solely on Mexican men’s intersection with the timber industry in the Black Hills. It breaks the Mexican men’s migration into three waves, according to the date they entered the Black Hills and started working as loggers. Comparing the environments of their hometown and the Black Hills also shows their growing desire to settle in the area. The chapter offers an analysis of each wave’s experience entering the timber industry, their work ethic, and how they settled into The Hills by focusing on culture shock, gradual transitions to the U.S, growing relationships with locals, and how the work and settlement methods they practiced ultimately secured their legal and permanent status in the United States. This chapter also discusses how each wave helped the upcoming waves.

The third wave of immigrant Mexican men ultimately lead to chapter three's topic of Mexican women. Mexican women finally made their vital appearance by the early 1990s after third-wave Mexican men asked their partners to join them. Women’s contributions centered
around their attachment to Mexican culture and Catholic faith. Continuing their cultural practices, celebrations, and religion helped the community's growth. Soon, families grew by having children, thus creating community and growing the seeds of community stability. This chapter also uncovered women’s migratory stories and analyzed the difference between their journey as women and that of the men discussed previously. I argue that Mexican immigrant women of this generation experienced a new sense of freedom when they moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota, one that provided them new opportunities for work and even to practice Mexican cultural traditions they could not practice in Mexico, due to poverty.

The topic of this thesis has gone widely unnoticed by state historians, leaving a gap in South Dakota's immigration and agricultural history. The field of immigration history continues to grow by adding new narratives of immigrants traveling from all over the world and making the United States their home. At the beginning of my research, Mexicans in this community still needed to realize their importance to the timber and lumber industry. This project made them question their significance in South Dakota's history. South Dakota's rich immigration history calls for further exploration of the inclusion and acknowledgment of other immigrants, such as Mexican immigrants, and how they have helped build the Rushmore state. Mexican immigrants and migrants in South Dakota have gone unnoticed, and this work aims to fill in the gap in Mexican American history of South Dakota.
Chapter One:

Aliens Pick Fruit and Green Kryptonite Kills Them:


“It’s a bird! It’s a plane! No, man, it’s a wetback!”

Los Hermanos Ortiz

Superman and immigrants had something in common, which was that the United States viewed them aliens. Los Hermanos Ortiz (William, Anthony, Gerardo, Kevin, and Oscar Ortiz) performed what was known as one of their best single hits in 2003, “Superman Es Ilegal,” which translates to “Superman is Illegal.” The song falls into the Corrido genre. Corridos, a Mexican ballad type, have long been present in Mexican history, dating back to 1910, as hundreds of Corridos survived the Mexican Revolution. Corridos were "the real deeds" of Mexicans and were popular “because what they sing is the pure truth.” Often, Corridos are political songs that capture social history by expressing the concerns and truth felt by the Mexican masses. D.C. Comics released the tale of Superman, an orphaned alien, after the Great Depression, as an influx of Mexican migrants crossed the southern border into the United States. Superman grew up in rural America after the obliteration of his planet. Superman’s white skin and blue eyes made him the ideal American, unlike the thousands of migrants working in the United States. Clearly, the

tale of Superman has no legitimate connection to U.S. immigration law. However, Jorge Lerma, the composer of “Superman es Illegal,” was inspired to write the song as U.S. immigration restrictions and strict border control divided the nation.

The Immigration Act of 1907 forced all immigrants and travelers to enter through an official port of entry. Immigrants underwent inspections and required approval to gain a legal entryway into the country. The American government labeled those who entered without inspection at an official port of entry, including the men in this study—and would include Superman if he existed, as illegal immigrants. While nationwide efforts in 2022 attempted to change the dehumanizing term, Mexican men in the Black Hills community needed to renew an Alien Registration Card every ten years. What classified humans as immigrants or migrants? Immigration historians debate the terminology while expanding the field. In fact, many historians use the term interchangeably and propose new definitions within their work.

Labeling the people in this study was far more complicated than anticipated. The people in this study did not have to cross an ocean but merely walked across an imaginary line to enter the United States, so calling them immigrants felt unjust. Mae M. Ngai, an Asian American historian, covered the complex terminology in her chapter, “Immigration and Ethnic history.” Ngai writes that the first to travel and migrate to the Americas called themselves settlers or colonists, and by the 20th century, those who migrated were labeled immigrants. Grouping new migrants as immigrants also attached racist notions toward minorities by placing an ethnicity or a cultural identity on them. Ngai encouraged calling the topic “The Peopling of America” instead of Immigration history.40 “The Peopling of America” provided a broad concept and included,

rather than separated, Indigenous peoples. However, “The Peopling of America” excludes conquest. While the men in this study traveled to the U.S. searching for work, as hundreds of Mexicans did before on contracts hoping to return home, it made the most sense to abandon the negative traits attached to the term “immigrant” and label them migrants regardless of their Indigenous roots. I also want to stress that almost all of the figures in this thesis entered the United States undocumented but gained citizenship or legal residency as they began to settle and form families.

At age 17, the men of this chapter began thinking of migrating to the United States. This chapter aims to cover the push and pulls factors experienced by the Mexican migrant men of the Black Hills community during the early 1970s through the 1990s. All of the migrants who built the community in the Black Hills lived in the same city in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. A brief overview of the country and state's economy, which propelled migration, suggests migrants’ claims of job insecurity, poverty, and rural conditions as the three primary push factors. Migrants expressed a growing job market in the United States became the primary pull factor, and this related to the dream of an easier life, and continued networking among migrants. The migratory journeys Mexican migrants experienced stressed their want for a better life because of the physically demanding travel, life-threatening settings, and emotional trauma they endured to attain an opportunity to build their life in the United States. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the jobs Mexican migrants worked prior to reaching the Black Hills.

Economists and historians, such as Roy Boyd, Maria Eugenia Ibarrarán, and Roberto Valéz-Grajales analyzed Mexico's economy to track its decline and the growth of poverty. According to Understanding Mexican Economy: A Social, Cultural, and Political Overview, natural resources and minerals created a false sense of security for Mexico. Mexico became
overdependent on its mineral wealth, making it the driving source of economic growth. The inconsistent resources created an economic boom and bust cycle, and the low-wage jobs created to extract resources failed to develop widespread wealth for the country. Boyd, Ibarrarán, and Valéz-Grajaels believed that the foreign capital exploitation of Mexico's natural resources impacted the economy negatively. Despite the plethora of resources, Mexico failed to distribute the wealth throughout the country, which forced different regions of Mexico to develop at much slower rates in extractive regions.\footnote{41} The country's southern region struggled while the northern and central states experienced economic growth as they widely contributed to raw material factories and exports.

The reliance on resources and minerals ultimately crippled the Mexican economy; however, during the scope of this thesis, achieving new goals in trade once again placed southern Mexicans in an economic crisis as jobs disappeared. According to anthropologist Jorge Durand, the early 1970s concluded the period of economic growth from World War II. In Durand's work “The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States,” the Mexican government intended to build the internal market after World War II ended. However, the model for postwar industrial growth based on the internal market was abandoned by 1973 to prioritize international trade. International trade helped the northern region states of Mexico because the Mexican government established industrialization programs there to boost export processing. The Binational agreements between the United States and Mexico secured a trade zone through the southern border, so all border states house maquila factories.\footnote{42} The tariff-free maquila, a factory in

Mexico that relies on cheap Mexican labor to maintain product export rate, take in raw materials, manufacture or process them and export the finished products, such as medical devices, electronics, or parts for the automotive sector. Maquilas, ultimately hindered rather than helped Mexicans because outside companies capitalize on the inexpensive Mexican labor force.

Mexico's economic trade expanded in border states, but the central and southern regions experienced little wealth growth. Eight states, Michoacán, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo comprised the southern region of Mexico. Although the southern region was the poorest in Mexico, the economy varied according to state. Disregarding beach resorts, such as Cancún, the central state of Michoacán, and nearby states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Tabasco are the least developed states in Mexico in terms of income, infrastructure, education, and quality of life, thus leaving those who lived in those states with little options but to migrate north to seek employment in agribusiness.\textsuperscript{43}

Migration became more common in poverty-stricken states in southern Mexico. Mexican officials encouraged migrating to the United States for better job opportunities rather than helping Mexican citizens. People in rural areas and inner cities of Mexico experienced lower wages, decreased job opportunities, financial hardships, government neglect, and economic marginalization. The poverty in these areas often resulted in the Indigenous people's protests against the Mexican government or mass migration of people of mixed descent, such as mestizo Mexicans.

Indigenous people of Mexico resorted to revolts, such as those in Chiapas in 1940, against the idea of migrating to another state, let alone another country, and abandoning their

\textsuperscript{43} Boyd, \textit{Understanding Mexican Economy}, 20.
Chiapanecos rallied against the Mexican government for their severe negligence in helping the heavily Indigenous-populated state. The government gave the Chiapanecos little to no resources or funds to cultivate their land. As of 2010, Chiapas is the poorest state in the country, experiencing a 78.5% poverty rate despite having a massive amount of natural resources, like coffee and cacao. Chiapanecos and Zapatistas continued to revolt until 1995 against the government to gain Indigenous land rights to begin production on the land. The Chiapanecos weaved their identity and culture into their land, so leaving was never an option for them. The government preferred allowing corporations to farm the land, but Chiapanecos refused to leave and continued to request the Mexican government for recognition as Indigenous people. Chiapanecos continued to suffer as poverty crippled their state. Mestizo Mexicans also loved their country, but many migrated to the United States rather than wait on the Mexican government for relief.

Rural states, such as Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán, had a larger population of mixed descent, so these states had a steady outflow of migrant workers traveling to the United States, which reduced rebellions. Mexican officials began encouraging the communities in rural locations to travel to find better jobs. The idea of cheap Mexican labor influenced the United States to create programs that permitted Mexicans to travel to the United States for seasonal work. One of the men I interviewed expressed his hatred of the Mexican government for encouraging them to become migrant workers because he felt the government failed to care or acknowledge that they failed their people. Michoacán became one of the poorest states in Mexico by the mid-1970s.

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I have tracked which Mexican families arrived first in the Black Hills through research. Three families, the Munoz, the Escalante, and the Salinas, originated from Michoacán, Mexico. The fourth, the Meza family, originated from Jalisco, the neighboring state of Michoacán. Due to poverty, the first families that migrated to the United States eventually reached the Black Hills of South Dakota by the mid-1970s. Most Black Hills Mexican community people were born in Michoacán, Mexico, in a small rural town called Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, named after the philosopher Don Melchor Ocampo. Ojos de Agua was a “beautiful little ranch on the hills around Zinapecauaro. It was a very small little ranch, and at the time, we didn't have any water or electricity, only wells. And that's why they call it Ojos de Agua; holes of water, pools of water.”

Although the people of this study loved their hometown, rural poverty made it difficult to live a healthy life because Ojos de Agua de Ocampo lacked basic infrastructures, such as roads, electricity, and water.

Rural living conditions were not the best in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo and the community's Mexican men often said they felt the Mexican government did little to help rural Mexico. Urban Mexico modernized at a much quicker pace than rural locations. Running water, indoor plumbing, electricity, and markets were inaccessible in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo. The state's health system also offered no help to those who could not afford it. According to the people interviewed, insurance was unheard of, and many could not begin to think of how to apply for health insurance in the 1960s and 1970s. The monetary system of the city also needed severe development. The school in Ojos de Ague de Ocampo was in the next city, an hour away by bus drive, not including the 25-minute walk to the bus station. All Mexican migrants

45 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, November 02, 2022, Interview 01, translated transcript.
46 Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, February 28, 2022, Interview 14, transcript.
47 Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, February 27, 2022, Interview 10, transcript.
interviewed for this study, except for one woman, did not make it to high school. Many felt lucky to have made it into middle school because most dropped out of school to help their families at home or to find work for extra family income or they were unable to pay for the expenses of attending school, such as the school uniform, supplies, and transportation. One man vividly remembered being eager to go to school because he enjoyed it, but he stopped attending at the age of nine to help his family and save money. He remembered the last assignment he completed. His teacher gave each student a piece of a cardboard box, traced the world map onto it, and assigned them to color each country and label them. His teacher gave the students *sopa de letras*, macaroni alphabet soup letters, to ensure a legible map. He completed it and was joyful when she told students to bring it home to show their parents. When he arrived home, his father was still working hard, so he had to wait to show him. A couple of hours later, his father returned, and he ran to pick up his project only to find that mice had eaten the alphabet noodles and began shredding the cardboard. He was distraught, but that memory stuck with him decades later because of the effort he put into his homework, although he knew it did not matter because his family was too poor for him to receive an education.

Poverty and lack of livable wage jobs worked together to push young male members of this community away. The Black Hills Mexican community members made it abundantly clear that rural Mexico had plenty of jobs, but they did not pay well for the labor they required. They had often heard that making money in the United States was much more manageable. Many Mexican migrants took up farming or worked in the timber industry, but they lacked resources and aid from the state to make a living off their products. When they harvested reasonable amounts of vegetables or fruits, they typically kept the products for themselves. Ojos de Agua de

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Ocampo’s men typically grew avocados, dragon fruit, cucumbers, guavas, or squash. Some men traveled to the closest city, Zinapecauro, to better their chances of selling their harvest. By the 1970s, Zinapecauro had enough population to achieve municipal status. Sometimes, the people of Ojos de Agua de Ocampo visited Morelia but preferred their small rural town.

Many families owned sawmills in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, but it was not enough to cover medical bills, daily living costs, or even to buy new shoes for their younger brothers and sisters. Abraham Romero's father owned a private sawmill and worked it with his sons and relatives. Abraham Romero Barrera was born in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, Michoacán, in 1957. As soon as he could carry a chainsaw, he started cutting trees with his father. He stopped attending school at age six to help his father clear out pathways to make their logging trips easier, or he picked up loose material, like scrap wood, at the sawmill. His cousin, Juan, shared a similar upbringing as Abraham.

Juan, like many other Mexican men in Michoacán, experienced little success while logging in Mexico with his family and pocketed nothing for his hard work. Juan, the oldest son of Jose Rosario and Maria Guadalupe Escalante, was born in 1959. He, too, dropped out of elementary school to help his father and their sawmill. By age 14, he was strong enough to hold a chainsaw and began logging on his father's land. According to Jose, it was common for families to own their sawmills; they were small, and nothing compared to the sawmill at which he later worked in the Black Hills, South Dakota. Juan stressed that just because someone owned a sawmill and land did not mean they were well off in Mexico. Abraham and Juan made no money while helping their family with their sawmill. Their fathers kept whatever earnings gathered by the sawmill. According to Juan, government assistance for personal sawmills was most likely not an option back then because the government did not care to help the state progress or advance its
living standards. He put little thought into improving the sawmill or farming business because the problem was too severe for him to fix. His father felt the problem was the fault of the state for not helping their citizens. Instead, Juan and Abraham focused on other avenues to help their younger siblings and parents, such as migrating to secure employment, like their uncle Angel Munoz.

Unlike others in this study, Angel and his family moved to a larger city in Mexico to avoid migrating to the United States.\textsuperscript{49} Angel Munoz was born on August 31, 1953, in Zinapecauaro, Michoacán. His family lived in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo but later moved to Mexico City because his father hoped for more opportunities than their ranch provided. Internal migration was common while Mexico's states experienced rapid urbanization. The decade of the 1970s showed a high rate of rural-to-urban migration within Mexico.\textsuperscript{50}

Moving to an urbanized city did not erase the poor conditions Angel and his family experienced. Angel remembered that his Ojos de Agua de Ocampo home had no running water. His parents placed him and his 13 brothers in charge of carrying buckets of water to their ranch. As a child in Ojos de Agua, Angel recalled hauling water for neighboring homes. When his family moved to Mexico City, Angel and his siblings could attend school. However, Angel made it to the sixth grade before leaving school and finding work. He sold small gelatins on the street but jumped at the opportunity to help his father in landscaping jobs. He worked with his father for two years after turning 15. Some of his family, his cousin and brother-in-law, migrated to the United States a few years prior and invited him to join them. At age 17, he decided to migrate to the United States. Every single migrant man interviewed for this thesis shared the same idea of

\textsuperscript{49} Angel Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 02, 2022, Interview 07, transcript.
\textsuperscript{50} Durand, “The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States,” 518.
migrating to the United States at age 17. Historian Hartmut Heep published an article, “Catholicism and Machismo: The Impact of Religion on Hispanic Gender Identity,” focusing on gender roles within Mexican culture. Heep stated that religious ideologies crafted male privileges and functions, and men defined themselves in social and economic terms. In rural Mexico, at age 17, boys became men, and according to Heep, “Masculinity becomes culturally self-referential, or men become men, when other men say so.” Juan remembered that by age 17, his father told him he was a man and needed to help the family. Catholic Mexican cultural norms pressured men to provide for their families even if it took them beyond the home space, pushing them to migrate to the United States to become men by providing.

Helping their families by crossing the border and finding work became the first pull factor of the United States. Angel, Abraham, and Juan desperately wanted to help their families. The thought of job security available only a few days' journey urged them to save money to make a move. Juan's younger siblings split one piece of bread each morning soaked in coffee for breakfast because that was all they had available. Far too young to start working, Juan's siblings became the core reason why Juan migrated. Abraham's father and mother grew ill, and they made little money to pay for hospital visits. Abraham's parents struggled to purchase themselves new shoes. Many men in this study believed that America offered an easier life, the American Dream.

The American Dream to the men in this study meant the ability to work to provide for their families, which created an easier life. Mexican men worked hard daily in Mexico but received little to no payment in return. The family that had already made a move to the U.S.

reassured them that the work in the United States was not easy, but it was not harder than the work in Mexico. It became clear to the men of this study, why not move and make more money for the same amount of work? Mexican migrant men soon officially planned to migrate across the border. Angel became the first to migrate into the United States of the men discussed in this chapter.

Angel successfully migrated to the United States in 1971 after he secured a tourist visa. His father worked for a company that suggested the tourist visa for Angel. Angel got his passport and migrated to the United States. However, a tourist visa does not permit employment. Angel found work but quickly returned to Mexico after violating the tourist visa agreements. The U.S. government flew him back to Guanajuato, which worked in his favor because it was close to his hometown, Zinapecauaro. Angel traveled back to Mexico City to save money to hire a “coyote.”

In order to cross the border, one needed the help of a “coyote,” the person who helped one across the United States by navigating the complex desert terrain. Coyotes, the animal, live in all habitats because they adapt very well according to their environment, so naming the human smugglers “coyotes” symbolizes their knowledge of the terrain and their witty strength to make multiple journeys across the border without getting caught. Pollero was another slang word for someone who helped migrants cross the border not by traveling through the desert or terrain but by driving across the border with fake identification cards. Pollero was a professional title that meant handler of chickens, thus being the term for smuggling humans across the border by hiding them in or under vehicles.

The role of a coyote was vital, yet, Mexicans viewed them as “bad and dangerous men.” In The Devil’s Highway: A True Story, Luis Alberto Urrea referred to coyotes as “middle-

management thugs.” The guides used codenames to keep their identity a secret, and they also wore worn-out clothes to blend in with their group in case they got caught by border patrol. Mexicans did not trust coyotes because they often collected their money and left them for dead in the middle of the desert. Many men shared stories of when their guide threatened their lives and requested more money halfway through their journey. Abraham stated, “These people [coyotes] prefer to steal instead of help.” Mexicans had no other way of crossing, but with a coyote because if one crossed alone, one ran the risk of getting lost, robbed, or killed by coyote gangs. Reluctantly, Angel hired a coyote to enter and work again in the United States.

Angel managed to migrate safely into the U.S. when he paid 250 dollars for a coyote in Tijuana, Mexico, to guide him to California. Border patrol caught Angel midway and dropped him off at the border instead of flying him to Guanajuato. Angel waited two days before he hired another coyote for a second attempt at California. A busy highway was the final obstacle that separated Angel from the Golden State. Angel remembered hiding in the shrubs by the highway. The coyote told him to stay hidden and decided when to tell Angel to run across the heavily trafficked highway. With no other option, Angel listened, and when the coyote signaled him to run, without checking, Angel ran through the traffic-loaded highway in the dark. He entered California.

Angel was shocked at the diversity in California; he claimed, “We didn't need to learn the language because everybody spoke Spanish in California. The banks, the stores, restaurants. All Spanish.” He and other Mexican migrants stayed in California, picking fruit until he was caught, while at work, and deported again. He underwent the same experience again in 1973 and

54 Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
55 Angel Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
again, successfully crossed the border into California and continued finding work harvesting fruit. In 1980, Angel and his uncle, Roy Escalante, invited Abraham and Juan to migrate. Roy had first migrated to the United States during the same year as Angel, 1971. Now, both Roy and Angel promised their nephews Abraham and Juan well-paid, secure jobs.

With the full support of his parents and wife, Abraham Romero Barrera, saved enough money for a coyote to help him cross the border. He had reached the age of 23. Abraham saved 6,997 pesos (350 US dollars) to hire a coyote to guide him across the border, only to be left in the middle of his journey when the coyote decided the payment not worth the trip. The coyote abandoned him without returning his money. Abraham returned to Mexico and hired another coyote. Hiring a coyote was incredibly easy. The entire process took less than five minutes because coyotes camped near the border. After his second attempt at hiring a coyote, he finally started the journey that would land him in the U.S and eventually, permanently.

Abraham walked for days without food and little to no water to finally find the right moment to enter the United States. Often, coyotes refrained from sharing their food or water with others because they brought a limited amount for themselves. He crossed the Sonoran Desert into California, where he had to wait under a bridge that Mexican migrants at the time knew as “La Libertad,” which translates to Freedom.56 According to the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, the Sonoran Desert region consists of Southern Arizona, the southeastern corner of California, the state of Sonora, Mexico, the Baja California peninsula of Mexico, and the Gulf of California islands. The lush Sonoran environment offered a unique terrain of large mountain ranges, narrow valleys, and rocky slopes. Some saw the desert as a beautiful and remarkable environment that

56 Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
provided a home for the native species of the region, but it has now become a graveyard for migrants.⁵⁷

Rattlesnakes always concerned Romero during his travels across the border. Often, migrants travelled from dusk to dawn and were not allowed to use flashlights for fear of attracting attention. The Sonoran Desert has many venomous and dangerous animals, such as the diamondback and tiger rattlesnakes.⁵⁸ To keep the rattlesnakes from biting their ankles, the coyote often advised Mexican migrants to spray garlic oil or wrap cloves around their ankles because garlic naturally repelled rattlesnakes. Abraham stated that he valued this information and remembered to pack cloves for future travel across the border. Much like Angel, Abraham crossed, waiting for the perfect moment to avoid detection. He crossed a busy highway and successfully walked through the Sonoran Desert and into California. Abraham’s journey took him roughly 2-3 weeks to travel. The last time he migrated back to the United States took him over a month because border patrol found him and returned him to Mexico six times. Border patrol often used helicopters to gain a more extensive view of the Sonoran Desert, which was how the patrol agents spotted Romero. It was only on the seventh try that he could travel undetected. There were other means of passage to gaining entrance to the United States. Other Mexican community members, such as Juan, migrated by crossing the Rio Grande.

Juan decided to migrate to the United States at the age of 21. He traveled as a single man with the support of his family. In 1980, Juan’s father saved enough money for his son to hire a coyote. Unlike Abraham, Juan did not have to navigate the rugged Sonoran Desert. Juan estimated that, in total, he walked a little over two miles. The coyote he hired took charge as

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soon as he left his ranch in Michoacán. In Juan's case, the coyote told him where to go, when to meet, and how to reach the access point. From that moment until he arrived in America, he followed the guide. Juan traversed the Rio Grande before reaching America. He struggled during his journey because, during the night, the environment reached chilling temperatures. Juan migrated during the cold seasons and was unprepared to swim across the river in low-temperature weather. He vividly remembered the fear he experienced while marching through the Rio Grande—the fear of drowning settled in when he underestimated the river’s current.

Migrants die each year attempting to cross the Rio Grande, but that did not discourage Juan. The coyote warned him and the others crossing to be cautious with their footing and pace because the river’s current is unpredictable. Angel Munoz’s cousin, unfortunately, passed away trying to enter the United States to seek better living conditions. The currents of the Rio Colorado, another well-known access point into the U.S., were strong that day, resulting in the death of his cousin. Juan hired his guide to get him to Illinois because his older sister lived there. He stayed in Illinois for a few months before he headed to work with his uncle Angel and uncle Roy. A decade later, his younger brothers and cousins migrated across the southern border to join Juan, creating a steady flow of migration through networking.

Networking truly became the most significant pull factor for this community. While poverty and limited job opportunities urged Mexican migrants to cross the southern border, their family secured their decisions and destinations. Angel migrated because his cousin and brother-in-law invited them. Angel's uncles, brothers, and cousins migrated within months from one another in the 1970s. When the 1980s rolled around, a new wave of migration approached the United States, such as the journeys described by Abraham and Juan. By the 1990s, the third wave of migrant men traveled to work alongside their uncles, brothers, and cousins. Despite
living in different countries, these men stayed in contact with one another. Almost all of the homes in Ojos de Agua had no electricity, so their families walked or took the bus to the next city over, Zinapecauco, or to La Distancia, to corner stores. Corner stores often had working telephones for customers to use after receiving payment. Many of the corner shop owners began writing messages for the families who patronized their stores and telephones. The next time one of these family members went to the store, the shop owner gave them their message. Men often set up times and dates to call one another to ensure their family traveled to the corner shops. The men of this community helped their families by sending them money. Their families depended on them, so many of the men in the Black Hills community followed the fruit to secure a steady flow of income.

Fruit picking was seasonal work for Mexican migrants. Angel, Roy, and some relatives stayed in California to pick fruit. Most migrants who landed in the Black Hills community started as fruit pickers who migrated in the first wave, in the 1970s. Seasonal work attracted Mexican migrants because it allowed them to earn money and return to Mexico during the non-producing seasons. Seasonal work patterns worked well with the labor environment of California. According to economic professors Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode's article: “A History of California Agriculture,” much of the agribusiness in California was migrant minorities, which created a complex history for migrant workers and their rights when working in California and other southern border states. California offered migrants a rich labor opportunity in agribusiness due to the complex and dynamic agricultural output. Migrants worked wheat, cotton fields, orchards, vine, and row crops. Mexican migrants in this community

59 Sherry Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, February 27, 2022, Interview 12, transcript.
worked picking fruit and vegetables in fields, orchards, vine, and row crops. Many Mexicans picked cherries, corn, grapes, or strawberries in the fields of California. They saved their earnings and set some aside to hire a coyote when the fruit season started again. California’s agricultural businesses relied on migrant workers, and U.S. border patrol visited the fruit fields monthly. Mexican migrants often found work in border states, but California and Texas experienced an influx of Mexican migrants in and by the 1970s. In 1968, Border Patrol detained roughly 100,000 Mexican nationals; by 1973, that number jumped to 500,000.\textsuperscript{61} Border Patrol rebooted their mass raids on farms and ranches in California and Texas.

Border patrol units frequently deported Mexican men who eventually became founders of the Black Hills Mexican community from California. When recounting their stories, most laughed about the occasions when the deportation patrol took them back to Mexico. The first time deportation agents detained Angel, he was high on a ladder picking fruit. He noticed other workers quickly climbing down their ladders and running into the fields. By the time Angel understood what was happening, deportation agents stood at the bottom of his ladder, signaling him to get down. After that time, Angel memorized the green truck they drove so that the next time they showed up, he would know before they got out of their trucks. He, too, hid in the fields. In 1976, another man picking fruit in California also became confused because he did not understand why everyone started running, so he continued his work. He stated, “Immigration wasn’t even looking at me. I see people running like Hell. And I thought what the heck? And pretty soon I saw somebody, and it was Immigration and they already passed me!”\textsuperscript{62} After he saw an immigration agent, he realized what was going on and made a run for it. Immigration


\textsuperscript{62} Obegario Simental, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 23, 2023 Interview 18, transcript.
patrol caught him, but his calmness and dedication to picking fruit made them believe he was a citizen. Getting deported did nothing, for they all migrated back the following week and continued picking fruit until the end of the season, except for some Mexican migrants who wished to stay longer than the fruit season in California. By 1973, the United Immigration and Naturalization Service reported and boasted that in a “single operation of 20 workdays in the LA area, a special force of 75 service officers located and processed 11,500 deportable aliens.” 63 During that time, there was a massive spike of apprehensions of Mexican nationals. By 1974 616,630 Mexican nationals were detained and questioned, compared to the prior decade when only 44,161 were detained.64

Some of the Mexican migrants who worked in California wanted to continue working after the fruit season. Angel and his relatives decided to follow the fruit and made a living migrating among states to secure full-year employment. Due to the low corn production in California in 1974, Angel and his relatives traveled to Oregon to find work. Angel and his relatives quickly left Oregon because the state offered little to no employment picking fruit. They traveled to Montana because other fruit pickers in Oregon advised him and his relatives to prepare for Montana’s cherry season. Cassville, Montana, offered much work to locals and immigrant workers during the cherry season (late June through August). Angel and his cousins needed to follow the fruit to find the Black Hills, South Dakota.

At age 17, the men in this study began considering ways to support their families while living in a poverty-crippled town in rural southern Mexico. Analyzing the push and pull factors they experienced allows an understanding of why they risked crossing the border for job

opportunities. While researching the members of this community, I found that the challenging part of their history was their journey crossing the Mexican-American border. Their journeys into the United States solidified the purpose of migration. Not only did their migration stories prove their strength, but they also reinforced the conditions of their lifestyle in Mexico. These Mexican men went through this physically demanding and emotionally draining journey to escape poverty and better their lives and the lives of future generations. Mexican migrants evolved throughout the 1970s. Mexicans started working the fields in California until the season ended and they returned home to Mexico, waiting for the harvesting seasons, until the late 1960s, when Angel and others broke the chain and decided to stay in the United States year-round by following the fruit according to harvesting seasons. Following the fruit ultimately lead them to Montana, where they explored new ideas and formed relationships with American women. Chapter Two aims to explore what following the fruit offered Angel and the next wave of Mexican migrants.
Chapter Two:

Thanks to Pool and a Tequila Sunrise: The Three Waves of Mexican Migration into the Black Hills’ Timber Industry

Barb ran to the back of the bar, scanning all the liquors the restaurant she worked at had to offer. Barb asked her friend what Mexicans like to drink. Barb and her friend stood there and contemplated and decided tequila was clearly the best answer.

“I'll make him a tequila sunrise!” Barb exclaimed while shuffling through the glasses.

“Make it for who?” Her friend asked while wondering who flustered Barb to make her forget how to make a tequila sunrise.

“The guy, the guy from the bar last night!” Barb said, flailing her hands with a burst of panic.

The night prior, Barb and a few of her friends went to the local bar in Big Fork, Montana, after she got off work. They wanted to play a round of pool, but when they arrived, a group of men was already playing pool. Barb placed her stack of quarters by the slot to imply it was Barb and her friends' turn after. The men playing pool were Angel Munoz, Roy Escalante, and Pasqual Munoz.

Following the fruit landed Angel, Roy, and Pasqual in Montana to pick cherries in 1976. Angel, Roy, and Pasqual drove into the city every couple of weeks to get groceries and wash their laundry. Along the way, they stumbled across the small town of Big Fork and decided to stop to find something to do on their day off. They saw a small bar and decided to play some pool. Carried away in the game, Angel thought his uncle Roy or brother, Pasqual, placed a new round of quarters for a new round of pool. The men played a couple of rounds of pool. Barb and her friends watched in disbelief that the men kept using their quarters to play another game of
pool. Finally, Barb had enough. When Angel aimed the pool stick at a yellow ball and pulled his dominant arm back to shoot it, she purposely bumped into him, making him miss his shot. Angel thought it was his uncle or brother, but when he looked up, he saw Barb and Barb's face broke into a smile, despite being annoyed that they used their quarters.

Angel began asking Barb questions because she appeared Mexican. Barb's mother was Mexican, so she was, but she did not speak Spanish. Embarrassed, Angel let her and her friends play immediately and of course, gave her back the quarters of hers he had used. Angel, Roy, and Pasqual lingered after because Angel “fell in love” with Barb. Without knowing English, Angel attempted to initiate another conversation with Barb. Slightly interested in Angel, Barb told Angel if he wanted to get to know her better, he should find her where she worked the upcoming weekend, and maybe they could go out after her shift. After listening to her vaguely explaining where she worked, Angel, Roy, and Pasqual left the bar to get rest for work the following day.

The following weekend, Angel was determined to find the restaurant to see Barb again. Angel, Roy, and Pasqual found the restaurant “in the middle of nowhere.” Elated that he saw her right when he walked in, Barb sat them and quickly hid in the corner to compose herself. Not able to speak Spanish, she went to their table with a few menus to get their drink orders. Angel asked her to surprise them. She returned with a drink none of them had heard of before, a tequila sunrise. That weekend was the start of their relationship and within a year, Barb and Angel married.

Angel, Barb, Roy, Raul, and Pasqual continued to follow the fruit after Angel and Barb married. They picked corn in California and then picked fruit in Oregon, Washington, and Montana. Moving to four states each year was not an ideal environment for the new family.

65 Barb Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 02, 2022, Interview 08, transcript.
Angel and Barb wanted to settle in Montana but picking fruit in Montana was not a year-round job. Barb, Angel, and their newly born daughter, Wendy, followed the fruit for a year, relocating to different states according to fruit season, until 1978. Barb’s uncle, Frank Davidson, a Black Hills contractor, contacted Barb’s mother at the beginning of June 1978 to offer Angel a job in the timber industry. Angel invited his brother Pasqual and his uncle Rogelio and cousin Raul to the Black Hills to check out the timber industry. Angel and Barb finished the cherry season in Montana before leaving for South Dakota in their 1972 Gran Torino. Angel, Pasqual, Roy, and Raul had never heard of South Dakota and knew little about the state's social setting and environment.

Located on the Missouri Plateau, South Dakota offers three distinct topographic areas. The eastern side of the state contributes to the Central Lowlands, the western side's environment is the great plains covered with short grass, and the third is the Black Hills. Created “contemporaneously with the Rocky Mountains,” the forested hills overwhelm the Black Hills.66 Each area uniquely contributes to South Dakota's agriculture, and the Black Hills' contribution was primarily timber production.67 Established as the Black Hills Forest Reserve by President Grover Cleveland in 1897, the area was renamed the Black Hills National Forest in 1907. The Black Hills National Forest is 70 miles wide and 100 miles long and is home to a unique terrain that includes canyons, grassy fields, and low mountains.68 Due to the surrounding landscape, the Black Hills is known as the Island in the Plains.

By 1978, the first wave of migrant Mexican men traveled to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Networking fueled the pull factor of employment, as Angel, Roy, Pasqual, and Raul continued to speak with their friends, family, and extended family in Mexico to encourage others to migrate to the Black Hills, ultimately, propelling two future waves of Mexican men to work in the timber industry between the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter focuses on the three waves of Mexican migrant men who traveled to the Black Hills by networking with each previous wave, starting with the first wave in the 1970s, the second wave in the 1980s, and the final wave that settled into the area in the 1990s. The analysis consists of how each wave settled into the field of logging, how they formed relationships and gained citizenship, and how they managed homesickness. This chapter also shows how each wave helped the next wave and how each wave, especially the third wave, settled into the area differently. This chapter also argues that the timber industry and the Black Hills environment provided a stable foundation for the Mexican community of the Black Hills, South Dakota to grow.

The timber industry boomed after the Black Hills Gold Rush in 1874 as settlement crept into the Black Hills after the American government went back on the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty they signed with Lakotas. The Black Hills Forrest has a complex history, with many regulations placed to protect the environment. Historian John F. Freeman's *Black Hills Forestry: A History* navigates the history of the Black Hills National Forest. The need for lumber to build homes and towns sparked the need for timber men and sawmills. As towns and cities developed, the need for timber increased. The settlement took a toll on the well-preserved Indigenous land and opened many discussions regarding the status and protection of the environment.

President Grover Cleveland's February 22, 1897, executive order essentiality created the policy structure that created National Reserves, such as the Black Hills Forest Reserve.
Frequently called the Washington Birthday Reserves such forest reserves became a heated topic because many American civilians wanted control over local forests.\(^{69}\) However, the work of conservationists, such as Gifford Pinchot and Wolcott Gibbs, began spreading and ultimately grabbed the attention of President Cleveland, which played a huge factor in his decision to create the Black Hills Forest Reserve that protected the forest against fire, timber fraud, and wasteful lumbering techniques. South Dakotan Senator Richard Franklin Pettigrew, the first U.S. Senator from South Dakota, openly opposed the Black Hills Reserve because he knew the importance of Black Hills's timber in the local economy. Pettigrew claimed the mines and other industries in the Black Hills were worthless without the timber industry. He tried different methods of removing the Black Hills forests from President Cleveland's National Reserve. President Cleveland left office without signing a budget bill related to the 1897 Executive Order that allowed timber sales and forest protection within reserves. According to Freeman, “By declining to sign the budget bill, President Cleveland left President William McKinley no choice, after taking office, than to call a special session of Congress.”\(^{70}\) Senator Pettigrew requested President McKinley to “cancel” his predecessor's order, which was “legally impossible.”\(^{71}\) President McKinley signed the Organic Act of 1897, which allowed timber sales and enforced forest protection of reserves, working against President Cleveland's Executive Order, which Pettigrew wanted. The Organic Act of 1897, other than the National Forest Management Act of 1976 that replaced it, was considered the most significant piece of congressional forest legislation because it made President Cleveland's executive order obsolete. The Forest Management Act, also known

\(^{70}\) Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry: A History*, 34.
\(^{71}\) Freeman, *Black Hills Forestry: A History*, 35.
as the Organic Act of 1897, certified the installation of the National Forest Reserve to protect and improve the forested areas and regulate a continuous supply of timber.\textsuperscript{72}

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 renewed the effort to protect national forests from intemperate logging, that had crept into the Forest System since the early 1900s. The U.S. Congress passed the NFMA and ordered the United States Forest Service to create regulations that controlled the size of clear-cuts, protected the environment, specifically streams, and developed reforestation. The Forest Service worked with all contractors and sawmills in the area to ensure ethical and high-quality products and still did, some seventy years later, throughout the three waves of Mexican migrants. All of the waves first started logging on government land because, by then, government programs aimed to gain control of forest fires by providing much-needed thinning, bushing, and clearing of trees to maintain a healthy forest. Fire prevention created a high demand for workers.

Angel and Pasqual had never logged or cut trees because their father left the poverty-stricken town of Ojos de Agua de Ocampo and moved to Mexico City to find work. Roy and Raul had some experience with logging and handling a chainsaw because their family owned a small sawmill in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo. The second and third waves had the most experience with logging, so by the time they migrated to the Black Hills, they knew how to handle, maintain, and upkeep chainsaws. Mexican men who logged were used to logging on private land in Mexico, and most of the time, it was their family's land. Logging on private land in the United States or Mexico met minimal restrictions on what tree to cut. It was quite the shift from logging on private land to working with contractors because of the massive amounts of timber and their location in federal forests. In Mexico, men grew accustomed to cutting only what was needed

\textsuperscript{72} Freeman, \textit{Black Hills Forestry: A History}, 41.
and continually implemented new plans to ensure healthy tree growth. Similarly, the Lakota did not overcut the Black Hills, especially compared to settlers interested in mining gold and building towns.

Lakota tribal nations merely cut what they needed. General Custer and white settlers used the supposed lack of use by Indigenous peoples to justify seizing the Black Hills. Lakota peoples have had a long relationship with the Black Hills, and evidence debunked the myth that they did not occupy the area. The people of the Black Hills who inhabited the area before the Lakota left archaeological evidence, such as petroglyphs and pictographs on cave walls, tipi rings, pottery shards, and grinding slabs. Modern Lakota people did not always live in the Black Hills, despite having a sacred spiritual and historical connection to the Black Hills. Written evidence of their previous home date back to the mid-1600s when French explorers, traders, and missionaries wrote about their encounters with the Lakota people in the woodlands of the Western Great Lakes and upper Mississippi River. According to the historian Jeffrey Ostler, by the 1700s, the Lakota moved west, and by 1750 they “established semi-permanent villages on the Missouri River and hunted on the Plains farther to the West, close to the Black Hills.”

Lakotas used the Black Hills in many ways: the Black Hills provided a place of worship, medicine, timber, and hunting grounds. Colonel Richard Dodge, an army official who spoke against the Lakota and their claim to the Black Hills, in the 1860s, argued that Lakotas never used the Black Hills or inhabited them. However, historians uncovered numerous events in Dodge’s journal of his tour stating otherwise. Dodge wrote that Lakotas often cut spruce trees for

75 Ostler, The Lakotas and the Black Hills, 7.
lodge poles. He encountered many Lakota wagon roads, medicine lodges, large camps, and Lakota people harvesting fruit (wild plums and berries). The Lakota also used the Black Hills as hunting grounds for wild game, such as buffalos, antelope, and elk. The Black Hills was a sacred location for the Lakota, for it was a place of worship.\textsuperscript{76} Natural features such as Wind Cave, Buffalo Gap, Racetrack, Black Elk Peak, Bear Butte, and Devil's Tower provided their culture with sacred myths and spiritual meaning. Although in contradiction to the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, the U.S. seized the Black Hills in 1877, Lakotas did not leave the Black Hills nor did the Black Hills cease to be a meaningful spiritual and environmental resource for Lakota culture. Many Lakotas continued to live in Black Hills towns and in Rapid City, which also became a service center for Lakotas living on reservations west of the Missouri River in South Dakota, such as Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock. Many Mexican immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and later would only learn about Lakota history with the Black Hills and the U.S. government after they arrived and started working in the Black Hills Forest Reserve. Seldom did Mexican migrants work with Lakota men in the Black Hills timber industry, but when they did, they helped one another learn the crafts of logging. Mexican migrants soon adapted to the strict regulations placed by the Forest Service when they started logging on public land. The extensive protection provided by the Forest Service secured the well-being of the entire land, not just the trees. Lakotas would have managed the forests of the Black Hills differently, but the regulations of the Forest Reserve over the twentieth century at least tempered the exploitation of the 1870s Gold Rush years and the two decades that followed. They issued new regulations annually because of the constant research they produced analyzing the land and new methods, all to keep the environment safe. For

\textsuperscript{76} Ostler, \textit{The Lakotas and the Black Hills}, 174.
example, the Forest Reserve has road regulations influencing the planning, location, design, drainage from road surfaces, and also construction, maintenance, and road closure procedures. Pine trees play an enormous factor in the Black Hills ecosystem, and the loss or destruction of trees significantly impacts the land, local communities, and the economy. About 92% of the saw timber harvested in South Dakota consistently derived from the Black Hills. Securing a healthy forest relies on safe practices, but logging is needed to keep a forest healthy. Without logging, forests run more significant risk of wildfires and insect attacks. The U.S Forest Service sought to ensure all timber harvests “be conducted with the goal of regenerating the forest to a desirable tree species.”

As overseen by the U.S. Forest Service, a timber harvest could only occur with a written contract between the buyer and seller. The contract detailed the exact description of the area harvested, sale price, completion deadlines, method of payment, performance bond requirements, slash treatment, road construction requirements, and revegetation after the sale. Typically, according to Mexican men of the community, the contractor communicated with the Forest Service and the contractor passed on the information needed for the loggers to do their tasks effectively within regulation. Angel Munoz felt there were too many regulations, but noted that learning them was not difficult.

The Forest Service notes the condition of each tree in the Black Hills. Loggers cut only the trees approved by the Forest Service and must follow all regulations while working in national forests. Forest Service agents mark each tree according to their status. Contractors must

communicate with their loggers to avoid cutting healthy trees and keep the environment safe. Depending on the contract, marked trees, typically bearing a spray painted symbol, must be cut or left alone. One man of the community, Obegarion Simental, born in Zacatecas, Mexico, in 1958, stated that it could get confusing at times because the colors and markings shifted depending on the contract. Juan stated that anyone who said they never accidentally cut the wrong tree lied because it was easy to get confused the more one worked. However, cutting the wrong tree was “a big deal” only if one hid or did not inform their contractor. One man in the community cut trees listed to remain on the land. He cut the tree’s bark, so no one saw the marking on the tree. His contractor noticed the massive trees he had cut and called the Forest Service. After an investigation, the Forest Service disclosed to the contractor that his worker attempted to steal the tree because he had buried the tree stump. The Forest Service told the contractor that the actions of the logger almost lost him his right to log on public land, and the violation cost him an enormous fine. The contractor had no other option but to fire the logger, and the Neiman Company never again hired the logger.\textsuperscript{79} Mexican men’s logging stories suggest that as long as one was honest and paid attention to the contract details while logging, a logger ran into minimal issues with the Forest Service. Many of the Mexican men shared stories about getting along well with the Forest Service, and all acknowledged that the primary goal of the Forest Service workers was to protect the environment and its animals. They also appreciated the goals of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, despite the agency’s many regulations regarding logging.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79} Obegario Simental, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante. 
\textsuperscript{80} Sherry Romero II, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 21, 2023, Interview 13, transcript.
Congress created the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970 to ensure a healthy and safe working environment by providing training, education, and assistance. OSHA and the Forest Service, for example, required the loggers to bring fire extinguishers and shovels with them in case of fires.\(^{81}\) Loggers understood the importance of the equipment, but thought it still tough carrying their equipment, personal items, water jugs, fire extinguishers, and shovels with them. They needed two fire extinguishers, one for their truck and one on them at all times. Abraham stated that carrying all of the equipment to the job site was tiring when they had to walk anything over a mile. Loggers parked their vehicles depending on the potential for soil erosion, and Abraham remembered a few times that he had to walk two miles with his equipment, lunch box, water jug, fire extinguisher, and shovel to the job site. OSHA also required the loggers to stay on site for half an hour to ensure the mufflers on their trucks or chainsaws did not start any fires. Surprise check-ups ensured that loggers followed the Forest Service and OSHA regulations.\(^{82}\) If any agents caught them working without the correct equipment, the Forest Service or OSHA fined the loggers.

The first wave of Mexican migrants had no translators to teach them the regulations and guidelines, so they learned by observing and by learning English. After learning English and becoming fluent, the first wave taught the second wave the regulations and guidelines. The third wave entered the logging business, with the two previous waves mentoring them. Each wave entered and settled the timber industry differently. The first wave learned how to handle the machinery to log correctly and safely when they started working with Frank Davidson, a local contractor. A demand for logging that opened positions for the first wave of Mexican migrant

\(^{81}\) Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 21, 2023, Interview 11, transcript.  
\(^{82}\) Obegario Simental, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
men occurred after the Dutch Elm disease (DED) spread in the mid-1970s. The Elm bark beetles carried an invasive fungal pathogen that caused the DED. The Dutch Elm disease targeted the Slippery Elm Pine tree, which became a rare tree in the Black Hills even after the Forest Service controlled the disease with the help of contractors and loggers. By 1978, Angel and his family, Roy, Raul, and Pasqual, had all started working for Barb’s uncle, Frank Davidson.

Frank Davidson was born in Stevens, South Dakota, and married Eda in the early 1940s. Frank and Edna settled in Keystone, South Dakota, where they began their family. Edna gave birth to two sons, Paul and Mike. Frank opened a contractor business called Davidson and Sons in 1971. Both of his sons soon worked with him. Mike cannot recall when his father worked in anything except the lumber and timber industry. Mike was eager to begin working with his brother and father. When he was about six or seven, Mike tagged along when his father went to work to “fall timber.” Logging has always been a part of his life, and he enjoyed the work. Generations of families in the Black Hills, like the Davidsons, also settled due to the timber and lumber industry. Growing up in the timber industry made it easy for Mike to teach his new workers how to work in the timber industry and how to handle the machinery safely.

The first wave of Mexican loggers remembered that Frank Davidson started them off with more manageable tasks, such as thinning or brushing. Every logger has to do thinning or bushing. However, for the first couple weeks, Frank tasked the new Mexican loggers with those tasks because it allowed them to familiarize themselves with the machinery and observe the more experienced loggers. Thinning created “space between trees” by cutting other trees or brush,

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84 Mike Davidson, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, January 31, 2023, Interview 19, transcript.
promoting a healthy environment for trees to thrive, and the space between would slow the
spread of wildfires. Brushing was another Forest Service requirement. Loggers
removed/pruned some limbs from trees, which had to be broken into pieces smaller than 18
inches. According to Angel, working in the winter was the most challenging part of the job for
the first wave of Mexicans. They had never experienced the winter season because they followed
the fruit. However, they endured the weather and cold temperatures for a steady income. They
enjoyed logging and were eager to learn about the business. Mike Davidson recalled that he was
impressed with how quickly Angel, Roy, Pasqual, and Raul picked up logging and became “very
efficient at it.” The first wave continued to work with Frank Davidson for two years. However,
Davison and Son’s timber contracting company closed without explanation to its loggers. Frank
sold his equipment to another local timber contractor, Paul Davidson (in no relation to Frank or
Mike Davidson). Angel and the others continued working in the timber industry. One day, a
Forest Service agent approached Angel and Roy and pitched the idea of them joining the 8(a)
program, a federal minority program to help them become contractors.

The 8(a) Business Development program helped Barb, Angel, and Roy to open their
contracting business. Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act established a business development
program that offered a nine-year agenda to help “firms owned and controlled by socially and
economically disadvantaged individuals.” Barb Munoz did most of the reading and research on
the program after Angel brought it up to her. After she completed the massive amount of
government paperwork, she shipped it to Washington, D.C., for approval. The 8(a) program

85 Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 20, 2023, Interview 15, transcript.
86 Mike Davidson, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
87 “8(a) Business Development Program,” U.S. Small Business Administration, accessed April 12, 2023,
almost accepted their file, but Angel needed citizenship. At the time, Angel was a resident, not a citizen, so they rejected his application. In order to qualify, one needed citizenship and be at least 50% minority. Angel and Barb called the 8(a) program and requested that the file name be changed to only Barb’s name because she fit the requirement. By 1981, the 8(a) program accepted their application and offered business development assistance, mentoring, federal surplus property, free management training, technical assistance programs, and connections with procurement and compliance expert who understood regulations. With the help of the program and his wife, Barb, Angel was able to open his business in 1981; ten years after migrating to the United States, following the fruit, and working in the Black Hills as a logger for three years, Angel and Roy became business partners opened a contracting business.

The relationships between the first wave of Mexican men and American women opened many doors for them and made conforming to American culture easier. Many of the first migrant men married American women. However, Angel and Roy married women that were Mexican American, but who did not speak Spanish. Dating women who only spoke English created a bonding experience because both people were learning a new language to strengthen their communication. Learning English seemed like a natural transition for first-wave Mexicans. (It is important to note I conducted interviews with first-wave Mexicans and their partners entirely in English. Some men said they felt more comfortable speaking in English because they had grown accustomed to it.) Angel stated that the family he made in the United States made it worth conforming to and settling in the Black Hills. After the birth of their children, the first wave of Mexicans never longed to return to Mexico and began thinking of gaining citizenship status to avoid deportation.

88 U.S. Small Business Administration, “8(a) Business Development Program.”
As the first wave settled, deportation became a fear. Many expressed that while working in California, getting deported never scared them, but when they had families that depended on them in the United States, they became afraid and paranoid about getting deported. By the 1980s, when Mexicans in the Black Hills community began wanting U.S. citizenship, five pathways existed for Mexican immigrants to become a United States citizen. The first was by birth in the United States. The second, “by naturalization in a court exercising naturalization jurisdiction,” the third, “by derivation through the naturalization of one's parents,” the fourth, “by acquisition at birth through citizen parents,” and finally, “by legislation collectively naturalizing certain groups or persons.” Some men in this wave fell in love, gained citizenship through marriage, or filed for “green cards.” Getting married did not automatically give someone citizenship, but it was the starting point for the process. Gaining citizenship through marriage was a lengthy process. The criteria to “define marriage for the purpose of conferring immigrant status” during the early 1980s depended on living together; the government required the couple to live together for at least three years after marriage, share a common language, consummate the marriage, and they must provide proof of a civil marriage. One could not be married in another country to file for naturalization through marriage, which impacted a few migrated Mexicans. Some Mexican migrants entered the country married, but when they settled with local women, they separated from their partners by not returning for years to Mexico. A couple of Mexican men attempted to marry American women for citizenship.

Arranged marriages for the purposes of obtaining citizenship have become a stereotypical concern for many Americans, however, it seems to be a less common route to citizenship for the

Black Hills community. Three men arranged marriages during the first and second waves to gain citizenship. Their intention was clear from the start that they wanted to marry for legal status. Two of three women were promised payment after the fact. One woman backed out at the last minute, and the other two women went ahead and married Mexican migrants from the first and second waves. The entire process of gaining citizenship by marriage was lengthy, so it was not worth the trouble. The relationships got complicated quickly after marriage because the women developed feelings for their husbands. The Mexican migrant men cared very little for their wives and the children from the marriage. Their attempts to marry into the United States circulated in the Black Hills community. They became cautionary tales for American women to avoid marrying “illegals” and for future migrants to apply for a green card or gain citizenship another way.

In order to petition for naturalization, Mexican men had to renounce their former citizenship in court, which appealed to many Mexican men in the first wave, but the second and third waves preferred to maintain their status in Mexico and applied for green cards. For the most part, the first wave married women they loved and were still together four decades after marriage. Their American partners helped them understand the American government and helped them apply for citizenship or their green card. Some women, such as Barb, helped their partners and the future waves to secure jobs.

The second wave of Mexican migrants, such as Juan and Abraham, crossed the southern border throughout the mid 1980s. While many of the men in this wave migrated to California, they stayed there for less than a couple of weeks until their uncles Roy and Angel picked them

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91 Jorge Lopez, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
92 Jorge Lopez, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
up. Some men hid in trunks until they were dropped off near South Dakota for a closer pickup. The second wave did not follow the fruit, although they did pick fruit to earn quick cash while waiting for their relatives to pick them up in California to bring them to the Black Hills. The men in the second wave started working for Angel and Roy's Tree Thinning Services, which later became Munoz Logging. The second wave networked with their relatives from the first wave, which secured their position in the Black Hills timber industry.

The second wave had more logging experience because they worked as loggers in Mexico. Their families built sawmills on property they owned in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo. Many dropped out of school early. At 8 years of age many quit going to school to help their family with sawmill work, such as Abraham Romero Juan Escalante. By the time they migrated to the Black Hills, they were well experienced loggers. The men in this wave were eager to begin working with their uncles. Juan stated that he always felt a sense of freedom working in the Mexican forest, so when he arrived in the Black Hills, he could not have asked for a better location in which to settle. Similar to the first wave, Angel and Roy first tasked the second wave of migrants with thinning and brushing. Juan and Abraham already knew how to handle a chainsaw but knew nothing about the other equipment, which intensified their excitement to learn how to operate the new machinery.

Logging in The Hills required knowledge of many machines, such as chainsaws, crawlers, caterpillar crawlers, skidders, hauling trucks, and hydraulic log loaders. Professional loggers relied heavily on their chainsaws. Typically, loggers bought their chainsaws and paid for the upkeep of the machinery. However, Frank Davidson supplied the first wave of migrants with

93 Mike Davidson, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
their first chainsaw. The men in the second wave bought their own. An average chainsaw at the time was roughly 400 dollars. A cutter, a person assigned to cut trees, should own 2-3 chainsaws at a time because of the wear and tear the machines endure. A chainsaw came with a three-month warranty, which allowed them to be repaired so long as the owner provided the chains and bars. Each chain cost 30 dollars, and the bars were 80 dollars each. A chain lasted about a week, and a bar about a month. The chainsaw was a high-maintenance machine, but necessary because dull chains could snap back at the operator while cutting something. Many Mexican men in this study shared cautionary stories of accidents they witnessed, which urged them to maintain their chainsaws in good condition. The contractor provided the other logging machinery.

A crawler machine, also called a bulldozer, was a large and powerful motorized machine furnished with metal edges in front of it to allow it to push material and debris out of the way. A caterpillar crawler was similar to a bulldozer. However, the caterpillar crawler also had a rear-mounted engine to balance the load of debris and material the machine moves, allowing it to hold more weight without tipping forward. Skidders, rubber-tired four-wheel-drive machines, were used to pull or move trees from the designated cutting zone and pull it for processing. Skidders also had small blades scaled on the front side to push material while leveling pathways. The skidder quickly became one of the favorite machines to handle by the second-wave Mexican men. Juan stated that no one taught him how to operate the machine. He learned by observing other men.

One man named Cristian from the third wave stated that he feared operating the skidder. While going downhill, Cristian incorrectly positioned the skidder's crane, which caused the

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94 Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.  
95 Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
skidder to lean forward because the weight was disproportionate to the bottom. He said he felt the skidder tumble between the front and back tires until he reached the bottom. After that occasion, he never operated the skidder. Nor was he asked to. The hydraulic log loader machines help loggers sort and cut timber logs and stack and load them onto the hauling trucks. As Mexican men learned how to operate the machinery, they mastered it soon after. Spending much of their week working allowed them to gain and expand their skillset as loggers. Loggers spent much of their week working and rested on Sunday. Loggers were self-employed, so they built their own schedules, but typically they worked Monday through Saturday because they carpoled together and keeping a set schedule worked better.

The loggers in the first and second waves lived next to one another. They all lived in a trailer court off Highway 385 called Pigley's Court. Angel and his family lived there, so naturally, as more Mexicans migrated, they moved to the same area. The single men of the second wave lived together. The men from the first and second waves prepared their lunches for work because their wives did not want to prepare lunches every day at 5:00 a.m. Mexican loggers typically woke up around 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m., depending on the season, prepared their lunches, packed their work gear, and left home by 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. to head to the job site. They worked as many hours as they wanted, so long as there was daylight. Angel placed his loggers on “pay by production,” a system that paid loggers according to the amount of timber they cut. Cutters marked the trees they cut with spray paint, typically spray painting their initials on the log, so contractors knew what to pay them when the sawmill weighed the trees. On average, Juan and Abraham cut 50 tons of trees daily during the 1980s and 1990s. Loggers worked every day for about 8 to 9 hours a day, if the weather allowed it. During the winter,

96 Cristian Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, December 07, 2022, Interview 03, transcript.
loggers worked shorter shifts because the sun set well before 5:00 p.m. In the summer, some loggers worked until 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. Logging during the spring often resulted in accidents because the soil was too wet and became unstable to operate machines or to have a firm stance while operating a chainsaw. It was no shock that many of the loggers experienced many accidents while working in this dangerous profession.

Most the loggers interviewed for this thesis believed their work was not dangerous, and they never once felt afraid of the machinery or environment. However, each also typically shared an accident they witnessed or experienced. Dealing with dangerous machinery and heavy equipment led, in some cases, to severe accidents and some Mexican loggers' deaths. Many had scars from when the chainsaw chain snapped. Others experienced concussions when tree limbs fell onto them, which often produced brain bleeds. During this research, one experienced the death of their relative while logging due to brain bleed.97 Abraham remembered the day his friend passed away due to a logging accident just moments after they had lunch together.98 One man had a massive scar across his face and almost lost his eyesight because of a chainsaw chain flying off.99 Luckily the men interviewed never experienced any dangerous animal encounters. Some men witnessed coyotes, deer, and mountain lions, but the animals never charged them. Abraham and his son stumbled across a mountain lion cub and managed to pet it before spotting its mother. They quickly jumped into their trucks and watched as she collected her cub and left.

Mexican loggers enjoyed viewing the wildlife around them and never feared the animals. The second wave of Mexican men also did not fear venturing into the local towns on their days off.

97 Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
98 Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
99 Cristian Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
The relationships formed by the second wave of men occurred primarily because they enjoyed their Saturday nights at local bars, similar to the first wave. At the bars, they met local women and started dating them. The second wave was not shy when trying to speak to women in English, despite knowing only a few words. Abraham met his soon-to-be wife, Sherry, at a local bar. Sherry was born and raised in Rapid City and was an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, or Sicangu Nation. At the time of her interview, Sherry exclaimed she had no idea how she and Abraham managed to date, let alone get married, because of the language barrier. Sherry and Abraham initially met at a bar when a friend introduced them. After that, they kept running into one another at different locations, and before she knew it, they were dating. Sherry stated, “He didn't really know anything other than hi, or bye.” Abraham picked up English fairly quickly, but they relied on hand gestures to communicate, such as “are you thirsty?” as indicated by gesturing holding a cup and bringing it to the mouth.\(^{100}\) Abraham stated, “I don't know how we did it, but we found a way. To this day. I don't speak English very well, but she understands me and I understand her.” Juan and his partner met and communicated similarly to Abraham and Sherry. As their relationships continued to flourish, the idea of settlement popped into their heads, and so did gaining citizenship or securing legal status.

Like the first wave, the women dating the second wave Mexican migrants helped them gain citizenship, not through marriage, but by learning the steps to begin their applications for citizenship or green cards. Sherry and others involved with the second and third generation of Mexican immigrants aimed to stay on top of any updates regarding citizenship and residency cards to help secure their partner's right to stay in the United States. Sherry helped Abraham soon after she found out about the U.S. Congress passing the Reagan Administration’s 1986

\(^{100}\) Abraham Romero, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.

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Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Sherry decided to research how this act impacted her and Abraham.

The IRCA legislation aimed to propose a change to both reform and control immigration. To control immigration, the legislation enforced new penalties on employers who hired unauthorized workers in hopes of securing American jobs for those with legal residency.101 Understanding that the United States economy relied on immigrant labor, the act also established a new pathway for migrants, who had lived continuously in the U.S. since January 1, 1982, to obtain green cards or citizenship. The IRCA also implemented new provisions, including admission criteria for migrants, eligibility for welfare, financial assistance, and more funding to strengthen border enforcement. Many migrants, such as Abraham, Juan, and Obegario, took advantage of this reform act and applied to become U.S. legalized permanent residents by getting green cards.

Abraham migrated to the U.S. in the Spring of 1980 and Juan in the winter of 1980, making them eligible to apply for legal status. Sherry helped Abraham meet the qualifications to gain his citizenship. Abraham had to learn how to read and write. Not having the privilege to complete elementary school in Mexico, he spent much of his free time preparing himself to gain citizenship. Naturalization required a 100-question exam covering history and civics of the United States. If an immigrant missed more than seven exam questions on their second attempt, they did not qualify. They had to endure the lengthy process of reapplying. Abraham and Sherry's dedication and commitment paid off when he gained legal status. Without Sherry, Abraham would not have put in the effort to gain permanent residency, nor did he want to.

Obegario Simental gained his residency by applying for a green card in 1987. Like Abraham, Simental also studied for his exam to get a green card.

Obegario stated that it was challenging to study the material because he also had to learn how to speak, read, and write in English. His partner, Elizabeth, helped him study. In order to prove that he lived in the United States, he provided multiple documents, such as electric bills filed under his name. Bank statements also reliably proved residency. Applicants, such as Jorge Lopez, also needed a clean record. He had to travel to Bloomington, Minnesota, to complete the process. Immigration agents questioned him and placed him and his wife into a room, and at this moment, Jorge began to panic. They required him to read “I have a red car” out loud to ensure he could read and speak English. Jorge’s wife had heard of agents trying to catch the applicant cheating on the written exam by leaving the room and watching the surveillance camera to capture when the applicant asked their partners for assistance. When the agent left the room, Jorge was about to ask her to clarify a question, but she quietly murmured not to ask her and looked away. She was more nervous than Jorge and felt terrible because she knew she could not help him. Finally, the agent returned, and Jorge continued to fill out the exam as the agent looked over his shoulder. He kept writing, and whenever he was about to fill out the wrong answer, the agent mumbled, “uh-uh-uh-uh.” Jorge then paused and tried again, and when he answered correctly, the agent said “uh-huh” to him. The agent helped Jorge meet the criteria for a green card. Many men in this wave received their green cards first and then applied for citizenship a few years later. Relationships with American women ultimately helped Mexican men lay a firm foundation for the next wave of Mexican migrant men to work.

102 Jorge Lopez, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
The second wave received much help from the first wave, and the women they dated and eventually married. The first wave also showed them how to send money to their loved ones in Mexico. The men, such as Juan, sent half of the paycheck every two weeks to their families because the poverty in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo had not decreased. Abraham sent money to his parents and son, and Juan sent money to his younger siblings. Juan's younger brothers and cousins noticed Juan's success as a logger, and by the turn of the decade, the third and final wave of Mexican men of this study migrated into the United States.

The third wave entered the timber industry in the Black Hills towards the beginning of the 1990s. Like the second wave, many migrated to California and waited for their brothers and cousins to pick them up to start working for their uncles Roy and Angel in the Black Hills. According to the interviews, this wave produced the strongest loggers because the two passed waves guided them and taught them everything they once had to learn by themselves. The third-wave loggers were excited to earn money and work. Just like the second wave, the third wave had much experience with chainsaws, and they quickly learned how to operate the machinery described during the second wave's entrance to the timber industry. These men enjoyed their craft, which became part of their identity. They began nicknaming one another according to their work ethic within their working groups. Juan earned the nickname “el chingon,” which essentially meant that Juan was very good at logging because the term was used to highlight someone's impressive skillset in a field. Later when his younger brother, Hugo, migrated in the third wave, they were known as “los chingones” within their contracting group and to other contractors.

After the third wave lived in the Black Hills for a year or so, they began finding work with other contractors. Some contractors noticed their work ethic and offered them jobs. Roy
Shaffer, an experienced and well-known timber contractor in the Black Hills, offered a position to Juan and Hugo while they were working for Angel. Angel sent Juan and Hugo to help Shaffer with a contracting job because the latter lacked loggers. At the time, Angel frequently tasked Juan and Hugo with thinning, but they wanted to be cutters because that was the task that got paid the most, and they found cutting more rewarding than thinning, so they were content working for Shaffer. Shaffer, impressed with their work, offered the two permanent positions. Juan and Hugo jumped at the opportunity, and Shaffer soon hired their uncle Abraham.

The men in this wave moved into Pigley's Court and lived with their brothers and cousins. Carpooling continued with the new men. They packed their lunches but made a point to complain about it during their interviews and wanted to avoid the everyday lunches packed by the previous waves, such as sandwiches. The second and third wave attempted to cook traditional Mexican food but did not know how and found authentic Mexican ingredients difficult to obtain in the Black Hills in the 1980s and early 1990s. Often, they held small cookouts during their lunch breaks and followed the regulations of the Forest Service. Adjusting and settling into the area was difficult for the third wave because they missed Mexico. Although the environment resembled their hometown, Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, the third-wave Mexicans missed their traditions and culture.

The first and second waves adapted to the Black Hills well and started relationships with locals; however, the third wave longed for Mexico. Loggers expected to have about two or three weeks off every spring because the soil was too wet and unstable to log. More often than not, the third-wave Mexicans returned to Mexico to visit their loved ones. Juan and his wife Fran, a local woman of the Black Hills, tried to match Juan’s younger brothers with local women. Juan’s younger brothers never showed interest in local women and did not understand how the first and
second wave men formed relationships with women when they did not know how to speak Spanish. His younger brothers and cousins started long distant relationships with women in their area in Michoacán. Crossing the border to return to the Black Hills to spend three weeks with their friends and loved ones in Mexico became harder as border patrol efforts strengthened. The third wave refrained from trying to learn English, making it difficult to settle into the Black Hills or practice their Catholic religion. The first and second waves learned English, so attending church was not an issue, but the third wave missed their traditions and did not attend church because they did not understand the service. As the second wave began to settle, marry, and start families, the third wave began thinking long-term. Returning to live in Mexico was not an option because there were no jobs, so they decided to bring their partners from Mexico to the Black Hills.

Securing a year-round position in the timber industry controlled the growth of the Mexican community in the Black Hills. Many third-wave Mexican men returned to Mexico during the spring, but the community only found the Black Hills because of the Munoz and Escalante family. Angel Munoz, Roy Escalante, and others followed the fruit through California, Montana, Oregon, and Washington until they made the right connections that ultimately helped them travel to the Black Hills to work as full-time loggers. Securing their status in the United States and within the timber industry propelled two waves to migrate and work for their uncles, Angel and Roy. Only their relationships with American women allowed them to start their own business successfully. The second and third waves worked with Roy and Angel and eventually made their connections in the industry through their hard work ethic and skills. The first and second waves conformed and adapted to American culture and the Black Hills. The third wave

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103 Rene Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 29, 2022, Interview RE, transcript.
refused to abandon their culture, language, and traditions, but the hard work placed by the first two waves allowed the third wave not to conform because the first and second wave situated their community within the Black Hills by integrating with the locals.

The Black Hill's environment reminded Mexican migrants of Ojos de Agua de Ocampo. Every person interviewed for this thesis made at least one remark on the terrain similarities between the Black Hills and Michoacán, Mexico. The close resemblance encouraged some Mexican men to stay in the Black Hills. Juan stated that he would not have settled in Hill City if the terrain were not forested. Juan and the other migrants in this thesis grew up in the Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range. The Sierra Madre del Sur expands over 600 miles in Mexico and covers much of Michoacán. Juan grew up in the forested mountains, so when he began working in the Black Hills, he found comfort in his profession, which gave him a sense of familiarity. Juan's younger brother, Rene, strongly agreed with Juan. Settling into the area was easy because of the similarity. Rene later bought a house with land and chose an area deep in Hill City's hills. During his interview, he said he could walk his property lines and easily mistake it for Ojos de Agua de Ocampo.

As they entered and explored the Black Hills, the familiar environment comforted them as it reminded them of their hometown, Ojos de Agua de Ocampo in Michoacán, Mexico. Mexican men began thinking of the Black Hills as home and decided it was time to settle, and the third wave decided to bring their partners from Mexico and start families. Including Mexican women solidified their goal of making the Black Hills their home. As the U.S. border patrol enhanced its force along the U.S.-Mexico border, returning home to visit for a few weeks became less feasible—not worth the risk of not being able to cross the border. Instead, the Mexican community in the Black Hills began expanding as they helped other family members.
enter the United States and helped them settle in the area and apply for a working permit or residency card or gain U.S. citizenship. Chapter three explores the importance of a new wave and generations of Mexican women in the stabilization of the Black Hills Mexican-American community by analyzing their actions to ensure the practice of their Mexican faith, culture, and traditions.
Chapter Three:

Not Just Tortillas, But Traditions: How Mexican Women of the Black Hills Practiced Their Culture

“As I completed the Waltz in my quince dress, the look on my mother’s face made me realize that this quince was for the both of us.”

Camilla Durango

Mexican women reinforced the almost forgotten cultural identity of the Black Hills community. The first two waves naturally “Americanized” themselves when they fell in love with American women and adopted values of their partner’s culture. Their relationships allowed them to settle into the area and the timber industry, but also caused them to lose part of their own culture. The third wave of Mexican men and the women who came after them settled into the area and were able to instill a new and revitalize cultural values and traditions into the Black Hills Mexican community. Without an influx of Mexican women, the largely male Black Hills Mexican community would have continued to mingle with local women, and their culture, tradition, and language would have continued to weaken. Mexican women who immigrated to the Black Hills migrated due to familial reasons. The women who helped build the community immigrated because their husbands asked them to make the journey and to build a family in the United States. The origin stories of why Mexican women immigrated to the Black Hills tell of their journey but also reveal their positions in public and private spheres in Mexico. Once in the United States, no longer crippled by poverty in rural Mexico, the U.S. economy allowed the Black Hills Mexican women to practice their culture, traditions, and faith to their fullest extent,

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104 Quince became a slang word for Quinceañeras and was used often by the young women in the community.
105 Camilla Durango, Interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, April 06, 2022, Interview 05, transcript.
while also navigating through new liberations the United States offered and stabilizing the steady growth of their community.

Immigration history, focusing on Mexican immigration, has focused on single men crossing the border searching for work. The literature focusing on Mexican women crossing the border is sparse but growing. While researching, I thought the women immigrated simply because their husbands asked them to immigrate. This may have been true to a point but Mexican women entered not because their partners asked, but because women wanted to provide a better life for their families for familial reasons. This chapter was influenced by the work of Larisa L. Veloz, Luz María Gordillo, and Rita James Simon. Although Veloz's work focused on a different time, *Even the Women Are Leaving: Migrant Making Mexican America, 1890-1965*, the study navigates the untold side of immigration history and the migratory factors of Mexican women and families.106 Luz María Gordillo's book, *Mexican Women and the Other Side of Immigration: Engendering Transnational Ties*, focused on the transnational community between San Ignacio Cerro Gord, Jalisco, and Detroit, Michigan. Gordillo analyzed the past three decades in the twentieth century of the Mexican community with transnational sexualities at the center.107 Rita James Simon's book, *Immigrant Women*, focused on many immigrant women from Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Philippines, and Korea. She focused on their experience entering the labor force, navigating through social classes, and assimilation.108 Immigration history often centers on various Congressional legislation passed that influence surges or declines in migrants but tends to lack the social aspect of immigrating into the United States. Veloz, Gordillo, and

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Simon ground their work in oral history and personal accounts of immigrant women. This scholarly work helped construct this chapter by providing comparative aspects of immigrant women and their roles in building U.S. communities.

Chapter three focuses on the quick progression of women's roles in their Black Hills community from 1990 through the early 2000s. The women in this chapter migrated into the Black Hills between 1990 and 1995. Mexican women migrated to the Black Hills and moved into Hill City by the 1990s. According to the United States Census Bureau, Hill City's population in 1995 was 747.109 Hill City was an easy transition for the women because of the size. The small town was similar in size to their hometowns in Mexico. Being surrounded by heavily forested mountains was also a positive attribute because, similar to the men in this study, the environment similarities reminded them of their hometowns. Hill City had a unique relationship with the environment compared to the surrounding towns. Named the “Heart of the Black Hills,” the Hill City School was the only school district in the United States to have Smokey the Bear as their mascot.

Smokey the Bear became the mascot after a wildfire spread 10 miles northwest of Hill City on July 10, 1939. The fire consumed over 5 miles of the Black Hills in less than one day. The fire reached 3 miles from the small town by noon on July 11. One of the first parties to respond was “a group of 25 school boys from Hill City. The team included the entire basketball squad, one eighth grader, and several boys who had recently attended or graduated.”110 Over four thousand firefighters contributed to containing the fire, and by the third day, they managed to control the fire. The schoolboys of Hill City helped every day, and to honor their service and

110 Hill City High School, “School History.”
bravery, “the name 'Rangers' was given to them.” Smokey the Bear became their mascot and their school colors switched to green and gold (the colors that represent the National Forest Service). They became the only school to hold their graduation ceremony at Mount Rushmore.

The Black Hills forest has become a part of the community's identity and reinforced connections between forest work and Mexican community. The Hill City school district formed the cultural center of town, a massive improvement in the eyes of the newly immigrated Mexican women, who became sending their children to public schools. Traveling almost an hour to get to school was a reoccurring issue for the community members living in rural Mexico.

The women in this chapter, unlike the migrant men, came from towns close to Ojos de Agua de Ocampo. However, poverty, women's traditional roles, and limited opportunities correlated and became common themes in their stories. Many women interviewed for this chapter were born in the Mexican states of Michoacán or Jalisco. This chapter begins by describing their life in Mexico, la cultura machista, and the options for rural women in Mexico. I also uncover their motives for immigrating to the United States, provide their migratory stories, and offer a synopsis of the critical difference between the women's and men's migratory journeys. The bulk of this chapter and the argument follows their desire to practice their Mexican culture and traditions because the very act of embracing their culture in the migratory context led them to discover new liberations. Thus, these women escaped not only Mexico's poverty but also gendered discrimination and violence towards women. The purpose of this chapter goes beyond including women; it illuminates their vital role in the community by showing how they valued and preserved Mexican cultural identity in the Black Hills amidst the very real cultural changes wrought by the immigration experience.
While immigration history focuses on the lack of jobs that forced single men to migrate, women also faced this reality. Rural Mexico offered almost zero opportunities for women. It was as common for women to struggle finding work that paid well, as it was for men. The work they did find revolved around house chores and domestic labor for families that could afford to pay them for their services. Many women in this research believed their future remained in their house by caring for their children and maintaining the household. The only other option involved completing high school and attending college. Yet the likelihood of that happening for rural women of Michoacán and Jalisco in the 1980s and 1990s seemed less than rare. Maria Socorro Munoz, born on May 13, 1952, in the small town of Ojos de Agua, enjoyed the discipline of education and wanted to attend college because she knew the other options were to become a housewife or continue living with her family and help with house chores. Maria graduated from Zinapecauaro High School, the only person in this thesis that made it past middle school; her teachers advised her to pursue a career as a nurse because she showed potential. While suffering from cancer, Maria's mother took her to Morelia, the capital of Michoacán, to help Maria search for a nursing program. Unfortunately, Maria never attended college because her parents passed away before they could attempt to save enough money for her to enroll.

Education, when completed, opened many doors, but the women in this study never finished their education because their families could not afford it.

Maria's parents' support to continue her schooling was also rare in rural Mexico. Families in that period tended to focus more on their sons' success than that of their daughters. Parents gave their sons more opportunities to start a career or find jobs. Due to the patriarchy embedded into their culture, mothers, and fathers wanted the best for their sons because they believed their

111 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, November 02, 2022, Interview 01, translated transcript.
daughters would get married and dedicate their lives to their families. Maria's parents did not practice *la cultura machista* and wanted their daughter to complete high school to get a college education. Growing up, Maria could escape the restrictions on women because of her parent's progressive outlook. However, after her parents passed away, Maria fell victim to the toxic male-dominant culture in Mexico.

Machismo impacted all the women in this thesis while living in Mexico, whether in the forms of domestic abuse, prioritizing the men in the families, or having a stunted concept of self-worth because of their environment growing up. According to Josué Ramirez, an anthropologist, machismo came from the word macho, used to describe a man's belligerent pride in his masculinity. Machismo held a different meaning depending on class, region, generation, and ethnicity. For example, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, in urban Mexico, college students widely used the word machismo to reject specific outlooks or behaviors in their families or to embellish a class trope possibility.¹¹² However, the women in this thesis identified the word strictly as a gendered trope that enforced a private and public patriarchal lifestyle. Josué Ramirez cited Constance Sullivan, a feminist literary scholar, in his work as Sullivan defined machismo as an “interlocking structure of values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior that ultimately have destructive effects for males as well as females.”¹¹³ In the 1970s and mid-1980s, little to no public discussion on change occurred in rural Mexico, so machismo was the norm in public and private spheres. Men controlled the public spaces of women through unwelcomed sexual remarks, rape, and femicide. The women in this study refrained from entering the larger cities

¹¹³ Ramirez, *Against Machismo Young Adult Voices in Mexico City*, 3.
without their dads, brothers, or husbands accompanying them. Men controlled the private spheres of women, either managed by their husbands or the eldest male in the family.

Some of the women seemed unfazed by the actions of their partners because Mexican society dismissed the actions of men, even in extreme cases of physical abuse and kidnap. Maria entered an abusive relationship, and no one did anything to help her. The partners of Sofia Durango and Julieta Munoz kidnapped them and forced them into marriages. Sofia Durango, born in Jalisco, married her husband when she was 20 and immigrated to the United States in the late 1990s. Sofia and Luis had gone on a couple of dates, but Sofia wanted to take their relationship slow. However, Luis grew impatient and showed up to her home unannounced and took her to his house. Sofia stayed at his house for a couple of days and tried to leave multiple times before agreeing to marrying him. Luis and Sofia married soon after the incident. The women of the community shared that this was a common occurrence in rural Mexico. Men kidnapped women they wanted to marry and kept them in their house until the women agreed to marry them. More often than not, their families did not do anything to prevent their daughters from kidnap or to locate them after they failed to come home.

Julieta Munoz, born in Ojos de Agua, was also kidnapped by her husband, Mario, while intoxicated; still, to this day, he jokes about kidnaping the wrong woman. Mario and Julieta planned on meeting one day to enjoy the afternoon together. Mario took her to his truck and drove off. He kept Julieta at his house for a few days, and after a couple of days, Julieta caved in and agreed to marry him. Mario and Julieta waited for a couple more days before Mario returned

114 Sofia Durango, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, November 01, 2022, Interview 04, translated transcript.
115 Arisbet Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 06, 2022, Interview 02, transcript.
116 Cristian Salinas interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
Julieta to her home because he had a change of heart and wanted to ask for her hand. Mario and Julieta's father chatted and agreed that she marry him. They later immigrated after Mario secured a Black Hills timber industry job.

Maria married a man from her same town named Fernando Munoz. He showed no signs of being abusive, but eventually he became more controlling and physically abused her. Fernando and Maria moved to Morelia, the capital of Michoacán, to find better jobs and he continued abusing Maria. After immigrating to the United States, Maria realized she was alone, not because her parents died but because Mexico did not protect women. At the time, Maria stated that no shelters offered help, and the police did nothing because domestic abuse was not considered a crime. Private and public spaces enforced this hyper-masculine culture and viewed women as objects. Although her ex-husband planted the seed of immigrating to the Black Hills, she does not regret immigrating to the United States because it allowed her to escape the toxic male-dominant culture and rebuild her life as a single, independent, and safe woman. Her journey into the United States differed from the rest of the women in the chapter, and she was the only woman who immigrated during the first migrant wave timeline. Fernando migrated to the Black Hills during the first wave and returned to Mexico, but each trip began spreading further apart until he stopped visiting. Maria decided to apply for a tourist visa and submitted the complicated paperwork. Upon approval, she flew to California, where she stayed for three years before meeting her husband in the Black Hills. By the 1980s, she settled in the Black Hills area, requested a divorce, and began rebuilding her life with her children. The other women immigrated after the third wave and entered the country illegally.

The migratory journeys in this chapter centered around who would travel with the women because the women were not to be left alone with the coyote because the coyote could not be
trusted. Having crossed the border multiple times, Mexican men were aware of the dangers their partners would encounter while crossing the border. The journey across the southern border differed for women because the machismo culture in Mexican society placed women in extreme danger. While men worried about getting caught by the border patrol and the environmental dangers, women had to worry about getting raped, murdered, sold, or abducted by the coyote on top of the environmental dangers and getting caught by border patrol. The machismo outlook increased in border cities due to Mexico's Border Industrialization Program of the 1960s. The Industrialization Program influenced an influx of female workers, who made up almost 80 percent of the workforce in Juárez, Mexico. Susan Faludi argued in her book that Mexican men resented women's gains in labor and retaliated with violence.¹¹⁷ Femicides increased during the early 1990s in major border cities, such as Juárez-El Paso, and because of this, crossing the border became much more dangerous for women travelling alone.¹¹⁸ So their husbands in the Black Hills traveled back to Mexico to escort them back across the border or alternatively, they entrusted someone in their family to accompany them.

If the women's husbands could not cross the border to accompany them, someone from their family traveled with them. Many of the fundamental first-generation Mexican women in the Black Hills community crossed the border during the early 1990s. Communication between partners helped them determine the right time for their wives to immigrate to the United States. In the case of Rocio Lopez and Sofía Durango, someone in their family accompanied them to ensure their safety. Rocio Lopez married Hugo Escalante and wanted to join her husband in the

Black Hills in 1993. Hugo’s older brother, Jose Luis, and his father-in-law traveled with Rocio to ensure she traveled safely across the border.\textsuperscript{119} Sofia Durango migrated with her older brother, sister, and daughter. Traveling across with a woman placed a target on the couple or group; it increased the chances of abduction, theft, and sexual violence. One woman in the Black Hills community recalled being robbed at gunpoint the first time she and her husband crossed the border.\textsuperscript{120} She stated, “Well there were these men that pulled out guns and pointed them at our sides–me and my husband. Then a friend was able to pull me away and separate us. They then took my husband. My husband then gave them all the money he had, and they let him go.”\textsuperscript{121}

The Black Hills Mexican community residents shared that coyotes often separated women, children, and men. In some accounts, coyotes divided their groups into two sections, one section for women and children and the other for men. Boys formed a variable class. Some separated boys at the age of 10 from their mothers and forced them to migrate with the men. Dividing the groups might have been the coyotes’ attempts to hold people for ransom. Although Sofia travelled with her brother, their coyote separated them right at border, which gave them little time to protest the separation.\textsuperscript{122} Sofia was white-passing, so she was able to avoid the physical demands of crossing by the desert or river. She gained access to the United States by using a fake passport to pass border customs. The passport had the image of a white woman that resembled Sofia. The coyote advised her to remember the information on the passport in case border patrol questioned her. Their guide separated Sofia from her daughter, Camila, her sister, and her brother. Fortunately, Camila crossed the border with her brother in a separate vehicle.

\textsuperscript{119} Juan Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
\textsuperscript{120} Isabella Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 07, 2022, Interview 23, translated transcript.
\textsuperscript{121} Isabella Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
\textsuperscript{122} Sofia Durango, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
while her sister hid under the car. Sofia’s sister struggled to breathe because of the constant dust and debris flying into her face while the coyote drove them. When the coyote stopped for border patrol, she could not make a sound or catch her breath because she would have jeopardized her family getting caught. After crossing the border, the coyote ordered Sofia’s sister to enter the other vehicle in which her brother and niece travelled. Sofia and her family successfully entered the United States, but the coyote held Sofia hostage until her brother paid a ransom.

Separating women from their families became a theme of the women’s migratory journeys. Alexandra Munoz, born in Santa Clara, Michoacán, also witnessed her group get separated. She stated,

I remember once we crossed, we all had to get into two different vehicles. We were all piled up, and it was very uncomfortable. My husband told the driver that I was pregnant, and he was nice enough to put me in the front seat. Our vehicle made it through safely but the other vehicle didn't. It was stopped by immigration. I remember one man in our vehicle practically crying because his wife and baby were in the other vehicle that got caught. He was very stressed because he had the pack with all the baby's food. My husband scolded him asking him, how did you think it was ok to be separated from your family? You have to stick together regardless. I never knew what happened, but I still find myself wondering about it.123

Through my research, I noticed that the men and women of this community remembered different aspects of their journey. Mexican men focused on the physical demands it took for one to enter the U.S. Mexican, while women emphasized the emotional stress they experienced from witnessing a lack of human empathy. Alexandra vividly remembered the fear of being left behind while she traveled through the countries at age 24. She traveled with a group of people, including her husband. Pregnant, she moved at a slower pace than the others. Coyotes have

123 Alexandra Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 07, 2022, Interview 21, translated transcript.
abandoned members who slowed the group down. The pregnant 24-year-old woman was not the slowest of the group the first time she crossed the border. As she recalled,

I was pregnant at the time and I remember doing ok but there was this older woman with a young boy, who must have been her grandson. She was really struggling. The coyote wouldn't let us take many breaks and she was falling behind, and the young boy was having a hard time trying to help her. My husband decided to fall back just a bit to help her, first making sure that I was ok since I was pregnant. The coyote was rushing us at one point towards the end. And he told my husband to just leave her, she's just holding us back. But my husband said no and managed to get her to move faster. We were all able to make it in the end.124

The women of this community were shocked at the lack of compassion they experienced or witnessed while immigrating to the United States. It helped them realize the shared struggles of immigrants seeking better opportunities in the United States. Many women expressed some guilt that they made it safely into the United States after hearing other stories of what their family members and friends have endured. Many also lost someone while attempting to immigrate to the United States, causing them to feel guilt that they made it. The women of the Black Hills Mexican community, however, in retrospect, viewed their journey well worth it in exchange for the new level of independence they gained.

Mexican women experienced settling into the Black Hills as a gradual transition. Not aware of the opportunities the Black Hills had, Maria settled back with her husband in an attempt to fulfill her role as a wife. Not until after she began learning English, she realized she had new possibilities. Although she had lived in California for three years before moving to the Black Hills to rejoin her husband and his family, she did not feel the need to learn English because she lived in a Spanish-speaking town, in the San Joaquin Valley of California. Maria stated, “The struggle was when we moved to the Black Hills” because her mindset shifted to learn English

124 Alexandra Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
was when she received notes from the school for her children. Maria thought to herself “how am I going to help my kids if I don't know the language.” With that realization, she contacted the local Catholic church, and they notified her of a small English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Pregnant and wanting to speak for herself and help her children, Maria brought the program to her husband, asking for permission to attend. Fernando showed no interest in learning English but did not stop her. She learned as much as she could until she had to find another program that suited her and her newborn child. The Literacy Council of the Black Hills was a perfect match for her to get one-on-one help and they provided a child-friendly environment. Maria learned how to speak, read, and write English through the Literacy Council. The Literacy Council also gave Maria the voice she needed to understand the abuse she regularly experienced.

She decided to become a single mother. Maria shared,

*Macho* culture is a big issue, to the point of women even being abused. It affects families, and they follow the cycle. And the reason I share this with you is because I was affected by that, *machismo*. And that's why I became a single mom, a divorced mom. But it is hard. I see many women over there that stay in that culture and stay in that marriage no matter what. But they don't realize that they give a bad example when there is violence and unfaithfulness to the children. And I opened my eyes here because I held that for 17 years. In Mexico, sometimes it's hard to break that cycle because you have to stay in that marriage. And here it is different; you have so many options, you have counseling to try and save your marriage.

Divorcing her husband made her realize the independence she had and a freedom she felt she would not have had if she had stayed in Mexico. Maria believed she would not have been able to get a divorce if she had remained in Mexico. As a single mother, she prioritized securing a job

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125 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
126 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
127 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
and becoming an active member of the Blessed Sacrament Church, the local Catholic church. Maria truly believed there were “a lot more opportunities in different aspects: social, economic” in the United States. Maria encouraged the other immigrant women to make the most of the possibilities.

Like Maria, additional Mexican women tried to fulfill their roles as wives and soon-to-be mothers soon after arriving in the Black Hills. When Rocio first entered the Black Hills, she and Hugo lived with Juan, Fran, and their firstborn daughter, Veronica. Shortly after Fran found out she was pregnant, she and Juan decided to move into Matkins Court because they wanted to settle down in the small town of Hill City. After all, they felt it offered a family-friendly environment. By the time Hugo brought Rocio, Juan and Fran had lived in Matkins’ Court for several years. Many followed Juan and moved into Matkins’ Court as their families grew, and soon the court was known as “Little Mexico” or “Tijuanita.”

Rocio prepared Hugo his lunches, took care of the household, and helped Fran with anything. Fran spoke little Spanish and believed Rocio was timid, but she later realized it was the language barrier. Mexican women found comfort in their private-space responsibilities because that was all they knew. Often Rocio would openly critique Fran for not folding Juan's laundry, preparing his lunch, cooking home-cooked meals, and ensuring their home was clean. Fran retaliated against the critiques by questioning Rocio why she needed to care for her husband as if he were a child. They became great friends, and Rocio began teaching Fran how to cook authentic Mexican food, because Fran had not remembered the traditional recipes. Boredom struck as Mexican women stayed home

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128 Cris Matkins, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, November 11, 2022, Interview 22, transcript.
129 Fran Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 20, 2023, Interview 25, transcript.
while their partners worked, which sparked the idea of potentially finding work that still allowed them to uphold their private sphere responsibilities.

Like Maria, the other women in the community partook in the economic opportunities presented in the Black Hills. A thriving tourism animated the Black Hills economy every summer, that surprised many Mexican women. The women thought they travelled to the Black Hills for their husband's jobs and found themselves elated at the idea of working themselves and contributing to the household income. Tourist attractions such as Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Bear Country, and Reptile Gardens created a high demand for housekeepers for motels and campground cabins and this allowed Mexican women to work. Some women provided fake social security numbers, or their bosses never requested one. Many Mexican women said they did not seek a job after a couple of years of living in the Black Hills because they did not know how to drive. Alondra Munoz, born in Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, vividly remembered learning to drive at 25. Back in Mexico, her family could not afford a car and relied heavily on walking to the nearest bus station to get around, so she never thought she would need to learn how to drive. Getting approved for a driving permit was difficult for women in Mexico. After Alondra learned how to drive, a friend that immigrated to the Black Hills helped her secure a job as a housekeeper. She enjoyed the easy work and the high pay of the cleaning staff surprised her. Housekeeping in the Black Hills typically ranged from early May through the end of October. Housekeepers entered work around seven in the morning and left by three in the afternoon. The schedule allowed them to work while fulfilling their household responsibilities. Being able to provide for their growing families financially gave Mexican women a new perspective on

130 Alondra Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, February 28, 2022, Interview 20, translated transcript.
themselves and allowed them to practice a new responsibility they would never have been able to
in Mexico.

Mexican men and women's ultimate goal was to own their homes and property. Many
purchased homes with the land during the 2010s, but in the 1980s and 1990s, they needed to find
temporary homes. Matkins’ Court became the home to Mexicans wanting to settle in the Black
Hills. By the mid-1990s, Cris Matkins' Court was at total capacity, with over half of her tenants
being Mexicans. Cris Matkins was born to Gordon and Halley Collins on July 29th, 1960. She
has been a landlady for over thirty years, and her main property, Matkins Trailer Court, has
served Mexican immigrants as a stepping stool to achieve their goal of owning their own homes.
Cris welcomed Hispanics to move into her court, while the rest of the community had yet to
accept Mexicans into the community. Cris felt obligated to because of her mother, Halley
Matkins. Halley identified as a Mexican American and moved to the Black Hills from Trinidad,
Colorado. Being partly Mexican herself, Cris knew Mexican migrants were “wonderful
people.” She also preferred renting to Mexicans because they kept their yards clean, gardened,
fixed the trailers they rented, and threw parties that welcomed the neighborhood. Cris stated that
she had never had problems with Mexicans in the 30 years she has rented to them.
Mexicans felt relief when they could speak to Halley, who spoke fluent Spanish and English, and
quickly signed leases to live in Matkins Trailer Court. Halley and Gordon knew many Mexican
men before their wives immigrated to the Black Hills because they owned two bars, Skilly's Gas
Station and G Bob's Bar, close to the sawmill. Halley catered to everyone at the mill, all loggers.
Halley formed a close relationship because few Mexicans lived in the Black Hills before the first
wave of migrants.

131 Cris Matkins, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
Halley Matkins became extremely close to her daughter's Mexican tenants and would offer them help with anything. Halley was an English teacher and translated for Mexicans at the bank, hospital, and churches and helped them with paperwork. Halley became busier with Mexican families as more came to work in the Black Hills. Halley began tutoring some Mexican women to learn English; Cris stated, “She [Halley] was proud to be able to do so.” The bond grew as the Mexican community expanded by having children. Halley often drove Mexican women to their prenatal visits and would help translate for them. When Halley passed away, the Mexican community offered their help to Cris and her family. Then, Cris truly understood the bond her mother formed with her tenants and how thankful they were for Halley’s help. One Mexican man that migrated during the early 1980s was a pallbearer for Halley’s funeral.

The community began offering programs to help immigrants settle into the area. Marianne Francis Fridell helped Mexican women gain a better footing in the Black Hills community. Marianne was born to Barbara Hoole and Dale Lyman Francis on March 20, 1951. Marianne was born in South Bend, Indiana, and moved to Spearfish, South Dakota, in the fall of 1969 to attend what was then Black Hills State College. Marianne learned Spanish when her parents moved to San Miguel de Los Baños, Cuba, in 1955, and she became fluent in Spanish after moving to the Black Hills and speaking to Mexican women in the community.

Marianne first came in contact with Mexican families of the Black Hills when she became a migrant specialist with Even Start, a program that aided immigrants. She also worked in ESL classes and would help provide development information from pregnancy through children five years of age. The first time Marianne met Mexican families of Hill City was with

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132 Cris Matkins, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
133 Marianne Fridell, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, January 10, 2023, Interview 24, transcript.
Caroline Hatten, a retired teacher from Custer, who held a meeting with a group of women and provided ESL classes. That class consisted of five women, two from the Mexican community of Hill City, Rocio Escalante, and Maria Lopez. The women welcomed Marianne and appreciated her help. Meeting these two women began her involvement with Mexican families in the Black Hills. According to Marianne, “There was much interest among the women and their families in immigration. Applying for citizenship was easier at that point because of the amnesty provided by Reagan's administration.”\(^\text{134}\) She helped many individuals with their paperwork. Resources were scant in the Black Hills, and at the time, the main immigration office was located in Sioux Falls with an annual visit to Rapid City. Helping the local families gain citizenship typically was a two-year process, and it became a rewarding part of her work. She helped Mexican immigrants prepare for the interviews in Sioux Falls.

Like Halley, Marianne's relationship with Mexican families of the Black Hills became intensely close. She became their interpreter and soon became a part of their family by being present in personal moments. Marianne often accompanied Mexican women and men when they sought medical care and was honored to participate in extraordinary events, as pregnant Mexican women frequently asked her to be there when they went into labor. Mexican women embraced Marianne and the help she offered. She noted that Mexican women were the keepers of the home but also the outreach into the community. At this point, women took on the role of mediators for the community. Mexican women kept the traditions alive and communicated with their families in Mexico.

Mexican women did not actively try to keep their traditions and culture alive because it occurred naturally. Regardless of where they lived, their culture was their identity. Faith played

\(^{134}\) Marianne Fridell, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
an enormous factor in the lives of the Mexican community. Many of the Mexican men attended Sunday mass, and even though they did not understand it, they felt it was important to attempt to practice their faith by attending church. It is important to note that Mexican men tried to practice their religion, but Mexican women made it a point to request the local church for a Spanish mass. Marianne notes that the Catholic Church helped bring many Spanish-speaking families together to attend the Spanish mass at the Blessed Sacrament Church in Rapid City. Maria Munoz also volunteered at the church and invited other Mexicans to attend.

By 1995, the population of Mexicans in the Black Hills had grown, and the church's Deacon asked Maria Munoz for advice on creating a more inviting environment for Spanish-speaking people. The Blessed Sacrament Church soon provided Spanish mass to the small Catholic Church of Hill City, Saint Rose of Lima. Mexicans became more involved in church services, and local Mexicans performed live Mexican music. Soon the church in Hill City, Custer, and Rapid City began including the service for La Virgen de Guadalupe. The Virgin of Guadalupe became an essential figure to Mexicans. Each Mexican home in the community held a statue or painting of the Virgen of Guadalupe to commemorate their faith.

The Virgin's presence in Mexico dates back to the early 16th century. The story that impacted mestizos and Indigenous people and became widely celebrated in Mexico and other countries occurred between December 9 - 12, 1531. The Virgin appeared on December 9 to Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, a Christianized Indigenous man, while walking toward Calzada Tepeyac. Singing caught the attention of Juan Diego, and he pursued it until he saw a vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Virgin appeared to Juan Diego as a Náhuatl-speaking younger

135 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
woman and requested a temple be built in her honor. Juan Diego returned to the quarters of fray Juan de Zumárraga, the archbishop of Mexico City. Fray Juan de Zumárraga requested Juan Diego to prove his vision of the Virgin. Failing to spread and fulfill her request, Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac, where the Virgin reappeared and asked her to find another delegate, but she declined his request. Failing twice to prove his encounter with the Virgin to the archbishop, Juan Diego returned a third time to Tepeyac to find the Virgin. She promised a sign would appear the next day, but Juan Diego failed to return because of his sick uncle. The Virgin felt compassion for his struggles and quickly forgave Juan Diego and cured his uncle.

The fourth apparition took place on the morning of December 12. The Virgin filled Juan Diego's tilma, a maguey fiber garment worn across the torso, with a strand of bloomed roses not native to Mexico, and the roses also bloomed on a barren hillside during winter. His tilma held the image of the Virgen underneath the roses. Juan Diego's tilma has been known as the "ayate de Juan Diego," and placed in the Modern Basilica encased in "bulletproof glass and state-of-the-art heat sensors." Since then, the Virgin of Guadalupe has become the most loved and respected saint in Mexican Catholicism and has received the title of the patron saint of Mexico. Many Mexicans interviewed for this thesis thanked the Virgin Mary while recounting their journey into the United States.

Besides Christmas, the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe was the most meaningful celebration for Mexicans in December. Throughout Mexico, people travel to crawl up and down the long Calzada on their knees to the Virgin's altar to show gratitude for their answered prayers to the Virgin of Guadalupe; Mexicans called this religious act la peregrinacion. Many of the

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137 Peña, Performing Piety, 8.
women and men in the Black Hills community participated annually when they lived in Mexico. The Calzada materialized by cobbled stone caused the participant great pain; in an attempt to reduce the pain, many laid out a pillow or blanket to crawl on and were accompanied by a friend or family member for support. While crawling to the altar, they held a rosary and pray until they reach the altar. It is important to note that the participants were joyful while doing this ritual and ignored the pain.

Many Black Hills Mexicans participated in la peregrinacion when they lived in Mexico and managed to participate while living in the Black Hills. Some members of the community were unable to return to Mexico to participate, so they often sent money to their families in Mexico, so they could participate. Sending their families money helped them contribute to the potlucks or rest spots throughout the journey. Mexicans began their journey as soon as they made it to the capital of Michoacán, Morelia. Some start by walking, and others crawl the entire trip. Mexico City was roughly an eight-hour drive from Ojos de Agua de Ocampo and the residents walked or crawled the whole way to the Virgin's altar. Cristian states that the trip from Morelia to Mexico City averaged roughly eight, and participants left in time to get there before or on December 12. He then took a bus to return to his ranch after he thanked the Virgin of Guadalupe by praying. Cristian Salinas from the Black Hills community sent his mother a little over 1000 dollars each December. His mother used to participate annually, but she stopped due to the physical toll the act took on her body. Instead, she offered her help at one of the posts set up by local communities to help those complete the spiritual walk in honor of the Virgin. The

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138 Cristian Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
139 Cristian Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
posts or potlucks offered religious travelers a place to sleep, shower, and eat. The locals divided the camp between men and women, which permitted a safe place for women to rest and bathe.

In Ojos the Agua, Michoacán, the Mexicans celebrated and honored the Virgin of Guadalupe by attending church and building a *capillita*, or shrine, outside their homes or in their courtyards. Mexicans decorated their capillitas with beautiful hand-crafted paper flowers of different colors, wreaths, beadwork, colorful vases of flowers, and mantles. The local church organized a march in celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The train began 2-3 days prior to the 12th of December. Locals took turns holding the enormous statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Typically, four to six people carried the sculpture throughout the town and stationed the Virgin on the capillitas.

In Mexico, locals walked miles to participate in the celebration and offered help to uphold the Virgin of the Guadalupe. The figure remained on the capillita for a couple of minutes for the family that set up the capillita to pray and take pictures. If one was severely ill or healed from a severe illness, the community and the church allowed the statue to remain at the shrine the sick person's family posted. Community members stayed with the figure throughout the night, praying and talking to one another. The family welcomed their company and the company of the Virgin of Guadalupe and provided ponche, other refreshments, and home-cooked snacks. Ponche, a popular warm fruit punch in Mexico, was typically made during the holidays of December. The following morning, the community continued the march throughout the town. During the early 2000s, Rosario, the father of Juan, was very ill due to Cancer. The statue stayed at Rosario's capillita.\textsuperscript{140} In 2021, the exact figure stayed at capillita of Jose Luis, Juan's oldest brother, when he recovered from the Corona Virus.

\textsuperscript{140} Arisbet Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
During the church ceremony on 12 December, it was common for children and adults to dress in traditional costumes to pay homage to their Indigenous roots. In Mexico, it was common to find the traditional costume hand-made by local Mexican women selling them at booths posted in the inner cities or along the roads to the larger cities. Girls dressed up as *indias mexicanas*; their costumes consisted of traditional white blouses with a layered neckline, colorful aprons and shawls, and vibrant ribbons in their braids. The boys dress up as Juan Diego by wearing white pants, a white long-sleeved shirt, a poncho, a straw hat, and sandals, and completed the costume with a painted-on mustache. The costumes were something that Mexican women of the Black Hills missed the most.

When the celebration was finally introduced to the Black Hills churches, the community's Mexican women had to get creative with their children's costumes. Unable to find an outfit for their daughters and sons, Mexican women made costumes to keep their religious practices alive. They began sewing dresses for their daughters and tilmas for their sons. Some even bought their costumes in Chicago, Illinois. The marches, a massive celebration in Mexico, continued on a much smaller scale in the Black Hills. Mexicans built a small shrine within their homes and bought statues or paintings of the Virgin of Guadalupe. They lit candles, placed flowers by their shrines, and prayed to the patron saint of Mexico. After introducing the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Mexican community of the Black Hills pushed for other celebrations for their children.

The *bendición de tres años*, the blessing of a three-year-old, celebrated a child's life on their third birthday. In Mexico, like many other countries in Latin America, parents present their child in the church when they turn three years old to thank God for allowing their child to live

141 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
past the dangers of infancy. According to the Catholic church, this tradition started due to Latin America's high infant mortality rates. The presentation of the child to God and the Virgin Mary also renewed the dedication of their life to God. After the presentation, a small feast took place where the community gathered and contributed to the feast. The Black Hills community followed this tradition after the Blessed Sacrament Church agreed to learn the scripture and tradition. They picked godparents for the ceremony. Instead of preparing a small feast, they typically threw a party with music, food, dancing, and activities for the children, such as a piñata or throwing rollo. Rollo was a fun activity meant to honor the godparents of the event by throwing quarters or bills to the children. Financial stability in the United States allowed them to throw big celebrations for their children, just as it allowed Cristian to send funds to his mother to celebrate the Guadalupe. Unlike the Quinceañeras, which called for at least six months of preparation, The bendición de tres años took little time for preparation.

None of the Black Hills Mexican community women experienced their quinceañera because their families could not afford the tradition. Having always wanted one, many women pushed their daughters to have one. A common practice in the Black Hills community was offering their daughter the choice of a car or a quinceañera. The girls interviewed for this thesis stated they wanted the car, and their fathers were relieved, but their mothers kept pushing them to do the quince (short for Quinceañera). Camilla Durango vividly remembered her mother asking if she wanted a quinceañera or a car to celebrate her fifteenth birthday. Camilla automatically knew that she would prefer the car. Quinceañeras took months of preparations and cost well over 5000 dollars to throw a successful quince. Sofia, Camilla's mother, continued showing her videos of girls in their quince dresses and the festivities practiced for quinceañeras. Many realized it did not matter what they wanted because their mothers wanted them to
experience the tradition. Camilla picked the car but ended up having a quince, and she remembered the stress planning an event that large but was thankful that her mother pushed her to have one because it became a memorable experience.

Quinceañeras appeared as a social event, similar to a sweet sixteen birthday party, yet, the event had a meaningful religious aspect and motive. Mexican culture attempted to make quinceañeras more inclusive and renamed the celebration to Quince Años to include young Hispanic men.\(^\text{142}\) However, the Mexicans in the Black Hills community stated that only young women commemorate their fifteenth birthday with God and many laughed when I asked if their sons wanted a quince party. The sons of the family typically received a car when they turned 15 in the Black Hills. Juan stated that growing up, he always wanted a car but understood that his family could not afford one. When his oldest son turned 15, he bought him a red Ford Explorer. The celebration of a quinceañera was not a universal practice throughout Latin America but was typically practiced in Mexico. The women in this thesis knew and went to quince celebrations in Mexico when they were rarely celebrated, but none could experience the event.

The church ceremony of a quince in the Black Hills enforced a revitalization of their baptismal oaths and made an unbreakable commitment to the Virgin Mary and God, similar to the ceremonies in Mexico. The young women then must live their life guided by the teachings of Christ and not astray from the church. According to historians exploring the celebration of a quinceañeras, the origin dates back to ancient Latin America, as evidence shows that the Indigenous people of Mexico partook in a “romantic birthday party that will live forever in the memory of the young woman.”\(^\text{143}\) Sofia wished she would have been able to create those life


\(^{143}\) Empereur, *La Vida Sacra*, 114.
long memories because the celebration was a family event. Quinceañeras reinforced that young women were ready for marriage, thus encapsulating the ancient notion that women were prepared for marriage by turning fifteen. Sofia stated that the idea of marriage was not attached to celebrations and she and her husband knew this before asking Camilla if she wanted a quinceañera. De-attaching marriage from quinceaneras has long been in effect in Mexico and when practicing the celebration in the Black Hills.

The Mexican community in the Black Hills practiced the event with their community and it created an opportunity for the community to gather, drink, and dance. Sofia managed to convince Camilla that a quince would be fun, they planned for roughly 150 guests to attend the ceremony and festivity. Due to the harsh winter conditions, the Mexican community often waited until the summer to celebrate their daughters' quinceañeras, such as Camila and her family did. Camila turned 15 in December but waited until June to celebrate. The first step was to secure a date and inform the local church and minister. The minister set up a meeting with the parents and their daughter to discuss the meaning and importance of a quinceañera. The local church of Hill City, operated by the larger Catholic diocese in Rapid City, worked to set up weekly lessons for their daughter and other participants to renew their knowledge of the religion. The other participants, or the court of honor, consisted of damas, young women, and chambelanes, young men, all chosen by the girl having her quinceañera. The damas and chambelanes were similar to bridesmaids and grooms’ men. The chambelan de honor, picked by the quinceañera, had the honor to escort the quinceañera throughout the evening.

144 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
145 Camilia Durango, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
The classes set up by the church also requested for all damas and chambelanes to attend to learn and renew their vows to the Catholic religion. Held once a week, a teacher assigned by the church, in many cases, Maria Socorro Munoz, taught the classes at the church's request.\textsuperscript{146} Maria Munoz, the first woman to migrate from Ojos de Agua de Ocampo to the Black Hills, wanted the young Mexican women to learn the meaning of God and His love. She created group projects where participants had to answer or voice their opinions. Maria surrounded the lectures according to the promises made by the quinceañera, such as vowing her virginity to her husband, practicing the faith daily, and always keeping God in her heart. Other responsibilities of the court of honor consisted of meeting multiple nights of the week after school to create and learn a group waltz and a fun dance.\textsuperscript{147} The dances performed by the court of honor represent the quinceañeras transition into adulthood, assuming she had never yet danced with young men. The classes took place over two-three months, meeting once a week. The court of honor met at least four or five months before the celebration to learn the waltz and the surprise dance, meeting up to two nights a week. Typically the quinceañera and her family asked a close friend or old family member to help teach the court the dance and to decide and teach the surprise dance. Camilla and her family hired a chorographer to help teach her and her court the dances. A massive commitment made by the court of honor reinforces the value of the celebration, especially after noting that the damas and chambelanes were 14 to 18 years old. Camilla recalled that learning the dances took a long time because the court consisted of teenagers and getting them to practice and learn the dances was impossible. The extravaganza took many members of the community for it to run smoothly.

\textsuperscript{146} Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante
\textsuperscript{147} Camilia Durango, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
Quinceañeras have many vital parts that complete the tradition. The birthday girl and her parents find padrinos (godfathers) and madrinas (godmothers) to help achieve the tradition because they provided traditional items needed for the celebration. Most quinceañeras have many padrinos and madrinas, depending on how many symbolic and traditional items they wish to present in the quinceañera's life. A rosary, Bible, and cross symbolize that the quinceañera will ground herself in a robust foundation of faith. The scepter represents the authority and control she has after the celebration of her life. The quinceañera also received a tiara, ring, pillow, natural bouquet, a porcelain doll, and shoes. The tiara or crown traditionally conveyed that the birthday girl was a princess and presented herself as one to God and the world, ready to endure the challenges of adulthood. The ring embodied God's absolute love for the young woman. A custom pillow, typically with her name, date of celebration, and theme color embroidered into it, was used for her to kneel during the mass church prayer. The quinceañera and her sponsors give the Virgin Mary the gift of a natural bouquet to show their gratitude. The doll, typically given to her by her father, symbolizes the last doll she will ever receive, meaning she must move on from childish things. The doll traditionally resembles the quinceañera and wears a matching or similar quince dress.

The quince dresses worn for the ceremony were beautifully detailed and dazzling. The average quince dress costs $700, but spending over $1500 on a quince dress was also common. Camila's dress was a little over $1000, and she remembered trying many dresses of different styles and colors. Camila was determined to wear blue, her favorite color, but her mother pulled purple dresses for her to try. Sofia would have worn purple if she had been able to have a quince

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149 Camilia Durango, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
back when she came of age in Mexico. Looking back, Camilla now understands why her mother kept trying to sway her to have a quince. Sofia was not able to experience the celebration and wanted to give her family the opportunity to follow traditions because her parents could not afford to in Mexico.

The celebration after the church took place in the late afternoon, with dinner provided. Camila's quince was the first significant event Sofia planned, and she was concerned about how much food and how many drinks she needed. She expected the entire Mexican community to partake in the festivity. Live music, such as a Mexican band typically from Illinois, or a DJ performs throughout the evening for guests to dance. More often than not, the quinceañera and her family ask relatives or close friends to help cover some of the expenses. Being asked to cover or provide something was considered an honor. Camila's event lasted until 11:00 p.m., and cleaning the area took them over 4 hours. The festivities in Mexico lasted longer when compared to the celebration in the Black Hills. The quince parties in Mexico typically lasted until 2 a.m., but this could be because of the regulations placed by the event spaces. The reception decor incorporates the theme color and usually takes a day to set up as a group effort. The family, the court of honor, and friends help decorate the night before the event. The food served at the party, also made by family and friends of the family, paired with drinks throughout the night and desserts towards the end of the event.

People of the Mexican community offer their help to families to bring something for the celebration, whether that be salsa, tortillas, liquor, beer, a side dish, or a dessert. Food played a significant role in Mexican culture, and a large feast was typically always provided after ceremonial traditions. The food prepared for quince ranged depending on the family. Camilla's family served chicken, rice, beans, salsa, other side dishes, and tortillas. The food aspect of
quinces was reasonably basic compared to Mexican weddings. Jorge Lopez prepared an
authentic dish for their daughter's quince.¹⁵⁰ They prepared carnitas. Carnitas was a staple food
in Michoacán and was typically cooked for celebrations. In Mexico, it was tradition to slaughter
the pig and prepare it oneself before cooking it in a copper pot. According to Jorge, using the
copper pot to cook the meat was to uphold tradition. One could use steel if they wanted. The
Black Hills community typically bought large amounts of pork shoulder rather than slaughtering
a pig. That custom did not occur in the Black Hills until the early 2000s. Typically the dish was
cooked outside because of the size of the pot. Being able to cook traditional Mexican food while
living in the Black Hills made the transition more accessible because the food provided comfort.

Authentic Mexican food was challenging to find in the Black Hills during the 1990s and
impossible prior to then. The first and second waves of migrants struggled with cooking Mexican
dishes and grew accustomed to American food. Angel and Juan enjoyed American dishes
prepared by their partners, such as meatloaf, mashed potatoes, spaghetti, and casseroles. Juan
remembered the day Fran made him tacos. Excited to eat tacos, Juan was confused when he saw
hard-shell tacos filled with ground beef, shredded cheese, lettuce, and sour cream. Fran told him
to try it, or Juan had to cook his own dinner, and Juan was surprised that he enjoyed them. He
only requested that Fran learn how to make her salsa spicier. The third wave hated American
food and survived on eggs, beans, and tortillas until their partners joined them in the Black
Hills.¹⁵¹

Mexican women of the Black Hills struggled to cook authentic Mexican dishes because
of the lack of ingredients. The local grocery stores sold few items they needed to make basic

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Simental, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, March 23, 2023, Interview 17, transcript.
¹⁵¹ Rene Escalante, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, November 01, 2022, Interview 16, transcript.
dishes, such as fresh peppers, masa, or tortillas. Tortillas, a staple in Mexican cuisine, were impossible to find during the later 1970s through the early 1990s. Maria remembered “the stores didn't have much. We had to be quick to get tortillas at the store. We didn't have the ingredients. They didn't have tortillas and chilis and other ingredients.”

Many of the Mexicans traveled to Rapid City, roughly a thirty-minute drive, to Prairie Market, to buy tortillas. Upon arrival, the tortilla stands were emptied on many occasions, so many would request tortillas.

Tortillas accompanied every meal for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Mexican history recorded the ancient food served to the Spanish upon their arrival. Tortillas, made from maize and derived from corn, were abundant in Mexico. Mexican women knew how to make homemade tortillas, but the unavailable ingredients, such as masa, hindered them from making them. The local markets and super chains stores, such as Walmart, did not have a supply of authentic Mexican cooking components, such as chilis, dried chilies, avocados, and spices. Mexicans survived by placing orders to Illinois when other family members or friends traveled to visit their extended families. Mexicans in the community often traveled to Chicago because their relatives settled there. They mostly brought tortillas and dried chili peppers when they returned from Chicago. Mexican dishes revolve around peppers, and all savory Mexican dishes in the Black Hills rely on peppers. Most fresh peppers were easy to find in the Black Hills, but dried-out peppers were uncommon. Fresh peppers such as jalapeño, poblano, and serrano were vital to make every day Mexican dishes. Mexicans made a la mexicana dishes, which means they added onion, tomatoes, and serrano or jalapeño to everyday dishes. Traditional Mexican foods required dried peppers of numerous varieties, such as chipotle, ancho, guajillo, and chile seco.

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152 Maria Socorro Munoz, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante
154 Arisbet Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
Making pozole, menudo, or tamales for holidays was typical, but finding the dried chilies made it very difficult to practice.

Before Mexican women settled in the area, the men substituted bread for tortillas. By the late 1990s, and early 2000s, the local stores had heard Mexican women’s demand for supplies. They began ordering Mexican ingredients, offering a 7-foot stand of different styles of tortillas ranging from flour, corn, and white corn and a few years later, they offered dried chilies and nopales. Nopales, otherwise known as cactus, was a staple to the impoverished communities in Mexico were cactus paddles. Widely available in rural Mexico, they grew in excess and required minimal care. Although preparing them before cooking them by grilling, boiling, or sautéing them needed an hour or so to slide the tip of a knife to remove each thorn node, nopales offered many health benefits, such as treating diabetes and taming high cholesterol and hangovers.\textsuperscript{155} Mexican women of the Black Hills could cook traditional dishes but needed to travel to Rapid City or placed re-quests to Chicago, Illinois, when family travelled. Being able to cook their traditional dishes allowed Mexicans to feel more comfortable in the Black Hills and practice another aspect of culture.

Upon entering Hill City to start their families, Hill City offered many comforts the women never had the 'luxury' of enjoying when they lived in Mexico. Tourism hit the Black Hills early with the establishment of Custer State Park, which introduced amenities in the towns to satisfy tourists and make their stay enjoyable. Paved roads and sidewalks caught the attention of some women because they were used to unkept streets.\textsuperscript{156} Having one market for the town was a massive cultural shift from Mexico. Fresh groceries, cleaning supplies, and pantry items in one

\textsuperscript{155} Arisbet Salinas, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
\textsuperscript{156} Alondra Salinas interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
location made grocery shopping easy. In rural Mexico, women traveled to the next city over, Zinapecauro. Mexican women had to make many stops to make one dish because no market held all household items. For example, Isabella Correa, who migrated with her husband from Ojos de Agua de Ocampo, described having to go to one place to buy poultry, then walking to the other side of the city's market square for vegetables and navigating through the city for other ingredients.\(^{157}\) The appliances available in Hill City were another shock to the women because they were accustomed to washing laundry by hand and washing their dishes in outdoor sinks called lavaderos.\(^{158}\) Their experience with washing machines was a hit, and when they traveled back to Mexico to visit in the mid-2000s, many women bought washing machines for their homes.

Immigration history has widely portrayed the idea of single men crossing the border in search of jobs. However, for familial reasons, women have been crossing the border since post-World War II. The women in this thesis, except for Maria, crossed the southern border because their husbands settled into the Black Hills and wanted to continue working in the timber industry. They migrated to be with their husbands and start a family; some women migrated with their firstborn child. The women in Hill City grew up in rural Mexico with few opportunities to escape poverty. Growing up in la cultura machista, many women underestimated their capabilities because their families valued the success of the men in their family. One woman in this thesis shared the abuse she experienced while living in Mexico and how immigrating offered her a way out of her abusive relationships. Maria was able to formulate an identity in the United States and provide for herself and her children. No longer did she have to rely on her husband for financial

\(^{157}\) Isabella Correa, interviewed by Sabrina Escalante, October 07, 2022. Interview 23, transcript.
\(^{158}\) Alondra Salinas interviewed by Sabrina Escalante.
support. Maria learned English by attending church and reaching out to the clergy. Other women found other programs that allowed them to practice their English and apply for citizenship. The women in this chapter truly made the best of immigrating to the United States and progressed while navigating a new liberation they never thought they would be able to experience. They felt empowered by paid work and the contributions they made to their household, while still practicing their traditional roles as housewives and mothers. Without women, the Black Hills community would have never grown. After women migrated they helped create a community and adapted both to the Black Hills and U.S. culture, but one strengthened by the cultural traditions of Mexico.
Conclusion

Including Mexicans to the history of South Dakota was my prime focus at the start of this project. Although there is still much work to be explored for Mexican American history in the state and the Great Plains, this thesis firmly placed their presence in the Rushmore state. I argued that the Black Hills Mexican community depended on the timber industry, and without it, the community would not have been able to flourish. Through their hard work and eagerness to learn the timber industry, the Forest Reserve regulations, and assimilating into the Black Hills community, the first wave of Mexican men made it accessible for future waves to migrate to The Hills.

Opening this thesis by exploring the migratory journeys and understanding why the members of this community left their mother country to seek better opportunities allowed me to find the starters of the community. Angel Munoz, Roy Escalante, and Pasqual Munoz settled into the area and began working for Frank Davidson, thus setting the community in motion. The migratory journeys featured men from each wave. Although crossing the southern border is much more difficult in the 21st century, the hardships they experienced, often overlooked in immigration history, reinforced their want for a better life to readers because they survived it all to escape poverty. After navigating through the many jobs offered to migrants in California, picking fruit and vegetables took them out of California and into Oregon, Washington, Montana, and ultimately, to South Dakota.

Analyzing how Mexican migrants navigated through the Black Hills, South Dakota timber industry helped me identify three waves of migration of Mexican migrants born in Ojos de Ague de Ocampo, Michoacán. The first wave traveled to the Black Hills by the 1970s, the second wave migrated during the early 1980s, and the third wave emigrated from Mexico in the
late 1980s and early 1990s. Each wave played an essential role in making the Black Hills Mexican community. The first wave helped the second and third waves settle into the timber industry. Angel Munoz and Roy Escalante became contractors and business partners by the early 1980s and opened a thinning business, which soon expanded to Munoz Logging.

In less than a decade, Angel and Roy went from picking fruit with no legal status to gaining citizenship, owning a successful logging company, and working with the Forest Service. The following two waves worked for Angel and Roy and gained more experience. The second and third waves followed the first wave and lived in the same area. The second wave followed the first by adopting a new culture, marrying local women, and learning English. The second wave helped the third wave settle into the area by offering them a place to live and letting them borrow chainsaws until they could buy their own. The third wave treasured their culture and refused to marry local women or learn English, and this is not to say that the first and second wave did not appreciate their culture. However, the third wave constantly made trips back to Mexico to visit their families and maintain their long distance relationships. In contrast, the first two waves remained in contact with their families in Mexico and did not visit until the late 1990s and early 2000s. The third wave pulled Mexican women to South Dakota’s Black Hills.

Mexican women migrated into the Black Hills by the mid-1990s, and some women crossed the border while pregnant or with children. Investigating and analyzing their migratory journey opened a much more extensive discussion of their lifestyle in Mexico. At the start of this project, I was unaware of the social climate in rural Mexico during the 1970s through the 1990s that pitted women and their future beneath men. Their stories of crossing the border seemed more intense than the men’s because of the different dangers they faced solely because they were women. This prompted me to expand on their lives in Mexico, which led to discoveries of the
new freedoms they experienced when they migrated to South Dakota. Getting jobs and providing for their families was something the women in this thesis did not think possible if they stayed in Mexico. As they developed their identity as more than homemakers, women also instilled their culture and traditions in the Mexican community. Practicing their culture came naturally to them, but it was difficult in terms of what the Black Hills offered. Nonetheless, the women reached out to local churches, requested their traditions to be included, and wanted Spanish mass. Their next step to reach a new level of independence was to learn English and gain citizenship.

The research process for this thesis required patience and persistence because my sources were still active members of this community. Many community members initially felt defensive because of the social climate surrounding immigrants, and they did not think their stories held historical value. After describing the focus of this thesis, they seemed apprehensive and avoided giving me a direct answer. However, when I interviewed the second generation of the community, listening in, the first generation began to feel more comfortable and to better understand my interest in their history and the origin of the Mexican community in the Black Hills. Soon they agreed to be interviewed. Providing an array of questions leads to fruitful conversations. As the interviewer, I set up an environment where they felt comfortable, provided clear recordings, and transcribed the audio recordings. Reviewing the transcripts, adding new questions inspired by their answers, and setting up second interviews were always a delight. Oral history entitled me to specific details that captured the human experience and emotion of immigration history. I knew this project would have challenges because of the lack of primary and secondary sources for the area. Mexican immigration and Mexican American history tend to focus on the border states because the border states have the highest populations of Mexican nationals and migrants. Some secondary sources provided context for the surrounding states.
Statistical evidence fell short in the oral history research and prompted extra work by searching for secondary sources to lead me to statistical data.

The interviews were very telling, meaning the experience rather than the content. For example, I was able to compare and contrast what language dominated the interviews. The first wave conducted their interviews entirely in English, and the second wave stated they preferred English. However, Mexican women and the third wave spoke in Spanish because that was natural for them. Juan, from the second wave, stated he had forgotten his Spanish. After the death of his brother Hugo, he had no one to speak Spanish to because his children, wife, and grandchildren only spoke English. The third wave and the women continued speaking Spanish, and Spanish became the dominant language in their households. Oral history investigation encouraged new challenges. By the end of the research journey, I helped produce primary sources that gave members of the Mexican community a chance to share their stories in their preferred language and their struggles.

South Dakota's immigration and agriculture history lacks the Mexican narrative, and this thesis only provided a glimpse of the Mexican presence in the state. A much broader project to encompass other Mexican residents within the state would be an avenue of exploration and collecting their oral history accounts to preserve their history. Recording their journeys into the country and ultimately to the state would determine what attracted them to South Dakota. In other words, what were South Dakota's pull factors, and what pushed Mexicans to settle almost 2,000 miles from their home country? Capturing and analyzing Mexican's role in the state's agriculture or workforce in its meat production could also be explored. One route I wanted to include was how the Pine beetle impacted the timber industry and the Mexican community. Logging has experienced a steady decline since 2015 and has Mexicans questioning if they need
to relocate to find job security. Some have moved to Wyoming, abandoning the Black Hills and what they presumed to be a forever home. Others stayed because logging became their profession, and they took pride in their work. Studying the identity of South Dakota’s first and second-generation Mexicans calls for exploration, especially as some second-generation Mexicans navigate through the limitations of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA). Creating a history of Mexican immigrant women in South Dakota or the Great Plains would offer a new perspective on immigration history. Immigration history tends to portray the typical Mexican immigrant being a single male looking for work, but that simply is not true. Mexican women have been migrating to the United States since World War II. Women migrate for employment, to better their future, and for familial reasons.

Nationally, my thesis has contributed to immigration history by providing a social aspect of migrating into the United States. Immigration history tends to focus on Congressional legislation passed that have altered the entrance of immigrants or the deportation and entrance statistics. The migratory journey of Mexican migrants tends to be quickly glossed over in historical monographs and research, but the reality of the subject needs to be acknowledged. The account of this thesis also contributes to the migratory history of Mexico and the Mexican government’s ongoing struggle to help impoverished states.

Migrating to the United States was not meant to be a permanent stay for the Mexicans in this thesis. Mexicans wanted to return to their home in Mexico, but they settled and took pride in their work in the timber industry. The Black Hills became their home and they built a life there. The growing Mexican population in the United States debunks the pigeon mindset as more Mexicans settle and spread throughout the country. The Black Hills Mexican community of this thesis is one of many Mexican communities in the United States that question if their stories are
valuable to their state's history. If anything, I hope my thesis settles their doubts as it rightfully places them in South Dakota's history.
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