

A Reading of Walls: The Politics and Economics of Print in a Mexicano Community

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ABSTRACT

I attempt a rhetorical reading of print on three walls or surfaces within a Latino community that is mostly Mexican in origin and located in a medium-sized Midwestern city. The three surfaces are the bedroom walls of a teenaged child whose parents are Mexicano, the Spanish print on downtown storefronts, and gang graffiti on buildings close to a new strip mall. I read these surfaces in order to highlight the socioeconomic and ethnic tensions of the city. In a larger sense, however, my reading also argues that communities, particularly in modern urban settings, are woven with each other's ways of being, and this means that traditional notions of cultural and ethnic identity are questionable. Another argument of the paper concerns the rhetorical nature of social science texts, particularly ethnographic texts; hence, knowledge-making is also story-making.