

# The Construction of Ethnic Identity among Mexican-Americans in St. Paul, Minnesota in the Post-WWII Era

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the complex processes and discourses in the construction of identity among Mexican Americans in St. Paul, Minnesota during the post-war period of 1945-1960. The construction of ethnicity within a group arises out a complex interaction between external and internal influences. It results of the tension between social and political contexts, arising from the desire of the group to maintain cultural traditions within a society that requires a certain degree of conformity from immigrants. The pressure to conform to post-war Minnesota society significantly affected Mexican-Americans in St. Paul who did not desire to surrender their cultural traditions and values and constantly sought to define their distinctiveness. The formation of ethnic identity was a process of interaction between the White communities' definition of the Mexican American community and how they envisioned Mexican Americans would conform to American political, social, and economic institutions, as well as, Mexican American own construction of ethnicity. According to the author, the annual Independence Day celebrations played a crucial role in the construction of the Mexican American identity. It is an event that was assimilationist but also resistant to assimilation, reactive to larger social trends but also assertive and formative. The celebrations reflect the incredibly complex processes involved in "becoming Mexican American."