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EL CERRITO, NEW MEXICO: A CHANGING VILLAGE

By CHARLES P. LOOMIS*

INTRODUCTION

Isolated in the high mesas of New Mexico, the village of El Cerrito, thirty miles from Las Vegas, New Mexico, was originally studied in 1939.1 For over a decade and a half this original study has been the standard reference describing the life and culture of the Spanish-speaking people living in the rural areas of the southwestern United States. During the past decade of prosperity and good wages, however, phenomenal changes have taken place as a result of the migration of these people from isolated villages to the cities.2 In an effort to understand these changes, a restudy of El Cerrito was undertaken during the summer of 1956.

Historical background. Although there is no detailed historical record of the origin of El Cerrito, it is known that the date of present occupancy goes back well over a century. All villagers in El Cerrito are of native or Spanish-American stock, descendants of Conquistadores and the indigenous population with which they mixed. The Spanish heritage of livestock raising, language, family and church which are still strong was blended with the Indian heritage of such cultural traits as the irrigation ditch and its dam, the use of adobe for building, crops and foods, and the methods and tools of farming.

Most of the present residents are descendants of people who migrated to El Cerrito from San Miguel, twelve miles north of El Cerrito on the Pecos river from which both villages and many other similar ones both above and below

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2. The percentage by 1950 of people of Spanish surname, a people originally almost entirely rural, who had become urban was as follows: Arizona 61.4, California 75.8, Colorado 49.7, New Mexico 41.0, and Texas 68.1. See Robert H. Talbert, Spanish-Name People in the Southwest and West, Fort Worth: Leo Potishman Foundation, Texas Christian University, 1955, p. 23.
derive their irrigation water. The original settlers in the area knew more about stock raising than farming. Their forefathers had passed up good arable land in their trek eastward to the Las Vegas area, thus named because it appeared to be good grazing land. Over the last fifty or so years most of the twenty to thirty families who have owned property in the village at any one time were dependent upon the several stockmen of the village for wages as herdsmen. Formerly in this setting as elsewhere in the Spanish Borderlands a well-regulated and organized system developed in the village so that available work was distributed in accordance with need to those not regularly on the “patron’s payroll.” But this patron-villager relationship is a thing of the past because practically all patrons and others of Spanish-speaking ancestry have lost their grazing lands and like the other villagers must seek work outside the village.

Now as in the past the majority of the families actually living in El Cerrito own and operate from ten to forty acres of dry-farming land plus one to four acres of irrigated land. Most of the land is used for subsistence farming and garden crops producing little if any cash income. Most of the irrigated land owned by villagers was a part of the original land grant handed down from the original San Miguel del Bado Grant. Other dry land was added by homesteading and some purchases. Only one family now living in the village has enough land without renting for a family-sized stock farm or ranch. This family owns some 2,000 acres of mesa land upon which graze about a hundred head of cattle. Only this family has any appreciable cash income from agriculture.

Fifty years ago the people of El Cerrito and elsewhere in north-central New Mexico possessed vast holdings of land used for grazing. Secondarily, small irrigated plots were set aside for subsistence agriculture purposes. Today the outlying mesa which once supported the livestock industry has been transferred to other hands. Thus most remaining units are the small, irrigated plots that were never of adequate size and fertility to support a family.

The great exodus. According to demographic theories which attempt to explain migration, continued depression in
the village and continued prosperity outside should lead to out-migration. Of course, solidary communities with a high level of integration such as El Cerrito may resist the pressure longer than others. At the time of the first study in 1940 there were 26 family units in El Cerrito. Today there remain only four family units and four old couples whose children have gone elsewhere to live. Fifteen families have locked their doors, boarded up the windows, and left to work at year-round jobs elsewhere. Further, three families have died out. Thus about one-fourth of the people who were in El Cerrito in 1940 remain there today, and these are predominantly older people.

Such an exodus takes the very heart and soul out of a community. El Cerrito is a prime example. An older person said, “When we die El Cerrito is gone, and that won’t be long now.” This is really not true because there are two younger families with farming and ranching units large enough to support them, especially if eventually those who have left decide to sell or rent their land to them. Two other families with older parents have sons who may take over their units, and one family has moved to another ranch some 50 miles away and uses the El Cerrito products there. Nevertheless, a community with many old people reflects a different set of aspirations than a community of young people. Even during the depression the community with its young people furnished not nearly such a gloomy and pessimistic prospect as do the older people now during prosperity. A decade and a half ago one out of every ten was over 55 and one out of every fifteen over 65. Now one out of every three is over 55 and one out of every seven is 65 and over.

In the previous study great stress was placed upon the importance of the family to the individual and community. What has this exodus done to the family? How has the family functioned during this period of near crisis? We shall discuss this in relation to the social systems of the village. Suffice it here to say that of those whose destinations are known almost four out of five have gone to the one city of Pueblo, Colorado. Another 12 live in cities near Pueblo and all are more or less in constant contact with one another. All return
or plan to return to El Cerrito even if less frequently than formerly. Thus, in exodus as when the homes in the village were full, the family remains the strongest sub-system.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION —
PRINCIPAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

The community's sub-systems. As is well known few societies manifest stronger community integration than the Spanish-speaking villages of the Southwestern United States. This is in general true despite bitter cleavages common in many villages but from which El Cerrito has been free for many years. Community-wide rites of passage and activities such as weddings and funerals, church ceremonies, cooperative irrigation clearing activities, dances, Christmas school programs, school closing programs in the old days involved most members. However, in the last decades with most of the able bodied working men and their families away the community as a social system is not at all what it once was. No longer are there school programs because loss of population has brought about the closing of the school. No longer are there dances because the school building where dances were originally held has been sold and is no longer available and because there are fewer young people who want to dance. Other community-wide social events which continue are so small and lacking in the original enthusiasm that a villager said "it is only the skin and bones of the old El Cerrito."

The family. In few societies does the family have a more prominent place among the social systems and organizations than does the family in Spanish and Latin American culture. In the villages the family remains the basic channel through which all organized activities must flow. At an early age the child learns that almost no responsibility is greater than that of loyalty to and support of the family. The various status-roles of family members pattern life somewhat differently than they do in Anglo communities in the same area. Formerly unmarried girls and boys did not mingle except at dances or in situations providing parental supervision. Girls
in El Cerrito were not even allowed to walk away from the village unchaperoned. Now that the first eight grades of the school in El Cerrito have been transferred upstream to the larger village of Villanueva the control necessary for the separation of the sexes is somewhat relaxed. The parents who frequently bemoan the weakening of controls realize that children must meet somehow if they are to marry. Actually girls and boys meet more or less clandestinely in Villanueva, Las Vegas or elsewhere. Mating no longer has the parental supervision it once did. Originally marriages were arranged by the parents when a youth expressed an interest in a girl whom he had seen at dances, in the school or elsewhere. Now the village for the first time in its history has a woman with children deserted by the father of the children. One of the daughters of a respected family, the mother originally met the father in town. The deserted girl has returned with her children to live with her parents, who had little to say about her marriage. An older lady said, “Children going outside for recreation is bad for their morals. They come to respect their parents less.” As will be indicated later, not only are the customs leading to marriage changing but the status-roles of parents and children are changing. On the whole they are changing in the direction of the lower class Anglo family.

During the early years of the great depression it was the extended family which provided the main support of the frequently hungry and poverty stricken villagers of El Cerrito. Later during the New Deal, relief, WPA work, and many other provisions made available from governmental sources saved them from real starvation. But the family contacts of the isolated villagers in the county seat and elsewhere provided the information necessary to make these resources and facilities available.

Now during prosperity many of the families have moved together to Colorado and many work in the same plants. Family systems which once sought out the relief and WPA jobs and other temporary work opportunities now report more permanent job opportunities and provide the security required in the transition from isolated village to metropoli-
tan life. In fact most large cities in the Southwest are interlaced with cliques of Spanish-speaking people who once lived in villages. At the present El Cerrito is closer in terms of family ties to Pueblo, Colorado, a city of 70,000, which is 263 miles distant, than it is to other towns and cities which are closer geographically. Family and village ties have helped remove the dozens of people who had no future in El Cerrito. Now that they are removed they unite through what we shall later describe as polite separatism to preserve the Latin-American culture which El Cerrito through geographic isolation preserved from Anglo culture for so many generations.

The Church. Although El Cerrito has never had a resident priest, the Catholic tradition has always been strong and no Protestants have ever lived there permanently. The church is still the best kept and appearing building in the village, and as in most Spanish-speaking communities is centrally located in the plaza. Probably there has been less change in the religious activities of the village than in those of any other social system. Services are held at least once a week by the villagers themselves with the priest from Villanueva conducting mass once a month. Two sisters accompany the priest once a month to teach the children their catechism. During the months of May, June and October the local people hold daily services in the church to which the women and just a few men are regular attendants. As previously the chief church celebration and for that matter village celebration is that of the “Function,” held in the fall or winter in honor of its Patron Saint. Whereas previously the ceremony lasted two days with feasts, it now lasts only one day. The feasts are served and ritual and ceremony arranged by the two local church officials, “Mayordomos de la copia,” appointed each year by their predecessors and approved by the priest. Whereas previously between one hundred and two hundred participated now the number is only 25 to 50. The greatest change in the activities of the church is in the number and composition of those who attend resulting from the change in the composition of the village. Some of the pews which were filled regularly a quarter of a century ago have been vacated by death but the church still has many older mem-
bers because it is they and only a handful of younger families who have remained.

The Ditch Association. From an economic point of view there is no community-wide social system of as much importance as the ditch association. It is certainly the oldest community organization. Its function is that of controlling, maintaining, cleaning, and repairing the irrigation system, the most important components of which are the dam and the main ditch. The dam, built on the principle of those found in use by the Indians hundreds of years ago when the Spanish arrived and consisting of stones and brush which are dropped in the river about a mile above the village, is in constant danger of being washed out. The rather long ditch leading from the dam located upstream to the fields around the village requires regular cleaning and repairing, particularly in the spring. About a quarter of a century ago each man was assessed one day’s labor for each acre of irrigated land. Since the great decline in the village population the assessment is not so great, one day of work for every two acres of land. Those absent or for other reasons not able to work must pay three dollars per day for a substitute. The mayordomo of the ditch, or the ditch boss, and the ditch board or commission, composed of the president, secretary and treasurer, are still elected annually by popular vote in the village. The Board makes or changes rules regarding the ditch and the mayordomo or ditch boss supervises all work done on the ditch during the year. Only the ditch boss does not contribute the regular quota of hand labor — his status-role requiring executive functions. Whereas earlier the annual spring cleaning of the ditch was the occasion of considerable festivity usually lasting about two days, this is somewhat less true now. It is a job to get finished, and there are fewer to do the work and to make merry. Today as earlier many villagers wish that a government program might improve the ancient irrigation system, making it possible to raise the water higher and prevent the inevitable loss of crops when a flood washes out the dam.

The school. When asked what has been the most important event affecting the community during the last five
years, several villagers mentioned the closing of the school by the County Board of Education because there were insufficient children of school age in the village to support a school. In 1940 two teachers were regularly employed to teach at the village school. Today the 14 children in El Cerrito are transported by bus to the school in the nearest village, Villanueva, over a dangerous and rocky road which in many other parts of the country would be considered practically impassable. Most of the villagers with children said they worried when they were en route to and from and at the Villanueva school during the long days. This would have caused even more anxiety a decade and a half ago when children and women seldom left the village.

Several villagers mentioned the great loss when the County Board of Education sold the school building. One room of this building is now used as a dwelling, the other room is used as a storage space for hay. The closed school with its desks, covered with jack-knife carved initials, under a pile of hay must produce nostalgia for those who learned to read and write, attended village dances, met their present spouses, participated in local political meetings, and all the other non-religious functions of the village there of earlier time. In fact for the author the image of the school house with its screens partly ripped off, hay protruding from a partly opened door, and the broken flag pole symbolized an almost deserted village, a village which is dying. No longer do parents and children peer out of windows ready to send the children off to school upon the irregular arrival of the teachers. No longer do parents expect them home for a brief period of lunch at noon after which they scampered back to school. Now the school bus arrives regularly and children must be ready or be left behind.

The Well Association. Until 1949 all water used for drinking, cooking, washing and bathing was carried in buckets from the irrigation ditch. Throughout the area this general practice resulted in many New Mexican counties having very high death rates, especially among young children, due to dysentery. Typhoid was endemic in many places and old and young alike in many villages suffered chronic
diarrhea. In 1956 when families in El Cerrito were asked what the most important events in the village were in the last years many answered, "The water project." It is interesting to note why they believe this to be true. The State Health Department officials are agreed that the main function of the well program is that of improving the health of the villages. The villagers, when questioned why they thought the attainment of the well and water system was so important, never once gave this reason. The reasons given were: The water tastes better, beans and other foods cooked in it taste better, it is softer, it avoids the effort and trouble getting the water from the ditch, too often the ditch water is muddy and must settle for too long a period before it is used. Several villagers claimed the ditch water was perfectly healthy, this notwithstanding the fact that there have been deaths in the village from typhoid, although usually not attended by a doctor. Most people commented upon the fact that the water from the Pecos river is harder and does not taste as good as the water from the well.

A law passed in the 1949 state legislature resulting from Senate Bill No. 58 states that villages may form a "Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association" which will provide for the installation of sanitary domestic water facilities, thus eliminating the present hazardous practices involved in the use of ditch water, open shallow wells, creeks, and rivers which are subject to contamination and, therefore, are injurious to public health. The law further specifies that "the persons so associating, their successors and those who may thereafter become members of said association, shall constitute a body corporate by the name set forth in such certificate and by such name may sue and be sued, and shall have capacity to make contracts, acquire, hold, enjoy, dispose of and convey property real and personal and to do any other act or thing necessary or proper for carrying out the purposes of their organization; provided, however, that such association created by this Act shall not have power to become indebted or issue bonds of any kind." Although El Cerrito and other similar villages had earlier held land grants under corporate arrangements based upon Spanish
and Mexican law, this is the first time El Cerrito has entered such a contractual arrangement under State law.

The San Miguel County health officials in Las Vegas and Santa Fe were surprised that little El Cerrito, isolated and without electricity as it was then, should be one of the first of the area to carry through negotiations and actually organize, prepare articles of incorporation and execute incorporation of an Association making the facilities available under the Corporation Commission of the state. In an effort to explain why this little conservative and isolated community applied in June of the year the law was passed and had its water supply in the same month, an official commented as follows:

El Cerrito unlike many villages does not have factional strife which is a frequent hindrance to the villages of the area interested in this program. There were no wells there originally so that no one already had water. In Villanueva, for example, there was both factional strife so common in these villages and some families already had wells. Some of the better-to-do people who had wells were opposed to a community project. El Cerrito is more like La Cueva — just one big family. La Cueva got theirs easily, too. Also Luis Aragon, a leader there in El Cerrito, pushed it. He is progressive and aggressive.

There is the further fact that El Cerrito has sent its share of migrants to Las Vegas, the county seat, and some of these people keep tab on what goes on in the court house and state legislature. This rural-urban linkage through relatives is used in politics and was very important in getting relief and making use of other facilities during the depression.

Although villagers from El Cerrito initiated action by talking with County Department of Health officials, a representative of the county office initiated the project in the village by holding a public meeting at which all who attended signed an application and a contract specifying among other things that

We agree to contribute all unskilled labor, such skilled labor as is available and desirable and all local materials such as sand, gravel, stone, timbers, vigas, adobes and any other materials it is feasible and desirable to obtain locally.
The state of New Mexico paid $3,444.43 for the engineering and geological services in planning the well, for its digging, and for the equipment including the gas engine, pump, tank, etc. The people contributed $1,939.00 in cooperative labor, digging the trenches within which to lay the lead pipes and in materials such as adobe, vigas, etc. Twenty-one families, most of whom are not now living in the village, paid the $1.00 membership fee and only one family in the village now uses the ditch water. This family is a member but claims that it cannot afford to make the main connection to the house.

Maintaining the pump. Typical of the Well Association and life in the village is the manner in which it is maintained and operated. The gasoline tank on the pump holds two gallons of gasoline which will fill the water reservoir tank holding a thousand or so gallons of water. When the pump stops because the gasoline tank is dry, the secretary-treasurer sends a child to collect either five or ten cents from each family to purchase gasoline for the next filling. Five cents is collected if the reserve water tank is only half empty and only one gallon of gas is needed to fill it. The child collects ten cents from each family if two gallons of gas are needed to fill the tank.

In 1956 the well was idle for two months because no one could make the repairs required for the engine and the pump. This and the insistence of the County Department of Health officials in Las Vegas prompted the officials including the president, vice president, a secretary-treasurer and two other commissioners to begin levying a $1.00 a month upkeep charge from the eight members now in the village and using the water. This forms a reserve fund which the secretary-treasurer keeps for an emergency. Many of the villagers believe the one dollar a month collected by the secretary-treasurer is used for paying off an indebtedness. This is an interesting misapprehension on the part of these villagers because the people are not under obligation to pay for the well but only to maintain it.

According to the records in the County Health Department in Las Vegas there are ten inside connections and six or eight washing machines in the village. There are as yet no
inside toilets or baths. The county health officials say that in other villages almost all families who get water soon get washing machines, and as funds are available, toilet and bath equipment is bought piece by piece.

The community. A decade and a half ago El Cerrito was described as an example of the convergence of neighborhood and community, a grouping within which almost every one of the two dozen or so families could claim at least a third cousin relationship with every other. Sociometric interaction charts described several powerful extended family groupings all linked to one another. Now, with three quarters of the people away from the village most of the time and several families gone permanently, El Cerrito is becoming merely a neighborhood in the trade center community of Las Vegas, New Mexico.

El Cerrito remains a community in the sense described by writers such as Brownell⁴ and Mead⁴ who see the small community as an arena for the nurture and development of the ideal socialized personality, the internalizing of the generalized other, the basic unit of strong healthy nations. However, unlike most other such neighborhoods it is isolated geographically and culturally and, except for the linkages through family ties to those working in the large centers, remains a closed system in many respects.

Social Processes

Social-cultural linkage with the outside world. The third most important event in the village in the last decade and a half, after the organization of the Well Association and the closing of the school, according to the people, was the coming of electricity. In 1952 an engineer of the Rural Electrical Administration located in Mora, from which the REA cooperative of the area is operated, visited the village and called a

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meeting of those who wanted electricity. At this meeting seven members signed an agreement to the effect that if the line were extended to El Cerrito they would install lights. Two families then argued against bringing this facility to the village and refused to sign the agreement, saying they could not afford the service. Both have since joined the cooperative and become users of electricity. The minimum monthly rate per family in El Cerrito is four dollars—fifty cents more than in neighboring Villanueva because El Cerrito is more inaccessible and farther from the center of distribution. Older people and some younger people, too, worry about the payments which could not be made if children working away were to lose their jobs or if another depression came such as they suffered in the thirties. Thus the fixed payments of $4.00 minimum per month for electricity per family (some must now pay over $10.00), $1.00 for water and then the many other installment payments for the second hand car, the refrigerator, the washing machine, television set, or other items indicate the linkage of this once isolated, subsistence village to the greater society. The coming of electricity was the final link which brought the outside world into El Cerrito. Most of the remaining families have viewed television in the home of the one family which has a set bought on the installment plan.

Comparing El Cerrito now with El Cerrito a decade and a half ago, it is the closeness of the linkage of the once isolated village to the greater society which most impresses the visitor. This linkage, in spite of a difficult road and considerable distance, is now firmly established. A decade and a half ago there were two radios serviced by electricity from batteries when their owners could afford them. These radios functioned only on occasion and were frequently out of order. Now practically all have radios or easy access to them. Then two old automobiles and two antiquated trucks were the only motored transportation to Las Vegas. Usually families with no auto or truck needing to go to town paid $3.00 to the owner for the privilege of riding into town and back with his purchases. After a trip to town was arranged those not needing to go were carried for less than the $3.00. Today all families
with younger people own a car and/or a truck. Most families go to town once a week and the cost of riding with a neighbor has been reduced to $1.50. Families working in Colorado or in other places return occasionally to check on their property and the many members of families now living in the village return more frequently. These latter especially send back money and bring various electrical gadgets, even refrigerators, radios and other large items.

After a decade and a half of ever accelerating and ramifying social-cultural linkages El Cerrito, still isolated geographically, and separated from the urban world by a stretch of road which, especially after rains, would frighten most drivers from other regions, now accepts the values of groupings in Las Vegas, Pueblo, Denver and Albuquerque above those of the village. For all except the few families who remain El Cerrito, which they still affectionately call La Placita, is little more than a possible haven during unemployment or a possible depression. All the older families and many of the younger people know that it could not serve as a haven during another depression unless the government provided the equivalent of PWA work jobs and other relief payments. Increased use of automobiles and trucks, radio, television and more frequent contacts in Las Vegas and the more remote centers which provide more and more year-round employment have now linked El Cerrito to the major social systems of the nation and world.

During the field work on the original study over a decade and a half ago the author lived with a family and came to know intimately two boys in their teens. In his diary written then is the following:

Bene and I prepared to go to Las Vegas. He was to see about an NYA job. . . . When Christiano (the father) sent his son with two pails of provisions and a shabby old pasteboard suitcase to Vegas for 15 days, he gave him much fatherly advice. Bene is about 20. The father showed real emotion. Tears stood thick in his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

The same scene was repeated earlier when the author took the younger brother of Bene for an overnight trip to Las
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Vegas and Santa Fe — the first such visit he had had in his life. A decade and a half ago this usually happened when sons or daughters left the village. Although family ties are practically as strong as ever today, the weekly contacts of most families with Las Vegas by car and truck, the daily school bus trips to Villanueva, mass media and many other contacts would make the above notes out of keeping with life today. Social-cultural linkage with the outside world has been achieved.

**Boundary maintenance.** Polite separatism characterizes the basic nature of boundary maintenance of Spanish-speaking groups in New Mexico. The evolution of this pattern is complex and has developed over the many decades of Anglo-Hispano interaction. In a brief space we can only sketch certain aspects of the evolution of polite separatism as a boundary maintaining device. Suffice it to say that even before the annexation of New Mexico by the United States in 1848 and in ever-accelerating measure thereafter, “invading” Anglos who generally maintained an exalted belief in their own superiority pushed their business and other interests in “the Anglo way,” that is, through the application of shrewd, often sharp, practices. Against this aggressive and industrious Anglo enterprise the natives were unable to compete. Spanish-speaking stockmen lost their grazing lands and watering facilities, business men lost their trade in the keen competition. Moreover, in the village centers such as Socorro, Taos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque,

> "Houses were opened for the indulgence of every wicked passion; and each midnight hour heralded new violent and often bloody scenes for the fast filling record of crime. The peaceable Mexicans hastened to pack up their little store of worldly wealth, and, with their wives and children, fled from the rapidly depopulating village."

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The results of this interaction have been summarized by Zeleny:

The average Spanish-American drawing what security he needs from the family, community and church, as an individual possesses "a serenity, a lack of competitive zeal, and a contented enjoyment of leisure and simple pleasures which makes him stand in contrast to the more tense, aggressive Anglo-American. . . . The reaction against their treatment by the Anglos as well as the conflict of cultural differences and values have tended to provoke attitudes among the Spanish-American group that have reinforced the pattern of social separatism. The Spanish-Americans have voluntarily remained aloof from social intercourse with the Anglos in part because of hostile attitudes toward them. From the time Anglo-Americans first appeared in New Mexico they were called 'Gringos' a term of contempt referring to them as foreigners or intruders, a group unlearned in the ways of the country.7

Through the device of polite separatism El Cerrito and the many similar villages retain their Spanish heritage despite the fact that most of the people who live there now work outside in the Anglo dominated urban cultures. Actually for generations this pattern of outside work has prevailed. Previously the most common outside participation was in Spanish-speaking section gangs on railroads, groups of Spanish-speaking people working in harvest fields and tending sugar beets, or in mines where the work groups were largely Spanish-speaking. Now the principal migrations are to the industrial centers of Colorado and infiltration with Anglo workers is more common. Nevertheless, the device of polite separatism results in groups of El Cerrito villagers living and maintaining contacts on and off the job in Pueblo, Denver and Albuquerque. Boundary maintenance makes accultura- tion to the national culture very slow indeed.

Olen Leonard and the author as Anglos spent many months of patient and constant effort to gain acceptance in El Cerrito in the thirties. Some contact has been retained in the intervening years, but the author was again impressed upon re-entering the village at the effectiveness of polite

7. Ibid., pp. 312 and 316.
separatism as a boundary maintaining device. If we had not
invested the many months of helpful effort in cultivating the
friendship of the villagers, and if they had not learned in the
fifteen years since the field work that we meant no harm, our
reception would have been that of polite contact and avoid­
ance. The original study and the camera report of the United
States Department of Agriculture had been circulated in the
village and by Senator Dennis Chavez in New Mexico gen­
erally, so that our status-roles as non-hostile but objective
investigators were legitimized. On the revisit two New Mex­
ican-Spanish-speaking graduate students accompanied the
author, and even their activities were viewed with suspicion
until people learned that they were helping on the re-study of
the village. In terms of the basic cultural and social compo­
nents of El Cerrito, the device of polite separatism has been
an effective boundary maintaining device. Social-cultural
linkage to the society outside has not meant that the basic
value orientation and social structure has changed greatly.

Decision making. Decision making on a community level
in El Cerrito now and fifteen years ago differs from that in
many other Spanish-speaking villages. This was emphasized
by the County Health Department officials who worked in the
village while the well association was organized. As indicated
above the New Mexico Department of Health is attempting
through what amounts to outright subsidy to introduce com­
munity pumps into villages where the hazard of sickness is
great because drinking water is taken from surface water
sources. Typically the villages are torn by bitter inter-family
feuds. In such villages if one group begins negotiations for
a well it inevitably meets the opposition of the traditional
opposing group. Negotiations may thus be held at a stalemate
for months or even years.

As stated in the original study,\textsuperscript{8} the two leading families
in El Cerrito long ago carried their feud to the point of actual
murder and severe beatings. Both families lost heavily in
sheep and money and one finally withdrew from the village.
The termination of the feud and the subsequent unity ac-

\textsuperscript{8} Leonard and Loomis, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 329.
counts for the fact that El Cerrito was one of the first villages in the region to agree to install a community well and join the REA cooperative and that never has difficulty in the election of officials for managing the most important community cooperative, the ditch association. Today as in previous generations all officers except the appointive church officials are elected by popular vote.

In the case of the village decision to organize the well association and install water, the initiator was the head of a family which is now the number two family of the village in terms of wealth and the only owner of a television set. Through almost unbelievable energy and thrift this family has moved from a position of dire poverty to that of being relatively well-to-do. A decade and a half ago he would not have been the chief decision maker of the village in an activity of this kind. Then the leading families spoke of him somewhat disparagingly as a striver and one too interested in his own advancement. Then, although he could not speak English well, the author thought his motivation in this respect stemmed from sentiments more typically Anglo than that of the leading families. Today this man, who fifteen years ago was considered as a bit overly ambitious for the village and not a key person, is without question one of the three leading men in decision making in most all community-wide decisions.

*Communication.* Communication as in earlier times within the village is primarily by word of mouth. The author's revisit to the village was known and evaluated in a very short time after his arrival. Visiting is still the most common form of pastime and recreation and is going on most of the waking hours and especially after church and other community gatherings. Since the closing of the school, the discontinuance of dancing and school entertainments, and the decrease in the number of full-time residents, communication and interaction opportunities are provided mostly through visiting. The return of relatives frequently without notice provides a time of intense interaction for the larger family group involved. Now that so many families are away, and since many do not write, a family may return to find those kin away whom they most wanted to visit. For example,
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on the door of the house in which the author lived in the thirties, now boarded up because the family is in Pueblo, Colorado, is the following inscription in pencil: "We came to see you and found you had left. Flora." However, since coming and going is mostly by families and since larger family groupings usually go outside to the same larger city, frequently working in the same plant, the coming and going of individuals are generally known to those most concerned.

Language. Whereas fifteen years ago few of the villagers could speak English now most young people, many of whom have served in the armed forces in various parts of the world or have attended the relatively good schools in Villanueva, can speak English. Likewise the many who have migrated to work and who remain in areas where English is spoken on the job have more practice in it and speak well. Thus one villager who scarcely speaks English commenting about his three sons said, "Cirilio was with the Army in Europe, Candido went with the Army to Africa and the Orient, and Teodoro was with the Navy. I wish I had learned the English my boys know. We would all be better off."

Incidentally El Cerrito differs from many Spanish-speaking New Mexican towns and villages which lost many sons in the Philippine Islands. The National Guard units sent to the Philippine Islands were made up of people living close enough to centers such as Las Vegas with armories in which to drill weekly. El Cerrito and similar villages were too isolated for this and had no national guard.

VALUES AND STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE VILLAGE

Some Changes in Ends and Norms. Fifteen years ago the people of El Cerrito would argue the advantages of life in their village with almost anyone. Although many knew that only a few could gain their chief livelihood there, most truly believed it was the best place they knew to live and bring up children. Men working in section gangs on the railroads, in beetfields to the north or later in various plants during the war longed for the day they would return to El Cerrito. Now all this has changed. Only three or four families want to stay
permanently and they doubt that many of those working away will return permanently. The tendency noted in the thirties to glorify the village's past still exists but now beside these past glories is placed a gloomy future. "There is little left. No dances, just a few people. There is little going on." Each longs to visit friends and relatives on weekly trips to Las Vegas or to visit with relatives in Pueblo, Colorado, Denver, or Albuquerque.

In summary we may say that as villagers in El Cerrito attempt to consider the changes they will or should accomplish through community-wide cooperation, that is, the ends and objectives of the community, they report a gloomy prospect. Some hope that there might develop some industry or employment so the people could earn a living and remain a part of the community, but most believe little short of a miracle will produce this. Aside from the pessimistic view of the future, villagers are anxious, as in the past, to cooperate in any way to improve the life of the village. As the children become more acculturated to outside ways a sort of marginality in the effectiveness of the old and new norms apply. People are uneasy about an apparent development of immorality in terms of old Latino norms and manifest uncertain and ambivalent attitudes toward Anglo norms, which some are adopting and with which more are in contact.

*Some changes in status-roles and social rank.* In the village itself such status-roles as those of father, mother, grandparents have remained relatively unchanged. Age and those who are parents and grandparents are still respected. However, in the urban centers to which the larger family units have gone, the villagers are accepting more and more the Anglo’s low evaluation of all those who do not earn, including the grandparents and older persons. In the village, however, several of the grandparents are provided with grandchildren to help them with chores and housework. In the urban centers all indications are that with the husband away on the job, the Anglo pattern of increasing social rank and status for wives and mothers from villages such as El Cerrito is an inevitable development. Men on the job are no longer independent. The Spanish-speaking woman, like Anglo women but unlike her
sisters who remain in the village, can and does contradict her husband at home, particularly regarding the socialization of the children. The urbanized village woman may demand and have time and money of her own to spend as she wishes. She can and is often expected to dress stylishly and to wear makeup. In fact, in contrast to earlier practices, adolescent and younger women are now doing this in villages such as El Cerrito. Older women and younger children follow the norms of status-roles in the villages but children in adolescence are less strictly supervised. The adolescent children are often the chief linkage the parents have with Anglo culture.9

In El Cerrito with the loss of the school the important status-roles of the teachers, members of the school board and pertinent relations to the county school system with its organization disappeared. The various officials of the Ditch Association, Well Association, the non-resident priest, the mayordomos of the church and the justice of the peace are, as a decade and a half ago, the chief status-roles. As indicated above in the discussion of decision making, one family through great industry and thrift has increased its rank in the village. However, the villagers when they move to larger centers enter the lower classes. Only a few become skilled laborers and attain upper-lower class status.

Changes in Social Power. In recent generations no person or family in El Cerrito has had great power as have some of the Spanish-speaking dons and well-to-do leaders elsewhere. No family owns more than a few thousand dollars worth of property. Nevertheless, through able management of political resources based upon available votes the leaders of the village still make their demands felt. This happened when effort was exerted to get the well and when electricity was requested from REA. Relatives from the village are numerous, and although the posts in county offices are not high nor many, politicians do not like to disregard even the smallest villages such as El Cerrito with its many kinship linkages throughout the area. It must be admitted, however, that the

decrease of population in the village, particularly the loss to other states, has lessened its voting strength and power in politics.

Sanctions. Since villagers frequent the larger centers and since there are fewer resources in the village by way of recreation and entertainment, the former negative and positive sanctions of gossip and fear of local disapproval no longer have the efficacy they once had. Thus although most families contribute their quota of labor to the Ditch Association, four resident families among the twenty-one have not paid the monthly levy made by the Well Association. The power of local disapproval of the others is insufficient to make them contribute even though they are able. We doubt that a decade and a half ago these four families would thus deviate. As in the past there are no law enforcement officials in the village and none are needed.

Facilities. From a community point of view there have been substantial losses in facilities since the thirties. There is no village school, no place in which meetings such as the one held for the organization of the Well Association can be held. There is no place for community dances. The chief gains are the well installation and electric light facilities. The road to Las Vegas is some but not much improved. Individual families have improved levels of living through the addition of various facilities such as washing machines, refrigerators, radios and other appliances. Three families own tractors and some motorized farm equipment whereas fifteen years ago there were none in the village. As mentioned earlier, fifteen years ago there were only two dilapidated cars and two old trucks in the village. Now all extended families have a car and/or a truck, or older people have children with such vehicles.

Territoriality. El Cerrito itself has not changed its geographic boundaries, and families do not go further for work than was the case fifteen years ago. However, as mentioned previously the village has heavy and perhaps permanent anchorage points, especially in Pueblo. Also several families from the village live in Albuquerque, Denver, and Las Vegas. Considering the strong family ties and other frequent inter-
action this means that in many ways the actual community of El Cerrito extends now to these distant points.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In the decade and a half since the original study of El Cerrito, a typical isolated Spanish-speaking village in San Miguel County, New Mexico, work opportunities outside the village coupled with continued contraction of local resources and opportunities have finally produced a major exodus. Although working outside the village is nothing new in El Cerrito, the pattern has changed greatly. Whereas formerly males worked on ranches, railroads, in mines and elsewhere a few months and then returned to the village, now many families have left to live the year around away from the village. The exodus has resulted in the loss of three quarters of the population, the school, and most hope for the future of the community. The outside contacts and linkages are producing fundamental changes in the social structure and value orientations of both those who remain in the village and especially those who have left for the urban centers.