

MEXICAN INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN HOUSTON, TEXAS FROM 1900-1940

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Abstract

Initial works on Houston provided homogenized interpretations of early twentieth century Mexicans as a monolithic, shared experience, grouping the entire population under a *colonia* label in a concentrated geographical area (Second Ward and Magnolia Park). These studies generalized the Mexican experience through a framework of exclusion from Anglo spaces between 1900-1940. Exclusion refers to the purposeful acts by Anglos designed to prohibit or limit individuals from participating in a targeted space through tactics of racism, discrimination, isolation, criminalization, exploitation, and/or marginalization. Later writings in the twenty-first century nuanced the historiography by examining the inclusion of Mexicans in social spaces by Anglos. Inclusion refers to instances when Mexicans participated, integrated, or were accepted into Anglo spaces. My study seeks to provide the first Houston monograph juxtaposing both inclusion and exclusion during these first four decades, demonstrating that experiences of Mexicans were heterogeneous.

My study analyzes three spaces in Houston's Progressive and Depression-eras: economic, learning, and social-cultural. In these spaces, I argue that intersecting dynamics shaped Mexican inclusion and exclusion. These dynamics include occupation, gender, class, language, nationality, citizenship, health, morality, residence, music, talent, race, and marital status. My dissertation demonstrates that the lived experiences of Mexicans were diverse. The varying degree of access and level of participation Mexicans faced makes clear that we cannot apply homogenizing generalizations or view the Mexican experience solely through racial exclusion.

In this study, I made use of the latest digital technologies to reconstruct narratives. Using this technology, I searched online repositories such as *The Portal to Texas History* and *GenealogyBank*. Genealogical databases like *Ancestry.com* also provided extensive amounts of

data. Cross-referencing keywords in such digital sources recovers previously unconsidered evidence. Because of this, my work has reconstructed messy and intricate accounts not previously studied. Filling this gulf, this dissertation reflects and contributes to the digital turn, particularly the recovery project Latino/a and Mexican American scholars are engaged in to tell local histories.

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Introduction

Inclusion and Exclusion in the Bayou City

In 1919, Felicitas and Pedro Gomez, along with their children, Maria, Lauro, and Pedro, immigrated to the United States and settled in Houston by May. Pedro found work as a section hand for the Houston Belt and Terminal Railroad. Two months after arriving in Houston, Pedro was working at the South Junction when he stepped in the path of unsupervised rolling freight cars. Both of his legs were severed from his hips. He was buried at Evergreen Cemetery the next day.¹ That November, Felicitas sued Walker D. Hines, Director General of Railroads, over the incident. She contracted the firm of Calvin, Ciulla, and Castle and was represented by Jack Ciulla and Warren Castle. Felicitas was awarded \$1350 and \$150 total for all three children. Her lawyers were given half of Felicitas' settlement, \$750, as payment.² A bilingual, illiterate widow, Felicitas took the reins as head of household and gained employment as a janitor for a Catholic Church. She and the three children rented a home in Second Ward at 2407 Runnels Street.³

Unlike Felicitas' accepted degree of access to legal protection against an Anglo-owned company, other contemporary Houston-based Mexicans faced limited participation amongst their Anglo counterparts. This was the case at Camp Logan, a local Army base, where Mexican and "American" (Anglos) civilian employees were segregated when eating meals in the mess hall. On

¹ "Section Hand Killed," *The Houston Post*, July 17, 1919, accessed February 13, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth609643/m1/8/>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Pedro Gomez, File No. 21467, 16 July 1919, accessed February 13, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

² *Mrs. Felicitas Gomez v. Walker D. Hines, General Director Railroads, et. al.*, 6, 359 (80th District Court 1919).

³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 2, Harris, Texas; Page: 8, Enumeration District: 38, accessed February 13, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

March 25, 1920, one Mexican sat at the “American” table and refused to move when ordered by a waitress. A fight ensued between the two groups resulting in property damage and bodily injuries.⁴ The Gomez and Camp Logan stories illustrate the historical experience of inclusion and exclusion for Mexicans in the United States. Inclusion was demonstrated when Felicitas and Pedro accessed courts controlled by Anglo judges, lawyers, and juries. At the same time, Camp Logan’s Mexican employees were excluded from sharing Anglo space in the segregated mess hall. It is not enough to solely recover these stories, but we must dive deeper into why those events played out the way they did. When we seek answers, we find that there is no clear explanation. Instead, a messy and intricate web of factors led to varying experiences for Mexicans in the early twentieth century, even within the same city such as Houston.

My study seeks to provide the first Houston monograph juxtaposing inclusion and exclusion during these first four decades. It demonstrates that the experiences of Mexicans were heterogeneous. I bring greater nuance to the initial Houston-based Chicano histories covering 1900-1940 by historians Francisco Arturo Rosales and Arnoldo De León. Their interpretations framed the lives of Mexicans within an exclusion, race-based framework and homogenized the city’s Mexican experience.

This exclusion, race-based framework by Rosales and De León described a racist atmosphere where “Jim Crow codes applicable to black people extended to Mexicans,” the latter facing “prejudice, insecurity, poverty, low wages, and cultural alienation.”⁵ These conditions were

⁴ “Takes Part In Kitchen Logan Hospital,” *The Houston Post*, March 26, 1920, accessed June 23, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht607011/m1/2/>.

⁵ Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston* (First Texas A&M University Press ed. University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies; No. 4. 1989), 26; Arturo F. Rosales, “Shifting Self-Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946,” *Aztlán* 16, no. 1-2 (1987): 73-74.

created by Anglos, who economically “forced [Mexicans] to assume the less desirable occupations” and socially placed them in an “almost castelike position.”⁶ As the historiography developed, Thomas Kreneck, Mikaela Selley, and Tyina Steptoe demonstrated that some Anglo acceptance of Mexicano/as occurred but was contingent on race, language, and class.⁷ My study is the first to illustrate the heterogeneity of Mexican American experiences in Houston between 1900-1940 by juxtaposing exclusion and inclusion. As indicated in the opening vignettes, Mexicans participated in Anglo spaces such as the courts. On the other hand, they continued to face segregation from Anglos at the local military base. In addition, these examples highlight how this history cannot be solely viewed from a homogeneous experience.

Homogenizing Interpretations

Initial local histories produced in the 1980s depicted a homogenized Houston narrative in three ways: as a single, shared experience, grouping an entire Mexican population under a *colonia* label, and by focusing on one geographical area (Second Ward and Magnolia Park). The single, shared experience narrative is primarily rooted in the Anglo-Mexicano schism where discrimination, survival, and exclusion defined early Mexican lives. While it is accurate that some contemporary Mexicans used the self-identifier of *colonia* to refer to the Houston Mexican

⁶ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 18; Arturo F. Rosales, “Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive, 1908-1975,” *The Houston Review* III (Summer, 1981): 232.

⁷ Thomas H. Kreneck, *Mexican American Odyssey: Felix Tijerina, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader, 1905-1965* (University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies; No. 2. 2001); Mikaela G. Selley, “The Melesio Gómez Family: Mexican Entrepreneurship in Houston’s Early Twentieth Century” (master’s thesis, University of Houston, 2013); Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

population in general, it was done with a limited perspective of the multitude of Mexican experiences at the time.⁸

The *colonia* label was introduced in Houston historiography by Arturo Rosales, expanded on by Arnolde De León, then perpetuated by later scholars. Rosales defined *colonias* as “Mexican immigrant settlements” which were different from barrios, characterized by the physical boundaries of a Mexican neighborhood. In his article, “Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive,” *colonia* became a unifying identity label to demonstrate the shared experience of an ethnic consciousness amongst Mexicans from various barrios.⁹ In *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, this term culturally defined Houston’s early Mexican community as “a transplant of a culture imported from Mexico.” Socially, it was a term that unified all classes of Mexicans under a “common milieu,” linked by their cultural nationalism and concern with survival amidst a racist atmosphere.¹⁰ In other words, *colonia* was defined as the coalescence of Mexicans culturally and economically due to being excluded from the dominant society through discrimination.

The homogenizing term, *colonia*, is problematic when considering experiences of inclusion within Anglo spaces or when Mexicans themselves took part in intraethnic exclusion. Further revealing is early biculturalism viewed through U.S. government sources, such as World War 1

⁸ For one example, see Mrs. Refugio Ontiveros Oral History, interview by Thomas Kreneck and Joe Torres, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 17 March 1980, <https://cdm17006.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/Interviews/id/168/rec/1>.

⁹ Francisco A. Rosales, “The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Chicago, Houston, and Tucson: Comparisons and Contrasts,” In *Houston: A Twentieth Century Urban Frontier*, eds. Francisco Arturo Rosales and Barry J. Kaplan (Port Washington, N.Y.: Associated Faculty Press, 1983), 59; Ibid., “Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive.”

¹⁰ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 39.

draft cards or naturalization papers. This was demonstrated as Mexicans checked “White” on draft cards or leveraged Anglo friendships as witnesses in their citizenship petitions.¹¹ And lastly, change and continuity over time were neatly unified by centering two East End barrios, the Second Ward and Magnolia Park. For example, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt* characterized any barrio existing outside of the Second Ward as “unique” and “lesser” communities formed “adjacent” to the “heart” of Houston’s Mexican Community.¹² This led to a concentration on East End histories and to considering other barrio histories as peripheral. In contrast to these three homogenizing factors, my research has uncovered a diverse set of experiences in Progressive and Depression-era Houston.

I argue that intersecting dynamics shaped Mexicans’ exclusion or inclusion within different economic, learning, and social-cultural spaces. By dynamics, I refer to the various facets of an individual’s background or environment (dynamics). For the purposes of my dissertation, these dynamics consisted of occupation, gender, class, language, nationality, citizenship, health, morality, residence, music, talent, race, and marital status. The intersection of two or more of these dynamics shaped one’s degree of access or level of participation. My study identifies exclusion as intentional acts by Anglos designed to prohibit or limit individuals from participating within a targeted space through tactics of racism, discrimination, isolation, criminalization, exploitation, and/or marginalization. This could be exclusion from work, labor organizing, schools, residence, dancehalls, movie theaters, or society overall through incarceration. Inclusion refers to instances

¹¹ World War 1 “raised citizenship, patriotism, and identity issues” for Mexicans, which is important factor to consider for Houston Mexicans. Many of the men covered in this dissertation registered for the draft. For more on this topic, see Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 50-57.

¹² De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 10-14.

when Mexicans participated, integrated, or were accepted into Anglo spaces. These shared spaces could be in businesses, unions, politics, labor rights, schools, marriage, or culture.

Historiography

Exclusion, Inclusion, Homogenization, and Heterogenization

Frameworks of exclusion and inclusion surfaced in the works of Chicano/a history in the early 1900s. Exclusion frameworks incorporated depictions of racism, discrimination, isolation, marginalization, and exploitation to portray an Anglo-Mexican schism, the former prohibiting the latter from full participation in economic or social spaces.¹³ Conversely, inclusion frameworks analyzed Mexicans as being able to participate in Anglo spaces.¹⁴ Mexicans negotiated this participation through either perpetuating or modifying dominant economic and social structures. I contend that both frameworks are accurate representations of Chicano experiences over time, and my dissertation seeks to converse with both simultaneously, thus highlighting a heterogeneous history.

An unintended implication of both frameworks is a characterization of a homogeneous or heterogeneous Mexican community. Homogenization forms when a historical group is depicted as having a single, shared experience, categorized under one label, male-centric, or are concentrated in one geographical area. Heterogenization stems from depictions where a group is portrayed as undergoing multiple experiences, sometimes shared or distinct from each other. A discussion of literature influencing my understanding of exclusion, inclusion, homogenization, and heterogeneity follows.

¹³ See Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972) for one of the most known works that incorporated an exclusion framework.

¹⁴ See Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987) for one of the earliest works that incorporated an inclusion framework.

Exclusion and Inclusion in Chicano Historiography

Prior to the formal field of Chicano history, scholars addressed the development of Mexican Americans by explaining their contemporary status as a product of exploitation. In the 1940s, George I. Sánchez's *Forgotten People* and Carey McWilliams' *North from Mexico* centered American exploitation as furthering the Mexican hardships in New Mexico and the entire Southwest, respectively.¹⁵ In 1958, Americo Paredes wrote *With His Pistol In His Hand*, analyzing the actions of Gregorio Cortez as a product of structural exploitation, particularly by the Texas Rangers.¹⁶ A study on California by Leonard Pitt emerged in 1968 chronicling how California Mexicans were systematically excluded, highlighting the Gold Rush as a significant catalyst.¹⁷

The academic discipline of Chicano history emerged during the 1960s, and these academics sought to counter contemporary narratives of their community and expose their racist underpinnings. Social scientists attributed the economic and academic status of Mexican-Americans to cultural deficiencies.¹⁸ An emerging group of Chicano historians argued against this

¹⁵ George Isidore Sánchez, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (Albuquerque, N.M: C. Horn, 1967); Carey McWilliams and Matt S. Meier, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 1990).

¹⁶ Américo Paredes, *"With His Pistol in His Hand," : A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958).

¹⁷ Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); George Isidore Sánchez, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (Albuquerque, N.M: C. Horn, 1967).

¹⁸ See the following for two of the most influential articles calling for this intervention: Juan Gómez-Quíñones, "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 2: 1971, 1-49, accessed June 20, 2017: <http://houstontx.library.ingentaconnect.com.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/search/article?option1=tka&value1=toward+a+perspective+chicano&pageSize=10&index=1#expand/collapse>; Octavio Ignacio Romano-V, 1971, "The Anthropology and Sociology of the Mexican-Americans: The Distortion of Mexican-American History," In *Voices: Readings from El Grito, a Journal of Contemporary Mexican American Thought, 1967-1971*, 26-39, Berkeley, Calif.:

culturalist premise, explaining the Mexican-American limited economic and academic status as a result of the history of exclusion since the nineteenth century.

In 1972, Rodolfo Acuña's *Occupied America* argued that Mexican Americans were a colonized people whose status could be labeled as an internal colony in the Southwest. This colonial status framed Mexicans living in the Southwest as "subjects of conquerors" having "an alien culture and government imposed upon them." They were "victims of racism and cultural genocide," "relegated to a submerged status," "rendered politically and economically powerless." Mexicans were a "submerged caste" within the "master-servant" Anglo-Mexican relationship. These "Mexican settlements or *colonias*" "had little or no control over their political, economic, or educational destinies" "remain[ing] separate and unequal to Anglo-American communities." In this colonial depiction, Anglos purposely barred Mexicans from sharing spaces with them. They existed to serve their prosperity and mobility, not join alongside.¹⁹ Another seminal work by Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, *The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans*, maintained this exclusion-centric narrative. The authors argued that "[d]espite the importance of their contributions, Mexican American workers continued to be socially and economically segregated" in the early twentieth century.²⁰ These foundational Chicano works formed an Anglo-Mexican schism explained through racism that late decade historians interpreted through economic frameworks.

Quinto Sol Publications. accessed November 1, 2017, <http://opendoor.northwestern.edu/archive/items/show/359>.

¹⁹ Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972).

²⁰ Meier, Matt S., Feliciano Rivera, and Matt S. Meier. *Mexican Americans, American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

A focus on capitalism as a driver of an exploitive relationship where Anglos used Mexicans to advance modernity and progress emerged in 1979. Richard Griswold del Castillo and Albert Camarillo depicted an isolated Mexican community in Southern California where Anglos denied full participation. These works incorporated sociological quantification methods to form bottom-up social histories and explain exclusion. For these historians, culture clashes were inadequate explanations of inequity; rather, how economics (labor and class) intersected with race had to be considered.

Camarillo argued “that the subordinate socioeconomic and political status of Mexicans emanated from the establishment of the dominant Anglo society in southern California and the corresponding growth of the capitalist economic system during the late nineteenth century.” This resulted in the proletarianization of Chicano workers where “[t]he occupational structure of subordination, characterized by racial and class stratification would continue to shape the lives of Spanish-speaking workers in the twentieth century.”²¹ Griswold del Castillo’s work viewed the post-1848 economic exclusion of Mexicans as explained through a persistent occupational pattern that was not conducive to American modernization. Socially, Griswold viewed violence and discrimination as catalysts for an “ethnic consciousness” based on Mexican nationalism. The focus remained on explaining the Mexicano’s “increasing isolation” from Anglo modernization in the latter half of the nineteenth century; albeit, an emerging “transmutation” is hinted at throughout the book. Griswold contends that “[a] few Mexican-Americans were successful in meeting the new

²¹ Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

requirements” of being Americans.²² The process of barrioization was an important concept that arose out of these works. Barrioization was the residential development of a segregated community from Anglos.

While authors like Griswold suggested inclusion was possible, the analysis remained on interpreting exclusion. Entering the 1980s, Texas-based histories expanded on explaining this ostracism in the Lone Star state via capitalism and race. Arnoldo De León’s *They Called Them Greasers* studied “how whites felt about Mexicans in the state of Texas in the nineteenth century.” These racial attitudes formed stereotypes integral to the institutionalized violence and discrimination enacted upon Mexicans by Anglos.²³ Mario Garcia’s *Desert Immigrants* centered the capitalistic exploitation of Mexican immigrants in El Paso as consequential to Anglo-Mexican race relations. Laborers were primarily viewed as a temporary necessity to further economic development, which shaped their social exclusion. Race, labor, and class intersected to form discrimination and segregation across life, as evidenced in occupations and schools. While explaining how Mexicans were purposely kept from participating amongst Anglos was the central focus, Garcia does hint at some acceptance with Anglos, such as organizing under the AFL union.²⁴

De León and Garcia were vital to expanding Camarillo’s and Griswold’s California-based history of exclusion to Texas. As will be reviewed in the subsequent local historiography section, historians interpreted the history of Mexicans in early twentieth century Houston through an

²² Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

²³ Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

²⁴ Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

exclusion-centric framework centered on racism and economic inequity. These works primarily informed my understanding of workers and their conditions entering the 1900s and how race and occupation were intertwined to form exclusion, two dynamics examined in Houston's economic spaces.

The Chicano/a historiography took a significant step in 1987 as it became more nuanced by juxtaposing exclusion with inclusion. One of those works was David Montejano's *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, which argued that the relationship between Anglos and Mexicanos, in regards to class and race, was contingent on capitalist shifts. Unlike the static nature of exclusion set by early Chicano historians, Montejano presented a fluidity of acceptance and rejection based on economics.²⁵ Vicki Ruiz's *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* analyzed "work, culture, and gender" through the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America's (UCAPAWA) unionization of Californian, Mexican women. Ruiz introduced the concept of "cannery culture," referring to the inter and intraethnic workplace relationships formed via shared occupational experiences. Common interests bound Anglos and Mexicans together out of these worksite concerns, evidenced by the latter's participation in a white union. Collectively then, Montejano and Ruiz were pivotal to analyzing the contingency of inclusion, but *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* exposed existing Chicano history as male-centric. Ruiz was the first historian to produce a monograph of Mexican women, demonstrating that such histories were possible but not prioritized. Earlier Chicano history as male-centric was made

²⁵ Montejano, David. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

visible by Ruiz's work because it showed that Mexican women were drivers of history, a thread that previously lacked any serious consideration.²⁶

In 1993, this nuanced juxtaposition of inclusion/exclusion was furthered by George J. Sanchez's seminal work *Becoming Mexican American*. Sanchez argued that cultural adaptation was a negotiated process between internal and external influences. Identity and ethnicity formed out of daily experiences of discrimination or acceptance.²⁷ In 1998, Vicki Ruiz's *From Out of the Shadows* was the first twentieth-century survey of Mexican women in the United States. The ground-breaking work introduced the concept of "cultural coalescence," or the process by which "[i]mmigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms." Ruiz argued that there is no "single hermetic Mexican or Mexican-American culture, but rather permeable *cultures* rooted in generation, gender, and region, class, and personal experience."²⁸

Ruiz and Sanchez's introduction of a cultural understanding of inclusion and exclusion illustrating the heterogeneous nature of Mexicans significantly influenced my dissertation's design. They demonstrated that focusing on the macro differences of culture between Anglos and Mexicanos, as done by Acuña and Meier-Rivera, was insufficient. Instead, micro (local) considerations of how individuals managed those cultural experiences were needed, revealing

²⁶ Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

²⁷ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Cary: Oxford University Press, USA, 1998).

varying nationwide experiences. This micro perspective informs my Houston study as my research sought to foreground heterogeneity and the quotidian.

Thus, a historiographical intervention depicting the experiences of Mexicans in Anglo spaces as heterogeneous occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s. For the next three decades, numerous Chicano/a works expanded inclusion or exclusion frameworks or juxtaposed the two. One of those was the 2013 work by Geraldo Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground*, who located the Arizona-Sonora borderlands as an area of both acceptance and limitation. While discrimination existed, Mexican and Anglos found a common cause when it came to generating profit. The book's primary example of this was the interethnic business connections made by Alex Jácome.²⁹ In 2015, *Corazón De Dixie* by Julie M. Weise showed how race was fluid in a port city requiring international commerce. Weise's chapter on New Orleans Mexicans detailed how they gained participation in society. There, "middle-class Mexican immigrants of the 1920s successfully engaged Mexico and shaped the image of 'Mexicans' in ways that secured their place among European-style white immigrants."³⁰ My research located local Mexican entrepreneurs who accessed Anglo spaces like the Jácomes in Tucson as presented by Cadava. Similar to Weise, my findings indicate a local fluidity between whiteness and the Mexican nationality, which formed inclusive spaces. These are only two of the twenty-first works influencing my dissertation, and others will be made clear throughout chapters.

²⁹ Geraldo L. Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground: the Making of a Sunbelt Borderland* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

³⁰ Julie M. Weise, *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 14.

As noted, exclusion and inclusion have been significant pillars of Chicano history. Studies have analyzed economic and social-cultural factors to explain these outcomes. The next section discusses how historians incorporated these frameworks into Houston histories.

Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Historiography

Houston became a city of interest for Chicano scholars in the 1980s. Following the lead of contemporary Chicano historiography overall, local foundational works set an exclusion-centric narrative presenting early populations as pushed to the margins by an uninviting and racist Anglo population. Homogenization interpretations emerged early as authors depicted the local Mexican experience between 1900-1940 as one of a single, shared exclusionary experience as a *colonia*. Men were the predominant historical focus, as was the East End (Second Ward and Magnolia Park) geographical area, which deepened a homogenous narrative. Historian Arturo Rosales initiated this historiography in the 1980s that Thomas Kreneck, Marilyn D. Rhinehart, and Arnolde De León expanded. In 2001, scholars introduced new interpretations of inclusion that complicated Mexican-Anglo relationships; however, some general patterns from the late '80s remained.

The earliest Houston-centered works informing my dissertation were written by Francisco Arturo Rosales, who formed an early local framework of exclusion. He wrote "Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive, 1908-1975" in 1981," "The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Chicago, Houston, and Tucson: Comparisons and Contrasts," and "Shifting Self-Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946" in 1987. The histories were framed from the perspective of *colonia* members, or those who formed ethnic networks based on Mexican culture, living in Houston's Second Ward. Mexican im/migrants were described as facing a purely hostile, Anglo environment. In response to this environment, Mexicans came together and

formed a cohesive identity based on Mexican nationalism.³¹ No matter what Mexicans did, any test of Anglo acceptance “proved unwarranted” as “projecting a Mexican image, no matter how positive it might seem to Mexicans, would not be accepted by Anglo society.” This “segregation resulted in a cohesion of sorts” forming a “*colonia milieu*” in which Mexican nationalism was used to counter hostility.³² Rosales’s accounts characterized Anglos as unaccepting Mexicanos into their spaces, forcing the latter to insulate themselves. His history illustrated a single, shared experience of segregation and discrimination for every Mexican in Houston.

Further, it constructed a homogenized view of the community into a *colonia* identity where all Mexicans were culturally bound together through an ethnic identity based on Mexican nationalism. Geographically, the evidence relied heavily on histories from the East End barrios (Second Ward and Magnolia Park), obscuring diverse experiences across Houston. Three historians expanded on Rosales’ exclusion-centric framework and homogenization in the late ‘80s.

Thomas Kreneck, Marilyn D. Rhinehart, and Arnoldo De León’s work’s continued focusing on the pre-1940 Anglo-Mexican relationship as one of exclusion by the former. “In the Shadow of Uncertainty,” co-authored by Thomas Kreneck and Marilyn Rhinehart in 1988, reviewed the impact of repatriation on Houston Mexicans. The article outlined the Great Depression strategy by Anglos of “deny[ing] public employment to Mexican residents,” meaning

³¹ Rosales, “Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive;” Arturo F. Rosales, “The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Chicago, Houston, and Tucson: Comparisons and Contrasts,” In *Houston: A Twentieth Century Urban Frontier*, eds. Arturo F. Rosales and Barry J. Kaplan (Port Washington, N.Y.: Associated Faculty Press, 1983), 58-77; Rosales, “Shifting Self-Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946.”

³² Ibid.

that “[i]n the midst of the economic crisis, Houston’s Mexican *colonia* largely cared for its own.”³³

The narrative continued the Rosales framework where Anglo exclusion, in this case to work and relief, forced Mexicans into a collective identity to survive. One year later, in 1989, Kreneck published *Del Pueblo*, and Arnolfo De León published *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*. The latter meshed Rosales and Kreneck-Rhinehart’s narratives to reinforce early twentieth-century Houston as an exclusionary environment for Mexicans, emphasizing the *colonia* homogenization. Likewise, De León examined early Chicano Houston history from an immigrant to Mexican American generational model. According to De León, in the first three decades, the newcomer immigrant generation was “a transplant of a culture imported from Mexico.” Then, the Mexican American generation emerged during the Depression-era when “a good portion of the community manifested a philosophical outlook that reflected its acceptance of American culture.”³⁴ This depiction too neatly grouped thousands of Mexicans under generational labels. As shown in my work, Mexicans immediately adapted and showcased biculturalism, an important aspect of their heterogeneity.³⁵

According to the *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, Mexican newcomers arriving in Houston between 1900-1920 were “kept from the most lucrative occupations” by the dominant society.³⁶

³³ Marilyn D. Rhinehart and Thomas H. Kreneck, “In the Shadow of Uncertainty: Texas Mexicans and Repatriation in Houston during the Great Depression,” *The Houston Review* 10 (1988): 21-33.

³⁴ Arnolfo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*; Thomas H. Kreneck, *Del Pueblo: A History of Houston's Hispanic Community* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1989).

³⁵ My work is in agreement with Cynthia Orozco’s assessment of generational models when she argues that they are “useful, but the heterogeneity of La Raza community must be considered as well.” For more, see *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 5.

³⁶ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 17.

Because of this forced economic exclusion from prosperous economic sectors, Mexicans “lived in poverty,” “moved into deserted homes,” and children learned in a “separate school.”³⁷ De León’s characterization of the 1920s continued developing an exclusionary atmosphere where Mexicans were subjected to Jim Crow and refused entry into Anglo public and private spaces. Mexicans faced “[i]nstitutionalized segregation,” particularly in schools where “no Spanish rules” were mandated.³⁸ At times, De León presented a limited heterogeneous interpretation; for example, when he wrote that a “division of several neighborhoods caused by distance as well as physical and psychological barriers caused people to identify more closely with their immediate neighborhoods and to differentiate themselves from others.”³⁹ The “1930s were more of an intensification of poverty than they were a new experience” for Mexicans, who were considered “economic liabilities” and “less desirable in the workplace.”⁴⁰ “Cultural growth, on the other hand, was another story, as a Mexican American way of life...was deployed throughout the several barrios, albeit within their confines.”⁴¹

Thus, De León’s work built on the exclusion-centric narrative that homogenized Mexicans between 1900-1940 as undergoing a similar experience as a *colonia*. Economically, Mexicans were excluded from sharing in the prosperity of the dominant society. Socially, they were considered undesirable and barred from integration. This exclusion based on racism and

³⁷ Ibid., 14-16.

³⁸ Ibid., 26-27.

³⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46, 52.

⁴¹ Ibid., 56.

discrimination led to a shared experience of intraethnic economic and cultural development as a *colonia*.

The subsequent major work was Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary* in 1999, which perpetuated an exclusion-centric narrative but inserted a much-needed gendered intervention. In Chapter 4 titled *Tejanas: Diasporic Subjectivities and Post-Revolution Identities*, Pérez provided a gendered examination of how 1930's women formed social clubs out of interstitial spaces between patriarchal groups. Interstitial spaces refer to the area between interethnic (Anglo and Mexican) male oppression where Mexicanas strategized to carve out roles and self-determination.⁴² Despite being a fresh interpretation, Pérez supports the exclusionary "survival" aspect stemming from Rosales and De León's interpretation. As reviewed earlier, these two historians argued that being excluded from society economically and socially by Anglos forced Mexicans to focus on surviving intraethnically. *The Decolonial Imaginary* documents how Mexicanas were "merely adjusting to another patriarchy."⁴³ While Pérez's work was the first to seriously consider local Mexican women in the pre-World War II period, it perpetuated a narrative where exclusion forced internal growth. In this case, patriarchal segregation from men's spaces brought Mexican women together to form "survival mechanism[s]."⁴⁴ And like the previous Houston histories, there is a constructed shared experience, albeit with Mexican women. Even though Pérez's work continued the Rosales and De León exclusion-centric and homogenizing

⁴² Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁴³ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 92.

framework, it still served as a critical gendered intervention in the historiography informing my dissertation.

A series of dissertations and books appeared between 2001 and 2013, introducing the inclusion framework where interethnic dialogue and bridges formed out of ethnic economies. *Mexican American Odyssey: Felix Tijerina, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader, 1905-1965* appeared in 2001, examining food entrepreneur Felix Tijerina as a major catalyst of amicable relations between white and Mexican communities. Kreneck presented a nuanced perspective of the Mexican Houston population, which challenged the exclusion-centric, foundational historiography by defining the Mexicano early position as ambivalent, wavering between acceptance and ostracism. He argued that Mexican “advancement was, at one and the same time, done in spite of and made possible by close proximity to Anglo American society. For Felix and his contemporaries, there was oppression yet opportunity within the larger environment.” The extent of Kreneck’s historiographical intervention was limited due to the biographical nature of his work, but it presented Anglo-Mexican relationships as one of acceptance.⁴⁵

Mikaela Selley followed Kreneck’s model, but she analyzed Mexican businessman Melesio Gómez and his family as entrepreneurs constructing bridges in the Sixth Ward, outside of the traditional Second Ward and Magnolia Park geography. *The Melesio Gómez Family* depicted an inclusionary atmosphere by detailing how Mexicans like Melesio Gómez built “social and business relationships with the Anglo community.” Selley also nuanced race with dynamics such as class and residence to explain why the Gómez family underwent an inclusive experience, complicating Rosales and De León. Even further, Selley breaks from the homogenization thesis of

⁴⁵ Kreneck, *Mexican American Odyssey*.

an early mono-cultural *colonia* (Lo Mexicano) when she argues that Melesio Gómez did not fit the De León “mold” because “[r]ather than promote a Mexican nationalist identity, he in fact embraced American culture.” This reflected a “more diverse group than previously assumed.”⁴⁶ Similar to Kreneck, Selley’s work focused on a particular family, which limited the work’s scope, but regardless, her work informed my understanding of inclusion. Additionally, Selley reconstructed a narrative outside of dominant Second Ward and Magnolia Park settings. This locating of Mexicans in another part of Houston was an important intervention because it challenged the initial geographical homogenization that overemphasized Mexicans in East End Houston.

Historians also produced monographs on education, religion, and race. Guadalupe San Miguel wrote *Brown, Not White: School Integration and Chicano Movement in Houston* in 2001. This book asserted that local meanings of race, such as whiteness, became problematic under desegregation.⁴⁷ This nuanced view of the localized fluidity of whiteness with Mexicans informs this dissertation, particularly racial dynamics. Although the early 1970s Mexican community is approached with nuance, there is still a reiteration of the exclusion-centric and homogenization framework for the period between 1900-1940. This can be viewed through the author’s assertion that whether through outright denial or manufactured social and economic conditions, Anglos desired barring Mexican pupils from sharing or shaping their learning spaces during these decades. San Miguel wrote that schooling was “limited to the elementary grades” because of “poverty, a history of failure in the lower grades, and/or exclusion from the higher grades.” Further, he

⁴⁶ Selley, “The Melesio Gómez Family.”

⁴⁷ Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2001).

asserted, “[t]he pattern of institutional discrimination was also reflected in administrative efforts to eliminate the use of Spanish in the schools.”⁴⁸ *Brown, Not White* places pre-1940 Mexicans under a monocultural (Mexicanist), monolingual (Spanish-speaking) working-class umbrella whose concern was with survival that shifts with the politically active Mexican American generation in the 1930s, which my dissertation complicates.⁴⁹ This portrayal reinforced Rosales’ and De León’s exclusion-centric framework (discrimination, survival) and homogenizing characterization (Mexicanist identity, non-English speaking, immigrant to Mexican American generational model) as established by their local foundational works.

Tyina Steptoe’s *Houston Bound Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City*, published in 2016, primarily focused on the African-American community, but her work analyzed the impact of im/migration, including Mexicans, on Jim Crow’s black/white binaries.⁵⁰ While Steptoe reinforces the discriminatory atmosphere between Anglos and Mexicans, her work nuances how race, language, and/or music could intersect to influence an outcome of inclusion or exclusion. For example, with language, Steptoe argued that “linguistic differences became the basis for discriminatory practices in local public schools,” but she also contended that “[t]hose who spoke English...had an easier time navigating the racial terrain of Jim Crow Houston.”⁵¹ Thus, while not a monograph on Mexicans, her work was in conversation with Kreneck and Selley in examining the dynamics of situated experiences impacting Anglo-Mexican outcomes. While Kreneck, Selley,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 12-23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15; 35-44.

⁵⁰ Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

⁵¹ Ibid., 96-97.

and Steptoe provided fresh and influential perspectives, one problematic area of their research concerns the source base.

All three works reinforced or expanded dominant narratives by primarily relying on existing historical sources from initial local histories, such as Felix Tijerina, the Gómez family, and Felix and Angie Morales, who were all present in *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*. Although these historians expanded the local historiography, these works nonetheless reiterated a limited amount of voices and experiences that suppressed alternative histories, which in turn reinforced the privilege of a dominant set of sources. This dissertation addresses this issue by uncovering fresh, original research using new digital research technologies, discussed in the methodology section. Moreover, this study seeks to extract the heterogeneous nature of lived experiences between 1900-1940, where Mexicans faced inclusion and exclusion within multiple spaces based on the intersection of various dynamics.

Viewing early twentieth-century Mexicans under a shared and common experience has led to inaccurate generalizations and tidy histories. Many, if not most, certainly faced exclusion in the Bayou City. Yet simultaneously, others faced inclusion by Anglos in their institutions. What is needed is a nuanced interpretation of the early twentieth Mexican narrative by balancing the inclusion frameworks of Kreneck, Selley, and Steptoe with those early exclusion frameworks of Rosales, De León, and Kreneck-Rhinehart. Beyond this conceptual contribution, I draw focus to a wider range of historical actors. Women have increasingly become a bigger part of the Houston narrative as historiography has evolved, but my work places them at the center of my story rather than as peripheral additions.

Mexican Women in Houston's Chicano Historiography

The 1980's works of Arturo Rosales focused primarily on masculine actors, setting the tone for Houston histories focusing on Mexicanos. One reason may be due to limited resources as

the Mexican American archive at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center was in its infancy during the 1980s. As an oral historian and the HMRC archivist, Kreneck worked with what he had at his disposal, incorporating the role of pre-1940 women into his study but without great depth. Still, there were some women in *Del Pueblo*, such as Ecequia Castro, a female food entrepreneur, who Kreneck wrote embodied “the founding generation of Mexican Houstonians.”⁵² Similarly, De León’s treatment of Houston also mentions women, but the historical catalysts are primarily men. This absence of women is demonstrated in *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*’s first two chapters reviewing the pre-1930s when only one Mexicana is named, “a Mrs. E.M. Tafolla,” who is mentioned as part of “niche” society.⁵³ In total, only eight sentences vaguely referenced Mexicanas or their experiences.⁵⁴

San Miguel did more to address women as “essential to the mobilization” of the Chicano movement in Houston, particularly under the Mexican-American Education Council (MAEC). This organization was a major driver of the boycotts and walkouts against Houston ISD in the early 1970s. Women, such as Marcelina Díaz and Elvia Quiñones, were cast as integral founders by San Miguel.⁵⁵ Next, Roberto Treviño seriously considered the influence of ethnic Mexican women in the church in his 2006 study of Mexican Americans and Catholicism.⁵⁶ Steptoe also

⁵² Kreneck, *Del Pueblo*, 20.

⁵³ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17; 26; 30-31.

⁵⁵ San Miguel, *Brown Not White*, 87-89; 205.

⁵⁶ Roberto R. Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

gives women agency as she foregrounds their navigation of Jim Crow to their benefit.⁵⁷ The works of Selley and Chrystel Pit shifted the historiography towards centering narratives of entrepreneur women, such as Estella Gómez Reyes, Angie Morales, and Ninfa Laurenzo.⁵⁸ My dissertation builds on these gendered advancements of centering Mexicana histories through newly explored sources revealing untold stories of Mexicanas as textile workers, plaintiffs, sex workers, unionizers, students, teachers, artists, and narcotic dealers.

Lastly, my work will be the first in over three decades to have conducted a significant amount of original research that sheds light on Mexicanas' experience. For example, no scholar writing on Houston Mexicans has utilized the pre-1940 Harris County district court records prior to my work. A new digital methodology has allowed me to reconstruct previously unconsidered Mexican histories in the Bayou City, such as the Lone Star Bagging strike or the use of Houston courts by Mexicanas. These court records demonstrate how Mexicanas accessed courts when their husbands were injured or killed on worksites. Conversely, Mexicana unionizers were excluded from labor organizing when their Anglo employers colluded with the Houston Police Department to quell their efforts. These and other gendered instances further my argument of heterogeneous experiences of inclusion and exclusion. My considerable focus on Mexicanas brings my dissertation into dialogue with feminist writings.

Feminist Historiography

Ongoing discussions in feminist studies drawing focus to the dearth of Chicana research and the silencing of Mexican women in the waves model (a model conceptualizing women's history since its founding as a field) have influenced my dissertation. Frustrated with "men in the

⁵⁷ Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

⁵⁸ Chrystel Pit, "Deal with Us: The Business of Mexican Culture in Post-World War II Houston" (dissertation, University of Arizona, 2011); Selley, "The Melesio Gómez Family".

[Chicano] movement [thinking] that liberation meant liberation for men,” Martha Cotera wrote the seminal Chicana feminist study, *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the US*, in 1976.⁵⁹ Cotera presented a broad profile of Chicana history and heritage, arguing that myths and stereotypes existed concerning Chicanas because of inadequate research, which she asserted was available.⁶⁰ In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez’s stressed that histories are genealogies whose themes create fictive truths and values.⁶¹ In conversation with this suppression of Mexicanas historically was Maylei Blackwell’s *¡Chicana Power!*, where she discussed “mechanics of erasure” as the systemic functions within academics and narrative frameworks. Blackwell argued that “historians’ understanding of historical significance is shaped primarily by their understanding of power as a top-down unilateral force rather than a multisited force that flows in a capillary fashion.” Further, she asserted that one mechanic of erasure was the use of a “single analytical lens,” such as race, in Chicano historiography, which historically flattens men and women as “unified subjects,” disregarding their separate and unique struggles.⁶²

Cotera, Pérez, and Blackwell are in direct conversation in their focus on how histories exert power on who gets included or excluded in historical writing, which guides my purpose. Reading these feminist texts instilled a belief in me that Mexicanas had to be more active in Houston’s early

⁵⁹ ACCTV. *Civil Society 411 - The Chicano Struggle for Civil Rights and Chicana Feminism*, Video, 2020, https://youtu.be/9Qa0CN_MiKw.

⁶⁰ Martha Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra: History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* (Austin: Statehouse Printing, 1976).

⁶¹ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁶² Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 3-4; 28-29.

twentieth century than what was currently espoused. These works framed my reading of male-centric local works and my determination to locate Mexican women in multiple sites. In the archives, I found women in every space, active in matters related to tamale production, work conditions, sex work, lawsuits, education, and art. As Blackwell suggests, power in Houston was multisited. Likewise, *colonia* or Lo Mexicano concepts lend to a homogenizing narrative that excluded or relegated women to the periphery of male organizations. It is not that these race-centric ideas are invalid, but their historiographical dominance conceals heterogeneity and thus serves as a mechanic of erasure. Overcoming the dearth in Mexican women's history of Houston helps in turn how knowledge is produced.

The limits of the feminist waves model in women's history have been a major discussion in women's history. Waves refer to the traditional model of women's movements divided into three periods: nineteenth century to 1930 (first wave), the 1960s to the 1980s (second wave), then 1990s onward (third wave).⁶³ The first wave is generally characterized as a struggle for suffrage since the 1848 convention in Seneca Falls. Second-wave activism is depicted as a renewed call for equality, pressing for "a reexamination of men's and women's social roles." The third wave is framed as a breaking away from framing concerns within a heteronormative gender context and focusing on "multiple identities of age, race, class and sexual preference."⁶⁴ The roundtable article "Is It Time to Jump Ship?" highlights how historians have reconsidered the waves model, challenging how it forms dominant narratives and providing new paths of interpretation. Julie

⁶³ Victoria I. Bromley, *Feminisms Matter: Debates, Theories, Activism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 131-149.

⁶⁴ Kathleen A. Laughlin, Julie Gallagher, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Eileen Boris, Premilla Nadasen, Stephanie Gilmore, and Leandra Zarnow. "Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor." *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 76-135.

Gallagher warned that “[a]s a construct, the metaphor creates and reinforces exclusivity; it illuminates only certain kinds of activism that were engaged in by a limited set of historical actors.”⁶⁵ Eileen Boris called the waves model “hegemonic feminism,” assessing “the dominant narrative’s placing of white middle-class women and their concerns at the center of feminism.” She introduced the framework of “strands,” as in strands of hair, to historicize women’s movements. This metaphor views each strand as a distinct women’s history stemming from a root representing “the past into the present.” These strands can “come together into braids,” “allow[ing] us to chart interaction as well as distinct paths.”⁶⁶ Leandra Zarnow called for closing “artificial gulfs between waves” by historicizing feminist actions and accomplishments, focusing on change and continuity over time rather than giving generational ownership.⁶⁷ This conversation reflects the impact of Chicana feminist critique of an exclusionary narrative in women’s history.

Martha Cotera’s *The Chicana Feminist* (1977) was a political document serving as a primary source for subsequent Chicana historians. Cotera argued that “feminist activities” have been part of the “Chicano civil rights movement from 1848 to the present.”⁶⁸ In her chapter, “When Women Speak: Our Feminist Legacy,” she asserted that contemporary literature framed Chicanas as transitioning from traditionally conservative to feminist. She rebuked the conservative depiction, along with the perceived development, arguing feminism was a continual process in a “legacy of Mejicano/Chicano feminism,” consisting of Chicanas serving “social, political, or

⁶⁵ Gallagher, “Is It Time to Jump Ship?,” 81-86.

⁶⁶ Boris, “Is It Time to Jump Ship?,” 90-97.

⁶⁷ Zarnow, “Is It Time to Jump Ship?,”

⁶⁸ Cotera, *The Chicana Feminist*, 4.

militant” roles.⁶⁹ In *¡Chicana Power!*, Blackwell called for historicizing “the genesis of feminist consciousness” and argued there are “multiple feminisms” rather than one.⁷⁰ Like Leandra Zarnow, Cotera advocates for a long-view of interconnected history, and the strand metaphor of Boris aligns with Blackwell’s multiple feminisms. Blackwell asserted that “[t]he history of feminism in the United States has been conceptualized thorough a falsely universalized construct of femininity based on white middle-class women.” She viewed the periodization’s first wave focus on suffrage as one that by conceptualizing gender, foregrounded “white women’s experience.” For Cotera, the “antilabor, antiimmigrant, attitudes of the leadership of the women’s movement” failed Mexican women at the time. Further, Blackwell contended that locating women of color solely in the third wave “is a mistake...because they are central to understanding the complexity” of the second wave.⁷¹

So, as Chicana feminists and women’s historians reviewed, the issue with the three waves model is that its power as the dominant historical framework of women distorts or makes invisible communities of color. These first histories (initial studies of a topic), such as the three waves, become the dominant narrative for understanding a historical period, group, or theme whose reinforcement by later scholars omits other concurrent histories.⁷² For example, framing the first wave as the struggle for suffrage silences the historical concerns of Mexican women, such as

⁶⁹ Cotera, *Diosa y Hembra*, 8-12.

⁷⁰ Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!*, 15-18.

⁷¹ Blackwell, *Chicana Power!*, 17-19; Martha Cotera, “Feminism: The Chicano and Anglo Versions—A History Analysis” In Alma M. García, *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (Oxfordshire, England ;: Routledge, 1997), 223.

⁷² Ibid., 274. My use of the term “first histories” comes from conversations with Leandra Zarnow and her writing. First histories refers to the initial works or studies on a topic in a particular field.

employment and income. The 1919 courtroom struggle of Felicitas Gomez described earlier exemplifies this point. Thus, historians must broaden past this monolithic focus to consider a wider range of interests and rights claims.

Methodology

The works by Rosales, Kreneck, Rhinehart, and De León formed the foundational narrative of Mexican history in Houston, and later works reinterpreted a majority of the same sources, actors, groups, and events. This is largely because these studies employed traditional research methods and drew on a limited body of available sources. In the past several years, new digital technologies have enabled fresh research methods that I draw on significantly. These digital technologies have brought to light different types of evidence that can be used to construct new narratives. Here I use them to complicate the early twentieth-century history of Houstonian Mexicans. Take, for instance, the earlier story of Pedro and Felicitas Gomez where the latter was forced into legal action due to tragedy that struck her husband. This narrative stemmed from an unexplored database, the *Historical Records* offered by the *Harris County District Clerk* located at <http://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/Edocs/Public/search.aspx>. I downloaded and searched the district court minutes between 1907-1930 for any Spanish surname. After locating their cases, I cross-referenced keywords in my other online databases. Using a combination of digital sources helped me reconstruct new narratives like theirs.

Crucial to my dissertation were digital newspapers from two major databases: The Portal to Texas History and GenealogyBank. The Portal to Texas History is a digital archive hosted by the University of North Texas. It contains multiple newspapers and is searchable using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. When scanning newspapers or documents, OCR technology can recognize letters that are made digitally searchable. I relied on this database to search for Mexican keywords between 1900-1930 in the *Houston Post*, *Houston Informer*, and

The Thresher. GenealogyBank is a privately-owned company that has scanned newspapers nationwide and enabled OCR-technology as well. I paid an annual membership for access, but it was well below the costs of visiting physical archives in time away from my wife and children, lost wages, transportation, and lodging. One of my main uses for this database was to search the *Houston Chronicle* for keywords between 1920-1940, which is absent from The Portal to Texas History. In addition, this GenealogyBank expanded my search for sources in other cities where Spanish-language newspapers were preserved. One of those is *La Prensa*, a Spanish-language newspaper from San Antonio. Due to OCR-technology, I was able to search the keyphrase “Houston, Tex” between 1900-1940 to narrow down searches.

Thus, using OCR-enabled, digital newspapers were a valuable source for scarce Houston-based, historical evidence between 1900-1940. Using a combination of various search terms with advanced settings, such as proximity searches (words in proximity to one another within a source), I located evidence of an obscure but present Mexican community from 1900-1940 across multiple newspapers. For example, the search term “Mexican colony” produced references to the participation of Mexican women in Houston’s No-Tsu-Oh celebrations, which was also absent from present historiography. No-Tsu-Oh was an annual festival held in downtown Houston designed to stimulate commerce through parades, balls, and sports.⁷³ This method of research allowed me to expand the limited Houston Mexican narrative between 1900-1940.

Another digital layer of my research methods was that of *Ancestry.com*. This database contains city directories, U.S. Censuses, World War I draft cards, naturalization records, birth and death certificates. As I came across individuals from court records or newspapers, I cross-

⁷³ Marilyn M. Sibley, “No-Tsu-Oh,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/no-tsu-oh>.

referenced their names in *Ancestry.com* and scoured any available resources. These documents allowed me to rebuild the missing backgrounds of those mentioned in other sources. The reverse was also true because I was able to cross-reference names found in *Ancestry.com* in digital newspapers. I paid an annual subscription for access, but like GenealogyBank, the cost was minimal compared to visiting a physical archive. Moreover, digital research was essential during a pandemic when archives were closed.

The Houston Metropolitan Record Center (HMRC) was the major archive I utilized, mainly to review sources footnoted in current works. The work of previous historians demonstrates that the HMRC's records have driven their analysis, between 1900-1940, which was centered on the scant sources of one emerging group of Mexicans. I provide a different reading because of new evidence located in recovered primary sources. Rather than one Mexican experience, I demonstrate there were multiple Mexican experiences occurring in early twentieth-century Houston. This is another major intervention in my work. Future researchers can follow my footnotes for a blueprint on how to incorporate a digital researching methodology.

One final note on the financial impact of digital research for students of color like me who come from working-class households. This ability to research anywhere, anytime is of most importance to those of us who must balance responsibilities, such as an active career and/or a family. Even more important were the financial savings to do research. Being able to work during the dissertation phase allowed me to graduate with minimal student debt. My financial healthiness leaving doctoral school will reverberate in my children's lives as they enter college, helping them be better prepared than I was.

Intersecting Dynamics and Other Keywords

Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality heavily influenced the structure of my writing and the use of intersecting dynamics as a frame of analysis.⁷⁴ Intersectionality is the analysis of one's experiences in various power structures, determining their degree of access. One's outcome of their race, gender, class, education, incarceration, wealth, etc., can affect their inclusion or exclusion in various aspects of society.⁷⁵ A "single-axis framework," or single-issue analysis, tends to "focus on the most privileged group members [marginalizing] those are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination."⁷⁶ For example, she argues that framing gender discrimination without analyzing race inconspicuously centers experiences of white women. To claim gender discrimination without intersecting it with race is "simply a statement that but for gender, they would not have been disadvantaged."⁷⁷ For Black women, even if gender is not an issue, they still must face the limits of race, which is also true for Mexicanas.

In Chicano history, focusing on a single axis of race alone implies that a small subset of Mexican men define boundaries. Following Crenshaw's logic, to focus solely on race is to say that, but for being Mexican, Mexicanos and Mexicanas would have been included in Anglo

⁷⁴ My introduction to Crenshaw came from Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana's article, *Critical Thinking About Inequality: An Emerging Lens*.

⁷⁵ Southbank Centre, *Kimberlé Crenshaw – On Intersectionality – keynote – WOW 2016*, Video, 2016, <https://youtu.be/-DW4HLgYPIA>; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing The Intersection of Race And Sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory And Anti-Racist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

society. A single-issue analysis omits the heterogeneity of Mexican society through dynamics such as occupation, language, and residence, amongst many others previously mentioned. And like Black women, failing to intersect race and gender overlooks the diverse experiences of Mexican women. Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality informed another major idea in this dissertation which is that of a situated experience. This refers to the notion that an individual's lived reality is contextual and contingent. One's relationships with other people are fluid as one navigates different spaces in society. In one space, a person can experience inclusion, while in another space, the same person can experience exclusion. Dividing my dissertation into economic, learning, and social-cultural spaces is largely a reflection of this thinking.

Another set of terms used is that of Mexican and Anglo. I use the term Mexican as all-encompassing. It groups citizens and non-citizens, immigrants and migrants together.⁷⁸ Anglo is another all-encompassing term for those of European background, except for those from Spain. I do not apply the term white to them because Mexicans were legally white, and whiteness, an ethnic and racial status, is an important dynamic I analyze. At times, I use the term white when bringing attention to a segregated space along Jim Crow color lines. Another important racial term is liminal whiteness. My dissertation refers to liminal whiteness as the ability of Mexicans to be legally and socially included on the white side of the Jim Crow color line, yet at times, still be arbitrarily excluded from whites-only spaces.

⁷⁸ While I simplify the Mexican identity term in my dissertation, I do recognize that it was much more complicated than what I present. For a thorough review of identity terms, see Cynthia Orozco's *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 11-12 and *Agent of Change: Adela Sloss-Vento, Mexican American Civil Rights Activist and Texas Feminist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 4-9.

Some other terms include social citizenship, self-determination, and brokers. Social citizenship is the sense of belonging and place established by individuals in their local community regardless of their formal citizenship.⁷⁹ An underlying theme of this dissertation is that of self-determination. I define self-determination as the attempt to navigate society on one's own volition. Self-determination is viewed through the choices made by historical actors to impact the outcome of their own lives. Brokers refer to individuals who served as intermediaries between cultures, helping to facilitate cultural exchange.⁸⁰

Chapter Outline

To tell this story, I have constructed my dissertation to take the reader into three spaces of cultural and economic exchange: Part 1 centers on economic spaces; Part 2 on learning spaces; and Part 3 on social-cultural spaces.

Part 1: Economic Spaces

Chapter 1 analyzes economic spaces and inclusion by reviewing how blacksmiths, barbers, laborers, and textile workers navigated Houston on their own accord in business, politics, interracial marriage, courts, or Anglo associations. Conversely, Chapter 2 analyzes exclusion within economic spaces through the narratives of tamale peddlers, sex workers, Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) members, and textile workers.

Part 2: Learning Spaces

Learning spaces refer to formal and informal educational settings where knowledge and skills were exchanged between instructors and students. This could have taken place in a formal

⁷⁹ This stems from the ideas of cultural citizenship. See Sarah E. Cornell, "Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833-1857," *The Journal of American history* 100, no. 2 (2013): 351-374 and Renato, Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship," *Hemispheric Institute*, <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/enc09-academic-texts/item/681-cultural-citizenship.html> (accessed March 25, 2021).

⁸⁰ This idea comes from Mae M. Ngai, *The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).

setting such as an elementary or an informal one such as a home where a Spanish club met. Chapter 3 reviews the inclusion and exclusion of pupils in two of Houston's elementary schools: DeZavala and Hawthorne. Chapter 4 begins with the formation of Spanish clubs, which was a catalyst for inclusion into Houston's secondary schooling, where the hiring of Mexican educators influenced the welcoming of Mexican students.

Part 3: Social-Cultural Spaces

Chapter 5 examines the inclusion of Mexicans into local celebrations, primarily No-Tsu-Oh. The chapter then looks at how men and women leveraged their talents to become major figures in Houston's performing arts scene. Contrarily, Chapter 6 links exclusion and recreational activities. Mexicans faced being prohibited from public amusements, such as movie theaters and dancehalls. They also became the target of new anti-narcotic laws, which began criminalizing any Mexican associated with marijuana.

Part 1: Economic Spaces

Across the Southwest and Midwest Mexican workers faced diverse experiences of exclusion and inclusion between 1900-1940. At times, Mexicans encountered inclusive environments where they secured employment alongside Anglos, but in other instances, Anglos designed workplace and business policies and structures to keep them out of Anglo spaces through discriminatory practices. While the focus here is Houston, a brief survey of economic spaces in Santa Barbara, Chicago, and El Paso make this apparent as a national trend.

In his work on Santa Barbara, California, Albert Camarillo found that native and foreign-born Mexicanos were often discriminated against in the early twentieth century. Here, Anglo unions did not want to organize with Mexicans. Wages between the two groups were stark. For example, Anglo teamsters earned up to \$4.50/day in 1907, while non-unioned Mexican workers only earned up to \$2.50/day in 1915. Being so ostracized, Mexicans organized amongst themselves and collectively resisted low wages. Packers struck for higher wages in 1903, while street-pavers did the same in 1913.¹ Almost 900 miles eastward in West Texas, differing experiences of participation muddy the national context.

In El Paso, railroad labor attracted a large population of Mexican men who faced marginalizing conditions as most were limited to low-paying, blue-collar jobs. Those working in the railroads “held few engineering or managerial jobs because these occupations remained in American hands.” Over time, though, some found work in white-collar positions, such as clerks, and even organized under Anglo-led unions. One of those was an AFL-endorsed International Clerk’s Protective Association in 1913, which organized those of American citizenship and skilled

¹ Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 166-172.

labor.² Thus, as events in El Paso demonstrate, the economic experiences of Mexicans were heterogeneous in the early twentieth century, as was the case in Chicago.

In her work, Gabriela Arredondo analyzed the degree of economic access through race in the Windy City. At times, Mexicanos faced similar treatment as Blacks in the workplace, but in other contexts, the two groups were seen as dichotomous. For instance, workplace exclusion resulted from one Chicago steel plant believing that Mexicans had “‘Negro’ blood.” On the other hand, enganchistas (labor agents) were careful to inspect dark-skinned applicants to ensure they were not Blacks passing for Mexicans. Chicago beet fields would reject such Blacks, meaning Mexicans had access to these beet fields while other ethnicities did not.³

Thus, across the nation, the degree of economic access for Mexicans was mixed. As will be seen in Chapters 1 and 2, Houston was much like Santa Barbara, Chicago, and El Paso, a divergent set of interethnic economic spaces where intersecting dynamics formed distinct outcomes of participation. One of the primary dynamics was occupation, which greatly influenced a Mexican’s ability to navigate Houston in the early twentieth century.

Local foundational historiography interpreting the occupation experiences of Mexican newcomers arriving in Houston has focused on their exclusion from workplaces, primarily due to traditional sources that provide an incomplete perspective. Historians’ use of city directories played a major role in forming this early narrative. De León used the 1910 and 1920 city directories to quantify Mexicans living in the city and extract statistical conclusions from them, particularly from occupational titles such as “laborer.” One conclusion was that of workplace segregation when

² Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 66-67; 97.

³ Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation 1916-1939*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2008), 58-64.

Mexican workers were characterized as men purposefully excluded from higher occupational positions because of racist Anglos.⁴ Interpreting one's lived experience based on occupational titles, such as laborer, is problematic. A laborer may not have achieved the American dream, such as home ownership, but his/her job title or wage alone did not determine their social citizenship.⁵ Another issue is that city directories do not include all Mexican workers. Interpreting economic experiences in the Bayou City as solely exclusion fails to consider the heterogeneity of labor experiences city-wide.

The focus of Part 1 is economic spaces, which are generally any areas concerning the production, distribution, or consumption of goods and services. The specific economic spaces Chapter 1 analyzes are labor organizations, the import-export trade, metalwork, barbering, railroad and construction worksites, and textile mills. By analyzing these economic spaces, we can extract the intersecting dynamics that provide a further understanding of the distinct outcomes of inclusion and exclusion within society. Part 1 examines the inclusion and exclusion of Mexican workers and their families as influenced by the convergence of two or more dynamics.⁶

Chapter 1 reviews four occupations: blacksmiths, barbers, laborers (railroad section hands, construction workers, etc.), and predominantly women textile workers. Analyzing the intersecting

⁴ Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*, (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program), 9.

⁵ This was an important notion established by Monica Perales who found that while El Pasoan Mexican workers at Smeltertown were subject to jobsite inequities and discrimination, they did not view themselves as victims, but as belonging and invested in the company and local community. For more, see *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁶ My notion of the coexistence of Mexican workers between inclusion and exclusion was influenced by their treatment in Cochise County in the late 19th and early 20th century. For more, see Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

dynamics of occupation, language, gender, ethnicity, race, and/or marital status of these workers reveals why they and their families accessed Anglo labor fraternities, political circles, businesses, marriages, adoptions, and courts. Conversely, Chapter 2 examines economic spaces to reveal how tamale peddlers, sex workers, PLM members, and textile workers faced exclusion from business, food production, society, and labor rights based on their unique blend of dynamics of occupation, ethnicity, race, health, morality, and gender.

Chapter 1: Making A Living

Coming to Houston

At the turn of the century, Houston found itself in an advantageous position economically. The 1901 oil discovery at Spindletop (90 miles east of Houston) sparked a transition from an economy based on cotton, grain, and lumber to one heavily invested in oil and gas. Galveston was a major competitor, but the 1900 hurricane ravaged them. This event caused investors and companies to reconsider the stability of Galveston and look towards Houston with its expansive railroad system. Another factor was the successful bid to expand Houston's port in 1910, completed in 1914. This economic boom required laborers, leading to the recruitment of Mexicans domestically and internationally.¹ According to Arturo Rosales, immigrants came to Houston as a last resort when they could not find similar environments to their homeland. These newcomers were of a pre-industrial background whose homeland skills were not applicable in Houston's economy.²

A quarter of Mexican men worked for the railroad in 1910, and these sites were often located within walking distance for workers. For those living in First or Sixth Ward, there were the H. & T.C. Shops. Fifth ward residents worked at the S&P yards, while Second Ward and Magnolia Park residents worked at the I & G.N. line. Another quarter of Mexican workers were considered "laborers," an all-encompassing term for many men's jobs.³ These workers were primarily

¹ Arnolde De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston* (First Texas A&M University Press ed. University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies; No. 4. 1989), 7-8.

² Arturo Rosales and Barry J. Kaplan, "The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Chicago, Houston, and Tucson: Comparisons and Contrasts," *Houston: A Twentieth Century Urban Frontier*, (Port Washington: Associated Faculty Press, 1983), 76.

³ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 9.

relegated to low-paying, blue-collar jobs in the railroad industry. One worker, Juan C. Hernandez, recalled only three employment options were mainly available: sewage, railroad, and the fields. As a blacksmith, Hernandez earned \$2.50 for ten hours of work.⁴

A Quotidian Look at Mexican Workers

Historians argue that from the moment of their arrival, Mexicanos “tolerated...abuse on the work site, and discrimination in employment.” Some have characterized early laborers as defenseless and voiceless.⁵ While this narrative is certainly valid to an extent, it is only one layer of the Mexican experience in the early twentieth century. This chapter begins with a brief review of the nineteenth-century historical development of liminal whiteness in relation to Mexicans. The context of race continually intersected with other dynamics that partly explains why Mexicans could access whites-only spaces. The next major topic is a reexamination of a white labor fraternal group, *Woodmen of the World*, as a history of inclusion. After, an analysis takes place of how three businessmen (Jorge Zambrano, Nick Montes, and Andres Ortega) were economically, politically, and socially integrated. The chapter then shifts to the connection between economic spaces and inclusion into courts. One barber, Ynes Travieso, established Anglo acceptance through his work which influenced his ability to adopt an Anglo child. Others used the courts to hold employers accountable for workplace accidents and deaths such as the Gabino, Davala, and Gutierrez family. These integrated men and women did not succumb to a victimized state of exclusion, and their experience cannot be formulated from job titles alone. Rather, researching the quotidian extracts dynamics of occupation, race, gender, language, residence, and marital status that help us make

⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵ Rosales, “Shifting Self Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946,” 78; De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 17.

sense of their inclusion. In other words, an examination of everyday occurrences within local economic spaces reveals an accepted level of participation within Anglo society.⁶

The Liminal Whiteness of Mexicans

The nineteenth-century national conversation on the whiteness of Mexicans helps make sense of their racial standing and ability to be placed on the white color line in Houston. Mexicans as liminally white, or as both white and nonwhite contingent on context, was a national development rooted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 turned Mexicans into Americans on paper. What that meant became a matter of space and time across the U.S., but those living in the Southwest became American citizens overnight by this treaty. Fifty-eight years earlier, the Naturalization Act of 1790 conflated citizenship with whiteness when it stipulated that only “free white persons” were eligible for naturalization. Thus, the mere act of granting American citizenship to Mexicans, acquired by war, legally placed them on the white side of the antebellum color line. The 1896 case of Ricardo Rodriguez was another important development to the legal whiteness of Mexicans prior to 1900.

After living in Texas for ten years, Mexican-born Ricardo Rodriguez sought naturalization in 1896. Government attorneys contested his application, arguing that Rodriguez was “not a white person, not an African, nor of African descent.” The case made its way to the federal district courts, handled by District Judge Thomas Maxey. The judge acknowledged the rights of Mexicans to become citizens via naturalization, but provided his classification of Rodriguez’s racial taxonomy.

⁶ For another work focus on the local and how ties to the community were formed by newcomers via economic spaces, see Julia María Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Localized meanings of race have also been explored in African-American history. For example, Eva Sheppard Wolf argued that notions of blackness and whiteness were contingent upon historical context. For more, see *Almost Free: A Story About Family and Race in Antebellum Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 58-60.

He attributed Rodriguez to “red men,” or an indigenous person, because of his “dark eyes, straight black hair, and high cheek bones.” The judge felt that he would not be considered white under a “strict scientific classification,” but believed Rodriguez could not be considered an “Indian” because he denied any indigenous ancestry. Further, Judge Maxey felt his ruling that Rodriguez was eligible for naturalization followed the legal precedent set forth by the 1848 treaty, which protected “all Mexicans, without discrimination as to color.”⁷ All in all, this ruling reluctantly curbed efforts by Texas to legally strip Mexicans of whiteness.

So, as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Rodriguez case exemplify, national legal precedents placed Mexicans on the white side of the color line. At the local level in early twentieth century Houston, some Mexicans could access this liminal whiteness, but as will be presented in later chapters on exclusion, many were also socially racialized as nonwhite.

Woodmen of the World as an Access Point

This section analyzes the Woodmen of the World (WOW) as an economic space because its membership consisted of those behind the production of goods and services: workers. As will be discussed, historians have misinterpreted this organization as one of Anglo exclusion of Mexicans. Intersecting dynamics of occupation, race, and language shaped the level of Mexican participation amongst Anglos. Individuals, such as Ynes Travieso and Jim Munoz, met WOW’s occupational and racial criteria, which influenced their acceptance into the labor organization and social events.⁸

⁷ Steven H. Wilson, “Brown over ‘Other White’: Mexican Americans’ Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits.” (Forum. Whiteness and Others: Mexican Americans and American Law), 152-154.

⁸ Neil Foley’s findings provide insight into the race relations between collaborating Anglo and Mexican workers in labor organizations. Many Mexican workers in Central Texas had an early association with the Industrial Workers of the World. There, socialist Mexicans were differentiated from peon Mexicans. They formed bonds with Irish and German socialists, being accepted as

Occupation, Language and Race in WOW

The Woodmen of the World (WOW), an organization providing life insurance, fraternal benefits, recreation, and social connections, was one of Houston's most prominent benefit societies. WOW was exclusive to white men aged 18-45 from select labor sectors. Regional groupings were called districts, while local organizations were camps.⁹ Most histories of Mexican labor organizing in Houston begin with the foundation of *El Campo Laurel*, a self-segregated Woodmen of the World camp established on March 2, 1908. Historians have analyzed this organization within the framework of a mutual aid society, and part of the early formations of a Mexican identity forced together by survival in an Anglo-dominated city marginalizing Mexicans.¹⁰ Historian Arturo Rosales argues that middle-class refugees “were not integrated into the class structure of Anglo society.” These elite Mexicans were only able to find leadership positions and status amongst their own community.¹¹ Essentially, this reading suggests that Houston-based workers in the first twenty years of the twentieth century were focused on “survival” embedded within “immigrant nationalism.” Historians have portrayed local Mexican men as forced to form work associations embedded in “Lo Mexicano” or “Mexico Lindo” because

“almost white.” For more, see *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 96.

⁹ Alan Axelrod, *The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Order* (United Kingdom: Facts on File, 1997), 264.

¹⁰ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 10; Thomas H. Kreneck, *Del Pueblo: A History of Houston's Hispanic Community* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 18-19; Arturo Rosales, “Mexicans in Houston: The Struggle to Survive, 1908-1975,” *Houston History Magazine* Summer 1981: 1.

¹¹ Rosales, “*The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Chicago, Houston, and Tucson: Comparisons and Contrasts*,” 71.

the dominant society ostracized them.¹² This reassessment of *El Campo Laurel* complicates this interpretation, revealing how the WOW camp was an access point into Anglo spaces, influenced by occupation, language, and race dynamics.

The Magnolia Camp No. 13 was the Anglo-dominated WOW camp as opposed to the Mexican-led *El Campo Laurel*, but one English-speaking Mexican barber, Ynes Travieso, was a member of the former since 1902 when he served as the camp's sentry.¹³ Ynes's membership in the Anglo branch challenges current historiography embedding the origins of *El Campo Laurel* as one that grew out of Anglo discrimination and marginalization. As mentioned earlier, only white men from select occupations could acquire WOW membership, criteria which Ynes met as a barber. In addition, if leading Anglo Woodmen despised Mexican men, they would have prohibited him from becoming an integral part of Magnolia Camp No. 13. This key dynamic of race, the white male criteria set by the Woodmen of the World, influencing Mexican acceptance into the Woodmen of the World has been glossed over by historians. While Mexicans separated into their camp, willingly or not, they were still a branch of a whites-only organization. Further supporting how race was important to access are new sources indicating that some *El Campo Laurel* members identified as white men.

¹² Rosales, "Shifting Self Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston 1908-1946," *Atzlán* 16, no. 1 (1985), 71-74; De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 9-10, 16-18.

¹³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 6, Harris, Texas; Page: 4, Enumeration District: 62, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; *Woodmen of the World*, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1902 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 509; City directories indicate Spanish-surnamed individuals were part of other camps. For example, the 1910 Houston city directory lists A. Luna as the watchman of Black Jack Camp, no. 82. That same year, T. V. Mancias was clerk of the Pine Tree Camp, no. 1515.

Born in 1870, Jesus Munoz immigrated to the United States in 1880. In 1899, he married his wife, Jennie, and their son, Flavio, was born in 1901. By 1908, the family relocated to Houston, where the English-speaking Jesus found work as a laborer for a railroad shop.¹⁴ Over time, Jesus became known as “Jim” and was accepted into *El Campo Laurel*.¹⁵ In 1908, the same year as the founding of *El Campo Laurel*, Jesus and other Mexican males in Houston joined forces with Anglos to issue a demand for work under the umbrella of whiteness. Addressed “[t]o the Contractors, General Foreman, and Managers of All Works in the City of Houston,” 284 Anglo men declared that “there are at this time several hundred laboring white men unemployed in the city of Houston and vicinity anxious to work...we the undersigned white citizens demand preference in employment.”¹⁶ Spread amongst these Anglo names were at least fifteen Spanish-surnamed men. They were a mix of U.S. citizens and non-citizens with an average age of thirty-two. These laborers such as “Jim” Munoz, Guadalupe Garza, Jose Medellin, Tom Gonzales, and others shared resentment against unemployment. The oddity is that these Mexicanos signed a letter labeling them as “white citizens” demanding a “preference in employment.”¹⁷ This declaration makes clear that some Houstonian Mexican men could identify with the Anglo workforce when it came to employment rights in the early twentieth century. This does not necessarily signify that

¹⁴ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Justice Precinct #1, Harris, Texas; Page: 1A, Enumeration District: 62, accessed May 23, 2021, <http://ancestry.com>.

¹⁵ “Jesus Munoz,” *The Houston Post*, November 12, 1923, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608015/m1/3/>.

¹⁶ “Demand a Preference,” *The Houston Post*, December 1, 1908, accessed July 9, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth606149/m1/7/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

these Mexicanos shed their Mexicanidad at the time; instead, it is an early indicator of their liminal whiteness.¹⁸

Mexicanos like Ynes and Jim complicate the current historiography characterizing early Anglo economic spaces as solely excluding Mexicans. Historians have missed how the dynamics of occupation, language, and race, in this case, liminal whiteness, shaped the inclusion of Mexican workers, from barbers to laborers, amongst Anglos in economic spaces of labor organization.¹⁹

Finding Social Acceptance

WOW's acceptance of those men who fit their occupational and racial criteria led to their participation alongside Anglos socially. For example, *El Campo Laurel* members participated alongside Anglos in Fourth of July celebrations. In 1911, when the nine W.O.W. camps congregated to celebrate Independence Day at Sylvan Beach, located south of Houston in La Porte, Texas, they included the Mexican branch. Some of the events included dancing and races, but the main attraction was the beach where thousands spent their time. Each of the nine camps took part in the main committee planning the event. *El Campo Laurel's* committee members consisted of Arthur Salsona and Andrew Ortega. An amusement committee was also created that included Ortega along with eleven Anglo camp members. Salsona was part of the ten "contest judges"

¹⁸ As Laura E. Gómez demonstrates with New Mexico politics, claiming a white identity during this time was a tactic towards inclusion and distancing one's self from African-Americans or indigenous populations. *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ The impact of language on wages has been analyzed by Cynthia Orozco. She found that in South Texas, language impacted wages between English and non-English speakers. Those Mexican men who spoke English made 5 dollars more per week than non-English speaking Mexicans. For more, see *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 24.

chosen, with the other nine being Anglo.²⁰ Mexicans continued participating throughout the 1910s, as evidenced when a young Mexican girl was awarded a perfume atomizer after winning first place in a girl's race.²¹

In addition to being included in the planning of Anglo-dominated WOW events, it's notable that Mexicans accessed an all-white beach named Sylvan.²² At these events, at least one Mexican, Salsona, displayed a small amount of temporary power over Anglos as he judged contestants. Also significant is that these were Mexicans celebrating American independence and that their children were exposed to American consumerism at these annual picnics, demonstrated through the perfume award. However, Mexican WOW members still proudly displayed their ethnicity, evidenced when *El Campo Laurel* celebrated Dieciseis de Septiembre, Mexico's Independence Day.²³ Collectively, these celebrations were early signs of a heterogeneous, bicultural community. Thus, this camp was not a mechanism to only reinforce mono-nationalism; rather, it drove dual-nationalisms. In other words, the camp not only reinforced a Mexicanist identity, but *El Campo Laurel's* members and their families were exposed to American society when included in these patriotic celebrations. This ability to socially navigate Houston stemmed from their WOW

²⁰“W.O.W. Held Picnic,” *The Houston Post*, July 5, 1911, accessed July 16, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604635/m1/11/>.

²¹ “Woodmen Celebrate At Sylvan Beach,” *The Houston Post*, July 5, 1917, accessed July 16, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth609658/m1/7/>.

²² Cindy George, “Ceremony highlights court cases that expanded the rights of blacks,” *Houston Chronicle*, February 13, 2015, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Ceremony-highlights-court-cases-that-expanded-the-6080602.php>.

²³ “Accepted Houston Invitation,” *The Houston Post*, September 15, 1911, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604633/m1/3/>.

membership, influenced by their occupational and racial standing. Participation in an Anglo organization spilled into the lives of wives through the formation of a woman's auxiliary.

Race and Gender: Mexican Women in the Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle

It is important to consider that a female counterpart of the Woodmen of the World was established because this impacted Mexican women. Established in 1891, the *Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle (W.C.)* was created in affiliation with WOW. Its "stated objectives were to combine white males and females of sound health and moral character between ages of 16 and 52." Like WOW, the WCs served to provide insurance against death and sickness for its female members. While the Supreme Forest was the national organization, "groves" consisted of local groups.²⁴

By 1917, Mexicanas formed Women's Circle No. 568, *Bosque Cipres*, affiliated with *El Campo Laurel*. This women's group was well-organized with dues, formal meetings, and various positions, such as treasurer and secretary. They kept informed of national and local causes. When the home of Alfonso Bret burned down, *Bosque Cipres* members raised and donated money to his cause. After a cyclone wreaked havoc in Baja California, Romanita Noriega and Margarita Valdes raised funds for the victims. Members, such as Amparo Torres, reached out to the community to sell policies and tend to the affairs of sick members.²⁵ Thus, gender and race positioned many

²⁴ "MS 198 - Oak Grove #18 of the Woodmen Circle (North Baltimore, Ohio)," *Finding Aids*, BGSU University Libraries, 20 Mar. 2014, lib.bgsu.edu/finding_aids/items/show/988, accessed 23 May 2021.

²⁵ "Ayuda A Un Mexicano," *La Prensa*, July 25, 1918, accessed July 19, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Cerca de cuatrocientos pesos importan las últimas remesas hechas por los lectores de 'La Prensa' para las víctimas de la Baja California," *La Prensa*, November 30, 1918, accessed July 19, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Notas Foraneas," *La Prensa*, January 1, 1919, accessed July 19, 2020, GenealogyBank; Angelina Morales, interview by Thomas Kreneck and Emma Perez, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 5 February 1979, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/felix-morales_OH246-1.php.

Mexicanas under the security of an Anglo organization that included them. The dynamic of race intersected with their gender, and is essential to understanding their inclusion into the *Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle*. Like their male counterparts, these Mexicanas were also viewed as liminally white, which intersected with their gender as indicated by their ability to create a grove called *Bosque Cipres*.

Mexican Businessmen and Inclusion

Jorge Zambrano

In this section, Houston's import-export business is the economic space since it concerned the distribution of goods. Analyzing this space reveals how the dynamics of occupation, language, and residence intersected to shape the level of economic and social access amongst Anglos for a pair of Mexican brothers, Jorge and Fabio. As Houston moved towards a port city, trade with Mexico became of the utmost importance. As covered in Chapter 4, this understanding led to Anglo businessmen viewing "commercial Spanish" as vital to their economic outlook. By 1920, the Chamber of Commerce tasked T.L. Evans to create a "new foreign trade and trade extension department" to "[open] up new channels of commercial trade with Mexico."²⁶ This desire to establish Houston-Mexico trade relations opened avenues for Jorge and Fabio Zambrano.

Occupation, Language, and Residence: Immigrating to Houston

Jorge and his wife, Susiana, immigrated to the United States from Mexico in 1904. In 1905, the couple settled in the Houston Heights at 220 W. 17th.²⁷ Living amongst Anglos was not a statewide phenomenon; residential segregation was a norm. For example, in San Antonio, one

²⁶ "New Departments Of City C. Of C. To Blaze New Trails," *The Houston Post*, July 8, 1920, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607498/m1/12/>.

²⁷ Jorge Zambrano, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1905, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

could not buy property outside of Mexican neighborhoods, or barrios.²⁸ With them came their two children, Susiana and Roberta, along with their two Mexican female servants, Mariana Rodriguez and Francis Alacron. While the two servants only spoke Spanish, Jorge and Susiana could speak English, as indicated by their census record.²⁹ By 1910, Susiana gave birth to two more daughters, El Nora and Marie.³⁰ Living in an Anglo community and able to communicate in English, Jorge established interethnic connections. This was evident when he worked as a Spanish translator and became an instructor for an Anglo-led Spanish club.³¹ By 1907, the family moved near modern-day Minute Maid Park at 1904 Prairie Avenue. Jorge added another occupation to his resume as a clerk at C.R. Cummings Export Co.³² Speaking English was essential to acquiring this new employment amongst an Anglo-owned exporting company, but the experience of that occupation was a building block to his entrepreneurial future.

Economic Inclusion: The Houston Importing and Exporting Company

Building on his experience as a clerk, Jorge moved into his own business in 1909. With his brother, Fabio, Jorge formed the Zambrano-Gonzales firm headquartered in the Mason building. In an extensive interview with Jorge, *The Houston Post* claimed this was the first importing and

²⁸ Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 29.

²⁹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0077* pg. 2, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 26, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁰ 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0077* pg. 2, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 26, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>.

³¹ “The Spanish Club,” *The Houston Post*, December 3, 1905, accessed September 26, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602966/m1/10/>.

³² Jorge Zambrano, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

exporting firm to establish its head office in Houston. Fabio ran a branch of the company in Mexico City. He bought a home in Houston but mainly lived in Mexico. The company principally imported fruits and hides while exporting lumber to Northern states and across the border, fueling Mexico's railroad construction. Jorge was a Houston visionary of how the Panama Canal's opening would expand Houston's shipping opportunities.³³

In late 1909, the business took on a new partner and began a major expansion hailed by the Houston community. Zambrano-Gonzales became the Houston Importing and Exporting Company. The new partner was an Anglo man, Haver H. Cherry, from Ohio. Haver and Jorge were near neighbors, living within two blocks from each other. Like the Zambranos, the Haver's housed a thirty-six-year-old Mexican female servant, Antonia DeAguirre.³⁴ Jorge, Fabio, and Haver's company was centered as a symbol of Houston's progress when they purchased a sailboat, named the *L. N. Dantzler*, that made regular trips between Houston, Vera Cruz, and Tampico. With this purchase, the trio cut out firms and now directly delivered fruits to the tables of Houstonians.³⁵

As Zambrano's importing-exporting ventures demonstrate, he was economically tied to the dominant society. Language continued to play a role, but through two languages: English and Spanish. Zambrano was able to fully communicate between Mexican and American clientele and

³³ "Houston Is An Importing And Exporting Center," *The Houston Post*, August 15, 1909, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605569/m1/14/>.

³⁴ "Traffic With Mexico," *The Houston Post*, September 1, 1910, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth443395/m1/72/>; 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0077* pg. 7, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 30, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁵ "Houston Importing Firm," *The Houston Post*, January 31, 1910, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth443308/m1/2/>.

government officials involved in the importing-exporting trade. Residence amongst Anglos was again impactful as he established his Anglo neighbor, Cherry, as a business partner. And as highlighted by local newspaper features, Zambrano's occupation was critical in that it was viewed favorably as furthering Houston's economic progress.

Social Acceptance

Seeing himself as part of Houston's economic society, Zambrano felt comfortable enough applying to the Houston Business League; however, it is not clear whether his firm was accepted.³⁶

The success of Jorge spilled over into the lives of his wife and their children. For example, Susiana was invited to social gatherings hosted by Anglo Houstonians. She, along with Malinda Cherry, were guests of Ellen Ray, wife of salesman Tom. Susiana sat amongst the wives of businessmen from banking, healthcare, oil, and legal sectors. Most of these individuals lived in proximity to the new Gonzales residence on 2716 Bagby.³⁷ Their oldest daughter attended the Fannin school and performed in school activities with Anglo children.³⁸

When trying to evaluate the Mexican experience, the intersecting dynamics of one's life mattered, as demonstrated by Jorge. His linguistic ability in speaking English and Spanish and

³⁶ "Business League Quarters," *The Houston Post*, August 26, 1909, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604924/m1/14/>. There is evidence that Zambrano was a taxpayer; made apparent when Judge Charles E. Ashe rendered that he owed \$62.06 in taxes. Paying taxes was important to development of one's notion of citizenship. For more, see Molly C. Micheltore, *Tax and Spend the Welfare State, Tax Politics, and the Limits of American Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

³⁷ "Social Happenings," *The Houston Post*, May 15, 1910, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605547/m1/13/>; 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0077* pg. 1B, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 30, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; *Houston Ward 4 District 0077*, pg. 7; *Houston Ward 4 District 007,7* pg. 9; *Houston Ward 4 District 0077*, pg. 10; *Houston Ward 4 District 0076*, pg. 11.

³⁸ "Public Schools' Recital," *The Houston Post*, May 9, 1909, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605378/m1/43/>.

living amongst Anglos formed economic networks influencing his employment. The Zambrano family's social inclusion was furthered by establishing a company that advanced Houston's vision of becoming a port. While Jorge serves as the most extraordinary example, other reconstructed accounts provide examples of heterogeneous experiences within economic spaces.

Nick Montes

The following two sections focus on the economic space of metalwork which relates to the production of goods. Chicano historians have neglected to analyze the acceptance of blacksmith proprietors in Houston. Intersecting occupation, language, and residence dynamics set up an access point for Mexican blacksmiths like Nick Montes and Andres Ortigas to gain social and political acceptance.

Occupation, Language, and Residence

Born in 1873, Nick was an English-speaking Tejano born to citizen parents.³⁹ Three dynamics central to Nick's inclusion across Houston society converged: language, residence, and occupation. His ability to speak English opened bridges with Anglos since he would be able to communicate with them. This proved useful when coupled with his residence amongst Anglos. Language and residence affected his occupational origins as a blacksmith because it led him to access training and networks of popular businessmen in the horseshoe-making industry.

In the early 1890s, Frank Eller, an Anglo from Indiana born in 1861, was a blacksmith working for the prominent company, Mosehart & Keller. The earliest record of Nick in Houston is in the 1899 City Directory stating his occupation as a "horseshoer."⁴⁰ The directory indicates he

³⁹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4, Harris, Texas; Page: 3A, Enumeration District: 84, accessed June 12, 2018, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁴⁰ Nick Montes, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1899 from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>.

was an apprentice or employee of Frank Eller. Frank's 1892 residence was on Girard street, the same street as Nick in 1899.⁴¹ Years later, *The Jewish Herald* recognized Frank's business as advancing Houston's modernity and representative of businessmen.⁴² Thus, the intersection of three dynamics is important to consider here. Nick's ability to reside amongst Anglos was critical to the dynamic of occupation. His residence and English-speaking skills put him into proximity and communication with a crucial connection, Frank Eller, who undoubtedly played a role in the Mexican's blacksmithing development. Nick would always be able to link himself, and thus his blacksmith ability, to the renowned Anglo businessman. Unfortunately, sources are extant, but one 1904 incident provides a quick glimpse into Nick's acceptance in Houston.

Accessing Anglo Healthcare and Legal Protection

On the Saturday afternoon of June 4, 1904, Nick was stabbed and almost disemboweled by a former Anglo employee, Will Brown. The reporting described Brown as "white" and "American," while Nick was referred to as "Mexican." The former employee was disgruntled over not being paid for a day's work by Montes. This report reveals Nick as a proprietor of his blacksmith shop with Anglo male employees. The Mexican employer did not represent a threat; instead, he was an asset to the dominant society as a source of income.

It's also clear that he was racially distinguished by nationality. Even though Nick could communicate with, live amongst, and employ Anglo men, he was still viewed as separate from "American." Yet, being labeled as "Mexican" was not synonymous with exclusion in his instance.

⁴¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1, Harris, Texas; Page: 3, Enumeration District: 91, accessed June 12, 2018, <http://ancestry.com>; Frank Eller, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1892 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁴² *The Jewish Herald*, June 22, 1911, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph69056/m1/5/>.

One could be Mexican and still build integration into and protection by the dominant society. For example, Nick was protected by Houston's legal systems, as exemplified when Will Brown was charged with assault with intent to murder. Digging deeper, being racially viewed as Mexican did not prevent his access to Anglo healthcare. This was made apparent when an Anglo physician, Dr. W. N. Shaw, attended his injured abdomen.⁴³

Political and Social Acceptance

After surviving the Will Brown episode, the Mexican blacksmith continued expanding his political and social associations with Anglos. Politically, he was active in Democratic politics from 1908-1912. In 1908, he was part of the 1,861 "good, loyal democrats" that made up the "Harris County Bailey Club," who supported Senator Joseph W. Bailey.⁴⁴ In 1912, he joined the "Eagle Democratic Club of Harris County" supporting Hon. Joe H. Eagle. Nick's name was printed amongst Anglos that represented the "undersigned citizens of Harris [C]ounty" who could vouch for Eagle's character as a "good citizen and a man of ability."⁴⁵ This unique political participation does not make sense in a macro view of anti-Mexican sentiments by Anglos nationally, but it demonstrates how intersecting dynamics shaped inclusion at the local level. Socially, Nick managed a baseball team that first emerged in 1911, which played against Anglo teams.⁴⁶ While

⁴³ "Will Brown Held," *The Houston Post*, June 25, 1904, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603770/m1/7/>; "Nick Montes Cut," *The Houston Post*, June 5, 1904, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603072/m1/12/>.

⁴⁴ "Harris County Bailey Club," *The Houston Post*, April 5, 1908, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605629/m1/15/>.

⁴⁵ "Eagle Democratic Club of Harris County," *The Houston Post*, April 27, 1912, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth606072/m1/11/>.

⁴⁶ "Nic Montes Play Sluggers," *The Houston Post*, April 7, 1911, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604014/m1/3/>.

his Democratic politics and baseball team management indicate his participation level amongst Anglos, probably most telling of his acceptance was his marriage to an Anglo woman, Effie Frazier.

Historically, states created miscegenation laws prohibiting marriage between Whites and other ethnic groups to protect White racial purity. However, no state explicitly included Mexicans in these laws. In the nineteenth century, it was common for Anglo men to marry Mexican women in the Southwest to access established economic networks. Over time, distinguishing those of Spanish ancestry versus those with indigenous blood became one classification of defining white and nonwhite Mexicans, but deciphering this was primarily a responsibility of local officials. In Texas, though, ‘Indians’ were not part of the miscegenation laws.⁴⁷ This absence in miscegenation laws helps make sense of why a Mexican man and Anglo woman living together was legally possible in a city that eventually criminalized the “co-habitation between races,” or between a white and “negro.”⁴⁸ Despite this context, the legal whiteness of Mexicans was not always respected socially in local settings. Anglo men could and did police interracial relationships that led to violence against Mexican men for having sex with Anglo women.⁴⁹ Yet, Nick was able to display his marriage to Effie without any known objection.

⁴⁷ Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 120-123. Appearing indigenous could cause Mexicans to be denied citizenship for more see Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 45-48.

⁴⁸ J.G. Hautier, *The Revised Code of Ordinances of the City of Houston of 1922*, December 4, 1922, Harris County, Texas, 730.

⁴⁹ Gabriela F. Arrendondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation 1916-1939*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2008), 26-27, 71-74; Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*, (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 2018), 61.

Effie was born in Missouri in 1881 to a father from England and a mother from Tennessee. In 1905, Effie married Nick. The Harris County Clerk and his deputy officiated the wedding. The Justice of the Peace undersigned the marriage certificate.⁵⁰ The interracial couple did not shy away from the visibility of their marriage. In 1910, they lived amongst white families in an apartment at 518 Louisiana.⁵¹ As Peggy Pascoe argued, marriage was a state tool that intertwined racial purity and miscegenation to support white supremacy.⁵² In this context, this accepted marriage represents how local officials did not view a Mexican marrying an Anglo woman as threatening the purity of whiteness. The approved marriage shows the messiness of race that Mexicans faced across the nation and the diversity of their experiences. Further complicating this scenario is the fact that Ella became associated with the Mexican colony as Señora Montes, indicating the fluidity of inclusion between “Americans” and “Mexicans.”⁵³

By this period, it is clear that Montes had established himself as a denizen of Houston which stemmed from the access point created by intersecting dynamics of language, occupation, and residence. With respected ties to Frank Eller, his early neighbor, and as a proprietor of a blacksmith shop employing Anglo men, the English-speaking Mexican found acceptance in Houston. Another blacksmith, Andres Ortega, followed a similar trajectory.

⁵⁰ Harris County Clerk’s Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County, Texas, Marriage Records*, Effie Frazier with Nic Montes, File No. 12204, 1905, accessed May 25, 2021 <https://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 3A, Enumeration District: 84, accessed June 12, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*.

⁵³ “Sheriff Hammond Was Arrested by “Policia”,” *The Houston Post*, September 28, 1914, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607414/m1/14/>.

Andres (Andrew) Ortega

Occupation, Language, and Residence

Born in 1876, Andres immigrated to the United States by railway in 1889. By 1910, the dark-skinned Mexican was bi-lingual (Spanish and English speaking) according to census records and living amongst a majority-Anglo community at 4211 Washington. Close to his residence, Andres established his blacksmith shop at 3615 Washington Avenue. Living with his family as lodgers were three Mexican men whose occupation was identified as blacksmiths. The fact that they lived with Andres and were blacksmiths indicates they worked at his shop. Like Nick, occupation, language, and residence as critical dynamics once again emerge to influence his level of participation amongst society. Andres would have been able to communicate with his Anglo neighbors and potential customers. For example, he was able to leverage language and his occupation by advertising for employees in English. In 1910, “Andrew” posted a classified for “a first class, all around blacksmith” in *The Houston Post*, indicating the expansion of his role as a blacksmith proprietor. Being printed in an English newspaper meant that Andres targeted Anglo employees, turning himself into an asset as a local employer like Nick Montes.

Social Integration

At some point, Andres also called himself “Andrew,” demonstrating his shrewdness in navigating between ethnic and racial identities of Mexican and American. This fluidity was displayed by citizenship records showing that Andres does not naturalize until 1929 but claims to be naturalized well before in his census records.⁵⁴ His societal integration continued into the 1910s with Houston’s Woodmen of the World (W.O.W) chapter when he participated in *Fourth of July*

⁵⁴ “Trades,” *The Houston Post*, June 12, 1910, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604447/m1/64/>; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Andrew Ortega, File No. 39425. 28 June 1929, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed October 7, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

committees alongside Anglo men.⁵⁵ Andres's bilingual skills further entrenched his inclusion during World War I. In June of 1917, he served on the "board of interpreters" for the draft board in Houston and even registered for the draft himself.⁵⁶ Even though Andres anglicized his name and was invited into Anglo spheres, he did not stop being Mexican. His dual-nationalistic identity is apparent with his involvement in Mexican independence celebrations in 1917.⁵⁷

When analyzing businessmen such as Nick Montes and Andres Ortega, the dynamics of residence, occupation, and language (in this case living amongst Anglos, blacksmithing, and an English-speaking ability) were constants that helped form acceptance amongst Anglos in the early twentieth century Houston.

Accessing Houston's Courts

When examining the economic spaces of service economies and the production of goods, a connection between these spaces and courts becomes apparent. First, the legal history of Ynes Travieso is explored, who was able to secure custody of his adopted Anglo child successfully. To understand his degree of access within Houston courts, it's necessary to examine how dynamics of occupation, language, and race intersected in his life. Next, occupation, race and gender are

⁵⁵ "W.O.W. Held Picnic," *The Houston Post*, July 5, 1911, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604635/m1/11/>.

⁵⁶ "Register Early and Avoid Rush," *The Houston Post*, June 5, 1917, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608455/m1/7/>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Justice Precinct 1, Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 17A, Enumeration District: 40, accessed October 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Andrew Ortega, 12 September 1918, Serial No. 720, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; accessed October 7, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁷ "Mexican Independence Day to Be Observed," *The Houston Post*, September 7, 1917, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610393/m1/8/>.

analyzed within Mexicana workers at The Oriental Textile Mill, which shaped their path to accessing courts. Likewise, the wives of workers killed on the job accessed courts which was shaped by intersecting dynamics of occupation, gender, and marital status.

Ynes (Ernest) Travieso

In this section, the economic space shifts to the service economy of barbering. Current historiography characterizes barbers as part of a “working class population” who “lived in poverty just a stone’s throw from the center of wealth that touched other capitalists thousands of miles away.”⁵⁸ Yet, further analyzing the available sources of one Mexican barber, Ynes Travieso, reveals how the convergence of occupation, language, and race influenced his inclusion. Ynes entered the Jim Crow city as bilingual and skilled, in an era where the racial status of Mexicans as legally white was liminal. These dynamics blended to form access points into Houston society.

Occupation, Race, and Language

On December 2, 1890, 29-year-old Ynes Travieso immigrated to the United States from Mexico via Laredo, Texas on the International and Great Northern Railroad. In 1891, he married 15-year-old Dora Travieso, and by 1900, both attained some degree of education as they could write, read, and speak English. Dora bore five children, four of who survived: Petra, 6, Maria, 4, Ynes, 4, and Emma, infant. The family migrated through San Antonio to Galveston, then by 1899, the family settled in Houston, and Ynes found work as a barber, going by the name “Ernest” at times.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 9.

⁵⁹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 6, Harris, Texas; Page: 4, Enumeration District: 62, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ynes Morales Travieso, File No. 293, 22 October 1912, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>;

In 1900, he found work under an Anglo proprietor, Gustave Dreyling, who ran a barber shop at 506 San Jacinto Street. Gustave was a sixty-five-year-old German who had immigrated in 1844.⁶⁰ Ynes's ability to speak English was critical here because he would not have been able to communicate with Gustave for employment without it. Coupled with that, the Mexican's skillset of cutting hair opened up the employment possibilities under Anglos, who were the majority at the turn of the century. Also of importance was where Ynes fell on the white-black color line.

By 1902, city directories position Ynes as a proprietor of a barber shop at 1215 Congress. That same year, a "Help Wanted" ad sought "[t]wo first class white barbers at 1215 Congress."⁶¹ These records indicate that the Mexican barber viewed himself on the white side of the Jim Crow color line; although, this does not necessarily mean he viewed himself as an Anglo. That a major newspaper would post that classified suggests their support of this racial assertion by a Mexican. This early trajectory of finding employment by an Anglo, coupled with how he was viewed racially and his communicative ability, continued to influence his acceptance through intermarriages, union membership, and adoption.

Social Acceptance

Ynes went through a series of marriages, leaving Dora and marrying an Anglo woman, Ida Griffno in 1901. They were married by Justice Matthews at their 1215 Congress Avenue residence,

Ynes Travieso, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1899 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁰ Ynes Travieso, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1900 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 3, Harris, Texas; Page: 9, Enumeration District: 75, accessed March 28, 2021, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶¹ Ynes Travieso, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1902 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; "Help Wanted," *The Houston Daily Post*, May 27, 1902, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth87085/m1/5/>.

from where Ynes operated his barbershop business. The Mexican-Anglo marriage was even publicized in the local newspaper.⁶² By 1907, he was married to a woman named Cinderella from either New Jersey or Saginaw, Michigan. They lived at 1603 Hardy Street in a two-story white home, where Cinderella ran a boarding house. They rented furnished rooms for \$18 and \$20 a month, preferring married couples without children. Cinderella's Anglo identity seems to blend with a Mexican one, as indicated by her 1910 census entry where her name changes to Celia.⁶³

In addition to being bilingual and marrying an Anglo woman, Ynes was fully immersed into American society as he became a member of the Knights of Pythias, Woodmen of the World (Magnolia Camp No. 13), D. O. K. K., El-Tex lodge No. 114, and the Barbers union. Further revealing of Travieso's inclusion is his 1912 naturalization petition, where he renounced any "allegiance and fidelity" to "the United States of Mexico." He obtained the signatures of white Houstonians on his petition, who vouched for his residency and character. One of those was a white man named Jim B. Kendall, a train dispatcher. The other was John Buse, a white brakeman for the railroad from New Jersey.⁶⁴

⁶²; "City Brevities," *The Houston Daily Post*, December 26, 1901, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath85838/m1/6/>.

⁶³ U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ynes Morales Travieso, File No. 293, 22 October 1912, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; "Board and Room," *The Houston Post*, April 4, 1909, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath606021/m1/27/>; "Board and Room," *The Houston Post*, March 12, 1907, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath603600/m1/10/>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5, Harris, Texas; Page: 15, Enumeration District: 61, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁴ "Y. M. Travieso," *The Houston Post*, February 1, 1919, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapath608003/m1/10/>; U.S. Department of Labor,

In 1915, the Traviesos adopted a white, ten-year-old girl, Oretta Frances Watts, after her mother, Minnie Watts, could not provide for her. That a Mexican man could adopt an Anglo female child is demonstrative of inclusion and deserves further attention. In October, the foster parents found themselves in court, as Minnie had a change of heart and wanted to regain custody of Frances. The trial lasted eight days, but on October 23, Judge Henry J. Dannenbaum ruled in favor of Ynes Morales and Cinderella Travieso. While the judge ruled the adoption papers invalid because they lacked the biological's father signature, he denied Minnie's custody application because of her "financial circumstances." Minnie immediately appealed the decision in the Court of Civil Appeals for the First Supreme Judicial District of Texas at Galveston but lost according to census records.⁶⁵ Ynes passed away from tuberculosis in 1919. His funeral service took place at the Westheimer's chapel by the Knights of Pythias, and then he was buried in the Evergreen

Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ynes Morales Travieso, File No. 293, 22 October 1912, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5, Harris, Texas; Pages: 2, 13, Enumeration District: 68, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁵ "Court Asked To Restore Young Child To Mother," *The Houston Post*, October 17, 1915, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607736/m1/13/>; "Adoption Papers Declared Invalid," *The Houston Post*, October 24, 1915, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607351/m1/21/>; *State of Texas, et. rel. Minnie F. Watts, vs. Y. M. Travieso and wife*, 13, 526 (61st District Court 1915), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>; Note: Neither the 1915 city directory nor the 1920 census that matches Minnie's address indicates she is African-American by the label *colored*. Minnie Watts, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1915 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 3, Harris, Texas; Pages: 27, Enumeration District: 44, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; Francis Travieso was listed as orphan living with Cinderella in 1920. Cinderella Trabuso Household, United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5, Harris, Texas; Pages: 7A, Enumeration District: 86, accessed February 19, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

cemetery. Cinderella continued operating and living at 1603 Hardy until her death, caused by a fall inside the home in 1933.⁶⁶

Similar to Nick Montes and Andres Ortega, language, occupation, and race were central to building connections amongst Anglos that Ynes leveraged. Language continued to play a role as the Mexican barber was English-speaking. Most influential was his occupation as a barber, which was respected by Anglos as indicated through his union and fraternal affiliations.

The Oriental Textile Mill and Mexicana Workers

In this section, the economic space shifts to the production of goods by women in textile mills. In the early 1900s, Mexican women in the workforce increased. Most of them found “employment in laundries, factories, and food-processing plants.”⁶⁷ In Houston, Mexicanas were recruited to work in the textile industry, such as the Oriental Textile Mill. In 1894, the A. R. Morey and Company constructed a large industrial building in the Houston Heights, at 2201 Lawrence Street. Its original purpose was to manufacture mattresses, but in 1901 the Oriental Textile Mill was incorporated to “manufacture yarns, textiles, and fabrics.”⁶⁸ In this mill, occupation, language, race, and gender converged to shape the experiences of inclusion for Mexicana textile workers.

⁶⁶ “Y. M. Travieso,” *The Houston Post*, February 1, 1919, accessed February 19, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608003/m1/10/>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Y. M. Travieso, File No. 2685, 03 January 1919, accessed February 19, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Cinderella Traviso, File No. 41604, 21 September 1933, accessed February 19, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁷ Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten, *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003), 126-128.

⁶⁸ Texas Historical Commission, “Details for Oriental Textile Mill (Atlas Number 2083004476),” *Texas Historic Sites Atlas*, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/2083004476> (accessed June 10, 2021); “New Incorporations,” *The Houston Post*, March 1, 1901, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph297659/m1/7/>.

Occupation, Race, and Gender in Recruiting Mexican Women

While men were largely recruited to work for railroads, women were targeted by Houston's textile industries. As women, these Mexicanas accessed distinct occupations which shaped their experiences when navigating Houston. One major recruiter of Mexicans and their families was the Oriental Textile Mill. As early as 1907, the company advertised for "white girls over 16 years." By 1920, the company was advertising in Spanish newspapers for "varias familias con trabajadores de mas de 16 años."⁶⁹ Between 1920-1930, at least 80 Mexicans were employed. Forty-four were male, 36 were female. Mexicanas primarily took on the occupations of weavers, spinners, twisters, and on occasion laborers.⁷⁰ As seen with men like Ynes Travieso, Mexican women could also identify with liminal whiteness since the mill sought "white girls." This racial status, coupled with their gender, made them targets for textile occupations. Once employed as textile trabajadoras, they participated with Anglos for labor rights as took place in California with cannery workers.⁷¹ This was made apparent when a Mexican mill employee, Clara Barrera, voiced her discontent against wage inequalities and working conditions.

⁶⁹ "Help Wanted," *The Houston Post*, September 9, 1907, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603671/m1/8/>; "Empleos," *La Prensa*, March 7, 1920, accessed February 27, 2019, GenealogyBank.

⁷⁰ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 1, Houston, Harris, Texas; Enumeration District: 33, accessed October 5, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; Ibid., Census Place: Houston Ward 6, Houston, Harris, Texas; Enumeration District: 97 accessed October 5, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; Ibid., Census Place: Houston Ward 7, Houston, Harris, Texas; Enumeration District: 106, accessed October 5, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1, Houston, Harris, Texas; Enumeration District: 28, accessed October 5, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷¹ Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

Clara Barrera

In the 1910s, twenty-nine-year-old Clara was an English-speaking Tejana residing in San Antonio with her husband, Frank, a policeman, and their two children. At some point, Frank passes away, leaving Clara widowed with dependents. In 1919, she was recruited by the Oriental Textile Mill, who paid her passage to Houston from San Antonio for \$36.36. She settled into the company's housing on Lowell Avenue known as Textile Village, renting a three-room cottage for two dollars a week.⁷²

Starting off, Clara was paid \$8 weekly, but moved up to \$9.60 within five months. Providing for her family proved to be a struggle for the Tejana. She had to obtain soap from the company store on credit but could not repay, causing her to lose credit. As a single mother, there were times when Clara needed to miss work which caused economic distress. In one instance, she was told her children could come to school "if they were clean." To secure their enrollment, they required proper clothing, which Clara could not afford, forcing her to take time off from work to sew and patch together clothing. For missing two days of work, she was only paid \$3.70 that week. Although struggling, Clara was not silent about her dire situation. She approached her foreman about a raise to no avail. After that did not work, Clara tried organizing workers to confront the foreman together regarding a pay raise, but her colleagues felt it too risky. Even though her efforts were spurred, the thirty-eight-year-old continued to voice her opinions against her wage. In October of 1919, the State Industrial Commission on minimum wage urged working women to

⁷² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: San Antonio Ward 1, San Antonio, Bexar, Texas; Page: 9B, Enumeration District: 6, accessed October 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 7, Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 10B, Enumeration District: 106, accessed October 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; "What is Minimum Wage, Hearing's Only Question," *The Houston Post*, October 24, 1919, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610227/m1/8/>.

express their thoughts on their working conditions. Clara testified to her conditions and was called an eloquent speaker by *The Houston Post*. The Tejana expressed her discontent amongst fellow Anglo textile workers. Preceding her testimony was W.H. Scholibo, Oriental Textile Mill Manager, and Ellen Reynolds, a “twister” at the factory.⁷³

Occupation, language, race, and/or gender intersected to form a distinct outcome for Clara. Her gender and race converged as a point of access for her occupation at the mill, but it also led to a low wage. Language intersected with all these dynamics to influence her access in speaking out against wage discrimination amongst Anglo allies who empathized with her, the state commission and fellow textile workers.

The gendered labor organizing atmosphere prior to the 1930s should be taken into consideration here. Clara’s use of the state commission fell into line with the vision of contemporary middle-class reformers who favored legislative routes over union efforts to improve women’s working conditions.⁷⁴ The particularities of Clara’s life disclose economic struggle and despair, but they also reveal participation by Mexicans in the discussion of labor rights via an Anglo state commission.⁷⁵ The story of another Oriental Textile Mill worker, Refugio Gabino provides a window into how these Mexicana textile workers accessed Houston’s courts.

⁷³ Ibid.; “What is Minimum Wage, Hearing’s Only Question,” *The Houston Post*; “Low Wages, Long Hours Rule For Women in Texas,” *The Houston Post*, March 6, 1936, accessed October 7, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁷⁴ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women In The 20th Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 79-91.

⁷⁵ Women like Clara Barrera are connected to other Tejanas who voiced their concerns against injustices in the early 1900s. For more examples see Cynthia E. Orozco, *Agent of Change: Adela Sloss-Vento, Mexican American Civil Rights Activist and Texas Feminist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020) and Acosta and Winegarten, *Las Tejanas*.

Flora and Refugio Gabino

Born around 1885 to Ignacio Gabino and Refugio Hernandez in Zamora, Michoacán, Flora Gabino later married Genaro Rodriguez and the couple had two children, Yganacio and Refugio.⁷⁶ Her brother, Francisco Gabino, was born in 1892.⁷⁷ Whether Flora divorces Genaro or he passes away is unclear, but she bears at least two more children with the surname Munguia, Octaviano, and Ruben.⁷⁸ By 1912, Francisco immigrated to Houston as a laborer for the H & T. C. Yards.⁷⁹ Four years later, the 5'5", dark-complected Flora crossed the border to live with her brother, Francisco, with no money and her four children.⁸⁰ Once she arrived in Houston, she moved in with

⁷⁶ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 34B, Enumeration District: 0009, accessed February 27, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ygnacio Rodriguez, File No. 47904. 18 June 1935, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Forth Worth, TX, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Refugio Degollado, File No. 36845, 12 May 1976, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁷ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Francisco Gabino, Sr., File No. 35469, 04 May 1975, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Octaviano Rodriguez, File No. 279. 31 October 1942, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Forth Worth, TX, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ruben Gabino Mungia, File No. 8402, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Forth Worth, TX, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁹ Francisco Gabino, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1912 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration Service, Mexican Border District, *Manifests of Statistical and Some Nonstatistical Alien Arrivals at Laredo, Texas, May 1903 - April 1955*, Flora Gabino, 26 August 1916, Serial No. 1071, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004; Record Group Number: 85, The National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., accessed February 28, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

him at 1112 Shea.⁸¹ Francisco quickly becomes an important source of permanency for Flora and her children, as indicated by Ygnacio's listing of Francisco as his nearest relative on his World War I draft card.⁸² By 1918, Flora's daughter, Refugio, found work at the Oriental Textile Mill.

On October 21, 1918, Refugio was injured when cleaning a machine at the mill. In January of 1919, Flora filed a lawsuit against the mill on behalf of her underage daughter. She sued for \$3000 in damages for personal injuries.⁸³ Three months later, the "feme solos" and their "intervenors," Woods, Barkley & King, were awarded a settlement of \$1250 from the company. \$250 was apportioned to Refugio, \$375 to Flora, and \$625 to the attorneys. Refugio's portion was to be paid to the country's registry because she was a minor, but it was to be used toward her benefit.⁸⁴ While living with her son, Ygnacio, Flora caught pneumonia in early 1935 and died quickly after.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Flora Gabino, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1918 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com/>; Francisco Gabino, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1919 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸² United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Ygnacio Gabino, 12 September 1918, Serial No. 1471, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Orange; Roll: 1983499, accessed February 28, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸³ "Suit for \$3000 Damages," *The Houston Post*, January 19, 1919, accessed February 28, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609711/m1/15/>.

⁸⁴ *Florina Gabino de Rodriguez and Refugio Rodriguez, Minor by Next Friend, Florina Gabino de Rodriguez v Oriental Textile Mills, Wood, Barkley, & King, Intervenors*, 16, 486 (61st District Court 1919), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>.

⁸⁵ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Flora Gabino Rodriguez, File No. 8038, 09 February 1935, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

So, not only did Mexicanas try to improve their futures by advocating for fair wages, they took to the courts when they felt wronged by employers, as did Flora Gabino. Due to tragedy originating from occupational hazards, such as dangerous machinery, they accessed Anglo legal spaces to overcome the loss of income. Refugio's female status and her race, the liminal whiteness of Mexicans, are important considerations because they allowed her to obtain mill employment. In addition, Refugio's occupation put her in vulnerable working conditions, but the mother and daughter were not silent about the workplace injury. Like Clara, these dynamics converged that provide another example of the diverse experiences Mexican workers underwent in Houston.

Laborers and Workplace Accidents

This section shifts to the economic space of production and the results of workplace accidents. Specifically, the worksite deaths of laborers, such as railroad section hands or construction workers, and its outcome on their families is the focus. Reviewing the actions taken by the wives of these laborers provides examples of how the dynamics of occupation, gender, and marital status intersected to influence inclusion. Mexicanas' accepted participation in the Houston courts stemmed from tragedy, a much varying circumstance than those of merchants, blacksmiths, barbers, or WOW members. For many Mexican workers, the cost of their labor was life and limb. One section hand in 1924, Angelo Martinez, had his leg severed by a passenger train while he was working on the Southern Pacific railroad. A chemical plant worker, identified as B. Lopez, was set aflame by a boiler at the Texas Chemical Company. He was ambulated to the hospital but later died.⁸⁶ These are only a few stories of the jeopardy Mexican workers faced each and every single day in Houston's early twentieth century. The current historiography predominantly focuses on

⁸⁶ "Mexican Section Hand Loses Leg in Accident," *The Houston Post*, July 26, 1921, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608676/m1/3/>; "Mexican Laborer Dies From Burns," *The Houston Post*, January 21, 1924, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608585/m1/1/>.

men in these economic spaces, but overlooked have been the workers' wives who challenged their husband's employers in court.

Occupation, Gender, and Marital Status

Mexican women did not sit idly by when the family's breadwinner was injured or killed. These Mexicanas forced Mexican male workers to be included as deserving of labor rights; in this case, compensation for their deaths. They chose to utilize Anglo lawyers to bring suits against their husband's employers.⁸⁷ In return, these Anglo lawyers saw an opportunity to capitalize monetarily on the family's loss, as was the case with Rosa Davalas and Juana Reyes.⁸⁸ Rosa and Juana represent only two of the twenty-seven Mexicanas that sought damages stemming from accidents in the workplace through Houston's courts between 1908-1926. For these women, their experience was shaped by dynamics of occupation, gender, and marital status. The occupation of their husbands was important because of the hazardous conditions they worked under, increasing the probability of injury or death. These dangerous jobs and any tragic outcome shaped the lives of wives. Economically, tragedy meant the loss of income, as was the case with the husbands of Rosa and Juana, Refugio and Jesus, respectively. Being married women linked these Mexicanas to entitlements of protection from the loss of a breadwinner.

⁸⁷ Mexicanas have had a long history of court use, but there is still a dearth of legal historical sources and historiography. While it is a time consuming process, we need to gather historical district court civil records and comb each page for Spanish-surnames then cross-check those in genealogical and newspaper databases. For a review of known court uses between 1821-1846 in Santa Fe, see Chapter 1 of Deena J. Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999), 17-37. For a study on California, see Mirsoslave Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

⁸⁸ The court document narratives used in this section contribute to Pablo Mitchell's call to "[reconceptualize]...the history of Mexican resistance and civil rights mobilization" based "[l]egal activism on the part of such ordinary Mexicans." For more see *West of Sex*, 10-11.

Refugio Davalas: The Section Hand

Refugio Davalas, H. G. Odell, and W. W. O’Falling were employed as section hands with the Houston Belt and Terminal Company in 1910. On November 18, the trio worked together near McKinney Avenue train crossing, near York Street, repairing a track. At 8:35 a.m., the three stepped off the track to avoid a northbound train, but moved directly into the path of a southbound train. Odell died within minutes, while O’Falling and Davalas were rushed to Houston’s Infirmary by ambulance. They both passed away within three hours due to broken legs, arms, and internal injuries. Refugio was buried in Holy Cross Cemetery the next day. An inquest ensued by Justice of the Peace McDonald, but he found no blame attached to the train company, ruling it accidental.⁸⁹ Refugio’s wife, Rosa, did not accept this ruling and pursued more action to right the wrong against her husband.

Rosa Davalas: Filing Suit

On December 8, Rosa filed suit against three rail lines: the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe, Houston Belt and Terminal Company, and Trinity and Brazos Valley. She sought \$30,000 for herself and her daughter. Rosa is reported to have appeared with attorney A. L. Cordova, along with Meek and Highsmith. It is not clear whether Cordova worked for Meek and Highsmith or she changed attorneys at some point. Regardless, her Anglo attorneys made the company admit liability and settle for \$2250, out of which Meek and Highsmith took \$950. Rosa’s minor child, Zapapas, was not “entitled” to any compensation, nor was a third plaintiff, Candido.⁹⁰ Refusing to

⁸⁹ “Train Killed Trio,” *The Houston Post*, November 19, 1910, accessed February 15, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604691/m1/18/>; “Train Crews Not Blamed,” *The Houston Post*, November 20, 1910, accessed February 15, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605727/m1/24/>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Refugio Davalas, File No. 5231, 18 November 1910, accessed February 15, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁹⁰ “Three Railroads Sued,” *The Houston Post*, December 9, 1910, accessed February 15, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605709/m1/16/>.

succumb to victimization by a major industry, Rosa's legal team formed a successful inter-ethnic alliance against Anglo capitalists. Another woman, Juana Reyes, continued this pattern in 1913.

Jesus Gutierrez: The Laborer

By 1911, Juana Reyes and Jesus Gutierrez were married and living in Houston. They settled at 1107 Vine, north of Buffalo Bayou in the Fifth Ward (near UH-Downtown today).⁹¹ Their first child, daughter Eloisa Gutierrez, was born on December 23, 1910.⁹² On March 13, 1912, Jesus Gutierrez, Jr. was born. His birth certificate indicates he was considered a "legitimate" child with his race listed as "Mexican." Juana and Jesus's nationality were marked as "US."⁹³

In the summer of 1913, Juana's husband, Jesus Gutierrez, and other Mexicans were contracted by Freund and Quay to construct a sewer in the Second Ward. Gutierrez was made foreman, leading a crew consisting of Eugenio Amaya, Apolonio Amaya, Luis Garravito and Manuel Garravito. By Saturday, August 2, construction was completed, and all that was left was to level the excavated ground. On that day, Foreman Gutierrez sent Eugenio down the manhole at the corner of York Street and Franklin Avenue. Immediately, Eugenio called for help. Luis, Manuel, and Jesus each descended into the manhole to help their colleague. As Apolonio approached the manhole, he saw the last man fall from the ladder and struggle for his life in the water. Apolonio began calling for help, and nearby residents rushed to help by using a rope to pull the men out. About thirty minutes later, Sid Westheimer Company's ambulance and the police arrived on the

⁹¹ Jesus Gutierrez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1911 from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁹² Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Eloisa Gutierrez (Cantu), File No. 23733, 02 May 1935, accessed February 15, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁹³ Birth Certificate of Jesus Gutierrez, Jr., 13 March 1912, Certificate 9968, Texas Department of State Health Services, Ancestry.com. *Texas, Birth Certificates, 1903-1932* [database on-line]. accessed February 15, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

scene. Pot hooks were used to bring the men to the surface, then lifted out the manhole by a rope tied around their waists. Each man was found dead. Justice of the Peace Crooker held an inquest, but he could not determine why the men fell into the water.⁹⁴ Just 24 years old, Jesus was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery.⁹⁵

Juana Gutierrez: Filing Suit

Immediately, Juana and Eloisa filed a suit against Freund and Quay for \$25,000 in damages. The mother and daughter claimed that Jesus was overcome with sewer gas, then fell into the water and drowned.⁹⁶ John C. Williams, a 39-year-old white lawyer born in Missouri, became involved in the case.⁹⁷ A year later, Juana appeared in court with her attorney. Freund and Quay settled with Juana, admitting to “carelessness and negligence.” The agreed-upon sum was well short of the \$25,000, with Juana awarded \$250. Eloisa was awarded \$50, but transferred to Juana for the “use, benefit, maintenance, support, and education” of her daughter.⁹⁸ Juana set a precedent as the wives and children of Luis and Manuel Garravito brought suit against Freund and Quay on December 15, 1914. Louisa, wife of Luis, and her children were awarded a total of \$200 for his

⁹⁴ “Four Drowned in City Sewer,” *The Houston Post*, August 3, 1913, accessed February 12, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605071/m1/14/>.

⁹⁵ Kelly Hamlin, “Jesus Gutierrez,” *FindaGrave*, Photo, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/185865618/jesus-gutierrez#view-photo=164315994>.

⁹⁶ “Local Courts,” *The Houston Post*, August 13, 1913, accessed February 12, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604006/m1/16/>.

⁹⁷ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 3, Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 10A, Enumeration District: 94, accessed February 12, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁹⁸ *Juana Gutierrez, et. al. vs. Freund and Quay*, 12, 288 (61st District Court 1914), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>.

death.⁹⁹ Maria, wife of Manuel, and her children were also awarded \$200.¹⁰⁰ Like Rosa, Juana felt wronged and understood she had the right to ameliorate the loss of her husband.

The power that these Mexicanas asserted to have some say in the outcome of their tragedy in an Anglo-dominated society is astounding. It also forms a new paradigm of how we should view women and self-determination in the early twentieth century, particularly in a state and era where the dehumanization of Mexican lives swelled, as made evident by the indiscriminate violent policing by Texas Rangers.¹⁰¹ It's apparent that the vulnerability of their husbands' occupations, along with their status as married women, shaped notions of labor rights. In these cases, that was an entitlement to compensation for their family's loss of earned income.

Much like *El Campo Laurel*, Anglo acceptance of Mexicans once again formed to protect the latter from economic tragedies faced by the family from the loss of their breadwinner, but the outcome of one's occupation changed how inclusion formed. In this situation, women may not have been able to control the circumstances of their husband's death, but to an extent, they could self-determine the economic outcome from that loss. These Mexicanas employed Anglo legal teams, not without their own profit motives, to secure compensation from their husbands' employers.¹⁰² In the end, the dynamics of occupation, gender, and marital status intersected to form

⁹⁹ *Louisa Garabito, et. al. vs. Freund and Quay*, 12, 447 (61st District Court 1914), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>.

¹⁰⁰ *Maria Garabito, et. al. vs. Freund and Quay*, 12, 448 (61st District Court 1914), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>.

¹⁰¹ Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You*, 83-96.

¹⁰² In courts, the credibility of Mexican men were bolstered by testimony of Anglo men. In Houston, the contracting of Anglo lawyers served Mexicanas in the same manner as viewed through their success rate. We do know that at least one Mexican lawyer, M.H. Diaz, provided legal services in the Houston area, but all Mexicanas employed Anglo lawyers except for one.

a distinct experience of inclusion for these workers' wives. These women were early pioneers of labor rights by Houstonian Mexicanas. As more joined the ranks of labor themselves, such as textile workers, they continued to advocate for workers' rights, bringing about varying circumstances and relationships with Anglos.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the intersecting dynamics of occupation, gender, marital status, race, residence, and language within economic spaces of the production and distribution of goods and services. The first section analyzed the *Woodmen of the World*, an organization restricted to white men from select occupations. Given this selective criteria, many Anglo men were not eligible for WOW membership based on occupation; yet, Mexican men gained membership in Anglo camps or their self-segregated Mexican camp, *El Campo Laurel*. Occupation, then, was an important dynamic for Mexican men who were part of WOW. Race was also significant as viewed by the fact that Mexican men met the white racial criteria. Language played a role as English-speaking Mexicans could communicate with fellow Anglo male workers. These dynamics of occupation, race, and language intersected to form access points, first through WOW membership, then into Anglo events and spaces, such as Fourth of July celebrations and white beaches.

The *Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle (W.C.)* was formed in association with WOW, whose membership was limited to Anglo women. Like Mexicanos, Mexicanas gained membership into this whites-only organization, indicating the role of race. As women, the male Anglo and Mexican camps of WOW were closed to them not based on their national origin, but due to their gender. These intersecting dynamics influenced the acceptance of a Mexican grove, *Bosque Cipres*, into the *Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle*.

But even she transitioned to an all-Anglo team. For more on interracial legalities, see *West of Sex* by Pablo Mitchell, 48.

For Jorge Zambrano, being bilingual (English and Spanish speaking) and living in an Anglo neighborhood formed social ties, impacting his employment as a Spanish instructor and translator. Eventually, he found work as a clerk at an Anglo-owned exporting firm. Language, residence, and occupation intersected that established a path towards an eventual welcomed integration of an Anglo-Mexican co-owned importing-exporting firm. Once economically included, Anglo society accepted Zambrano's family.

Like Zambrano, Nic and Andres spoke English and lived amongst Anglos, putting them in advantageous positions. Nic's residence put him in proximity to one of Houston's leading blacksmiths, Frank Eller, while Andres placed his business near his home. Being able to communicate in English made it easier for them to access Anglo apprenticeships, hire Anglos and even post wanted ads in English newspapers. They turned their occupation as blacksmiths into businesses and became local employers. These dynamics intersected to form a foundational path to inclusion. For Nic, his social acceptance first became evident when an Anglo attacked him. This violence against a Mexican was not tolerated, and the culprit was held legally accountable. Further, Nic accessed Anglo healthcare to treat his wounds. Later, he would even marry an Anglo woman and was active in politics alongside Anglos. Andres was able to join the aforementioned WOW camp, *El Campo Laurel*, and was even selected for the local World War 1 draft board of interpreters.

Examining economic spaces of production and service uncover the inclusion into local courtrooms and state government hearings by barbers, textile workers, and laborers' wives. Following a similar pattern, occupation, language, and race intersected to form the base through which Ynes Travieso could participate in the dominant society. Soon after arriving in the city, Ynes established himself as an English-speaking Mexican barber on the white side of the color

line. His integration into Anglo society was made visible when he married an Anglo woman and joined the Anglo WOW camp. Most emblematic of his degree of access was his successful use of Houston's courts to secure custody of his adopted Anglo child.

Not only could some Mexican men access Houston's courts, but so too could Mexican women. For one group of Mexicanas, race and gender intersected to form an access point to textile work. For example, the Oriental Textile Mill recruited white women, which racially included Anglos and Mexicans as viewed by their employment. Once on the job, working conditions impacted Mexican women adversely. As simultaneously white and Mexican, these women workers were given a platform at state hearings or successfully sued their employers for damages.

Similar to Mexicana textile workers, the wives of deceased Mexican laborers accessed Houston's courts to sue their husband's employers for damages. The economic space of production spread into these courtrooms where dynamics of occupation, gender, and marital status converged to influence their participation in society. The occupation of their husbands placed these women in a vulnerable position when workplace deaths occurred. As married women, court rulings in favor of these plaintiffs deemed them entitled to monetary relief and protection from their husband's employers.

One of the principal questions is how representative are the experiences of these Mexicans. Unfortunately, that is an extremely difficult question to answer because of the limited evidence available. It would be irresponsible to apply these case studies to all Mexicans as a whole. Still, they do give us insight into the heterogeneity of Houston's Mexican population in the early twentieth century. Further, these experiences of inclusion reveal that a single-analysis framework is not sufficient. For example, when it came to Mexican entrepreneurs, De León argued that a "dependence on consumers from the colonia restricted them to an economy" based on intraethnic

patrons.¹⁰³ This race-based analysis framed all Mexican businessmen as limited to Mexican customers. Yet, this chapter makes clear that was not entirely true, but liminal whiteness was only one aspect. To examine economic spaces solely through race leads to an overly simplified and monolithic interpretation ignoring the nuanced diversity of experiences. A Mexican could be placed on the white side of the color line, but being a woman shaped access to certain organizations, employment, or legal recourses. Living amongst Anglos or communicating with them via English was also important because of the economic and social networking those dynamics opened. Even through a limited amount of case studies, examining intersecting dynamics of occupation, gender, marital status, race, residence, and language within economic spaces forms understandings that a single-issue interpretation cannot.

¹⁰³ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 18.

Chapter 2: Working Against the Grain

Alongside examples of workers and entrepreneurs who gained access to Anglo Houston socio-economic spaces, there were counterpoints to this inclusion narrative. This chapter highlights how specific industries and businesses were marked as harmful, licentious, and radical. The stories of tamale peddlers, sex workers, Partido Liberal Mexicano members, and textile workers show that once a Mexican workforce was defined as a threat, they faced marginalization and a hostile society. First, an examination of the exclusion of Mexican tamale peddlers from Houston's food industry takes place. Then, the societal and economic restrictions that Mexicana sex workers were part of is reviewed. The last two sections focus on the rejection of Mexican labor organizing in Houston, beginning with the Partido Liberal Mexicano, then under the Textile Workers Organizing Committee.

"Tamales Sons of Disgrace": Policing Peddlers Reckless

There was a man in our town
And he was a wondrous rash
He went into a boarding house
And ate a plate of hash.
-Milwaukee Sentinel
There was a man in our town
And he was worse, by golly!
He stopped a greasy Mexican
And ate a hot tamale.
-The Houston Post¹

This section focuses on food production as the economic space, specifically tamale making and consumption. Historian Vick Ruiz argued that "food as an imaginary reinforces inequality as

¹ "Tampering With Trifles," *The Houston Post*, March 4, 1912, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606076/m1/6/>.

well as racial/spatial boundaries,” which is substantiated by the poem *Reckless*.² In it, a Houston man’s act of buying tamales from a “greasy Mexican” peddler was measured as a more egregious act than that of his Milwaukee counterpart. The writing contains three dynamics that shaped the lives of Mexican tamale peddlers in the Bayou City’s early twentieth-century history. At the core was their occupation as peddlers, which converged with their racial status and local perspectives on health.

Ruiz also posed the question, “Do foodways bring people together or serve as a signifier of otherness?” Between 1900-1920, the answer was situational when it came to Mexican food vendors. In their attempts of economic self-determination through the formation of food businesses, tamale peddlers faced an all-out assault against their entrepreneurial spirit by Houston Anglos. Those Mexicans who resisted these policing efforts faced a relentless onslaught, while those who conformed faced no apparent antagonism by Anglos.

Current historiography characterizes Mexican food as “unfamiliar” to Houstonians until the 1930s, with Felix Tijerina usually given credit for introducing the food on a large scale. Yet, on the contrary, tamales were so engrained into the Anglo’s palate by 1920 that they became “a locus of contestation” during Houston’s Progressive efforts.³

“Houston’s Classical Tamales”: The Prominence of Mexican Food in Early Houston

Houstonians and visitors alike could not have missed the influence of Mexican food at the turn of the century. In 1896, Mary Wright described Houston as “an up-to-date city-truly

² Vicki L. Ruiz, “Citizen Restaurant: American Imaginaries, American Communities,” (American quarterly 60, no. 1 (2008), 6.

³ Ibid., 5-9; Thomas H. Kreneck, *Mexican American Odyssey: Felix Tijerina, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader, 1905-1965*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); Tyina Steptoe, “From Lightnin’ to Lemonade: Culture Reimagining Culture in America’s Most Diverse City,” (paper presented at Gulf Coast Food Project Presents Houston Eats!, University of Houston February 2018), <https://vimeo.com/uhit/houston-eats/>.

cosmopolitan.” She dedicated a portion of her letter with the title “Tamale and Chile Con Carne.” Wright described tamales and chili con carne for her audience, adding that “tamale is Mexican, but it suits a Texan’s taste.”⁴ Here is the first consciousness of how Houstonians begin to adopt these foods as part of their culture while simultaneously recognizing the food’s Mexican roots. The surprising element of her story was the make-up of vendors.

While Mary recounted that she viewed two Mexican vendors, she also wrote of Black-owned stands. After a “black mammy” served her chile con carne, Mary exclaimed, “This is pretty hot!” The vendor rolled her eyes and responded, “If it wasn’t hot, honey, it wouldn’t be chile.” More surprising was that Italians had “almost entire control of [the] market,” whether in the market square or through peddling excess merchandise.⁵ Early on in Houston’s history then, comida Mexicana played a role in the heart of Houston, the Market Square, and varying ethnic groups participated.

A look at Houston’s restaurants between 1899-1905 supports the cosmopolitan nature of Mexican food vendors. Under “Restaurants” in the 1899 city directory, three Spanish-surname individuals, one Anglo, and two African-Americans were listed as owning chile stands.⁶ In 1905, seven Anglo and six Spanish-surnames made up vendors.⁷ Houstonians intrigued by Mexican food are also shown in the expansion of their Spanish vocabulary during this time. A *Houston Post*

⁴ “Tamale and Chili Con Carne,” *The Houston Post*, June 23, 1896, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph85777/m1/10/>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1899, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷ “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1905, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

reader asked, “Is ‘tamale’ the correct name of the Mexican article generally thus designated?” The newspaper responded by reviewing the correct singular and plural terms, tamal versus tamales.⁸ Entering the 1900s, a growing market and intrigue of Mexican food extended into Anglo homes.

Anglo women were central to the spread of an appetite for Mexican food in the everyday home as they became targets of home-making and advertisements. For example, a 1901 newspaper section titled “A Corner for Women” gave a detailed recipe, in English, for chicken tamales. Seven years later, recipes were still being shared in the “Of Interest to Women” section of *The Houston Post*.⁹ Companies directly targeted women in their advertisements. One marketing strategy was to give away a can of Mexican tamales to the “Ladies of Houston.”¹⁰

The commercialization of Mexican food expanded in the 1900s and became a staple of many local businesses. Early on, some real estate was advertised as “suitable for...[a] tamale stand” and “tamale kettles” were announced in classifieds as foundations of a “profitable business.”¹¹ In the mid-decade, restaurants began including chicken tamales on their menus, such as Mike Genora’s White Kitchen.¹² The Houston Packing Company was heavily invested in the

⁸ “Post’s Letters,” *The Houston Post*, August 29, 1897, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph84268/m1/6/>.

⁹ “A Corner For Women,” *The Houston Post*, July 10, 1901, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph84523/m1/4/>; “Tamales,” *The Houston Post*, February 29, 1908, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606031/m1/9/>.

¹⁰ “Ladies of Houston,” *The Houston Post*, April 28, 1910, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph605897/m1/9/>.

¹¹ “For Rent,” *The Houston Post*, April 25, 1901, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph83438/m1/19/>; “For Sale,” *The Houston Post*, January 27, 1907, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603111/m1/46/>.

¹² “Mike Genoa’s White Kitchen,” *The Houston Post*, January 1, 1906, accessed August

consumption of comida Mexicana. They canned chile con carne and tamales for the Red Cross brand.¹³ Their identity as integral to the local economy was solidified when they were a featured manufacturer in the 1910 “Made-in-Houston Exposition,” where they continued targeting women by giving away a can of tamales.¹⁴ Their popularity even branched out to the Spanish-speaking community when they hosted a contest for the best recipe in English or Spanish.¹⁵

By 1910, Anglo appropriation solidified Mexican food into the Bayou City’s identity. This was made evident when issue was taken with a comparison of Houston’s tamales to San Antonio’s. While hundreds of journalists were eating tamales provided by George Bailey of *The Houston Post*, Representative James Slayden remarked Houston’s tamale was merely an imitation of San Antonio’s. This sparked a response posted in *The Houston Post*, titled “Houston’s Classical Tamales,” detailing the history and difference between the two variations. The Houston tamale found its origins in the Battle of San Jacinto, taken from the chef of General Santa Anna; although, it needed the “requirements of civilization.” After several generations, the origin’s “fierceness” was tamed, “evil eliminated,” and “desirable qualities added,” finally rendering it fit for human stomachs. On the other hand, the San Antonio tamale was attributed as having kept most of its origins from the “ancient Mexicans.” This made it unfit for consumption except by Mexicans and white people who had their “insides lined with asbestos or who can drink carbolic acid or aqua

21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph443328/m1/8/>.

¹³ “No Picnic or Outing,” *The Houston Post*, May 30, 1909, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph605734/m1/34/>.

¹⁴ “Made-In-Houston Exposition,” *The Houston Post*, April 24, 1910, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604998/m1/9/>.

¹⁵ “Recipe Contest,” *The Houston Post*, May 8, 1910, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604231/m1/53/>.

fortis.” The article noted that consumers are frequently arrested for disturbing the peace because eating a “fiery” San Antonio tamale put one in an uncontrollable, crazed state. While the Alamo City’s tamale equated to a “taste of the inferno in advance of the last judgment” that “would throw an elephant into convulsions in seven seconds,” Houston’s version left “soothing and comforting impressions...upon the interior of one’s anatomy.”¹⁶

It is clear that early twentieth-century Houston was enmeshed in Mexican food, particularly tamales and chile con carne. While there were experimentations with other forms such as “Hot Possum Tamales” Houstonians craved and consumed Mexican-style food.¹⁷ Within this context of demand, Mexicans found their economic participation as vendors limited by the city’s health campaign and racialization.

Occupation, Race, Health: Early Communal Policing

Tamale-making provided an arena for a discourse of Progressive ideals of sanitation and cleanliness to play out. Health and racial archetypes converged with the occupation to shape the exclusion of Mexican food peddlers from the local food industry. Progressive-era Houston desired Mexican food, but within arbitrary sanitary notions. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw campaigns against tamale peddlers, typically Mexicans, by political, commercial, and social organizations. Prior to city regulations emerging in 1909, policing tamale peddlers began with the social and commercial community of Anglos and elite Mexicans.

Two years after Mary Wright’s visit, chile stands were ordered to be removed to the rear of the Market Square in 1901. One critic of the order labeled it “official tyranny” on those with limited

¹⁶ “Houston’s Classical Tamales,” *The Houston Post*, January 21, 1910, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth443228/m1/6/>.

¹⁷ “Heavenly Houston,” *The Houston Post*, December 23, 1908, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604422/m1/6/>.

political power. He emphasized the burden placed on those hundreds purchasing a meal for 10 or 15 cents at the stands. This reader noted that cleanliness could not be an issue because the stands are kept “scrupulously clean.” A counter-response from another reader dismissed any political underpinnings, noting that the concern was on appearance and cleanliness. If tamale stands were to be allowed, the current “canvas covered stands” should be replaced with “something neat and substantial.”¹⁸

Over the next eight years, the local community and newspaper stigmatized these vendors through racial connotations with health.¹⁹ One story detailed how a “produce man” frequently gave his dead turkeys and chickens to an aged woman, assuming she plucked their feathers and discarded the carcass. He was also a repeat customer of a “tamale man.” At one point, the same aged woman accompanied his tamale vendor. This led the produce man to believe he was possibly eating “his own grub” and avoided the delicacy from then on.²⁰ The respectability and sanitation of this occupation were undermined by questioning the meat used.

Newspapers' poems associated causality of the decline in cat or dog populations with the practices of tamale vendors.²¹ One poem read as such:

Now meat's gone up,
That next door pup,

¹⁸ “Chile Stands on Market Square,” *The Houston Post*, June 2, 1901, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth84488/m1/13/>.

¹⁹ Newspapers were instrumental in creating or impacting schemas of “Mexican” and “Mexican American” identity for their readers. For more, see Melita M. Garza, *They Came To Toil: Newspaper Representations of Mexicans and Immigrants in the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018).

²⁰ “Ate His Own Grub,” *The Houston Post*, December 7, 1907, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602549/m1/14/>.

²¹ “Exchange Interviews,” *The Houston Post*, July 15, 1902, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth85942/m1/4/>.

Who sits and bays the moon,
Will likely feel
The steal and steel
Of tamale venders soon.²²

Newspapers were essential to creating pejorative imagery of a health and tamale peddlers juxtaposition. Poems like *Reckless* described these peddlers as “greasy Mexican[s].”²³ This first decade of the twentieth century defined who could and couldn’t be part of the burgeoning business of Mexican food in Houston. This early blend of health, race, and occupational dynamics influenced later city campaigns of exclusion. Newspapers were integral to Mexican peddlers’ marginalization from this trade, but so were intraethnic pressures from Mexican organizations and women.

Intraethnic Policing: The Black Hand

In addition to ethnic and racial stigmatization by Anglo populations, early policing of Mexican tamale peddlers also occurred intraethnically. Mexicano/as took part in the policing of perceived menial occupations that damaged their social image. In their viewpoint, achieving respectability for their population meant taking part in removing their people from participating in certain occupations, as seen with the murder of Mexican Benjamin Larrumbide.

Considered the “boss” of tamale vendors, Benjamin Larrumbide first opened a food stand in the Market Square in the 1890s. In 1905, Mexicanas began imploring Larrumbide to find another occupation because they objected to tamale peddling. Apparently, the “better classes” of Mexicans in Houston found tamale peddlers degrading to their people. Because Benjamin refused to cease his business operations, he faced an attack upon his home. A fire was set in his apartment building,

²² “Tampering With Trifles,” *The Houston Post*, April 24, 1902, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth87053/m1/6/>.

²³ “Tampering With Trifles,” *The Houston Post*.

originating below his apartment. He narrowly escaped the fire, but unfortunately, he would not find the same luck two years later.²⁴ In 1907, a Mexican organization called *La Mano Negra*, or the Black Hand, brought terror for Houston's tamale peddlers.

In February of 1907, Benjamin woke up to find a Spanish-language circular on his door, advising him to cease his work or face dire consequences. The translated circular read as follows:

Warning!

Having ourselves decided at the meeting of the 20 of the present month that on account of the great influx of tamale vendors, which we have received in such force, they must be made to understand - these tamales sons of disgrace - that after March 1 next they are prohibited from going about the streets, like saddled asses, with their cargoes on their backs.

All of this herd of ill begotten beings are hereby notified that if they continue to frighten with their noise (brays) (inheritance) from sire ass that begot and the dam that gave them birth - that after said date they shall be destroyed, those who continue in the caprice of loading themselves like a herd of disgraceful animals.

-By the order of the council No. 11 Dated the 30th day of October, 1862. Black Hand.²⁵

Now living at 804 Brazos, near City Hall's location today, and still refusing to acquiesce, the tamale peddler was set ablaze on the night of February 14. After three days of suffering, he died from burn wounds suffered from his waist to his neck.²⁶ Exactly how or who committed the act is shrouded in mystery. While he told investigators that he had knocked over a kerosene lamp in his residence, a witness stated he was set on fire when a lamp was thrown at him two blocks away from his home.²⁷ Larrumbide's wife would later state that her husband told her the act was

²⁴ Benigo Larrumbide, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1899, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; "Former Attempt," *The Houston Post*, February 23, 1907, accessed May 18, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603641/m1/14/>.

²⁵ "'Black Hand in Houston,'" *The Houston Post*, February 21, 1907, accessed June 14, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602533/m1/8/>; The 1862 date presumably refers to the Black Hand's origin, but it is not clear.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Mexicans Are Terrorized," *The Houston Post*, February 22, 1907, accessed June 14,

intentional but never revealed more information.²⁸ The incident shocked and instilled such fear in the local Mexican community that they refused to speak about the incident to authorities or the press. The remaining tamale peddlers adhered to the March 1 deadline after Benjamin's murder.²⁹ Thus, policing of tamale peddlers was first intra and interethnically communal. These attempts to limit or restrict Mexicans from participating in Houston's food industry just happened to occur with the commercialization of Mexican food simultaneously.

The Rise of Mexican Restaurants

Coinciding with this ethnic and racial stigmatization of peddlers by Anglos and Mexicans were changes in those associated with such occupations in the restaurant section of the city directories. These changes indicate that the campaign to rid Houston of tamale peddlers supported the rise of redirecting potential customers to formal businesses. Moving away from a street vendor label also reveals the effects of health, ethnicity, and racial dynamics on the occupation.³⁰

The 1902 city directory listed four Anglo, three African-American, and two Spanish-surnamed stand owners. The 1905 city directory listed seven Anglo men and five Spanish-surnamed individuals as proprietors of chile stands. In 1908, all six of those identified as owners of these stands had Spanish surnames in the city directory's "Restaurant" section. There is an evident decline in non-Mexican tamale vendors; although, Anglo owners continued operating

1908, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603813/m1/11/>.

²⁸ "Echo Of Black Hand," *The Houston Post*, June 30, 1907, accessed June 14, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602858/m1/8/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ This racialization for the purpose of a material outcome is line with Tomás Almaguer's work where viewed "racialization...as a contestation over privileged access to either productive property...or positions in a highly stratified labor market." See *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 19.

Mexican food businesses without any label identifying them as street vendors. For example, Frank Declement is listed as running a “chile stand” at 409 Louisiana in 1902-1905. Soon, the same owner is listed under the same address, but the label “chile stand” is removed in 1907’s “Restaurant” section. The Dudley Bros, who appeared in 1903, were listed as “chile parlors” owners, but this affiliation was removed in 1908 and never reapplied.³¹ So, while affiliations as a street vendor became increasingly absent, identifying as a proprietor of a Mexican restaurant emerged, but with an aversion to the ongoing stigmatization regarding cleanliness. Not only did Anglos participate in this shift, but so too did Mexicans.

Born in 1860, Mercedes Hernandez immigrated to the United States in 1894 from Mexico. By 1900, she and her two children settled at 508 Milam Street in Houston. Listed as a housewife in the 1900 census, she opened a Market Square chile stand in 1902.³² Five years later, she shifted her business strategy. In 1907, Mercedes advertised the grand opening of her “restaurant and chile stand” located on 414 Milam on the “other side of El Cid saloon.” She promoted her newfound establishment as “all clean and good service,” and signed her classified as “Mrs. Mercedes Hernandez.”³³ While she identified with chile stands in her newspaper advertisement, her 1907

³¹ “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1902, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 560-561; “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1903, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 517-518; “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1905, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 489; “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 474; “Restaurants,” Houston, Texas City Directory, 1908, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>, 499.

³² Mercedes Hernandez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1902, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

³³ “Special Notices,” *The Houston Post*, January 14, 1907, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603463/m1/8/>.

city directory reference removed that association present in her 1902 entry.³⁴ In addition, Mercedes felt compelled to emphasize health in her advertisement, undoubtedly resulting from the rising negative health connotations. Eventually, Mercedes moved her restaurant to 803 Washington and her residence to the Houston Heights at 914 10th Street.³⁵

It's unclear whether any of these proprietors took part in a concerted effort to stigmatize peddlers, but it is clear they benefited from it. Those Anglos or Mexicans able to obtain formal real estate or rental spaces to open a restaurant rather than an informal realty, such as a stand, avoided further policing of their venture by city officials during the *Pure Food Campaign*.

The Pure Food Campaign

As a reaction to ptomaine cases in 1909, Houston began its *Pure Food Campaign* that was formed for the safety of Houston residents by enforcing sanitation regulations by food vendors.³⁶ The director was City Health Officer Dr. George W. Larendon. Tamale vendors were one of the many targeted businesses.³⁷ In April of 1909, Houston officials initiated their Pure Food Campaign to combat "impure foods."³⁸ A case of ptomaine in 1909 caused City Health Officer Larendon to advocate for a city chemist and slaughterhouse. He argued that meat rejected by the inspector at

³⁴ Mercedes Hernandez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁵ Mercedes Hernandez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1910, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Mercedes Hernandez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1911, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁶ Ptomaine is the odor or taste resulting from putrefied food which was believed to cause food poisoning. For more, see Edward Geist, "When Ice Cream Was Poisonous: Adulteration, Ptomaines, and Bacteriology in the United States, 1850–1910," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 86, no. 3 (2012): 333-60.

³⁷ "Stringent Rules," *The Houston Post*, April 24, 1909, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606167/m1/1/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

the federal packing plant was sold to local butchers. In addition to the chemist and slaughterhouse, Larendon proposed initiating local inspections whereby a certificate was granted if conditions were deemed sanitary. In the same interview, the health officer noted there was a great danger in the “indiscriminate purchase of tamales,” but revealed that no cases of ptomaine poisoning originating from tamales were known at the time. He associated this possible danger with the fact that the public was unaware of the conditions these foods were made in and by whom.³⁹ This government campaign against Mexican vendors was supported by the continued anecdotal stories of contracted illnesses via newspapers.

One anecdote consisted of a white woman, Mrs. H. W. Meinscher, and her son becoming ill after buying tamales from a “Mexican street vendor.” The hero in the article was Mr. Meinscher, who secured medical treatment after finding them suffering from abdominal pains and vomiting.⁴⁰ Articles concerning those who became ill reveal how race played a role in who could be a victim of street vendors. In this article, it is Anglo families who became sick and are deserving of sympathy. Though it is conceivable if Anglo communities became ill, their Mexican counterparts became ill, but no such stories were recorded. Instead, the cleanliness of ethnic communities was portrayed as a threat that required bureaucratic intervention, even though the city’s health officer acknowledged a lack of concrete evidence.

This campaign expanded to schools under a “Talk on Sanitation” held weekly in the 1913 school year. One of the “Daily Sanitation Talks” listed tamales as one of the ten foods causing

³⁹ “Health Measures,” *The Houston Post*, April 7, 1909, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604153/m1/11/>.

⁴⁰ “Tamales Cause Ptomaine,” *The Houston Post*, October 1, 1911, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605178/m1/12/>.

sickness. Further, the “intelligent care” of the “housekeeper” in not purchasing impure foods was given importance over city regulations.⁴¹

As Mexican restaurants continued emerging in the 1910s, cleansing oneself of sanitation concerns continued being of utmost importance, as demonstrated by the continued advertising of health. The Mex-Res served “Mexican dishes only” at 1109 Capitol Avenue. Between the hours of 11 A.M. to 12 P.M., a patron could purchase a “Mexican dinner” consisting of enchiladas, tamales, frijoles, sopa de arroz, chile con carne, tortillas, tea, and café for twenty-five cents. The restaurant claimed that Mexican food was the “healthiest food known, notwithstanding a large amount of chile pepper used.” An appropriate amount of chile pepper could cure indigestion if consumed regularly. A considerable amount of advertising space focused on their “clean and sanitary conditions,” supporting how their dishes were “properly prepared.” While “ordinarily tamales [were] made in a squalid Mexican hut under disagreeable conditions,” Mex-Res allowed patrons to view tamale-making in a dedicated window. Included was the approval by the city health inspector.⁴² So popular was the twenty-five-cent dinner that it was served all day long in January

⁴¹ “Daily Sanitation Talks,” *The Houston Post*, April 1, 1913, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph443382/m1/7/>.

⁴² “Eat Something Different,” *The Houston Post*, October 12, 1913, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604714/m1/43/>; This depiction was based on long-held beliefs of the “inferior state of Mexican domesticity.” For more, see *West of Sex* by Pablo Mitchell, 39-40. Commercial depictions of Mexicans also serve as measurements of progress and modernity. If the origins of tamales are depicted as stemming from unclean Mexicans, then this serves as evidence that whites juxtapose their clean and modern, or civilized, methods against. For more on the use of nostalgia and historical authenticity to serve white interests, see Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) and Phoebe S. K. Young, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

1914, and could be delivered by a messenger. Women were particularly fond of the establishment as an advertisement noted it was “essentially a ladies chili and coffee parlor.”⁴³

Tamale suppers were also part of local business luncheons, but only if verified sanitary.⁴⁴ For instance, one weekly luncheon of the Rotary club consisted of “chiladas, tortillas, frijoles, tamales, chili, [and] ensalado.” It was noted that the foods were prepared “Mexican style,” but “in the usual...cleanliness of cuisine and service.”⁴⁵

The Crusade for Better Health

Over the next few years, this health campaign hardened by associating tuberculosis with informal tamale-making by Mexicans, leading to direct policing by local law enforcement. On Thursday, June 15, 1916, inhabitants of 506 and 514 Smith Street, Antonio Luna, Cresencio Corroli, Juan Munoz, and Francisco Cabrera, found themselves being forcibly removed from their residence. The 1915 city directory and the 1910 census indicate that many of these residents were laborers.⁴⁶ Along with other Houston Mexicans, they became the target of The Houston Foundation and the city’s health department and police when they initiated their “Crusade for Better Health.” Under the headline “Disease and Filth,” it was reported that sixteen families, and a total of sixty-four occupants, were found living in “disclosed sanitary conditions.” In some rooms, six individuals shared space with limited ventilation. Out of the seven paragraphs dedicated

⁴³ “Announcements,” *The Houston Post*, January 9, 1914, accessed August 19, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605281/m1/10/>.

⁴⁴ “A Tamale Supper,” *The Houston Post*, August 19, 1910, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605316/m1/16/>.

⁴⁵ “Mexican Dishes Served Rotarians,” *The Houston Post*, May 9, 1914, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607138/m1/7/>.

⁴⁶ Francisco Cabrera, Cresencio Corroli, Antonio Luna, and Juan Munoz, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1915, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

to the story, two focused on the production of tamales by tuberculosis-infected inhabitants that found their “way to the mouths of citizens.”⁴⁷

During the raid, one woman described as the “dictator” took the lead on providing clean-up directions and finding new quarters for the removed inhabitants. When the owner of the new quarters was informed of his new tenants, he attempted to have them charged for trespassing. The Houston Foundation stepped in and found a new location for the removed Mexicans. City Sanitary Inspector M.L. Lewis noted that a child and manged dog rolled out of a sack, suspected as holding corn husks, when a last sweep of the Smith homes was conducted.⁴⁸ The actions to find new housing by The Houston Foundation may have been warranted because of dilapidated conditions, but the reporting of the incident perpetuated a link between occupation, in this case, tamale peddlers, and health, tuberculosis, which culminated in further criminalization of these vendors by police.

The following week, Court Sergeant McNutt enforced an injunction of “clean homes, no more tamales, fewer dogs and cats, no lice, no weeds in the yards, no den for typhus bacteria and one family to a house as nearly as possible.” Any of these “sores” gave McNutt the cause he needed to enter a residence for inspection. By the end of Monday, he had inspected “15 Mexican homes,” where he found compliant residents willingly acquiescing to imposed standards. On the other hand,

⁴⁷ “Disease And Filth,” *The Houston Post*, June 17, 1916, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608169/m1/6/>.

⁴⁸ “Houston Mexicans Being Treated To Severe Clean Up By The City,” *The Houston Post*, June 20, 1916, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610156/m1/8/>; The focus of an extended kinship under one roof was a tactic to invalidate Mexican domesticity. The details of sleeping arrangements were part of historical attacks on immigrant sleeping patterns. For more, see Chapter 3 of *West of Sex* by Pablo Mitchell, 39-40, 47.

“obstreperous Mexicans” prevented him from inspecting more homes.⁴⁹ A.D. Polemanakos, the owner of the houses, found charges being brought against him in which he was forced to renovate the structures.⁵⁰ Not soon after these raids did the Superintendent of Police issue orders that officers were to investigate all street tamale vendors and follow them to inspect wherever those tamales were made. If conditions deemed “satisfactory to the authorities” were found, then the business could continue.⁵¹ The *Pure Food Campaign*, the subsequent criminalization, and police efforts against Mexican peddlers culminated from the convergence of occupation, race, and health. Street vendors were racialized as unclean leading to the perspective that the city’s well-being was under attack.⁵²

Still, Anglos continued craving Mexican food, but only in settings deemed acceptable. Tamales persisted in being a prominent food choice in Houston during the 1920s, just as tamale peddlers continued to be stigmatized. On April 24, 1919, Houstonians sent a care package of chile con carne and tamales to Texas troops stationed in Berlin. These soldiers shared and feasted with German allies as they enjoyed music together.⁵³ At the turn of the decade, the local identity with

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “Owner Promised To Destroy Buildings,” *The Houston Post*, June 21, 1916, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610529/m1/8/>.

⁵¹ “Police Will Investigate All Hot Tamale Peddlers,” *The Houston Post*, June 22, 1916, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610686/m1/7/>.

⁵² This recovered narrative builds on the work of historians dealing with disease and racialization. John Raymond Mckiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁵³ “Early Morning Observations,” *The Houston Post*, April 24, 1917, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610601/m1/6/>.

Mexican food roared into the twenties. Houstonians who entertained, such as bridge clubs, commonly served their guests tamales.⁵⁴ College students at Rice consumed Mexican food across campus at the Ye Old College Inn.⁵⁵ Businesses continued their commercialization as seen by the new methods of Ragsdale Tamale Shop at 3910 McKinney. The proprietor, Ragsdale, incorporated a “tamale maker” that produced 50 tamales a minute if required.⁵⁶ Future Mexican entrepreneurs Felix Tijerina and Melosio Gomez capitalized on this atmosphere, but on the backs of tamale peddlers who faced an onslaught of constriction on their participation within Houston’s food industry.⁵⁷ As reviewed, their occupation became intertwined with health in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Their informal economy was linked with causing sickness through ptomaine and tuberculosis, giving rise to policing by the community, health officials, and law enforcement.

“Undesirable Citizenship”: Mexican Prostitution in Houston’s Red Light District, 1900-1917

This section shifts the economic space to exchanging one’s money for a sexual service, or sex work. Men searching for companionship at the beginning of the 1900s could find women offering such services in Houston’s downtown area. One cluster of bordellos was located along the 600 block of Louisiana, between Capitol and Texas, where the Jones Hall for Performing Arts

⁵⁴ “Bridge Club,” *The Houston Post*, March 5, 1922, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth609004/m1/39/>.

⁵⁵ “Ye Old College Inn,” *The Houston Post*, January 7, 1921, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth229874/m1/3/>.

⁵⁶ “Houston As Seen By The Visiting Reporter,” *The Houston Post*, December 13, 1924, accessed August 21, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607927/m1/5/>.

⁵⁷ For more on these individuals, see Kreneck, *Mexican American Odyssey* and Mikaela G. Selley, “The Melesio Gómez Family: Mexican Entrepreneurship in Houston’s Early Twentieth Century” (master’s thesis, University of Houston, 2013).

stands today.⁵⁸ Among the makeup of these bordellos were Mexicanas who found employment in prostitution. Alongside Anglo women, the dynamics of occupation, gender, and morality intersected to shape the experience of Mexicana sex workers as one of restricted access.

Occupation, Gender, and Morality: Roots of Mexican Sex Workers

Born to a Mexican father in 1874, Marie Melcatha was living in Galveston, TX by 1890. There she married Frank Bernardoni, and their son, Romeo, was born in 1892.⁵⁹ The two divorced in 1893, and Marie moved to Houston with her son.⁶⁰ At her home on 611 Capitol Avenue, near the Jones Plaza today, Marie was identified as “Spanish” by the city and labored as a prostitute.⁶¹ Marie was not alone as other Mexicanas worked alongside her.

The 500 block of Preston Avenue, where the Wortham Theater Center currently sits, was also home to saloon keepers and working girls of Mexican descent. Living at 518 Preston were wife and husband, Aurelia Salgado, 25, and Ignacio Salgado, 50, who ran a saloon at 510.⁶² Next door at 512 lived a French prostitute. At 514 and 516 lived two Davila surnamed women, Natalia

⁵⁸ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 4, Enumeration District: 68, accessed August 28, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁹ Harris County Clerk’s Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County, Texas, Marriage Records*, Maria Melcatha with Francisco Bernardoni, File No. 1008868, 1890, accessed August 28, 2018 <https://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁰ “The Courts,” *The Galveston Daily News*, May 27, 1893, accessed August 28, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph468706/m1/8/>.

⁶¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 8, Enumeration District: 68, accessed August 28, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; Marie Melcatha, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1900, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶² Ignacio Salgado, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1900, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

and Julia, who immigrated in 1893.⁶³ Records indicate they are related, but their age discrepancy does not clarify if they are mother-daughter or sisters. Marie, Aurelia, Natalia, and Julia show that Mexican women were part of a small but visible community of brothel women.

In 1903, Natalia relocated a couple of blocks away to 514 Smith, and by mid-decade, became the head of a bordello consisting primarily of Spanish-surnamed women.⁶⁴ The details of the 1905 city directory indicate her status as a madam. That year's directory lists Martina Guerrero, Josephine Delgado, Marie Gomez, Julia Smith, and her long-time neighbor, Aurelia Salgado. Natalia was the sole woman recorded with a phone number, 1286, out of all the women listed.⁶⁵ As a madam, Natalia would have gained status and responsibility. Madams were viewed as employers who provided benefits, such as "free birth control, health care, legal assistance, housing, and meals for their employees," and provided protection from abusive men.⁶⁶ Future records solidify Natalia's role, but they also bring to light a story of how Mexicana prostitutes became part of a larger social experiment of governmental regulation during Houston's Progressive era.⁶⁷

⁶³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 3, Enumeration District: 68, accessed August 28, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁴ Natalia Davila, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1903, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Martina Guerrero, Josephine Delgado, Marie Gomez, Julia Smith, and Aurelia Salgado, 1905.

⁶⁶ Thaddeus Russell, *A Renegade History of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 101-124; Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 90-91.

⁶⁷ Grace Penã Delgado has considered how the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly that of border policing, shaped the lives of Mexican sex workers. For more, see "Border Control and Sexual Policing: White Slavery and Prostitution Along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1903-1910," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2012): 157-178.

The Restricted District

In April of 1908, a city ordinance required women of “questionable character” to move within the limits of the “restricted district.” Beginning in May, all women operating outside of the restricted district were subject to criminal law.⁶⁸ Houston officials chose to build this district in an area populated by African-Americans in Fourth Ward near Allen Parkway and Interstate 45 today. The majority of the Restricted District was bordered between Allen Parkway, Heiner Street, West Dallas, and Gillette Street. In response, Black residents and allies bought up one-third of the property in the proposed area to curb this “very undesirable citizenship” moving in.⁶⁹ However, this tactic did not dissuade the city, and by May 27, the city’s engineering department was constructing a new sewage line for the new inhabitants.⁷⁰ Within the Restricted District’s boundaries was a street named Hardcastle (currently Skyline Trail). Both Natalia Davila and Aurelia Salgado settled there at 818 and 820 Hardcastle Street, respectively, once again becoming neighbors.

The Women of Hardcastle

Few sources survive, but women living at 818 and 820 Hardcastle can be located in the census records and city directories, giving us a sense of their makeup. The 1910 census and city

⁶⁸ “City Will Invoke The Laws,” *The Houston Post*, April 23, 1908, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605233/m1/8/>; Houston was part of a larger effort to district and contain sex work, for more see Thomas Clyde Mackey, “Red Lights Out: A Legal History of Prostitution, Disorderly Houses, and Vice Districts, 1870-1917” (Diss., Rice University, 1984), <https://hdl.handle.net/1911/19051>; Jef Rettman, “Business, Government, and Prostitution in Spokane, Washington, 1889-1910,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 89, no. 2 1998: 77–83; Courtney Q. Shah, “‘Against Their Own Weakness’: Policing Sexuality and Women in San Antonio, Texas, During World War I,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010): 458–482.

⁶⁹ “Buying Property,” *The Houston Post*, April 7, 1908, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605529/m1/14/>.

⁷⁰ “The City Hall,” *The Houston Post*, May 27, 1908, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605945/m1/5/>.

directory list the following women at 818 Hardcastle Street: Natalia Davila, 24; Stella Callaghan, 22; Carrie Goday, 22; Clotilda (Florence) Trevino, 20; Martina Guerra, 32; Angelina Gusman, 26; Corina Delagarza, age 23; Flora Hill, 48; Solidad Martines, 29; and Lizzie Garcia, 22 as occupants. Interestingly, all women have some lineage to Mexico except for Stella (Australian mother), Carrie (Cuban), and Flora (Austrian father Austrian, Massachusetts mother). Solidad was the only woman listed as married, with Flora and Florence identified as widows. Most could read and/or write, except for Natalia and Corina.⁷¹ Their location within the Restricted District, along with varying surnames and ages, supports their employment in a Houston bordello ran by Natalia Davila (listed as head of household).⁷² Over the next seven years, various women would enter and leave this particular address. Out of all the women who shared this residence in the 1910s, Natalia is the only one listed with a phone, indicating her continued status as the madam of 818 Hardcastle Street. Down the street, Natalia reunited with an old acquaintance, Aurelia Salgado.

At 820 Hardcastle Street, Aurelia, age 35, was listed as the head of household. Between the ages of 20-32, Aurelia's boarders were Elisa Japata, Estella Lupes, Ollie Courtney, Conseulla Garza, Amelia Rosales, Natalia Ramos, Mouvella Caveat, Maria Fernandez, and Enuncio Guerro. Most of the women were single, but Elisa and Natalia were married. Aurelia was divorced, and Maria was widowed. All had some connection to Mexico, except Ollie from Texas and Elisa from

⁷¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 2A, Enumeration District: 70, accessed October 24, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; Houston, Texas City Directory, 1910, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷² Houston, Texas City Directory, 1911, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Houston, Texas City Directory, 1912, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Houston, Texas City Directory, 1913, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Houston, Texas City Directory, 1915, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Houston, Texas City Directory, 1917, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

France. All could speak English, and all could read and/or write except for Mouvella and Amelia. The only male in this household was the piano player, Enuncio.⁷³ Just like Natalia Davila, Aurelia is the constant inhabitant and the only woman listed with a phone number in the city directories at that address.⁷⁴ Aurelia's status as the madam of 820 Hardcastle Street is indicated through her identification as the head of household in the census and her phone number in the city directory.⁷⁵

Policing the Restricted District

For these Mexicana sex workers, the dynamics of occupation, gender, and morality intersected to form exclusion from full participation in society. Officials targeted sex work to constrain immorality, as defined by the city, leading to regulating sex worker mobility and behaviors. First, city ordinances restricted them to a pre-defined geographic area. The ordinance "colonizing and segregating houses of ill-fame" declared it "unlawful for any public prostitute or woman notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, live or sleep in any house, room or closet situated" outside of the Restricted District.⁷⁶ So for Natalia, Aurelia, and other Mexican sex

⁷³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 2A, Enumeration District: 70, accessed October 24, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁴ Aurelia Salgado, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1911, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Aurelia Salgado, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1913, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>; Aurelia Salgado, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1910, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁵ All evidence points to Aurelia and Natalia's continued journeyed together in Houston's community of sexual economy between 1900-1917. The only major discrepancy is in Natalia's age and immigration year in the 1900 and 1910 census. In 1900, her age is recorded as 18 while in 1910 she is 24. Her immigration year is recorded as 1893 in 1900 and 1895 in 1910. It is the continued proximity to Aurelia Salgado, whose record data stays consistent, and continuity in occupation that strongly suggests the same Natalia from 1900-1917. It is quite possible that she lied to the census taker about her age to hide the fact that she was a fourteen-year-old prostitute.

⁷⁶ J.G. Hautier, *The Revised Code of Ordinances of the City of Houston of 1914*, May 6, 1914, Harris County, Texas, 269.

workers, their mobility around Houston was constrained by law as well as their social connections. The city's ordinance stated that "any person who rides or walks through or along any street or sidewalk or other public place (not being an officer in discharge of his duty) with any prostitute or woman of ill-fame, must not be fined less than One nor more than One Hundred Dollars."⁷⁷ This subjected men and women associated with sex workers to the will of the city. While they faced this alongside other ethnicities, they were still Mexicanas facing a distinct occurrence demonstrating the heterogeneity of Mexicans across Houston.

Census records indicate that some of these brothels employed male piano players. For instance, Aurelia hired Enuncio Guerra, age 22.⁷⁸ The attachment to these establishments made men like Enuncio vulnerable to policing in 1910. Maintaining "law and order" during Houston's No-Tsu-Oh, a major city celebration discussed in Chapter 5, motivated a "general cleaning out of habitual idlers." This *cleaning out* referred to the Restricted District's musicians. On November 9, police officers went into the reservation and arrested three male piano players, charging them with vagrancy. Up to that point, they were considered "regularly employed," but their work schedule had become "obnoxious" to the city. They had become obnoxious because this "class of persons" loafed on street corners during the day until they entered a brothel for work at night. All men arrested were given time to engage in "legitimate occupations" or be sent to prison.⁷⁹ For some

⁷⁷ Ibid., 272.

⁷⁸ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 2A, Enumeration District: 70, accessed October 24, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷⁹ "Piano Players Must Go," *The Houston Post*, November 10, 1910, accessed October 29, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605611/m1/9/>.

musicians like Enuncio, their economic participation was contingent upon how society viewed morality within the spaces they were employed.

Restrictions continued hardening for the Restricted District over time, limiting economic participation through the sale of liquor. The conduct of patrons driving out of the restricted in early morning hours provided an opportunity for further crackdowns on establishments in 1913. The city's mayor, Ben Campbell, directed Houston police to arrest anyone selling "intoxicating liquors" without a license in the Restricted District. Under the city's liquor ordinance, women were not allowed to apply for such permits. Enforcement was so important to the mayor that he was ready to increase the police force to do so.⁸⁰ The first arrests were Anglo women, but each was able to post a bond of \$200.⁸¹ Eventually, in 1914, the city designated the Restricted District a dry territory through an ordinance prohibiting the sale of liquor in the area.⁸² Rather than police the men leaving this area, the focus once again turned to women. Madams like Natalia and Aurelia faced exclusion from conducting their business through the outright gendered restrictions of the newly mandated liquor license.

In this economic space of sex work, the convergence of occupation, gender, and morality produced a contextual experience of exclusion from economic and social participation for Mexicanas.⁸³ Even though many could speak English, this communicative ability didn't matter as

⁸⁰ "Liquor Sales Stopped In Restricted District," *The Houston Post*, August 12, 1913, October 29, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604678/m1/5/>.

⁸¹ "Women Facing Charge Of Selling Liquor," *The Houston Post*, August 23, 1913, accessed October 29, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605157/m1/8/>.

⁸² "Restricted District Is Now Dry Territory," *The Houston Post*, May 7, 1914, accessed October 29, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607658/m1/7/>.

⁸³ Through this analysis, I hope to avoid Brooke Meredith Beloso called "the flattening of sex work," or failing to fully consider "women's privilege or oppression." For more, see "Sex,

it did for those Mexicans reviewed in Chapter 1. City officials deemed women like Natalia and Aurelia a moral threat, meaning their work and social lives could be controlled and policed like tamale peddlers. Laborers in other industries also faced policing and an exclusion from labor rights when their efforts to unionize were considered threatening.

Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM)

This section focuses on the organization of those involved in the production of goods through the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) as the economic space. In 1901, those opposed to Mexican President Porfirio Díaz met at the Congreso Liberal in San Luis Potosí, Mexico and formed the PLM. Ricardo Flores Magón, a working-class intellectual, emerged from this meeting as the leading advocate to overthrow Díaz. He evolved the PLM into an organization that focused on free speech, wealth inequity, and improving the conditions of the working class and peasants. Shortly after establishing the PLM's *Regeneración* publication, Magón was arrested and incarcerated for a year. After continuous harassment, he fled with his brother, Enrique, to Laredo, Texas in 1904. Finding support amongst Texas Mexicans, the Magón brothers established the PLM headquarters in Laredo before moving its location away from the border in San Antonio. *Regeneración* became a major newspaper across Texas. In the 1910 edition, the PLM included the plight of women in its platform, which led to significant Mexicana recruitment. Eventually, Mexican and U.S. governments collaborated to suppress the PLM. The United States Department of Justice assigned special officers to newly created deputy positions in Texas to help Mexican officials. Mexican consuls surveilled PLM mail and assisted in deporting “revoltosos,” or the

Work, and the Feminist Erasure of Class.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 1 (2012): 47–70.

‘unruly ones.’ These efforts succeeded, and the PLM was heavily diminished in 1917.⁸⁴ This statewide pattern followed suit in the Bayou City where race and citizenship intersected to shape the limitation of local labor organizing. This experience gives us further insight into the diverse experiences formed within economic spaces.

Grupo Regeneración “Ricardo Flores Magón”

In Houston, at least 16 workers sympathetic to the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) banded together under the leadership of José Angel Hernández by 1911.⁸⁵ The following year they officially established their organization: Grupo Regeneración “Ricardo Flores Magón.” This co-ed organization fought against the “maldita trinidad, Capital Clero y Autoridad.”⁸⁶ By 1913, membership was at least sixty members and drew crowds into the hundreds. Women such as A.P. de Morantes were given a platform at meetings. Described as a “companera,” she received heavy applause for her speech at a 1912 meeting.⁸⁷ This Mexican labor organization that fought against capitalism, authority, and religion faced opposition by Houston’s power structure when they attempted to hold a rally defending a Mexican and Anglo male convicted of killing a deputy.

⁸⁴ Teresa Palomo Acosta, “Partido Liberal Mexicano,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/partido-liberal-mexicano>.

⁸⁵ “Nuevos Grupos,” *Regeneración*, October 14, 1911, accessed July 12, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁸⁶ “Grupos,” *Regeneración*, August 10, 1912, accessed July 9, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁸⁷ “En Defensa de los Mexicanos,” *Regeneración*, October 26, 1912, accessed July 12, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Por La Libertad De Flores Magon Y Companeros,” *Regeneración*, March 1, 1913, accessed July 9, 2020, GenealogyBank; The fact that women were given a platform in organized labor prior to the 1930s is striking considering they were excluded from the “trade-union movement” prior to the “late 1930s” as argued by William Chafe in Chapter 5 of *The Paradox of Change*. It’s also important to consider that Mexican women struggled for equity in later Mexican American organizations, such as LULAC. For more, see Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 196-220.

Race and Citizenship: Unlawful Agitators

On September 11, 1913 sixteen Mexican males and one Anglo, Charles Cline, headed towards the Mexico border to join Zapatista forces but were intercepted by law enforcement. After a quick battle, the group escaped, but Deputy Sheriffs Eugene Beck and Candelario Ortiz were captured and held prisoners. Sheriff Ortiz, a fifty-four-year-old who had immigrated from Mexico in 1887, was killed the next day trying to escape. The group was apprehended and imprisoned while awaiting trial. Jesus Rangel and Charles Cline became the poster child of capitalistic and government aggression against America's working class.⁸⁸

Three months later, on a Sunday evening, December 29, three hundred Mexicans gathered in a building off Main Street in Houston. José Angel Hernández, leader of the local PLM, organized the event to bring awareness of the Rangel-Cline defense fund and other acts of violence by the Texas government. Hernandez and his group were met with a show of local and federal force by the Houston Police Chief, United States District Attorney, Deputy United States Marshal, and federal secret service men. They ordered the crowds to disperse on the reasoning that they met for an “unlawful purpose-that of inciting the people to criticise and attack the judicial authorities of the State.” Addressing the crowd in Spanish, Hernández vowed to hold a future meeting and promising to have an “American” present.⁸⁹

Hernández’s stated necessity of an “American” presence highlights how race and citizenship intersected within labor organizations. For these workers, being labeled “Mexican” was

⁸⁸ Emma Goldman, “Mexican Notes,” *Mother earth, a monthly magazine devoted to the social science and literature* 1, vol. 11 (1916) (New York: Greenwood Reprint Corp, 1916), 651-652; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1, Dimmit, Texas; Page: 11A, Enumeration District: 0036, accessed July 13, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸⁹ “Police Chief Interrupted,” *The Houston Post*, December 29, 1913, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth605271/m1/4/>.

viewed in a threatening light because of their labor associations; in this case, the PLM. These associations challenged capitalism which the dominant society, particularly a booming oil and port city like Houston, wanted to protect.⁹⁰ Further, they were part of a greater U.S.-Mexico concerted effort against the PLM. To curb these Mexicans, a lack of U.S. national citizenship became a tactic to constrain their participation in labor organizing.

It is clear, though, which labor organization Mexicans aligned themselves with influenced how their acceptance in Houston's economic spaces played out. For example, an association with the Woodmen of the World formed inclusion amongst Anglos, while an association with the PLM formed exclusion. The latter relationship brought about an enforcement effort to curb Mexican labor rights in the Bayou City. When workers associated with the wrong labor organization, meaning one deemed a threat, they faced a concerted effort from government authorities. This is just another example of the diverse experiences faced by a heterogeneous Mexican community. This pattern of labor organization exclusion continued into the 1930s at the Lone Star Bagging Company.

The Lone Star Bagging Company

This section examines the economic space of the production of goods, specifically the Lone Star Bagging Company and textile workers. Occupation, race, and gender intersected to limit the participation of Mexicanas in labor organizing.

Race and Gender on the Worksite

In addition to the Oriental Textile Mill, bagging companies were major employers of Mexicanas, such as the Werthan Company. As early as 1918, Werthan advertised specifically for

⁹⁰ The contemporary context stemming from border violence is important to consider here. There were stories of uprisings and violence against Anglos by Mexicans which put localities on alert. For more, see Chapter 1 of John Weber, *From South Texas to the Nation: The Exploitation of Mexican Labor in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

“25 Mexican Girls with some knowledge of patching bags.”⁹¹ Another employer was the Lone Star Bagging Company which manufactured new bags, cotton bale burlap covering, iron ties, and renovated second-hand bags. Company images indicate that Mexican and Anglo women dominated the workforce, who embraced each other early on.⁹² One of these employees was Cruz Rubalcava, a bilingual, literate, and naturalized woman from Mexico. After moving to Houston with her Anglo husband, Luke Finnell, and their three children, she found work at the Houston-based company. By 1930, the couple had separated, leaving Cruz with all three dependents. Her youngest, Josefina, joined her mother as a Lone Star employee at 14 in 1932.⁹³ Eventually, Josefina worked her way up into a supervisory role. Most notably, the young woman helped lead efforts for higher wages against her employer, as will be reviewed.

Early on, gender and race were important dynamics at the Lone Star Bagging since it was a business where Mexican women were included and worked alongside Anglo women. Yet, once Mexican women voiced their discontent, acceptance amongst Anglos deteriorated.⁹⁴ Their

⁹¹ ““25 Mexican Girls,” *The Houston Post*, May 4, 1918, accessed June 30, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608480/m1/14/>.

⁹² *Second-Hand Bag Department employees from Lone Star Bag and Bagging Company*. Photograph. Houston, 1937. From the Houston Metropolitan Research Center at Houston Public Library, MSS0282.001 Joe Rodriguez/Olivia Valdez Collection, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth222073/m1/1/> (accessed June 30, 2020).

⁹³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 2 Harrisburg, Harris, Texas; Pages: 55B, Enumeration District: 108, accessed June 30, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 2 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 49A, Enumeration District: 130, accessed June 30, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; Josefina’s employment alongside her mother substantiates Vicki Ruiz’s finding that “working for wages could...tighten bonds of kinship.” For more see Chapter 1 of *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives* by Vicki Ruiz.

⁹⁴ This complexity of how women can find common cause to unite or divide across ethnic and/or racial lines was present in other cities, such as Tampa and Chicago. For more, see Nancy

occupation of being textile workers was significant because it would allow them to access unions specific to their work. Like the PLM dismantling, though, Lone Star Bagging Mexicanas faced a concerted effort by business and law enforcement to exclude these women from unionizing.

Excluding Mexicanas from Labor Organizing

In early 1937, five employees, including Lucille Allison and Beulah Kindahl, met to discuss organizing a union. Soon after, Beulah was fired, and the union did not move forward. Upon hearing about this conversation, the company president, M.M. Feld, instructed his foremen to “keep this place clean of union activity of any kind.” Shortly after, in April, two Mexicanas, Margaret Florez and Josephine Finnell, led efforts to organize workers for collective bargaining. Florez labored nine hours a day for a one-dollar wage and felt a union could help them negotiate compensation. After consulting the Oil Workers Local 227, a Textile Workers Organizing Committee (T.W.O.C) organizer named R.R. Tisdale arrived in Houston to help these two women organize their union.⁹⁵ Race and occupation intersected here in that the T.W.O.C. was CIO-affiliated, and they had recently begun recruiting Mexican workers.

On May 18, Florez and Finnell recruited for membership inside Lone Star Bagging and were ordered to cease by the company president, Feld. Three days later, Margarita was fired but then hired by the T.W.O.C. Feld’s reasons were that a labor force reduction was necessary; yet, workers were employed in Florez’s department a week later. Her foreman, Fuller, characterized Margarita as lazy and always in the restrooms, but she had not been reprimanded once for this reason during her tenure. The dismissal of her friend did not dissuade Josephine, who continued

A. Hewitt’s *Southern Discomfort: Women’s Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁹⁵ Lone Star Bag and Bagging Co., 8 N.L.R.B. 244 (N.L.R.B-BD 1938), accessed June 30, 2020, <https://casetext.com/admin-law/lone-star-bag-and-bagging-co>, 247.

recruiting. By June 1, the pair had recruited thirty-five members. Upon hearing about these new union efforts, Lucille Allison restored her efforts to establish a union, but this time she worked with the company president to create an “inside union.” On June 4, Allison and her associates began recruiting for the new “Employees Union” using coercive methods. They informed workers that they would be fired or deported to Mexico if they didn’t join the inside union. Unlike the T.W.O.C. efforts, company president Feld allowed all Employees Union efforts to proceed during working hours on company property.⁹⁶ Race and gender converged once again, but not as an access point formed when the company was recruiting. Instead, preventing a T.W.O.C. union formation was divided along racial lines. Anglo women allied with Anglo-dominated management against the unionization efforts of Mexican women. The former felt free to use racially coercive acts against the latter as viewed through threats of deportation. This Anglo-Mexican schism intensified as Mexicanas refused to be intimidated.

The Employees Union approached Josephine to sign a union membership card, which she refused at first. No doubt feeling pressured by Allison’s coercive efforts, she finally acquiesced and joined the inside union on June 2. The next day, she was fired because her production rate had decreased, but in reality, it was based on her T.W.O.C. membership. Josephine’s foreman was unaware that she had joined the Employees Union the day prior. Others held firm throughout Allison’s coercion, such as Antonio De Leon, an employee of Lone Star Bagging since 1929. Antonio was part of the initial organizing effort and officially joined the union on June 2. Allison threatened that Antonio would lose her job if she did not join the Employees Union, but De Leon held firm. On June 9, Feld retaliated against workers supporting T.W.O.C. Lucy Salas and Santos Guarado overheard a foreman tell his floor lady to fire union members first. Lucy, along with ten

⁹⁶ Lone Star Bag and Bagging Co., 248-252.

other Mexicanas, were immediately laid off. Soon, more reasons were found to clear the company of an outside union. Foreman Fuller began characterizing the veteran worker, Antonio, of inefficiency and damaging machines. On July 22, he discharged her based on “burning” a machine by not maintaining it with oil.⁹⁷

After being mandated by the National Labor Relations Board in January of 1938, Margaret Florez, Josephine Finnell, and the other women were reinstated to their positions with backpay. Three months later, conditions had not improved to the Mexicana workers’ satisfaction, who took their fair wage efforts one step further.⁹⁸

“Viva La C.I.O.”: Strikebreaking and Local Law Enforcement

On Friday, March 25, 1938, the seventeen-year-old Margaret organized her CIO members against Lone Star Bagging. Margaret and 49 other workers wearing green CIO paper hats, mainly Mexicanas between 16-18 years old, formed picket lines around the company. They demanded a \$2 minimum wage raise from the \$1.27 to \$1.50 range they earned. Other demands included a forty-eight-hour work week and improved working conditions. Shouting “Viva la C.I.O.,” the strikers blocked the entrance to the plant. When one worker, Doris Noe, tried to enter the plant, she was told to leave unless “she wanted her hair pulled out.” The bag department supervisor, R.C. Fuller, confronted Margaret and ordered her off the premises. Fuller proceeded to slap her, but

⁹⁷ Ibid., 256-260.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 262; This action N.L.R.B. of backpay and employment reinstatement on behalf of Mexican women was in direct contradiction to future government inquiries. For more, see Cletus Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: the FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991). This narrative also complicates current New Deal historiography such as that by Jefferson Cowie. The New Deal was made possible by its “whiteness” and its exclusion of African-Americans, but what does the protection of the N.L.R.B. provided to Mexicans speak to? It seems to indicate that Chicano history complicates the notion of New Deal whiteness. This is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but an important research question. For more on Cowie’s New Deal analysis, see *The Great Exception: The New Deal & the Limits of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

Margaret returned fire with a punch to his nose. Two police officers arrived on the scene but unsuccessfully quieted the crowd. Six more officers arrived for backup and cleared the entrance to allow workers in. By Friday evening, the picketers grew to 100, made up of 75% women, and staged an all-night vigil.⁹⁹ The situation deteriorated the following day rapidly.

When workers arrived Saturday morning, the majority-women led picketers attempted to block their vehicles from entering the plant. What happened next is of controversy. The striking workers alleged loyal workers were aggressive by attempting to clear the demonstrators using their vehicles. Those trying to gain entry accuse the picketers of ransacking their automobiles, leading to violent confrontation. Regardless of the antagonists, it was the contact made by Anna Marino which initiated an all-out melee between strikers and workers. After the police quelled the violence, at least five striking women were sent to the hospital. Annie Cardenas was stabbed with a knife on her right leg, and Cecelia Gonzales was cut on her leg. Three Mexicanas received cuts and bruises from Marino's truck. Out of the hundred demonstrators, twelve men and thirteen women were arrested. They were later charged with disturbing the peace. Shouting "Viva la C.I.O" in the police station, Margaret was charged with assault and battery stemming from her confrontation with R.C. Fuller the day prior. They would all post bond and be released to the union attorney. Picketing continued Monday morning without any reported disturbances until another confrontation with a police officer occurred.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ "CIO Workers at Houston Bagging Plant on Strike," *Corpus Christi Times*, March 25, 1938, accessed June 30, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Girl Workers For Bagging Firm Strike," *Houston Chronicle*, March 25, 1938, accessed June 30, 2020, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰⁰ "Five Strikers Hurt, 23 Arrested in Fight At Bagging Company," *Houston Chronicle*, March 26, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Six Taken To Hospitals In Houston Strike Riot," *Beaumont Journal*, March 26, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Girl Leader Of Strikers Faces Charge," *Houston Chronicle*, March 27, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Meeting Slated Today On Strike At Bagging Plant," *Houston Chronicle*,

Nineteen-year-old Mellie Ortiz was protesting early morning on March 30, 1938, when she was confronted by Lieutenant C.H. Neyland around 8 A.M. Suddenly, Neyland threw Mellie to the ground, tearing her clothing. The officer claimed she “defied police orders,” but a witness claimed it was “unwarranted and unnecessary.” Strikers got together in front of the City Council and demanded that the police activities be investigated. They felt that police officers were being used as strikebreakers. They used arrests as tactics to tie up strikers in the legal system to break up the picket lines. Mayor Fonville refused their request.¹⁰¹

The outcome of the Lone Star Bagging strike is unknown, but enough is known about the efforts by the majority-women workers and the response.¹⁰² The intersection of occupation, race, and gender is first visible through employment recruitment, but this access turns to exclusion when Mexicanas attempt to organize a union. The company deemed this assertion of power a threat, who immediately conspired with Anglo women to stunt its formation. When Mexican workers would not acquiesce, local law enforcement supported the company in constraining the boundaries of these workers’ right to organize.¹⁰³

March 28, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰¹ “Textile Strikers Denied Probe Of Police Activity,” *Houston Chronicle*, March 30, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Strike Breaking Laid To Police By Union Officials,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 14, 1938, accessed July 3, 2020, GenealogyBank.

¹⁰² This incident also reveals the diversity of Mexicana experiences in the pre-1940 era. Mexican women used both intellectual protest and physical protest. Women like Margaret Florez represent the latter, while women like Adela Sloss-Vento embodied the former. For more on Sloss-Vento, see Cynthia E. Orozco, *Agent of Change: Adela Sloss-Vento, Mexican American Civil Rights Activist and Texas Feminist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 4-9.

¹⁰³ This use of law enforcement on behalf of Anglo employers against organized Mexican workers was a common pattern. See Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Conclusion

In direct contradiction to the examples of access and participation in Chapter 1 were the limitations and restrictions faced within economic spaces of the production and distribution of goods and services. Occupation, race, health, citizenship, gender and/or morality intersected to shape exclusion from the local food industry, societal participation, selling alcohol, and labor organization.

Tamales were part of Houston's identity since the turn of the twentieth century. Over time, though, as the food became commercialized, tamale peddlers bore the brunt of exclusion from the local food industry. This was influenced by the intersecting dynamics of occupation, race, and health. Newspapers, the Mexican community, and city officials all manufactured a stigmatized link between Mexican tamale peddlers and disease.

Mexicana sex workers were part of a policing effort that limited their societal participation through restrictions on their mobility. In addition, economic restrictions were placed on Mexican madams when the sale of liquor was banned in their establishments. As female sex workers, these Mexicanas became entangled in a city-wide moral experiment known as the *Restricted District*. They were forced to relocate within a designated boundary to practice their sex work, then their movement outside of these boundaries was criminalized.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Mexicans had a complicated labor history with Anglos. The two groups collaborated and resisted each other in the workforce.¹⁰⁴ While Mexican businessmen and textile workers experienced acceptance, those workers who attempted to organize were not well-received in the Bayou City. Race and citizenship converged to influence

¹⁰⁴ This complicates notions that a Mexican ethnic consciousness drove worker solidarity in the early twentieth century. For more see pages 108-109 of Garcia's *Desert Immigrants* and Rosales's "Shifting Self Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness."

the limited participation of Mexican workers. Grupo Regeneración “Ricardo Flores Magón” was a short-lived local chapter of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. Unlike those WOW members who could be white and Mexican, Mexicans in the local PLM chapter had their nationality viewed as the antithesis of American. Local and national law enforcement was brought in to prevent their labor organization efforts.

Within the intersecting dynamics of race and gender, this pattern continued into the 1930s when Mexicana textile workers attempted to organize under the C.I.O. At the Lone Star Bagging Company, female workers Josephine Finnell and Maragaret Florez attempted to form a union under the Textile Workers Organizing Committee. Management split workers down racial lines, pitting Anglo women against Mexican women, backing the former’s company union efforts. Threats of deportation were made to obstruct labor organizing. When that didn’t work, Mexicanas were fired without valid reasons. When tensions escalated, and workers picketed, local law enforcement was brought in to quell their union efforts.

Going beyond race to examine the limitations and restrictions of Mexicans within economic spaces contextually reveals how exclusion was heterogeneous. For example, how exclusion was rationalized changed with one’s occupation. For tamale peddlers, their work became associated with disease; for sex workers, links to immorality were made. These were critical to shaping their access or participation was regulated. Heterogeneity is further viewed when experiences of inclusion and exclusion are juxtaposed. For Mexicana textile workers like Clara Barrera or Refugio Gabino, who did not disrupt the production of goods, they successfully accessed the dominant society’s institutions to speak out against working conditions. Yet, those like Margaret Florez who engaged in strike tactics faced violence from employers and local law

enforcement. Thus, analyzing economic spaces tease out the varying degrees of access and levels of participation between 1900-1940.

Part 2: Learning Spaces

In a nation that tied its existence to a citizenship playbook, formed on a bedrock of English, many Mexicans refused to play by the rules. Teaching and speaking Spanish was one area where Mexicans demonstrated their self-determination in the early twentieth century, facing both support and backlash by Anglos.

Part 2 focuses on learning spaces, which are defined as settings where knowledge and/or skills were transferred between a subject matter expert and learners. The specific learning spaces reviewed in Part 2 are elementary schools, Spanish clubs, and high schools. By analyzing learning spaces, we can extract intersecting dynamics that deepen our understanding of how/why Mexicans faced inclusion and exclusion from these settings.

Inclusion or exclusion was contextual because some Mexicans were accepted into Anglo schools, while others were segregated. Overall, these chapters argue that language, ethnicity, race, residence, class, and citizenship situationally converged to form varying educational experiences for Houstonian Mexicans. Further, Part 2 complicates current Chicano historiography that generalizes the Mexican experience as mostly stringent discrimination when speaking Spanish, maintaining Mexican culture, or seeking education in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 3 argues that in areas where monolingual, Spanish-speaking Mexicans overwhelmingly made up the student population in primary schooling, Anglos felt threatened and instituted cultural racism to segregate Mexicanos. Scholars have written that the local Mexican community “heartily supported” DeZavala, attributing enrollment to a population “unaware” of the racist reasoning behind the school’s construction, but new sources reveal that parents vociferously asserted this practice as discriminatory.¹

¹ San Miguel, *Brown, Not White*, 21.

Experiences differed in another primary school, such as Hawthorne Elementary, where the majority of Mexican pupils were bilingual (English and Spanish). In this space, bilingual Mexicans learned alongside their Anglo peers. Rather than attending a segregated school, they enrolled in an integrated school. Considering language as a significant component of one's background reveals how linguistics influenced early twentieth-century experiences in an environment of Americanization and subtractive policies.

Chapter 4 shifts to learning spaces of adult education and secondary schooling. Analyzing these spaces demonstrates how the Spanish language was a primary dynamic of access that set off a trifecta of inclusion. First, as Mexican brokers, these Spanish-language instructors secured inclusion amongst an Anglo business community seeking Spanish instruction. Subsequently, this paved the way for Mexican educators, whose language mastery opened another pathway to Anglo inclusion through employment as teachers in whites-only high schools. These high-school, Mexican Spanish teachers set a precedent for Mexican pupil acceptance at the secondary level. Once allowed to attend Anglo high schools, these students embedded themselves deep into school culture as leaders and members of school clubs.

Chapter 3: Inclusion and Exclusion in Houston's Primary Schools

Heterogeneous Experiences: The Ramirezes and Herreras'

By 1920, twenty-eight-year-old Isabel Ramirez and her husband, Elias, settled into Magnolia Park. The Texas-born Isabel, literate and able to speak English, took on the role of housewife while her husband was employed as a janitor at Rice Institute. Residing with them at 72 Avenue L. were their four children ranging from ages 3 to 11, with the oldest two attending public school.¹ For the next two decades, Isabel and her family would soon find themselves engulfed in a controversy over the segregation of their children from Anglos in a Mexican school.

Across town in Houston's First Ward, Celia Herrera underwent a different experience with her children's schooling. Born in 1894, Celia immigrated to the United States in 1900 and eventually settled in San Antonio. By 1917, she and her husband, Felipe, migrated to Houston, living at 1103 Dart.² The Herrera family experienced Anglo acceptance which influenced their son, Julio, who attended the local Anglo elementary. The Ramirez and Herrera family are indicative of the diverse set of experiences Mexicans endured in Houston's primary schooling.

This chapter examines heterogeneous experiences of inclusion and exclusion within the learning spaces of primary schooling, specifically, DeZavala and Hawthorne Elementary. First, an exploration of the segregation of Mexican children in Magnolia Park occurs. Anglos viewed a

¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Magnolia Park, Harris, Texas; Page: 32A, Enumeration District: 108, accessed March 11, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

² Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Julio Herrera, File No. 10778, 11 April 1917, accessed March 5, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5, Harris, Texas; Page: 10B, Enumeration District: 83, accessed May 17, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; and Felipe Herrera, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1917, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>.

growing, primarily mono-lingual Mexican population as a threat to their community, necessitating spaces where their children would not adopt Mexican culture. Contrary to current historiography, Mexicano/as were not powerless against this discrimination. New evidence shows that the local community met and voiced their resistance against creating a Mexican school in Magnolia Park. They continued to voice their concerns into the 1930s and acted by forming the DeZavala PTA.³ Oral histories point to the fact that DeZavala attendance could be circumvented by bilingualism. These attempts at curbing segregation by Mexicans are underscored as resistance to educational exclusion.

Then, the experiences of Mexican pupils at Hawthorne Elementary, a white school, are analyzed. At Hawthorne, a primarily bi-lingual, Mexican population was included within the school and community. At the heart of the Ramirezes and Herreras' experience was the convergence of language, race, and residence, which shaped inclusion or exclusion.⁴

Anglo Schools and Mexicans

Since Mexicans were legally white (as reviewed in Chapter 1), they were technically permitted to attend Anglo schools, but inclusion had its limits. To prevent school integration, the legal strategy of cultural racism was formed and became all too common across the Southwest. Cultural racism used language proficiency to justify the separation of white nationalities, in this

³ "Unique P.-T.A. Introduced at Church School," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, October 25, 1929, accessed May 13, 2021, *GenealogyBank*.

⁴ As Guadalupe San Miguel asserted, the historical enrollment data of Mexicans shows that "anywhere from 16 percent to 50 percent, matriculated in public schools from 1850-1940." Chicano histories of history primarily focus on explaining barriers to education which has led to an inadequate explanation of diverse experiences of attendance. For more on this topic, see "Culture and Education in the American Southwest: Towards an Explanation of Chicano School Attendance, 1850-1940," *Journal of American ethnic history* 7, no. 2 (1988): 5–21.

case, Mexicans from Anglos. Understanding the national environment of language and race provides a deeper understanding of how these dynamics played out locally.

Promoting English: Americanization and Subtractiveness

In 1919, Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis proclaimed that immigrants should adopt “the clothes, the manners, and the customs” of the United States, substituting “for his mother tongue the English language.” Across the nation, businessmen and private organizations answered this call through their Americanization efforts. Progressive era capitalists saw it as their duty to ensure immigrants learned English as viewed through English courses in Henry Ford’s automobile plants. Private efforts, such as the YMCA or settlement houses, influenced local and state governments into incorporating Americanization into local schooling. Night courses for adults to learn English and other aspects of American values were introduced. During the day, Anglo-American Protestant culture was transmitted through curricula to the children of these immigrants.⁵

These efforts worked in conjunction with the “organic theory of society” whereby it was believed that an industrial order where interdependent workers were fragmented into differing workplace hierarchies required a unifying culture. Ethnic cultures were viewed as “traditional societies” whose backwardness threatened the cohesion and progression of a modern culture. Assimilation of these distinct social groups into the dominant culture was seen as a solution to that threat. Central to assimilation was a communal norm of communication, or a common language.⁶

Language instruction became a central component of the Americanization process to normalize English as a national norm. Educators across the country viewed non-English speaking

⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 131-137.

⁶ Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1990), 31-32.

children as a threat to the nation. They felt schools should serve as a space where English substituted Spanish, which was the foundation of a backwards, traditional culture. Those who spoke their native language were believed to have retained their native culture, which led to academic failure. It was also assumed by many that language diversity within a society formed groups averse to each other rather than a unified society.⁷

In post-World War I America, nativist reformers nationally furthered their efforts to eliminate foreign languages from the nation's fabric leading to a "subtractive policy." In 1917, the Texas legislature passed an English-only language law banning Spanish and other foreign languages from curriculum and classrooms. Applying to administrators and faculty alike, this law was the first in the nation to criminalize non-English instruction. Texas schooling served to promote Americanization and eradicate the Spanish language and Mexican ethnicity.⁸

Mexicans and Whiteness

Segregating Mexican pupils from their Anglo counterparts based on language deficiency was a tactic established in nineteenth-century Texas. This was the case in El Paso where Mexican children unable to speak English were not allowed in public schools when they first opened in 1883. Beginning in 1897, they attended a segregated school, the Mexican Preparatory School. Here they were segregated from Anglo children until the fourth grade. The 1906 superintendent intentionally hired non-Spanish speaking educators so they would not be tempted to communicate in their pupils' native tongue. The 1922 superintendent commented that the primary need was learning English, in addition to Anglo-Saxon habits and values. In accordance with the organic theory of society, administrators commented how English allowed many Mexican pupils to attain

⁷ Ibid., 40-45.

⁸ Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 23-24.

employment. Five hundred fifty-one miles eastward, San Antonio's elementary education director agreed with El Paso's Americanizing pedagogy when he commented that English was necessary for a unified country.⁹ Across the nation, language was weaponized in schools to shape Mexican children within the mold of Anglo modernity and citizenship.

In San Angelo, Mexicanos did not sit idly by, accepting segregation and having their language subtracted. In 1910, the Mexican community walked out of their Mexican school. They demanded attendance at the Anglo schools, which had superior facilities and instruction.¹⁰ This resistance to segregation eventually played out in the courts, where the legal rationale of cultural racism lawfully permitted the separation of Mexican and Anglo pupils based on English proficiency.

In Tempe, Arizona, rancher Adolfo Romo, Jr. filed the first known desegregation lawsuit in 1925 on behalf of his children. The lawsuit alleged that Tempe Independent School District No. 3 provided inadequate teachers for the Eighth Street School, where Mexican children were required to attend. This school was used as a training grounds for student teachers from Tempe State Teachers' College. Romo sought attendance at the Anglo school for his four children. The school district defended their segregation based on pedagogical reasoning, arguing that English development required separating Mexican children. While the schools remained segregated, certified teachers replaced the college students.¹¹ Later legal developments in Val Verde county

⁹ Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 110-111; 119-120.

¹⁰ Richard R. Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (New York: NYU Press), 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

affirmed cultural racism statewide. Beginning in 1902, the town of Del Rio established a Mexican school for elementary-aged children. In 1930, LULAC sought to end this segregation through an injunction. The superintendent justified the separation based on the migratory status of Mexican children, arguing Anglo students were academically advantaged because of their consistent attendance and English proficiency. Including migratory students in Anglo classrooms would damage the former's academic progress and morale. Separate schools met the needs of each group, but the superintendent admitted that white children of migrant families were not separated. Eventually, the case was decided in the Texas Court of Civil Appeals. Here the court decided that arbitrary segregation between Mexicans and "other white races" was not acceptable. An injunction was not granted, though, because the plan was not unlawful if the intent was not to "discriminate against any of the races involved." In the case of Del Rio, separating Mexicans from Anglos was not acceptable based on race because both were white, but it was permitted based on language or class. So, Texas recognized the legal whiteness of Mexicans but sanctioned cultural discrimination. In other words, discrimination was acceptable if the intent was not to separate Mexicans from Anglos, Italians, Germans, etc. based on racial classifications, but rather on cultural or economic classifications.¹²

Thus, while Mexicans were racialized as legally white, cultural or economic markers could simultaneously racialize them as socially non-white. Further muddying the waters was that cultural or economic markers could also place Mexican as another nationality under whiteness. Here then was the oppressive American landscape for Mexican schooling in the early twentieth century as they experienced Americanization, subtractive policies, and culturally-based legal segregation.

¹² Ibid., 156-158.; Cynthia E. Orozco, *Handbook of Texas Online*, "DEL RIO ISD V. SALVATIERRA," accessed April 26, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jrd02>.

Nevertheless, like those in Tempe or San Angelo, Bayou City Mexicans did not sit idly by and accept inferior schooling. Instead, they either understood their right to attend Anglo schools or challenged the cultural racist formation of Mexican schools.

DeZavala and Exclusion

Race, Language, and Residence: Setting up a Mexican School in Magnolia Park

In Houston, Mexican children were not sent to Houston's Black schools, nor was there any known discussion about this strategy. Magnolia Park was a whites-only, exclusive community. The 1920 census indicates that no Blacks took up residence in Magnolia Park, except for one housemaid. Allowing Mexicans to live there while barring Blacks was implicitly placing Mexicans on the white side of the Jim Crow color line, or legally white. This accepted habitation amongst Anglos gave Mexicans measurements of equality, such as their children attending integrated (Anglo and Mexican) schools. Yet, in 1921, this dynamic of residence intersected with race and language in Magnolia Park when the school district implemented the practice of Mexican schools so common across the Southwest.

An examination of the 1920 census reveals an emerging non-English speaking population in Magnolia Park. The 1920 enumeration recorded 115 elementary-age children between six and eleven. One question recorded was whether the person could speak English. Out of those 115 children, 49% were recorded as non-English speaking or had guardians who did not speak English.¹³ So, the characterization of an emerging, monolingual (Spanish) student population was valid. Many reasons could account for this, such as an immigrant population unable to speak English. Another is that for Magnolia Park Mexicans, the Spanish language was a purposely reinforced dynamic of their identity. Elvira Salas, who immigrated in 1917, remembered her

¹³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Magnolia Park, Harris, Texas; Page: 1-82, Enumeration District: 108, accessed March 11, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

mother and father were unhappy when she spoke English at home and wanted her to focus on Spanish.¹⁴ In fact, Spanish competence placed one within a higher class amongst Mexicanos. Like Elvira's family, Antoinette Rivas recalled her father disallowing English at the dinner table. Her mother, Josephine, frequently corrected her Spanish and feared Antoinette would learn Spanish that was "below her."¹⁵ Regardless of why a sizeable monolingual population existed, the fact of the matter is that many Anglos in the community viewed this with disdain, as exemplified through their school board complaints.

Thus, residence and race were important to placing Mexicans within an Anglo community, but exclusion through segregationist tactics emerged once those intersected with language, in this case being monolingual (Spanish-speaking). The solution to this language gap was viewed through the same lens Anglo officials had applied in El Paso and Tempe. These students required the alteration of their existing culture to fit Anglo standards of English instruction before sharing learning spaces.

Exclusion: Creating the Mexican School: De Zavala

In his research, historian San Miguel found that the burgeoning population of Mexican children in two Magnolia elementary schools, Magnolia and Central Park, sparked discussions over segregating Mexican children within their district. These children came from Spanish-speaking, working-class backgrounds who resided in "overcrowded and substandard housing." Anglo parents expressed concerns over this growing population to Magnolia's school board. The

¹⁴ Mrs. Fernando Salas, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 4 October 1985, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/fernando-salas_OH351-1.php.

¹⁵ Antoinette Rivas Oral History, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 26 April 1989, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/antoinette-rivas_OH323.php.

existing schools in Magnolia Park could not effectively instruct non-English speaking students because none of the teachers spoke Spanish. To placate the Anglo parents, the school board recommended the construction of a Mexican school: Lorenzo De Zavala Elementary. Initially, the building consisted of two rooms, but more classroom space and a playground were added by the end of the 1920s because of growing enrollment.¹⁶ When the school was proposed in 1920, the local Mexican community immediately protested to the current consul, Meade y Fierro, who advised them not to enroll their children. Meade y Fierro had to return to Mexico but promised to bring the issue to the attention of the Mexican government. Upon his return, the consulate found that the majority of parents had enrolled their students into DeZavala. Feeling disgusted and insulted that the community defied his advice, he chastised their disobedience.¹⁷

When the new consul, Leandro Garza Leal, took over the position, the parents once again raised the issue of the “segregacion de los niños.” Consulate Leal promised to speak to school officials over this segregation. In their meeting, the superintendent informed the consulate that the intent was not segregation; rather, this was a preparatory school where those attending could reenter the official schools once ready. Language was a major motivator because it was expressed that Mexican pupils in Magnolia ignored the English language. Satisfied with this response, the consulate arranged for the superintendent to present his rationale during the 1921 Mexican Independence Day celebration.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Brown, Not White*, 21.

¹⁷ “Los mexicanos de Magnolia Park, Houston, no tienen derechos, pero sí obligaciones,” *La Prensa*, October 4, 1921; accessed March 9, 2020, GenealogyBank.

¹⁸ “El Caso De La Segregacion De Los Niños Mexicanos De Las Escuelas De Magnolia Park,” *La Prensa*, October 15, 1921, GenealogyBank; “Separan A Los Niños Mexicanos De Unas Escuelas Publicas,” *La Prensa*, September 19, 1921, GenealogyBank.

On September 14, 1921, the Magnolia Mexican community assembled at the Juarez Theater to hear out the local superintendent's reasoning for segregating Mexican children from Anglo schools. They were addressed by Consul Leandro Garza Leal and Magnolia's superintendent. The superintendent claimed that Mexican children "retardaban" (retarded) the instruction of Americans, who learned nothing in the presence of the former. Not content with his rationale, parents protested against the order but turned to the Mexican consulate to no avail. Consulate Leal judged the superintendent's reasoning as "prudente" (prudent). Additionally, he claimed the Magnolia Mexican community had no "derechos" (rights) if they had not registered as Mexican citizens; although, he reminded them of their obligation to pay a centennial tax to their Mexican government. This paradox infuriated the local population, who rhetorically asked, "¿Entonces se puede ser y no ser ciudadano mexicano...?"¹⁹ In a response defending the consulate's actions, Magnolia's newly formed Comisión Honorífica chastised those refusing to comply with Mexican laws through renewing their Mexican citizenship and paying the centennial tax.²⁰

In the end, the consulate maintained his position that no segregation existed in Magnolia Park, siding with Magnolia's school officials. San Antonio's *La Prensa* agreed with this final evaluation printing that "no hay tal segregacion." The paper used the consistent Mexican graduates from Houston's Anglo high schools as evidence that segregation did not exist for Houston's

¹⁹ Ibid; "Los mexicanos de Magnolia Park, Houston, no tienen derechos, pero sí obligaciones."

²⁰ "El Caso De La Segregacion De Los Niños Mexicanos De Las Escuelas De Magnolia Park."

Mexicanos. For the Mexican elite, this school existed for the purposes as the Anglo viewed it: “accommodation.”²¹

Following the logic officials employed in Tempe, Arizona, and preceding Del Rio, Magnolia Park’s school officials rationalized that Mexicans were not racially segregated from Anglo pupils like African-Americans; rather, their language deficiency legitimized separation. School officials could have recruited bilingual teachers instead of constructing an entirely new school, but that would have gone against Americanization and the subtractive policy, which lay at the heart of this segregation. A collective language, English, was deemed essential to America’s modernity, necessitating the curbing of Spanish from Magnolia Park’s pupils as viewed through district lesson plans.

The *Curriculum Revision and Development in the Houston Schools* document highlighted a second-grade Mexican unit titled “Teaching English to Foreign Children.” Within it, one activity program designed for Mexican pupils consisted of “Daily Health Activities” in which cleanliness was stressed across subjects. Students recited how they “cleaned up to go to school” during English while a flash card game called “To Be Clean” was played in Reading. Progress was recorded when one student, Baudelia, “came back to room to ask for soap when there was none in shower room.”²² One of the goals for this unit was “[t]o create a desire for reading English.” The pupil audience was described as “speak[ing] no English at beginning of term,” and

²¹ “No Hay Tal Segregacion,” *La Prensa*, May 29, 1922, accessed March 10, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Vision of J.R. Cheek Has Turned Acres of Wooded Land Into Modern City,” *The Houston Post*, December 9, 1923, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608575/m1/29/>.

²² Karen A. Benjamin, “Progressivism Meets Jim Crow: Segregation, School Reform, and Urban Development in the Interwar South,” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007), 298.

“com[ing] from homes where little or no English is spoken.”²³ In this unit, Americanization and subtractive curriculum intertwined English with socialization such as cleanliness to reconfigure students. In this particular neighborhood, language and race intersected to form exclusion through segregation tactics. Anglo parents and school officials viewed the preponderance of monolingual (Spanish-speaking) pupils as hampering the progress of English-speaking pupils. Of course, those Spanish-speakers were Mexicans which meant that the problem was defined along racial lines. Since they were considered legally white, then the use of cultural racism was utilized, which allowed separation based on language deficiencies.

Fighting Back

Even though the Mexican Consul and Comisión Honorífica acquiesced to the school district’s pedagogical segregation, the vocal protest at the Juarez Theater by local parents demonstrated the awareness an injustice. In resistance to the discrimination, community leaders organized to provide alternative schooling via the Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez. This organization was a mutual-aid society established in 1919 to provide financial support to Mexicans through life insurance offerings along with a cultural sense of belonging.²⁴ Although short-lived, the mutual aid society created classrooms at their Salon Juárez to provide alternative education to the deemed racist DeZavala schooling. Demonstrating that it was possible to hire bilingual teachers, the Sociedad recruited a thirty-something Mexicana, Leonor Ancira, born in Saltillo, Mexico. She was hired as the school’s only teacher, and while she was bi-lingual, Leonor primarily

²³ Houston Independent School District, *Annual reports, 1924 – 1930, Houston Independent School District*, pages 104-106, page 87, electronic version, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas.

²⁴ Leigh Cutler, “Salon Juarez,” *Houston History Magazine* 3, no. 2, (Spring 2006): accessed March 22, 2021. <https://houstonhistorymagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/salon-juarez.pdf>

taught in Spanish.²⁵ Leonor represented the many women who were active in rejecting or challenging the learning spaces set forth by Anglo and elite Mexican men.²⁶

Working in individual capacities, other Mexican women took on the responsibility to curb enrollment at De Zavala. One of those was Maria Chairez, sister of Frank Chairez, who served on Magnolia's Comision Honorico, which advocated for the separate school. Maria was an educated woman, having attended Central High School but leaving after two years. Still, her English proficiency was strong enough to provide language tutoring in 1925 to help young students enroll into Franklin Elementary, located 12 minutes west of De Zavala. According to Maria, a Mexican pupil could enroll in the former over the latter if they met a certain level of English proficiency.²⁷

Working within the oppressive context thrust upon them by the local Anglo and Mexican power structure, working-class Mexicanas continued their acts of self-determination by influencing their children's education through the formation of a Parent-Teacher Association, or P.T.A.²⁸ One of these parents was the aforementioned Isabel Ramirez, who had at least two children

²⁵ Juan Hernandez, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/juan-hernandez_OH237.php; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 22B, Enumeration District: 0129, accessed March 12, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

²⁶ Women such as Leonor, Maria Chairez, Isabel Ramirez, and others involved in the De Zavala P.T.A challenge the "myth of women's submission" which portrays Mexican women in the early 1900s as docile and submissive to men, focusing on marriage and family. For more see, Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 198-200.

²⁷ Maria Puente., interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 26 October 1978, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/maria-puente_OH235.php.

²⁸ "City and County News in Brief," *Houston Chronicle*, March 6, 1931.

attending De Zavala in the 1920s. By 1930, she bore five more school-age children eligible to attend De Zavala in the 1930s.²⁹ Isabel and other parents sponsored benefits to raise money for needy families along with community events, such as a “baby parade” and class parties.³⁰ They also continued the fight against what they perceived to be the segregation of Mexican children in sub-standard conditions. In 1936, the PTA’s president, I. Martinez, wrote the following open letter in English:

The De Zavala School is a beautiful building where most of the Mexican children attend school with one purpose in mind. And that is to learn to become useful citizens. When they come out of school, they have little to show for the years spent in school. The teachers are of first class or just what any other school requires, but the DeZavala P.T.A. believes the slow progress of these children is due to the segregation of these students.

The P.T.A. has had to put up a fight for school facilities and for whatever little improvement is asked for. For the past three years this organization has been fighting for an auditorium, cafeteria and other improvements. Nothing has been done about it.

The De Zavala P.T.A. is not asking for charity. It is justice that they ask. Most of the parents sending children to this school are taxpayers and they have the right to demand just like the rest of the people. They contribute for the education of their children and therefore are entitled to ask for equal school facilities.

I wonder why this letter asking this favor was not written two years ago. The same problem that exists now existed then and yet no aid from the P.T.A. was solicited. I often wondered whether the children were asked to perform this duty or whether the janitor was asked to do it, but by talking to some of the people living around the school, I found out that it was the children who had to do this work in order to save the school board some expenses.

²⁹ “P.-T.A.,” *Houston Chronicle*, June 2, 1937, accessed March 10, 2020, GenealogyBank; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 42A, Enumeration District: 0127, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁰ “Program For Benefit Of Mexican Families To Be Held Tonight,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 4, 1932; “DeZavala School To Hold Baby Parade,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 14, 1933; “Nursery School To Be Sponsored By P.-T.A. Council,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 4, 1935.

Is this fair? If you are a parent, how would you feel if you knew that your son had to be taken out of his class to perform this task?³¹

Even against the backdrop of the community's activism, each following consulate continued to support the school district's exclusion, as exemplified by the 1934 dinner given in honor of De Zavala's teachers and school officials. At the dinner, Consulate Servando Barrera observed that "Houston is bearing on its shoulders the welfare of its Mexican population." In response, De Zavala's principal Anne O'Neil stated there was a waiting list for potential teachers because "Mexican children are apt pupils." She expressed her "desire" for Mexicans to have "equal opportunity with others of becoming useful citizens." O'Neil felt they were "becoming internationally minded"³² Becoming Americanized and thus proficient in English allowed a Mexican pupil to become a useful citizen. Until then, these youth were to be separated from the Anglo student population in Magnolia Park.

Hawthorne and Inclusion

Race, Language, Citizenship, and Residence: The Herrera and Guerrero Families Forming Social Citizenship

Across town in First Ward, a distinct experience simultaneously formed in Magnolia Park formed. Rather than attend a Mexican school, zoned Mexican elementary-aged pupils attended Hawthorne Elementary, an Anglo school. Examining their context reveals dynamics of language, race, citizenship, and residence that help explain their varied lived experience. Census records indicate a substantial community formation near the Grand Central Depot. Evidence is insufficient, but a dense Mexican population suggests proximity to the station played a major role in early First

³¹ "De Zavala School P.-T.A. Protests 'Discrimination,' Segregation of Mexicans," *Houston Chronicle*, October 13, 1936.

³² "Dinner Given For Teachers Of Mexicans," *Houston Chronicle*, May 22, 1934, accessed March 10, 2020, GenealogyBank.

Ward settlement. Hawthorne, one of the area's elementary had an attendance boundary set by White Oak Bayou, Houston and Texas Central railroads, and Colorado Street.³³ Before delving into the integrated Hawthorne school, it's important to consider the influence of parents or other kin. Records of two families within Hawthorne's boundary, the Herreras and Guerreros, indicate English-speaking families formed a sense of place and belonging with the Anglo-dominated community, or social citizenship, despite their formal "alien" citizenship status.

Julio Herrera, a Hawthorne student, and his brother, Felipe, left traces of how race, language, and citizenship intertwined to influence acceptance. Even though both brothers were born in Texas to Mexican parents, the Herreras claimed a Spanish ancestry that may have influenced Anglo perceptions of them.³⁴ When the bilingual Felipe, a machinist, registers for the World War 1 draft, he is listed as a citizen with his race as "Spanish-American."³⁵ On Julio's death certificate, his race is listed as "Spaniard."³⁶ At some point, Felipe was known as "Phil" in the community, suggestive of his social transformation.³⁷ Their Spanish ancestry claim and Felipe's

³³ "Hawthorne School," *The Houston Post*, September 5, 1920, accessed March 7, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606997/m1/8/>.

³⁴ "United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5 Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 10B, Enumeration District: 83, accessed March 5, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁵ United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Felipe Herrera, 05 June 1917, Serial No. 512, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; Roll: 1953726, accessed March 5, 1920, <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁶ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Julio Herrera, File No. 10778, 11 April 1917, accessed March 5, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁷ Ibid.

anglicized name give us insight into their perceived European racial ties.³⁸ In addition, the fact that Felipe was English-speaking and registrars for the draft indicates a level of bicultural identity and ability to communicate with Anglos. When the eleven-year-old, Julio Herrera, died of spinal tuberculosis in 1917, Hawthorne sent their condolences to his older brother, Felipe. He thanked the school publicly in a *Houston Post* announcement.³⁹ This act suggests the Herreras became viewed as members of the school's community. *The Post* even included notification of Julio's death and services.

Another family, Sotero Lardin and Maria Mares Guerrero, who spoke English, had at least three school-aged children who could also speak English. While the couple was born in Zacatecas, Mexico, they married in 1899 in Monterrey, then immigrated via rail through Laredo in August of 1905. They eventually settled in Houston, living at 1510 Winter Street. By 1930, they would move into the Woodland Heights at 1034 Omar Street. Indicative of an immediate sense of belonging is the fact that Sotero first petitions for naturalization in a short amount of time in 1918, then again in 1937. Like Felipe, he identifies his race as "Spanish." Sotero secured an Anglo Houstonian to sign as a witness, Joseph P. Carter, a Ford Motor Company clerk who lived within a mile of the Guerreros at 403 Pecore. Maria's naturalization petition in 1944 reveals how she, too, was able to

³⁸ Paul Taylor found this as a nationwide pattern. He wrote that middle-class Mexicans were "treated like their lower-class counterparts" once living in the United States. They were consigned to the same neighborhoods and jobs as Mexicans who "they considered inferior." In order to distinguish themselves from their working-class counterparts and accelerate American societal acceptance, the middle-class labeled themselves as "Spanish." See Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 19.

³⁹ "Julio Herrera," *The Houston Post*, April 13, 1917, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610546/m1/7/>; "Local Death Roll," *The Houston Post*, April 14, 1917, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610533/m1/11/>.

secure social citizenship despite not being a formal citizen. She secured two Anglo female witnesses. One was also a housewife like Maria, Alice L. Sony who lived at 1603 Dart Street. This address was within half a mile of the Guerrero's Winter Street residence. Alice claimed to have known Maria since 1921, indicating they became acquainted at the Mexican couple's initial address.⁴⁰ These records demonstrate how the bilingual (English and Spanish-speaking) and racially Spanish Guerreros formed networks within the Hawthorne-zoned, Anglo community despite not being formal citizens.

Few sources exist, but the Herreras and Guerreros exemplify the forty-six out of fifty-five Mexican households that lived within Hawthorne's attendance boundary. These families demonstrate how a seemingly insignificant number of First Ward Mexicans created a bilingual and bicultural identity, whose children were included at the Anglo school.⁴¹ Census data also corroborates how English-speaking parents influenced their children's trajectory.

Language: English Data in the Census

Further examination of census records of those households with school-age children within these attendance boundaries in 1920 reveals a peculiar aspect of their language background in comparison to Magnolia Park. Out of the fifty-five Mexican students who were zoned to Hawthorne, twenty-one, or 38%, were marked as English-speaking. Out of the remaining thirty-four students that carried no designation as to whether they could speak English or not, twenty-five had parents who were marked as English-speaking by the census enumerator. So, at least 83%

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Sotero Lardin Guerrero, File No. 1219. 13 August 1918, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Forth Worth, TX, accessed March 20, 2021, <http://ancestry.com>; Ibid., Sotero Lardin Guerrero, File No. 5793. 5 April 1937; Ibid., Maria Mares Guerrero, File No. 7364. 18 February 1944.

⁴¹ San Miguel suggests that the role of parents is important consideration when analyzing reasons for Mexican school enrollment; see "Culture and Education," 13-15.

of Hawthorne-zoned Mexican students either spoke English themselves or had parents who did as compared to 51% in Magnolia Park. Thus, census data indicates that the majority of the Mexican children who attended Hawthorne came from English-speaking households. In addition, almost 70% of these English-speaking households immigrated from Mexico, indicating they also spoke Spanish. Collectively, this data suggests that a bilingual Mexican community was forming in the First Ward since at least by 1920, if not earlier. The type of work was similar between this First Ward community and Magnolia Park as the majority shared occupational titles such as “laborer,” “cook,” and “carpenter.”⁴² Language data suggests that households zoned to Hawthorne more than likely had a significant role in teaching English to their children in some form or fashion. For these First Ward students, they entered learning spaces with a bilingual ability. This language dynamic was central to their future inclusion rather than experiencing the same segregation as Magnolia Park students. The logic of cultural racism was grounded in language, mainly being non-English-speaking. If most Mexicans comprehended English-speaking lessons, separation could not be justified or become a significant parental concern in First Ward as in Magnolia Park. Intertwining how many of their parents viewed themselves racially as Spanish with being English-speaking along with living in an Anglo neighborhood demonstrates how dynamics of language, race, citizenship, and residence influenced their integration at Hawthorne rather than segregation.

Including Mexican Pupils in Hawthorne

With this background of Mexican families eligible to attend Hawthorne, the school began including Mexican culture in the first half of the twentieth century. When the staff of *The Houston Post* visited the school in 1919, they were greeted by a “little Mexican girl pupil of the school”

⁴² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 1-63, Enumeration District: 33, accessed March 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

who performed a “vocal solo sung in her native tongue.”⁴³ This pattern of including Mexican culture continued into the thirties when the school displayed a “Mexican exhibit sent to Houston” from Mexico that displayed “Mexican products.” In 1933, a meeting of various “Parent-Teacher Associations” from local Anglo schools took place at Hogg Middle School. There, a “Little Mexican Band from Hawthorne School” entertained what was probably a majority Anglo parent membership. That a Mexican identity could be included in an Anglo school and in front of Anglo parents makes sense when the intersecting dynamics of the First Ward community are considered. As English-speakers with a segment attached racially to Spanish, the culture of these Mexicans was accepted in Hawthorne, unlike its separation in Magnolia Park.

Like De Zavala, school activities make clear how Americanization at Hawthorne was important; yet, Mexicans faced this curriculum in integrated settings. One of those projects was the construction of a miniature Mount Vernon. Grounding students in a particular American past occurred through instilling reference points in their memory. For example, Mexican girls participated in studying “songs of bygone days,” then performing those at Hawthorne. Mexican pupils took part in being conformed to industrial order through the American Automobile Association. This group organized schoolboy patrols throughout the country with the aim to “develop safety consciousness,” particularly on what caused accidents. At Hawthorne, the city’s first School Boy Patrol was established, sponsored by the Motor League of South Texas. At least two Mexican children, including Valdoremo Ojeda and Argentina Cruz, were founding members.⁴⁴

⁴³ “Blessington and Lewis Entertain at Hawthorne,” *The Houston Post*, March 1, 1919, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608584/m1/9/>.

⁴⁴ “Mexican Exhibit Is On Display at Hawthorne,” *Houston Chronicle*, March 24, 1930; “P.-T.A.,” *Houston Chronicle*, January 11, 1933; “Art Gravure Section,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 14, 1933; “New Pupils Honored At Crockett School By Girl Builders,” *Houston Chronicle*, January 26, 1936; “Sam Brown Belts Are Presented To Boy Patrol Unit,” *Houston Chronicle*,

Unlike Magnolia Park, these Mexicano/as experienced Americanization alongside their Anglo counterparts. And conversely, their Anglo peers experienced an additive policy of Mexican cultural inclusion rather than one of subtractiveness. The community even rejected the cultural discrimination policies implemented across the nation. For example, Hawthorne's principal, Edith Wright, attempted to separate instruction between Anglo and Mexican children in 1933. The program was not well-supported because "neighborhood enthusiasm" was insufficient amongst the community.⁴⁵ Although armed with modern pedagogy, Principal Wright lived in Fourth Ward, outside of the elementary's community, and was out of touch with the social citizenship Mexicans had established since their settlement.⁴⁶

Conclusion

These learning spaces reveal varying experiences contingent on the background of those involved and on actions by school officials. Reviewing race, language, and residence at two Houston elementary schools highlights the diverse experiences of Mexican pupils' inclusion and exclusion. In Magnolia Park, Mexicans moved into an Anglo-dominated area, and at first, enrolled in schools with Anglos. Anglo residents expressed anxiety over the growing Mexican population. Language was a major concern because a large sector was monolingual, or Spanish-speaking only. Anglo parents felt this stunted the growth of their children, so the district built a segregated Mexican school.

April 27, 1936; "School Boy Patrol Given Insignia," *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1936, accessed March 5-6, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁴⁵ Corrinne Tsanoff, *Neighborhood Doorways: Neighborhood Centers Association of Houston and Harris County*, 26.

⁴⁶ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 10B, Enumeration District: 77, accessed March 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

Pupils at Hawthorne Elementary faced an integrated experience; although, it is more than likely they faced some individual discrimination by fellow students or faculty. But, there was no segregated Mexican school, and evidence shows Anglo and Mexican students in integrated experiences such as student clubs or school performances. Unlike in Magnolia Park, race, language, citizenship, and residence played out differently for Mexicans moving into First Ward. As the records of parents demonstrate, English-speaking Mexicans were able to build social citizenship, or local belonging, with Anglo neighbors. Furthermore, census data indicates a majority English-speaking student population. Cultural racism depended on a large Spanish-speaking monolingual student demographic to justify segregating what was legally considered a white nationality, Mexican, from Anglos.

Historians have characterized communities located outside of the Second Ward as part of the “unique” and “lesser barrios” formed “adjacent” to the “heart” of Houston’s Mexican Community.⁴⁷ This is undoubtedly not how those communities would have viewed themselves, and such is the case with Mexicanos living in First Ward. They were part of their own diverse experience separate from those in Magnolia Park, yet analyzing learning spaces solely through race leads to overly simplified interpretations like “white schools had been left behind to Mexicans” in Houston.⁴⁸ The two case studies presented in this chapter are not meant to be a definitive representation of all Mexican experiences in elementary. Instead, they serve to uncover diverse experiences of participation within learning spaces.

⁴⁷ Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston, (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program)*, 10-14.

⁴⁸ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 27.

Chapter 4: Spanish As Opportunity

A 1929 student editorial in *The Thresher*, Rice University's student newspaper, commented on Latin-American foreign trade and the limited availability of Spanish courses offered on-campus. This editorial viewed trade "beyond the Rio Grande" as an economic "golden opportunity" which required amicable relationships that the writer linked to language. To their disappointment, Rice offered language courses that "nobody cares to take" such as Latin or Greek, but not beginner's Spanish. According to this student, there was no question that Rice students desired the "study of Spanish" but were unjustly "denied this opportunity."¹ Possibly unbeknownst to this student was that Houston's desire for Spanish had a history stretching back to the turn of the 20th century. A history where the dynamics of language, race, citizenship, and/or kinship converged in a trifecta of inclusion: beginning with Spanish clubs, then Mexican public school educators, and lastly with Mexican high school students.

This chapter is divided into the three phases of the inclusion trifecta. Phase one of the inclusion trifecta reviews early Spanish clubs that emerged in Houston out of a recognition of "commercial Spanish" by Anglo businessmen. These clubs set desirability and demand for Spanish instruction; and a need for instructors that Mexicans would fulfill. This established an access point to a group of individuals Mae Ngai has described as cultural brokers: ethnic individuals who mediated the exchange of culture between their group and Anglos.² In Houston, these early Mexican brokers were Jorge Zambrano and Benjamin DeAcala. Each was tasked with teaching Spanish to Anglos across Houston's clubs and night classes.

¹ "Rice Institute and Foreign Trade," *The Thresher*, February 21, 1919, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth230129/m1/2/>.

² Mae M Ngai, *The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).

Phase two focuses on the Mercado-Tafolla family and their integration as Mexican educators in Anglo high schools. From his involvement in early adult language education, Mercado leveraged his Spanish-speaking ability to earn employment as a public school teacher. He created a network of kin when his son and sister-in-law, Esther Tafolla, were soon employed. They became the first Mexican presence in whites-only secondary schools as Spanish teachers and student club sponsors. Lastly, the third phase examines how the Mercados and Tafolla set a pathway for the admittance of Mexican pupils alongside Anglo high school students. These educators initially shaped these learning spaces as sites of inclusion for students, who then participated across school culture.

Setting the National Scene

This pattern of Anglo adoption of Spanish was not unique to Houston; rather, as historian Rosina Lozano has shown, “[i]n the U.S. Southwest, both Anglos and Spanish speakers alike were interested in learning each other’s language.” For example, “the situation in New Mexico forced politically ambitious settlers to learn Spanish, whether they wanted to or not.” For others, learning Spanish “fed their connection to the land, with themselves depicted as bringers of great progress.” Social connections were also influential, particularly those Anglos interested in romance with Mexicans.³ For some Blacks living in the Southwest, “mastering Spanish represented the first step in creating a new identity and a new life.” For example, learning how to talk “Mexkin,” allowed an ex-slave, William Ellis, to pass as Mexican and access opportunity.⁴ Spanish was not accepted

³ *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 83-88.

⁴ Karl Jacoby, *The Stranger Career of William Ellis: The Texas Slave Who Became a Mexican Millionaire* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 48. African-American historians have long explored how Black populations leveraged language as power, such as Gullah. For more, see Chapter 6 of Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 167-191.

in public schools across the country, though, making Houston an interesting case. For example, Spanish was stricken from the public school curriculum in South Texas, and a Stop Speaking Spanish Club even emerged in San Antonio.⁵

Phase One of the Trifecta: Spanish Clubs as an Access Point

This section shifts learning spaces to linguistic clubs, in this case, Spanish instruction.

Early businessmen helped establish an appetite for a particular type of Spanish that developed the initial access point in the first step of the inclusion trifecta covered in this chapter. Dynamics of language and class were instrumental to later Spanish club instructors, such as Jorge Zambrano and Benjamin DeAlcala.

Language (Commercial Spanish) and G.M. Hernandez

One of the earliest linguistic pioneers was a South American immigrant, G.M. Hernandez, who immigrated to the United States in 1891.⁶ By 1900, the 26-year-old was teaching Spanish in Houston through his school called the Business Men's Spanish Academy.⁷ Endorsed by Houston's "leading business and professional men," his school offered distance education via mail and face-to-face courses. Hernandez changed the school name to South Texas Business College in 1905. That same year, he advertised his language course as "Commercial Spanish," adding "Spanish Shorthand" as a new offering.⁸ Hernandez was credited as influential in establishing Spanish

⁵ Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 49.

⁶ G.M. Hernandez, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1900, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>; 1900 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0068* pg. 1, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 24, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷ "Spanish Academy," *The Houston Post*, June 22, 1905, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602708/m1/7/>.

⁸ "South Texas Business College," *The Houston Post*, July 9, 1905, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603581/m1/4/>.

courses at the Houston High school by *The Houston Post*. It was recognized that he influenced the language of some of the “best known citizens” and among Houston’s “business men.”⁹ It is clear that Hernandez’s command of “commercial Spanish” was a highly-regarded skill that sustained growth over time. Being a Spanish instructor gave him access to Houston’s Anglo business community and learning spaces. Setting aside the South American background, the importance here for future Mexicans is the precedent of economic utility offered by a particular language: commercial Spanish. Critical to this linguistic formation were the learning spaces of Spanish clubs established by the Anglo business community.

Language and Class: El Club Espanal de Houston and El Circulo Espanol

In January of 1904, the first recorded Spanish club, El Club Espanal de Houston, was formed in the city. At the Rice Hotel, these twelve Houstonians met for the “purpose of organizing a Spanish literary society”: Mrs. M. E. MacManus, Mrs. T. Belden, F. B. Weeks, Louis E. Dreiss, W. Waldo, A. B. Taliaferro, N. V. Belden, Dr. James House Bute, Dr. Z. F. Lilliard, Professor J. S. Miraman, C. W. Welch, and Judge Lock McDaniel. About two weeks later, a cabinet was established with Edgar Watkins sitting as president. The club met every other Tuesday in the Mason building.¹⁰ Available census records reveal an Anglo-led coalition from the professional

⁹ “Merited Recognition,” *The Houston Post*, September 2, 1905, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth443375/m1/12/>.

¹⁰ “Will Study Spanish,” *The Houston Post*, January 13, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602778/m1/3/>; “El Club Espanal de Houston,” *The Houston Post*, January 29, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603043/m1/4/>; “Today’s Local Guide,” *The Houston Post*, March 9, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603198/m1/1/>.

ranks employed as lawyers, physicians, civil engineers, merchants, interpreters, and teachers, mainly from the Deep South.¹¹

Not long after in March, another Spanish club formed, El Circulo Espanol. Again, the cabinet consisted of primarily Anglo names: President Dr. Max Urwitz, a physician, Vice President Mrs. H.C. Archer, Secretary F. J. De Meritt, a business dealer. Director G.M. Hernandez, the aforementioned Spanish teacher, was the only non-Anglo member. Others included Judge Lock McDaniel and Richard Murray, a lawyer.¹² A new cabinet was formed in 1905 when Dr. Urwitz passed away. Another physician, Dr. S.V. Wagner, a German immigrant, was elected president, while Grace Hannon, a notary public, was elected secretary and treasurer. A notable new mention was the club's new instructor, Mexican entrepreneur George S. Zambrano (discussed in Chapter 1).¹³

¹¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States*, 1900 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0071* pg. 4, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 24, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; *Houston Ward 3 District 007*, pg. 14; *Houston Ward 3 District 0081*, pg. 1; *Houston Ward 3 District 0081*, pg. 1; *Houston Ward 3 District 0076*, pg. 7; *Houston Ward 4 District 0074*, pg. 6; 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 3 District 0087* pg. 9B, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 24, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; *Houston Ward 4 District 0073*, pg. 5A.

¹² "El Circulo Espanol," *The Houston Post*, March 10, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht602613/m1/5/>; "Spanish Club's Program," *The Houston Post*, April 13, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht603824/m1/13/>; "El Cerculo Espanol," *The Houston Post*, May 15, 1904, accessed September 24, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht603418/m1/21/>; 1900 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 3 District 0075* pg. 5, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 24, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; *Houston Ward 4 District 0073*, pg. 2; *Houston Ward 3 District 0075*, pg. 5; *Houston Ward 4 District 0074*, pg. 10; *Houston Ward 4 District 0068*, pg. 1.

¹³ "The Spanish Club," *The Houston Post*, December 3, 1905, accessed September 26, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht602966/m1/10/>; 1900 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0073* pg. 4, digital image,

Thus, language and class intersected to establish a specific Spanish as a language of status and associated with economic opportunity. Those among the ranks of early Spanish clubs were from professional backgrounds, which elevated its image. Others trained by Hernandez were prominent businessmen who gave the language economic utility amongst Anglos. This early environment was an important access point that some Mexicans leveraged.

Accepting Mexican Brokers

Upon his settlement in the Bayou City, Jorge Zambrano immediately leveraged the demand of his bilingual skillset by launching a career as a Spanish translator, most likely influencing his recruitment into the El Circulo Espanol.¹⁴ Soon after his linguistic career, Zambrano used his US-Mexico connections to help him launch one of Houston's most successful import-export companies, giving him the confidence to apply for the all-Anglo Houston Business League.¹⁵ For Zambrano, Spanish language instruction amongst Anglos was a jumping-off point to economic inclusion. Further examination reveals how others capitalized on this linguistic launchpad as well. One Mexican, Benjamin DeAcala, who could speak commercial Spanish, garnered favorable treatment in the elite Anglo community of Houston, even intermarrying.

Immigrating in 1890, Benjamin, an insurance agent, was allowed to use office space owned by The Young Men's Business League to teach commercial Spanish, which businessmen across

Ancestry.com, accessed September 26, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; Jorge Zambrano, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1905, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

¹⁴ Jorge Zambrano, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

¹⁵ "Houston Importing Firm," *The Houston Post*, January 31, 1910, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth443308/m1/2/>; "Business League Quarters," *The Houston Post*, August 26, 1909, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604924/m1/14/>.

Houston attended.¹⁶ Described as a “well known young man,” De Acala’s 1916 marriage to Estell Dickens, a white woman, was considered “popular,” being publicized in *The Houston Post*. Details of their marriage included the gifting of genuine pearls by the groom to the bride.¹⁷ By 1919, Benjamin had started his Spanish language newspaper, *Revista Obrera*, promoted by *The Houston Post*.¹⁸ Again, the common pattern here is the teaching of “commercial Spanish” proceeded with participation amongst the Anglo business class. DeAcala’s ability to marry a white woman and publicly display that relationship reveals the extent of his acceptance by the dominant society. And while Mexican men were targeted by Anglo’s business community, this did not prevent Mexican women from finding economic opportunities through bilingualism. While scant, there is evidence suggesting that some women benefitted from their knowledge of commercial Spanish. For example, one job classified ad posted by a “lady stenographer” desired a position “requiring knowledge of commercial Spanish,” and touted her Mexican residence for nine years.¹⁹ The Spanish language built economic and social bridges, leading to bicultural events.

Another club, The Spanish Club, embraced Mexican national celebrations such as Mexican independence. At the Woodmen of the World hall, they took part in an event on September 16, 1908. White and Mexican residents worked together to host this event. J. J. Mercado, a Spanish

¹⁶ *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: *Houston Ward 5*, Harris, Texas; Page: 16B, Enumeration District: 89, accessed November 4, 2018, <http://ancestry.com>; “Y.M.B.L. Gives Room For New Spanish Class,” *The Houston Post*, April 10, 1919, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609271/m1/11/>.

¹⁷ “Home Wedding,” *The Houston Post*, November 5, 1916, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610001/m1/10/>.

¹⁸ “Y.M.B.L. Gives Room For New Spanish Class.”

¹⁹ “Situations – Female,” *The Houston Post*, January 9, 1911, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604300/m1/10/>.

teacher, Patricio Gutierrez, a musician, Pedro Ramirez Reyes, a painter, Francisco Juarez, a tailor, and Ishmael Ochoa, a blacksmith, led the celebration but were joined by whites like Annie B. Ward, amongst others. The assistant city attorney, J. E. Niday, also made a presence.²⁰ Here we see how language programs helped form bi-cultural spaces where Anglos and Mexicans celebrated the latter's identity. We also see how Spanish clubs, populated by whites, attached the language to Mexican identity.

Thus, here was the backdrop of Houston's relationship with Spanish in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Business-oriented Anglos viewed the language in opportunistic economic terms and sought particular instruction. Language and class intersected to provide an access point for some Mexicans. The consequence of this was an opening of a unique route of acceptance that leveraged the Spanish language during the Bayou City's Progressive Era by Mexicans. Capitalizing on this social climate was the Mercado-Tafolla, family who engineered Houston's early high school Spanish courses in an era of Americanization and subtractive policies.

²⁰ United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Pedro Ramirez Reyes, 12 September 1918, Serial No. 3516, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; Roll: 1953525, accessed September 30, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; Francisco Juarez, 05 June 1917, Serial No. 1995, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; Roll: 1953564, accessed September 30, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; and Patricio Gutierrez, 15 June 1917, Serial No. 2308, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; Roll: 1953564, accessed September 30, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>; J.E. Niday, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>; 1910 U.S. census, Harris County, Texas, population schedule, *Houston Ward 4 District 0075* pg. 2A, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed September 30, 2019 <http://ancestry.com>; and "Mexicans To Celebrate," *The Houston Post*, September 16, 1908, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht605423/m1/4/>.

Phase Two of the Trifecta: Mexican High School Educators

This section continues with the learning space of Spanish instruction. It examines the second stage of the inclusion trifecta that developed out of a second access point formed by the intersecting dynamics of language, class, citizenship, and kinship. At Houston's turn of the century, the atmosphere of language, particularly that of "commercial Spanish," carried over into high schools. Houston's schools not only separated Black and Anglo students, but teachers as well. This fact makes the employment of Mexican teachers in Anglo schools even more salient. Examining the dynamics of language, class, and kinship of two Mexican educators, J.J. Mercado and Esther Tafolla, helps make sense of their acceptance as Spanish teachers at Anglo high schools.

Language, Citizenship, and Kinship: J.J. Mercado

In 1845, two-year-old Anastacia Salinas crossed the border with her parents, Martin and Josefa, from Guerrero, Coahuila. Anastacia lived in Bexar County, Texas, and in 1859, the sixteen-year-old married Juan Jose Mercado, born in Zacatecas. The following year, they had a namesake son, J.J. Mercado.²¹ In 1861, Texas joined the Confederacy, prompting Juan Jose to enlist into the Thirty-Third Cavalry, known as Duff's Partisan Rangers. This regiment was part of the "Nueces Massacre" that captured and executed a group of pro-Unionists attempting to flee to Mexico. Juan Jose, a corporal, served alongside Private James Tafolla, a musician, in Company B.²² What

²¹ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Anastacia Salinas Vda. de Tafolla, File No. 49821, 05 November 1935, accessed March 10, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; Juan Jose Mercado, File No. 23886, 31 July 1926, accessed March 10, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: *San Antonio Ward 3*, Bexar, Texas; Page: 32B, Enumeration District: 0013, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

²² Compiled service record, Juan Mercado, Corporal; James Tafolla, Private, Company B, Thirty-third Cavalry; Carded Records Showing Military Service of Soldiers Who Fought in Confederate Organizations, compiled 1903-1927, documenting the period 1861-1865, record group 109; National Archives, Washington, D.C.; *Handbook of Texas Online*, "NUECES, BATTLE OF THE," accessed March 22,

happened to Juan Jose is unclear, but by 1870 Anastacia and James were married and living in Bandera, Texas.²³ James was a major influence on his stepson, J.J., who later significantly impacted early twentieth-century Houston. In 1880, James took on the role of a Methodist minister, then in 1900, became a teacher, two occupations that J.J. would later fulfill.²⁴ In 1882, J.J. married Angelita, then bore their namesake son two years later. Following his step-father's footsteps, J.J. took on the role of a preacher when the two lived in Laredo.²⁵ Presumably, Mercado's work took his family outside the country as they lived in Monclova, Mexico between 1891-1893, then Monterrey between 1902-1904, before landing in the Bayou City.²⁶

Before coming to Houston, Mercado, Sr. was influenced by the intersecting dynamics of language, citizenship, and kinship. Language was important because he was bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. As demonstrated by the founding of Spanish clubs, entering Houston as a bilingual Mexican could mean opportunity in language instruction. Kinship influenced his career

2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qfn01>. Uploaded on August 31, 2010. Modified on March 13, 2019. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

²³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*, Census Place: *Precinct 4, Bandera, Texas*, Bandera, Texas; Page: 415B, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

²⁴ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*, Census Place: *Corpus Christi*, Nueces, Texas; Page: 22C, Enumeration District: 116, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

²⁵ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: *Justice Precinct 1*, Val Verde, Texas; Page: 23, Enumeration District: 0074, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: *Laredo Ward 2*, Webb, Texas; Page: 1, Enumeration District: 0108, accessed March 11, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

²⁶ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), *U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925*, John Joseph Mercado, File No. 42830, 25 May 1920, accessed March 12, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

path as he modeled himself after his step-father and became an educator, another important dynamic when considering the desire for Spanish instructors. Born in Texas, Mercado, Sr. was a first-generation American citizen, but more importantly, he was the descendant of a Confederate soldier, Juan Jose. This played a major role as viewed by his feature in *The Houston Post*. The piece highlighted his Confederate ancestry, titled “Four Generations of the Mercado Family.”²⁷ The bilingual educator from a Confederate background was in a perfect situation entering the Bayou City.

Inclusion: Mercado, Sr. as a Houston Educator

Following his step-father’s footsteps into education, Mercado, Sr. landed in a city whose thirst for commercial Spanish allowed him, like earlier Mexicans, to find social status based on his connection to a respected type of Spanish dialect. Mercado’s role in Houston schooling began in 1907 as an instructor at the Houston High School, where he taught Spanish during the high school’s adult night school.²⁸ His classes were in high demand. For example, free night classes at the Central High School claimed an enrollment of 540 students their first week in 1914. One hundred seventy-five of these students enrolled in the commercial Spanish course, consisting of men and women

²⁷ “Four Generations of the Mercado Family,” *The Houston Post*, January 11, 1914, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604328/m1/4/>. Important context to consider here is the rise of the Lost Cause narrative, which was the remembering of the South’s involvement in the Civil War as heroism and valor, rather than one of fighting for slavery. This article feature of Mercado was only six months after the Blue-Grey reunion at the 50th anniversary of Gettysburg. For more see David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003).

²⁸ Juan Mercado, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1907, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>; “An Outsider’s View Of The Insides Of The Young Men’s Christian Association,” *The Houston Post*, January 26, 1913, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604338/m1/21/>.

desiring language proficiency for “commercial purposes.”²⁹ These positions brought him close to the city’s Anglo professional society as viewed through his recognition by Houston High School’s night class students. In 1913, Burton L. Palmer, a lawyer, honored Mercado during graduation. Speaking in Spanish, Palmer presented Mercado with a gift.³⁰ In addition, the Spanish professor was invited into the homes of Anglo residents, such as Rene Brunet’s, a high school Spanish student. In 1922, the Central High School’s Spanish students hosted a Mexican supper that brought together Anglo and Mexican residents, including the Mexican consul.³¹ Much sought after, Mercado, Sr. was recruited to lead Spanish clubs in the 1920s, such as the “Circulo de los Amigos.” Meeting in the home of Anna Howe, the Mexican educator was elected as president by his Anglo peers.³²

Even though closely allied with Anglo Houston, Mercado, Sr. continued to advocate for Mexicans. In conjunction with his social standing amongst whites, Mercado, Sr. maintained a presence amongst his fellow Mexicanos. He participated in the 1911 “Gran Congreso Mexicanista” which brought delegates representing Mexican populations across Texas cities to protest lynching and school segregation.³³ Nor was Mercado, Sr. shy about publicly lambasting Houston when some

²⁹ “More Than 1200 Attending City Free Night Schools,” *The Houston Post*, October 25, 1914, accessed November 4, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607398/m1/8/>.

³⁰ “Diploma Awarded At Night School,” *The Houston Post*, December 20, 1913, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604035/m1/9/>.

³¹ “Senior Spanish Students Attend Mexican Supper,” *The Houston Post*, February 6, 1922, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608529/m1/12/>.

³² “Spanish Club Elects Officers At First Meet,” *The Houston Post*, January 31, 1923, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609562/m1/7/>.

³³ “Gran Congreso Mexicanista,” *Cronica*, August 10, 1911, accessed April 11, 2020, GenealogyBank.

residents tried to implement Juan Crow. In one incident, Mercado published a scathing rebuke after a picture show establishment ousted a Mexican patron, then overcharged Mexicans for entrance because of their nationality. Mercado alerted Galveston's Mexican consulate, hoping to find justice over the matter.³⁴ In addition to aggressively lashing out against discrimination, Mercado did not relinquish his Mexican identity while working with Anglo society. For instance, J.J. always navigated between American and Mexican nationalisms. During World War I, he was recruited by Chief Registrar Guy McLaughlin to sit on the draft board registrar. Mercado addressed about 1000 Mexicans at a rally on June 3, where he advocated those with citizenship to fulfill their patriotic duty. He pleaded to non-citizens to stay in-country and assist in the war effort through their labor.³⁵ Yet, just that following September, he took part in the Mexican Independence Day celebrations as a speaker.³⁶

This was the complexity of J.J. Mercado, Sr., a man who was not shy about fighting for Mexican civil rights or practicing cultural traditions that challenged Americanization; yet, he was viewed as an asset by the Anglo business community. He was so engrained into Houston's economy that the Young Men's Business League made him a member in 1916.³⁷ Like Jorge Zambrano, Mercado Sr.'s bilingual mastery was viewed with opportunity by Anglo elites. These

³⁴ "Cincuenta Centavos la Entrada Para los Mexicanos," *Cronica*, August 10, 1911, accessed April 11, 2020, GenealogyBank.

³⁵ "Mexicans Addressed on Duty to Register," *The Houston Post*, June 4, 1917, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610145/m1/2/>; "Mexicans Rally at City Hall Sunday," *The Houston Post*, June 2, 1917, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609425/m1/7/>.

³⁶ "Mexican Independence Day to Be Observed," *The Houston Post*, September 7, 1917, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610393/m1/8/>.

³⁷ "Young Men Enlist 173 New Members," *The Houston Post*, June 8, 1916, accessed March 31, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610221/m1/4/>.

Spanish-speakers were the gatekeepers of knowledge, and local Anglos businessmen were willing to desert the stringent Americanization and subtractive policies that would have shunned these Spanish instructors. Even further, Mercado, Sr. had a choice. He could have abandoned his community and selfishly capitalized on the wants of Houston's high society; instead, he chose to protect and sustain Mexican identity.³⁸

Mercado, Sr. continued teaching Spanish at Central High School into the 1920s. His son, Mercado, Jr., joined him as faculty in 1922.³⁹ The sixty-five-year-old passed away on July 31, 1926, but his son continued his educational work in Houston.⁴⁰ Also important to the community's development were female bilingual educators such as Esther Margaret Tafolla.

Language, Kinship, and Class: Esther Tafolla

In 1880, Esther was born to a Spaniard father, Antonio Colin, and a Mexican mother in San Luis Potosi. The family immigrated to the United States in 1893. At some point, Esther relocates to Austin, Texas and marries Earnest Anastacio Tafolla, a Methodist minister, in 1908. Earnest was the step-brother of J.J. Mercado, Sr.⁴¹ In 1911, Earnest passed away, leaving Esther

³⁸ Mercado represents what Alida C. Metcalf described as a transactional go-between. This was a person who served as an arbitrator between cultures. For more, see *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

³⁹ Juan Mercado, Jr., Houston, Texas City Directory, 1922, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>.

⁴⁰ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Juan Jose Mercado, File No. 23886, 31 July 1926, accessed March 10, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁴¹ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Esther Margaret Tafolla, File No. 101627, 30 December 1978, accessed April 17, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: *Austin Ward 2*, Travis, Texas; Page: 10B, Enumeration District: 0068, accessed April 17, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

widowed with their two children, two-year-old Ernest and infant daughter, Esther.⁴² Possibly with the beckoning of her brother-in-law, Mercado, Tafolla settled in Houston the following year. She took up residence in the Houston Heights at 714 Arlington amongst Anglo neighbors, owning her home valued at \$4,000. Esther quickly adopted an American identity, as evidenced through her bilingualism and naturalization in 1918.⁴³

Like Mercado, Esther was able to speak English and Spanish, revealing language as an important dynamic to consider. Esther's residence amongst Anglos, homeownership status, and the property value indicated class and point to the Mexicana being of means. Kinship was critical in that she was related to Mercado, Sr., who established himself amongst Anglos and was able to exert nepotism. Of class, the bilingual sister-in-law of one of Houston's premier educators had all the right converging dynamics to experience inclusion amongst the dominant society.

Accepting Esther

Following Mercado, Sr.'s lead, the mother of two was hired as a Spanish teacher at the Senior High School in 1912.⁴⁴ Evidence of her community ties can be seen in the efforts to save her home in 1915. On the morning of February 10, a fire erupted in the home of A.R. Colgin, Tafolla's next-door neighbor. By the time the fire department arrived, Colgin's home was considered a loss, so

⁴² "Obituary," *San Antonio Light*, October 16, 1911, accessed April 17, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁴³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: *Houston Ward 7*, Harris, Texas; Page: 5A, Enumeration District: 100, accessed April 17, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; Esther Tafolla, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1915, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>.

⁴⁴ "Principals and Teachers Selected By The School Board Last Night," *The Houston Post*, June 4, 1912, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht605843/m1/13/>.

firefighters concentrated their efforts on Esther's home, managing to save it.⁴⁵ By 1929, Jefferson Davis High School, a white school immersed in Confederate identity, hired Esther as a Spanish teacher amongst an all-white faculty.⁴⁶

Phase Three of the Trifecta: Mexican High School Students *Language, Race and Kinship: The Mercado-Tafolla Precedent*

This section shifts to the learning space of high schools and analyzes the last phase of the inclusion trifecta: the integration of Mexican high school students into Anglo secondary schools. That the Mercados and their relative Esther Tafolla were the first Mexican educators in Houston's secondary schooling was significant for future Mexican high school students. Reserved for Anglo teachers and students, Mercado, Sr. entered these spaces as early as 1907, and Tafolla in 1912, due primarily to the dynamic of language. Following them were Houston's first Mexican high school students. By 1922, Mercado Sr.'s Spanish courses at Central High's night school were considered the most popular offering, and soon after, Mexican pupils began enrolling in the high school. As early as 1926, twelve students were present.⁴⁷ At the Houston Heights where Mercado, Jr. taught, at least four Mexicans were present between 1922-1924.⁴⁸ And by 1929, at least four Mexican students attended Jefferson Davis, where Esther taught.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "Two Residences In Heights Burned Wednesday Morning," *The Houston Post*, February 11, 1915, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606966/m1/10/>.

⁴⁶ Jefferson Davis High School, *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1929), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 20, 2020, 19.

⁴⁷ Central High School, *The Cosmos* (Houston, TX, 1926), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 17, 2020.

⁴⁸ Houston Heights High School, *The Pennant* (Houston, TX, 1922), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," www.ancestry.com, accessed March 23, 2021; Ibid., 1924.

⁴⁹ Jefferson Davis High School, *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1929), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 17, 2020.

As this section will show, students at Houston Heights, Central, Jefferson Davis, and San Jacinto High School were accepted by Anglo faculty and students. It bears stating that it is more than likely that these Mexican students experienced some form of bigotry at these schools. However, the context to their inclusion had been established before their entrance by the intersecting dynamics of language and race. First, with the formation of Spanish clubs amongst Anglos that established a degree of acceptance of Spanish and Mexican instructors; then, with the employment of Mexicans to teach high school and adult night school Spanish. Recalling that faculty were segregated between white and black schools, choosing to hire a Mexican educator set in motion an implicit precedent that the Mexican nationality was deemed on the White side of the Jim Crow color line in Houston's secondary schooling. This whitening of Mexican students at the high school level had important consequences for their education. For one, they could take advantage of the enormous inequities in instructional quality existing between White and Black schools by sitting in Anglo classrooms.⁵⁰ A conspicuous contradiction would have been established had these Anglo high schools chosen to employ Mexican educators while barring Mexican pupils. And knowing that Mercado, Sr. was not shy about voicing his opinion against injustices, he would have certainly used his connections to publicize such exclusion.

In addition to language and race, kinship is essential to understand why Houston's Anglo schools admitted Mexicans. As discussed earlier, Mercado Sr. leveraged his position to help employ his son and sister-in-law. Soon after, his grandchildren, niece, and nephew benefited from this nepotism in the 1920s. Mike Mercado, J.J. Mercado Jr.'s son, was a student at Central High in

⁵⁰ "Big Curriculum At Night School," *The Houston Post*, October 8, 1922, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth609822/m1/6/>; Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941*, 117-129.

1926.⁵¹ Esther's son, Earnest, entered Houston Heights High School as a freshman in 1923, while her daughter, Esther, entered Jefferson Davis as a freshman in 1925.⁵² To have denied Mexican students from Anglo high schools would have shut out the kin of faculty working at those schools. By hiring Mexican faculty because of their Spanish mastery, an implicit acceptance had been established: these learning spaces were sites of inclusion that extended to kin.

So, the historical precedent was established: Mexican educators preceded Mexican students, the former blazing trails for the latter. Of course, these students must have held an academic ability to enter high school, but being qualified does not equal acceptance. These students capitalized on the initial access point by the Mercados and Esther, which was influenced by language and kinship. They became enmeshed into school culture as viewed through their participation in school clubs, continuing their inclusion as adults.

Inclusion at Houston Heights, Central, Jefferson Davis, and San Jacinto High

Examining existing sources of students at three Houston high schools provides insight into the extent of their inclusion. In these learning spaces, they participated in school activities with Anglo students. The first known Mexican high schooler, Gladys Mancias, was admitted at the Houston Heights High School, which later became Reagan High School. The teenager was enmeshed into a bicultural world from her birth because of her Mexican father and Anglo mother. In 1922, the "dignified Senior" was active in the school's Spanish club, La Tolteca. The club was organized in 1921 "to create a greater interest in the Spanish work." She also participated in the

⁵¹ Central High School, *The Cosmos* (Houston, TX, 1926), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 17, 2020, 61.

⁵² Houston Heights High School, *The Pennant* (Houston, TX, 1923), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," www.ancestry.com, accessed on March 23, 2021; Jefferson Davis High School, *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1929), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 17, 2020.

Booster Club and served as the Class Historian. At one school program, she presented her “class history” in front of her Anglo peers and administrators. Gladys was even tasked with writing a class history for the 1922 yearbook.⁵³ Her inclusion into Anglo society continued into adulthood when she was part of a bridal party for an Anglo bride.⁵⁴

At Central High School in 1926, at least twelve Mexican teenagers attended. Students like Gustavo and Regallo Elizondo or Consuelo and Diana Gonzales expanded Central High as a site of inclusion through their active roles in student organizations. Many would build on their inclusion at the university level and in their personal lives through intermarriage. For example, the Elizondo and Gonzales siblings took part in the Todos Amigos Spanish club, representing four of the group’s thirty-seven members. Diana took her activity further by participating in the Students’ Association and the French Club.⁵⁵ After graduating, Diana enrolled at Rice University, where she joined their Spanish club, Los Buhos.⁵⁶ In 1927, she was elected president by her Anglo peers.⁵⁷ After graduating in 1930, she continued on the legacy of the Mercados and Tafolla by teaching

⁵³ Houston Heights High School, *The Pennant* (Houston, TX, 1922), “U.S. School Yearbooks, 1900-1999,” www.ancestry.com, accessed on March 23, 2021; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 23B, Enumeration District: 37, accessed March 23, 2021, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁴ “Williams-English,” *The Houston Post*, June 29, 1924, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607984/m1/38/>.

⁵⁵ Central High School, *The Cosmos* (Houston, TX, 1926), “U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012,” www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 17, 2020, 104-105.

⁵⁶ Rice University, *The Campanile* (Houston, TX, 1927), Internet Archive, www.archive.org, accessed on March 23, 2020, 122.

⁵⁷ “Los Buhos Names Gonzalez Prexy,” *The Thresher*, October 7, 1927, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth230085/m1/3/>.

Spanish at the Y.W.C.A.⁵⁸ Language again played a role throughout Diana's inclusion across society through her active role in high school and collegiate Spanish clubs, then as a language educator herself.

At Jefferson Davis High, a young Esther Tafolla immersed herself heavily into Jefferson Davis's school culture alongside her Anglo peers. She participated in the Senior Class Play, swimming team, Jay Dee staff, and was president of the Reporters' Club. Esther was even elected to leadership positions such as Vice President of the Spanish club and Secretary of the Glee Club, directing her Anglo peers.⁵⁹ Esther was one of the four Mexicans attending Davis in 1929. Alongside her were Henrietta Perez, Anita San Miguel, and Carl Ortiz. Henrietta joined many school clubs and participated in school plays, such as the school's French club. Anita was part of the Bo ' Arro Club and the Reporters Club.⁶⁰ Carl was part of the Anglo-dominated Compañeros Españoles club with Esther and the French club with Henrietta. He was also one of the school's Scholarship Pupils and eventually attended Rice University.⁶¹ These students' relationships with Anglos did not end with the student body at Davis High but continued with intermarriage. Carl married a white woman, Estelle Walters, obtaining parental consent. Estelle even became Estella on their marriage certificates.⁶² Like Carl, Henrietta eventually intermarried with a white man,

⁵⁸ "Y.W.C.A. To Hold Two Classes For Study Of Spanish," *Houston Chronicle*, October 5, 1930, accessed March 23, 2021, GenealogyBank.

⁵⁹ Jefferson Davis High School, *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1929); Ibid., *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1930), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 20, 2020, 75, 103, 105, 113, 114.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 105; Jefferson Davis High School, *Beauvoir* (Houston, TX, 1930), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012," www.ancestry.com, accessed on April 20, 2020, 115.

⁶¹ Ibid., 97, 103, 104.

⁶² Harris County Clerk's Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County, Texas, Marriage*

Weldon Howard Riley. She was even able to acquire Mrs. Kenneth Tice, a white woman, as a witness for her naturalization application.⁶³ Anita also intermarried with a white man, Frank Vickrey, and frequently found employment in white businesses as a saleswoman. In fact, two of Anita's sisters followed suit and married white men.⁶⁴

Another White school, South End Junior High located at 1300 Holman, employed five Spanish instructors. All were Anglo, but one: Esther Trevino, a 30-year-old Tejana born to Mexican parents.⁶⁵ The bilingual Esther earned a B.A. in Romance Languages in 1924 from the University of Texas. She would later earn her Master of Arts in Humanities from the University of Chicago

Records, Carl C. Ortiz with Estelle Walters, File No. 6413, February 25, 1931, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 22A, Enumeration District: 0009, accessed April 21, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>; Birth Certificate of Arthur Cecil Ortiz, 3 July 1931, Certificate 57099, Texas Department of State Health Services, Ancestry.com. *Texas, Birth Certificates, 1903-1932* [database on-line]. accessed April 21, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶³ U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Henrietta Perez Riley, File No. 10626. 23 November 1935, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Forth Worth, TX, accessed April 20, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; Fort Bend County Clerk's Office; Richmond, Texas, *Fort Bend County Marriage Records*, Weldon Howard Riley with Henrietta Perez, File No. 18517, February 03, 1940, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁴ Harris County Clerk's Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County Marriage Records*, Frank Norris Vickrey with Anita Elizabeth San Miguel, File No. 47606, December 29, 1939, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>; Miss Anita E San Miguel, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1937, from Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com>.

⁶⁵ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 11A, Enumeration District: 45, accessed March 24, 2021, <http://ancestry.com>; "List of Teachers In Houston Schools Are Announced by Board," *Houston Post*, September 13, 1925, accessed March 25, 2021, GenealogyBank.

in 1933, writing her thesis in Spanish.⁶⁶ In 1926, the school became San Jacinto Senior High.⁶⁷ And like earlier patterns, Mexican students began trickling in after the employment of a Mexican faculty. These students would find opportunities in school clubs. In 1929, Diana Gonzales's brother, Edmundo, attended the school. El Circulo Espanol was "one of San Jacinto's [High] largest and most enthusiastic organizations." It claimed over "two hundred members" that consisted of "popular and influential students of the school." Its "active purpose [was] to make the Spanish language more popular by its daily use and adoption." He served as Vice-President of the club, then was elected as President in 1930 by his Anglo peers. He was described as a "popular executive" because of [h]is earnestness and the speed with which he adapted himself to the rules of parliamentary law." Edmundo was also active in the school's Booster Club and ran track.⁶⁸

Conclusion

In the first decades of Houston's twentieth century, being bilingual in English and Spanish played a critical factor in the inclusion of the Mexican community within secondary schooling. Beginning with Spanish clubs promoted by Anglo businessmen, Mexican educators were hired to instruct their Anglo peers. This served as a launching pad for their individual careers and strengthening of ties with the Anglo community. From here, Mexican youth followed educators Mercado and Tafolla into high schools, carving out independent roles in school organizations. Language was clearly crucial to a trifecta of Mexican participation within Houston's Anglo learning spaces.

⁶⁶ University of Chicago, *The Autumn*, (Chicago, IL, 1933), The University of Chicago Library, <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/dig/campub/mvol-0447-1933-0825/7>.

⁶⁷ Denison and Pugh, *Houston Public School Buildings*, page 107.

⁶⁸ San Jacinto High School, *El Oroo 1930* (Houston, TX, 1930), "U.S. School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," www.ancestry.com, accessed on March 25, 2021.

First, Spanish was viewed with opportunity among certain Anglo circles in Houston. Those of the professional class (lawyers, doctors, merchants, etc.) viewed the language as an economic advantage, creating Spanish clubs. This established the initial access point for some Mexicans who served as Spanish instructors, but that spilled over into their social lives.

This favorable perspective of Spanish was carried into Houston's secondary schools, creating a second access point. Many high schools offered students Spanish as a foreign language course, which provided an entry point for Mexican educators at Anglo schools, such as J.J. Mercado, Sr. and Esther Tafolla. This acceptance alongside Anglo faculty was influenced by language, citizenship, class, and kinship dynamics. Mercado came from a bilingual background, meaning he could translate Spanish into English for Anglo students. In addition, his stepfather was an educator, which provided a career model. Mercado, Sr. could also claim Confederate ancestry because of his father and stepfather's (both Mexican) military service for the Confederacy. Once Mercado, Sr. was hired as a Spanish instructor for a local high school, his sister-in-law, Esther Tafolla, followed. Esther was a bilingual widow of means who was also employed at an Anglo high school.

These two access points set precedents that influenced the acceptance of Mexican pupils into Anglo high schools. Language had set off a cascade that led to Mexican educators and Spanish becoming vital parts of these high schools. In a segregated school system, their employment signaled belonging on the white side of Jim Crow. To have denied Mexican students while employing Mexican educators would have created an ostensible contention. Keeping in mind that J.J. Mercado, Jr. and Esther Tafolla had school-age children, the hiring of Mexican educators came with an implicit understanding of nepotism for their sons and daughters. Thus, language, race, and

kinship establish a basis for Mexican high school-aged students. Once admitted, though, they built on this access point by integrating deep into school culture.

In Houston's early twentieth-century learning spaces, Spanish served as a middle ground of inclusion which was influenced by the dynamics of language, residence, race, class, and kinship.⁶⁹ The trifecta of inclusion presented in this chapter challenges the notion that "practically...no biculturation" existed.⁷⁰ As Wendy D. Roth argued, "[r]acial acculturation works as a two-way street...rather than immigrants' simply conforming to the dominant American culture."⁷¹ While "no Spanish rules" were present in Houston, so too was the language one of opportunity.⁷² Negotiations between Anglos and Mexicans occurred in learning spaces to form bicultural opportunities. As Part 2 demonstrates, inclusion and exclusion occurred across Houston's simultaneously between 1900-1940, presenting heterogeneous Mexican experiences.

⁶⁹ This term of "middle ground" refers to the Richard White's framework where he argues that examining local contexts where two or more contrasting groups meet, reveals negotiation and accommodation by all sides. For more, see *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁰ De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 39.

⁷¹ Wendy D. Roth, *Race Migrations Latinos and the Cultural Transformation of Race* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁷² De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 27.

Part 3: Social-Cultural Spaces

In 1980, historian Thomas Kreneck, and volunteer Joe Torres, interviewed Mrs. Refugio Ontiveros. Refugio and her husband immigrated to Houston in 1919 from Zacatecas, Mexico. After describing the discrimination she and her husband faced in Texas movie theatres, Joe asked Refugio if she had heard of Patricio Gutierrez, a local musician who played for “Americanos.” Refugio responded that she did know of Patricio. Amidst such harsh discrimination, Joe asked her how a Mexican could achieve such success amongst Anglos. Refugio answered that it was because he was “provecho,” or advantaged.¹

Refugio’s oral history revealed the diversity of social-cultural experiences for Mexicans. Some faced harsh discrimination in Houston when seeking out recreation in the city. For others, performing for Anglos was an access point that impacted their societal acceptance. Part 3 reviews this inclusion and exclusion across social-cultural spaces.

Historian Arnolando de León concluded that “racial prejudice during the [1920s] was as prevalent in Houston as anywhere else and Jim Crow codes applicable to blacks extended to Mexicans.” He continued that this group was “denied access to nearly all public and private establishments owned by Anglos, from restaurants to ballrooms.”² Scholar Mikaela Selley depicted a more complex setting, asserting that “Houston’s blurred color lines allowed for

¹ Mrs. Refugio Ontiveros Oral History, interview by Thomas Kreneck and Joe Torres, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 17 March 1980, <https://cdm17006.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/Interviews/id/168/rec/1>.

² Arnolando De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*, (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program, 2001), 26.

social...relationships with the Anglo community.”³ A closer examination of Houston presents a nuanced perspective where these varied experiences of access simultaneously occurred across social-cultural spaces. Mexicans were excluded from accessing social-cultural spaces, but the opposite was also true.

Part 3 examines various social-cultural spaces, defined as settings where heritage, traditions, artistry, or recreation were expressed. The specific social-cultural spaces analyzed in Part 3 are Anglo civic celebrations, Houston’s performing arts scene, movie theaters, dance halls, and recreational drugs. By analyzing these social-cultural spaces and those historical actors involved, we can view how inclusion or exclusion formed because of these converging dynamics: music, race, gender, class, talent, citizenship, language, and morality.

Chapter 5 analyzes music, race, class, and talent as dynamics that formed the basis for the acceptance of Mexicans into Houston’s culture. First, the welcomed participation of Mexicans in Houston’s most prestigious annual commemoration, No-Tsu-Oh, is covered. Then, a review of the acceptance of Mexican artists Patricio Gutierrez, Emilio Ugalde, Mimi Ypiña, and Eva Perez in Anglo social and economic spaces takes place.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the opposite of the previous chapter by reviewing how strategies of Mexican exclusion emerged in recreational spaces of movie theatres, dance halls, and marijuana use. In some movie theaters, Mexican access was restricted by racially-based pricing and seating segregation. At dance halls, at least one Anglo-owned venue denied Mexicans entrance based on their nationality. Mexican-owned dance halls were raided and closed by law enforcement, denying Mexicans participation from recreation. Those Mexicans who engaged with marijuana after its

³ Mikaela G. Selley, “The Melesio Gómez Family: Mexican Entrepreneurship in Houston’s Early Twentieth Century” (master’s thesis, University of Houston, 2013).

criminalization were targeted by law enforcement, resulting in societal restrictions based on their criminalization and/or incarceration.

Chapter 5: Cultural Acceptance

According to De León, a Mexicanist identity was born out of a sense of nostalgia for the motherland and systemic racism by Anglos. Clubs and organizations, such as Mexico Bello, filled a void for Mexican heritage. They were an opportunity to display proper behavior and civility to curb Anglo stigmas.¹ This characterization fits the “Lo Mexicano” framework, but it disregards two key aspects. First, it omits how Mexican culture and Mexican origin individuals were incorporated into the city’s social-cultural identity since the turn of the twentieth century. Second, that characterization dismisses how musical talent formed an access point within Anglo social-cultural spaces.

This chapter works within the social-cultural spaces of Houston’s civic celebration and performance arts scene. It follows how the intersecting dynamics of music, race, class, and talent shaped access points. The first section reviews the acceptance of certain Mexican music and bands by Anglos early on as instrumental to setting precedents for the future inclusion in Houston’s civic celebrations and performance arts scene. Second, Mexican participation in an Anglo civic celebration, No-Tsu-Oh, is covered. The last section examines four Mexican artists (musicians, singers, and dancers) who established themselves in Houston’s performance arts scene, then accessed additional social and economic connections.

Background of Band Music

Military band music in the United States is rooted in colonial origins from the “military fife and drum traditions that Europeans brought with them across the Atlantic.” In the nineteenth century, technological advancements regarding brass instruments and printed music coupled with

¹ Arnolde De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston*, (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program, 2001), 33-34.

“musician-soldiers” returning home contributed to the “popularity of military-style brass bands in the United States.” These musician veterans formed bands and played a diverse set of music for a wide range of audiences “quickly surpass[ing] classical symphony and orchestra in both prominence and popularity throughout the country.”²

Like the United States, Europeans influenced the development of Mexico’s military music. When French forces invaded Mexico in the 1860s, they attempted to pacify the population by trying to “serenade the Mexican people in the main plazas of towns throughout the country” with their French military bands. When Porfirio Diaz took over as president the following decade, he “modeled Mexico’s new military bands...after those of the French army.” These bands played both European and Mexican works in a time that consisted of what is considered the “golden age for military bands in Mexico.”³

The national context of music in the United States and Mexico met at local contexts such as New Orleans. In 1884, Mexico’s Eighth Cavalry Band was welcomed into that city, playing at multiple Anglo venues and was a featured attraction of that year’s World Fair. While Mexico and New Orleans elites viewed this engagement as an opportunity to advance economic self-interests, it impacted the social relations between Anglos and Mexicans.⁴ Likewise, in Houston, the inclusion of Mexican national bands formed an access point.

² Valeria Priscilla Jiménez, “Brokering Modernity: The World’s Fair, Mexico’s Eighth Cavalry Band, and the Borderlands of New Orleans Music, 1884 - 1910”. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018, 188-190.

³ Ibid., 202-206.

⁴ Ibid., 179-243.

Establishing Music as a Dynamic: Anglo Acceptance and Mexican Bands

Very early on, the dominant society chose to include Mexican bands in their cultural celebrations. These early decisions by Anglo Houstonians to incorporate elements of Mexican culture provide understanding as to why music was an important access point for later Mexicans in a Jim Crow city. For instance, in 1894, a Houstonian couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Lee honored a woman, “Miss Fischer of Brenham,” with a dance. Anglo guests included a civil engineer, F.L. Dormant, from Holland, and Charles W. Nelson, a life insurance salesman born in New York. What makes this particular event interesting is that a “Mexican band furnished the music” for which the Lee’s dining room was converted for guests to dance. Which specific songs were played remains unknown, but at the very least, here were Mexicans providing entertainment for Anglo Houstonians in the late nineteenth century.⁵ In fact, one Mexican band became a featured attraction for the city in the spring of 1898.

The Sweeney & Coombs’ Opera House contracted the “Mexican Military Band” to play one concert on April 27, 1898. The band was led by director Captain Encarnación Payén, consisting of fifty musicians and eight soloists.⁶ Captain Payén, born in 1844, was a music professor who trained Mexico’s most renowned musicians at the National Conservatory of Music.⁷ The band performed European overtures at the opera house, but it was with “the Mexican

⁵ “Twenty-five Years Ago,” *The Houston Post*, August 10, 1919, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth609120/m1/30/>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 8, Enumeration District: 71, accessed June 7, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; Ibid., Census Place: Houston Ward 3 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 21, Enumeration District: 76, accessed June 7, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶ “Mexican Military Band,” *Houston Daily Post*, April 26, 1898, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth84481/m1/12/>.

⁷ “Brokering Modernity,” Jiménez, 207.

numbers...that best pleased the audience.” A “thoroughly appreciative and seemingly well pleased” audience enjoyed the performance.⁸ In Houston’s late nineteenth century, the clamoring for Mexican entertainment established an acceptance of highbrow Mexican bands that only escalated in the twentieth.

In 1902, the Musical Protective Union sought to have foreign musicians categorized under the Alien Contract Labor Law banning unskilled immigrants. They argued that orchestra musicians were artisans, not artists.⁹ This anti-foreign sentiment did not dissuade local Houstonians from contracting and supporting Mexican bands. For example, the local Elks lodge, an Anglo male fraternal society, hired Mexican orchestras to perform at their initiation meetings.¹⁰ Nationally, though, this Elk inclusion of Mexican bands would be met with opposition. In 1905, the El Paso Elks worked with the Jalisco governor to charter the Jalisco Mexican National Band to accompany the Elks to their national convention in Buffalo. The Musicians’ Union of the United States protested their presence and threatened not to participate if the Mexican group attended and played at the convention. *The Houston Post* vehemently protested this discrimination and argued, “[t]here can be no doubt about the people of the country desiring to hear the Mexican music.” In its scathing opinion, the *Post* believed the Jalisco band brought credit to the convention and the State of Texas. When “the Mexican band incident” is coupled with the late nineteenth-century popularity of Mexican bands in Houston, it becomes clear that Anglo Houstonians valued certain Mexican

⁸ “At The Opera House,” April 28, 1898, *The Houston Daily Post*, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth84483/m1/9/>.

⁹ “To Curb The Speaker,” *The Houston Daily Post*, November 29, 1902, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth83539/m1/6/>.

¹⁰ “Elks Hold Initiation,” *The Houston Daily Post*, August 19, 1900, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth83327/m1/5/>.

artists.¹¹ Collectively, these examples demonstrate how Mexican artists and music were accepted into Anglo social-cultural spaces. These Mexican bands established music as a dynamic influencing access. This inclusion was further expanded in the 1900s when music intersected with race and class to form an access point for Mexicans in the city's most prominent civic celebration: No-Tsu-Oh.

Accessing No-Tsu-Oh

Race and No-Tsu-Oh

In 1899, "The Mardi Gras of Texas" was formed as a city-wide celebration intended to draw people from all over the nation.¹² Organized by local businessmen, No-Tsu-Oh (Houston spelled backward) evolved into a week-long festival centering around the fable of King Nottoc (cotton), who ruled Saxet (Texas) in the land of Tekram (market).¹³ Eventually, in 1914, Nottoc gave way to King Retaw, or King Water, marking the Ship Channel's dredging completion.¹⁴ A prominent businessman was chosen as King Nottoc, and a prominent woman was crowned queen.¹⁵ This carnival celebrated Houston's economic prosperity and put the city's elite on display, although it was understood that this was an Anglo space.

¹¹ "The Mexican Band Incident," *The Houston Post*, May 25, 1905, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht603465/m1/6/>.

¹² "Advertisement," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Nov. 02, 1908. <https://www.genealogybank.com/nbshare/AC01180426021248100001528237296>; Houston was part a larger national trend of civic celebrations, particularly carnivals, manufacturing a sense of unit that served the political and economic interests of elites. For more, see Chapter 3 of David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

¹³ Charles Orson Cook, "John Milsap's Houston: 1910," *The Houston Review* 1, no. 1 (1979): 125–30.

¹⁴ Marilyn M. Sibley, "No-Tsu-oh," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 06, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lln01>.

¹⁵ Louis F. Aulbach, *Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings* (Scotts

Black Houstonians were excluded from the city's celebration because "[o]rganizers prohibited blacks from attending No-Tsu-Oh as the city worked to show itself off to visitors."¹⁶ In 1909, the African-American community organized De-Ro-Loc, or "colored" spelled backward. Organized by the prominent black community, it resembled No-Tsu-Oh, as evidenced by their coronation of King La-Yol E-Civ-Res, or "Loyal Service." Lasting until 1920, the carnival's location alternated between Emancipation Park in Third Ward and West End park in Fourth Ward's Freedmen's Town.¹⁷

Thus, No-Tsu-Oh was a segregated event whose organizers served as gatekeepers of race. Being on the white side of the color line was critical to participation. However, as seen in economic and learning spaces, Mexicans could be white or nonwhite. This liminal whiteness was a vital access point that intersected with music and class, leading to Mexican participation in No-Tsu-Oh.

Music, Race, and Class: Incorporating Mexican Bands into No-Tsu-Oh.

The inclusion of Mexican culture in the No-Tsu-Oh carnival extended from earlier precedents of incorporating Mexican national bands. The 1907 No-Tsu-Oh saw the first participation by Mexican elements, including bands and Mexican government officials. Thomas Flaxman was the chairman of that year's music committee.¹⁸ Born in 1876 Louisiana to German

Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).

¹⁶ Calvin D. Blair, "De-Ro-Loc: Houston's Forgotten Festival" *Houston History Magazine* 16, no. 2, (Spring 2019): 7.

¹⁷ James E. Fisher, "De-Ro-loc No-tsu-oh," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 06, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lld19>.

¹⁸ "One Month To The Carnival," *The Houston Post*, October 5, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603158/m1/5/>.

parents, Flaxman was the owner of a dry goods store, Flaxman Notion Company.¹⁹ With the help of the Brownsville Mayor, Fred F. Comb, and Consul, Dr. Miguel Barragán, Flaxman contracted the Second Mexican Cavalry Band to play daily, which cost a “high price.”²⁰ This military band, consisting of sixty pieces, was assigned to Mexico’s Second Cavalry stationed in Matamoros.²¹ It was considered of “international fame,” and like other Mexican national bands, was known for playing European and Mexican compositions.²² Securing the band was viewed with appreciation because they were considered “one of the most perfect musical organizations in the Western world.”²³ The Anglo desire to be entertained by Mexican bands intersected with race in that it was linked to Western civilization. In a carnival that showcased modernity and progress, being labeled Western was an essential measure of whiteness.²⁴ Considering that No-Tsu-Oh was a segregated event, this connotation was important to the band’s participation in an Anglo celebration. Another

¹⁹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 3 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 19A, Enumeration District: 94, accessed June 7, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; “Dry Goods,” *The Houston Post*, July 18, 1906, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603689/m1/14/>.

²⁰ “The Bands Coming,” *The Houston Post*, October 26, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603413/m1/5/>; “The Mexican Military Band From Matamoros,” *The Houston Post*, October 27, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph602948/m1/18/>.

²¹ “Has Fine Reputation,” *Brownsville Daily Herald*, October 12, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph147584/m1/1/>.

²² “The Auto Parade,” *The Houston Post*, October 3, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph602683/m1/10/>; “Matamoros Concert Was Great Success,” *Brownsville Daily Herald*, January 26, 1909, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph147909/m1/2/>.

²³ “Second Mexican Cavalry Band,” *Brownsville Daily Herald*, October 9, 1907, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph147581/m1/1/>.

²⁴ For more on whiteness and Western civilization measurements, see Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2010).

“guest” of the carnival was the Mexican consul at Brownsville, Dr. Miguel Barragán, who was pictured in *The Houston Post*. Beneath the image, his military service of “distinction” as a “member of the surgical staff of the Mexican army” was highlighted. So too was his medical background profiled, describing him as “one of the leading medical practitioners and surgeons of the lower Rio Grande country.”²⁵

The local Anglo population shared an appreciation of the Mexican band, as demonstrated when one interviewed “gentleman” reported that “he was delighted to learn that the No-Tsu-Oh committee had secured this as one of the bands to play at the Carnival.”²⁶ In addition to being a daily attraction for Houston carnival-goers, the band was prominently featured at the coronation of King Nottoc, Judge Hiram M. Garwood, and Queen Nottoc, Alice Graham Baker.²⁷ Houstonians so well received the band they attempted to have them play one last time after the carnival ended. Flaxman appealed for citizens to offer the “proper inducement,” or “about \$200,” to contract the musicians for a performance at Sam Houston Park, located downtown.²⁸

An element of class is apparent here, as indicated by the consul’s invitation and the band itself. The Second Mexican Cavalry Band was no ordinary musical group; rather, highbrow musicians of prominent status and respectability elevated No-Tsu-Oh. In addition, the featured attendance of a Mexican, Dr. Barragán, cannot be detached from his perceived distinction. Dr.

²⁵ “One Week Before Carnival,” *The Houston Post*, October 27, 1907, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602948/m1/18/>.

²⁶ “The Mexican Band,” *The Houston Post*, November 3, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603454/m1/81/>.

²⁷ “The Coronation of Nottoc IX,” *The Houston Post*, November 7, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth602532/m1/10/>.

²⁸ “Mexican Band for Sunday,” *The Houston Post*, November 9, 1907, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth603181/m1/16/>.

Barragán's occupation as a government official and medical doctor established his class. Most of all, though, he was viewed as essential to contracting the Mexican band. Early access to No-Tsu-Oh was limited to a certain class of Mexicans, such as government officials and respected musicians. This intersection of music, race, and class was important to Mexican culture becoming a staple of the No-Tsu-Oh event.²⁹

Race and Class Presents "A Peculiar Opportunity"

As reviewed in the prior sections, Anglos welcomed certain Mexican bands, even defending them when excluded. This established an atmosphere of acceptance for those Anglo citizens who viewed and listened to a Mexican musical group at the 1907 No-Tsu-Oh. It was not beyond Anglo communities to prohibit Mexican bands from performing in their spaces. This was seen in Buffalo, New York when the inclusion of the Jalisco Mexican National Band became controversial. Yet, these bands were "appreciated by every visitor" in Houston.³⁰ As evidenced by Anglo newspaper coverage, rather than being racially differentiated from Western civilization, they were integrated alongside Anglos. Due to these precedents of music, race, and class, a segment of local Mexican residents now had access to a public event, which No-Tsu-Oh's 1914 celebration brought to fruition.

With these dynamics in the background, the 1914 carnival included a segment of the local Mexican community who expanded the precedent set by the 1907 Mexican band inclusion. That 1914 carnival was unique in that its "Deep Water Jubilee" celebrated the recent completion of the Houston Ship Channel. A new addition was the "Ships of All Nations" where Clark Cox would manage a pageant of floats representing "principal nations of the world." These ships were

²⁹ "The Arrival of King Nottoc Will Open The Carnival," *The Houston Post*, November 7, 1909, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht638126/m1/27/>.

³⁰ "Second Mexican Cavalry Band," *Brownsville Daily Herald*.

constructed around the themes of colonization and adventure. Participating women were viewed as representatives of “royal blood” from corresponding nations.³¹

Any ethnic group wishing to be included in this celebration had to meet the pre-defined standards of being associated as a *principal nation* and of *royal blood*. The ancestry of Mexicans had both Spanish and indigenous roots, and being linked to one or the other had racial implications. As will be seen, some Mexicans were attached to a Spanish ancestry, meaning they could claim a European background in Houston.³² Indigenously, those with an Aztec background could still meet the “royal” criterion. Although true to the carnival’s segregated past, there is no mention of the African-American community forming their own float. While African-Americans could certainly claim roots in African kingdoms, their absence indicates that Anglo organizers excluded them from *principal nations* and *royal blood*. This racialized distinction influenced the first participation of the local Mexican community in the esteemed No-Tsu-Oh carnival.

In July of 1914, the Anglo parade committee decided that Houston’s “Mexican colony” could enter their float centered on “Mexican history.” Anglo organizers believed that Mexico could claim “the first ever naval fleet built in American waters” by Hernán Cortés, which gave local Mexicanos “a peculiar right to representation.”³³ Through this criterion, the carnival’s Anglo

³¹ “Ships Of Nations Parade To Be Beautiful,” *The Houston Post*, November 8, 1914, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607428/m1/29/>.

³² Claiming Spanish ancestry could permit a Mexican to participate in Anglo events. For more see, Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2009), 27-28.

³³ “Miles of Flower Laden Vehicles In Pageant Of Surpassing Beauty,” *The Houston Post*, July 19, 1914, accessed June 9, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth606971/m1/24/>.

gatekeepers granted access to Mexicans who identified with a Spanish lineage.³⁴ In addition to race, class was another influential dynamic to the participation in this civic celebration.

On July 19, “a number of the leading members of the Mexican colony of Houston,” about 30, formed the “Mexican No-Tsu-Oh Celebration club.” Officers were elected with Prof. Jesus Gutierrez as president, J.J. Mercado, Sr. as treasurer, J.J. Mercado, Jr. as director, and A.A. Del Castillo was elected secretary.³⁵ Del Castillo was editor of a bilingual weekly newspaper titled *Mexico Independiente*.³⁶ As reviewed in chapter four, Mercado was a leading educator in Houston. As will be reviewed later in this chapter, Gutierrez was one of Houston’s most prominent musicians. It was fitting that the emerging pedagogical talent from the Mercado family once again became a broker of cultural exchange. As a Spanish instructor for Anglo adults and teenagers, the family was viewed as integral to Houston’s transformation into an international seaport. This time, though, he had company with an up-and-coming musical talent in the Gutierrez family who had built social connections amongst Anglos through his musical talent. Recruiting *leading members* into the committee brought prominence and status necessary to their acceptance amongst Anglo organizers. For example, the ongoing campaigns against Mexican tamale peddlers or sex workers

³⁴ This demonstrates that localized histories were conflating Spanish and English history much sooner than academics. Herbert Eugene Bolton is viewed as the first to write histories characterizing Spaniard colonization as mirroring that of Englishmen. For more, see *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1921.

³⁵ “Mexicans promise to enter best float in Ships of Nation’s event,” *The Houston Post*, July 20, 1914, accessed June 10, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607223/m1/7/>.

³⁶ “Weekly Paper in Spanish,” *The Houston Post*, December 29, 1914, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607416/m1/10/>.

would have diminished the group's respectability. Thus, race and class intersected to influence Mexican participation alongside Anglos in one of Houston's premier civic celebrations.

Mexican Participation in No-Tsu-Oh

Jesus and Mercado, Jr. resolved to design a float representing the Mexican people in a "dignified, worthy, and attractive" manner." It was decided that "several thousand dollars" would be required to construct their float.³⁷ Mexicanas were vital in that they were the primary fundraisers. In September of 1914, five Mexican women arrested the local sheriff, Frank Hammond, and held him for thirty minutes until a friend came to his rescue. Though, it was all purely for entertainment and to raise funds for the Ships of All Nations float. Noted as "beautiful" by the *Houston Post*, the "policia" consisted of "Senoritas G. Valdez, L. Ortega, M.G. Garcia, and Señora Nick Montes." They went around arresting men who they held in jail, a tent, until someone paid the bond of fifty cents.³⁸ The following month, this group planned a 'Beneficio Kermesse' to raise money and formed committees. It was noted that they had permission from the men to do so and would turn over all money to them.³⁹ The Mexican colony's executive committee granted official recognition of this auxiliary. These "prominent women" planned on serving Mexican dishes hoping to challenge the notion that Mexican food was highly seasoned or spicy.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Mexican Colony Will Enter Float," *The Houston Post*, July 16, 1914, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607244/m1/3/>.

³⁸ "Sheriff Hammond Was Arrested By 'Policia,'" *The Houston Post*, September 28, 1914, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607414/m1/14/>.

³⁹ "Mexican Women To Meet," *The Houston Post*, September 29, 1914, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607631/m1/25/>.

⁴⁰ "Mexican Women To Hold Typical National Fete," *The Houston Post*, October 5, 1914, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607242/m1/10/>.

In the end, these Mexicans successfully completed “[t]wo of the most beautiful floats” and took part in No-Tsu-Oh that November. “The first float...contained a number of beautiful señoritas and well formed senors,” who sang Mexican’s national hymn as the float moved along. “The second float represented a royal Aztec barge and on it rode a descendant of the Montezumas.”⁴¹

The answer to how and why Mexicans would be invited to participate in an Anglo cultural event first lies in the early inclusion of Mexican bands in Houston. Then, as this event makes clear, race and class converged to allow some leading local Mexicans to represent a culture that was indicative of modernity and progress, two main themes of No-Tsu-Oh.

Music and Talent

The following sections shift social-cultural space to Houston’s performing arts scene. Some Mexicans leveraged the dynamics of music and talent that influenced acceptance amongst Anglos. Early on, music as an access point was established out of Mexican national bands. Then, music expanded to include individual skills and abilities related to playing instruments, singing, and dancing. For Patricio Gutierrez and Emilio Ugalde, their talent on the piano formed social and economic access. Likewise, Mimi Ypiña and Eva Perez entertained audiences through their singing and dancing talents which influenced their participation in society.

The Gutierrez Family

The most prominent example of leveraging music and talent in Houston was the Gutierrez family. Jesus and Patricio, the father and son duo, were part of Houston’s music for decades. While living in Zacatecas, Mexico, Jesus Gutierrez’s father learned how to play guitar, which he passed down to his son. When Jesus immigrated to the United States in 1890, this skill was enormously influential because it allowed him to find employment as a musician in San Antonio. In 1895, Jesus

⁴¹ “‘Ships of All Nations’ Parade Far Exceeded All Expectations,” *The Houston Post*, November 11, 1914, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607409/m1/10/>.

married his wife, Dolores, and the next year they had their son, Patricio. By 1910, Jesus and his family relocated to downtown Houston. Like his father, Jesus passed down his musical talents to Patricio, which became critically influential.⁴²

Music and Talent

At the age of six, Patricio began his musical training under his father, starting with ear training, then reading music. Jesus desired for his son to learn how to play the piano, but they did not own one. Fortune had it that a man by the name of Greenwald needed space in his store and offered Jesus a piano if he could move it. Jesus took him up on the offer and moved the piano to his home. From there on, piano and singing were Patricio's life; and later, he began accompanying his father to various performances.

First and foremost, Patricio's success must be credited to his own hard work and study. Secondly, Patricio recalled that "daddy was the one who prepared me for this." Jesus was the "dominant influence" in his career; yet, Patricio's access to Anglo training cannot be omitted. The first was his music instructor, Aldridge Kidd. In 1912, sixteen-year-old Patricio began studying under the thirty-seven-year-old Aldridge for almost four years. The following year, his professional career took a major step forward when he performed with the well-known Julien Blitz.⁴³

The Houston Symphony Orchestra

Blitz was born in Ghent, Belgium on May 21, 1885, but immigrated to the United States two years later. He studied the piano and violin in his youth, then returned to Ghent to study at the

⁴² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Census Place: San Antonio Ward 2 Bexar, Texas; Pages: 2, Enumeration District: 83, accessed June 7, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; Patricio Gutierrez Oral History, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 27 January 1980, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/patricio-gutierrez_OH293.php.

⁴³ Ibid.

Royal Conservatory in 1905. By 1910 he was living in Houston. Blitz and Patricio became members of the same musicians union and began playing together after meeting. Their first public performance came in 1912 when Blitz and Patricio played together in the Houston Concert Trio. In 1913, Blitz became the founding conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra in 1913 and recruited both Gutierrez men into the symphony as charter members. Immediately, Patricio became a highly popular and respected musician in Houston's music scene. This was illustrated by a 1915 advertisement of a Houston Symphony Orchestra concert that featured Patricio and Blitz to attract ticket sales. After Patricio's performance that night at the Majestic Theatre, he received "storms of delighted applause from the whole audience." He was "recalled over and over," with his recital described as a "complete mastery." Over the next two years, Patricio garnered "much celebrity in Houston" and had "developed to a point where his competence to please a critical audience [was] assured."⁴⁴ Viewed as part of Houston's "own gifted and ambitious youth," the intersection of music and talent helped Patricio form even stronger interethnic connections, as demonstrated when Anglo women recruited him to perform at their events.⁴⁵

Working with Anglo Women

In 1917 the Women's Choral Club, a women's choir in Houston, were "congratulating themselves" after obtaining the Patricio as their pianist for the year. With his association, the

⁴⁴ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 15B, Enumeration District: 83, accessed June 7, 2018 <http://ancestry.com>; "Concert," *The Houston Post*, April 24, 1915, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607366/m1/16/>; Willie Hutcheson, "This Season's Third Symphony Concert," *The Houston Post*, April 29, 1915, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph606894/m1/7/>; "Patricio Gutierrez Recital Tuesday," *The Houston Post*, October 14, 1917, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609484/m1/50/>.

⁴⁵ "Houston's Just Pride In Her Own," *The Houston Post*, May 2, 1915, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607758/m1/37/>.

women felt they had “retain[ed]” a “talented artist.”⁴⁶ In their advertisements, Patricio’s name was prominently placed as the club’s accompanist to attract audiences.⁴⁷ Club performances put him directly in contact with married Anglo women such as Dorothy Ellwood and Anna C. Plunkett.⁴⁸ The twenty-year-old Dorothy was born in Minnesota and married to Henry Rice, president of a building supplies company.⁴⁹ Anna was a twenty-nine-year-old member born in Mississippi and married to a jeweler.⁵⁰

Anglo women also invited the dark-skinned Mexican into their homes. In 1918, Mrs. Herbert Roberts contracted Patricio as the featured musician when forming a fundraiser for Belgian and French children. The event made the local newspapers with *The Houston Post* displaying Patricio’s image next to Mary Waldo.⁵¹ Mary was a French tutor who served as a reader for the

⁴⁶ “Pianist for Choral Club,” *The Houston Post*, April 29, 1917, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608361/m1/31/>.

⁴⁷ “Woman’s Choral Club,” *The Houston Post*, September 23, 1923, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610026/m1/28/>.

⁴⁸ “Program Of Merit Pleased Audience,” *The Houston Post*, March 26, 1917, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609647/m1/10/>.

⁴⁹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Part of Justice Precinct 1, Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 11B, Enumeration District: 111, accessed June 14, 2021 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁰ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Houston City Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 2B, Enumeration District: 91, accessed June 14, 2021 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵¹ “For The Children Of Belgium And France,” *The Houston Post*, December 1, 1918, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608578/m1/34/>; Pablo Mitchell’s work on newspaper design analyzes how advertisements set what was racially acceptable between Anglos and Mexicans. For more, see *Coyote Nation Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005), 149-173.

program.⁵² An Anglo, female piano teacher, Katherine Allan Lively, would write glowingly of a Gutierrez recital. In her review, she noted that even though Patricio claimed Mexico as his motherland, she opined that “Houston [felt] a claim” to him as his education was tied to the Bayou City.⁵³ Patricio’s acceptance in Houston’s community impacted his personal life as viewed in his marriage to an Anglo woman.

In 1929, Patricio married nineteen-year-old Lola B. Smith, an Anglo woman. The couple’s interethnic marriage was publicized in the *Houston Post*, detailing their marriage at Our Lady of Guadalupe, a Catholic church in Second Ward, by Father De Anta.⁵⁴ Patricio and Lola also obtained a marriage certificate signed by Albert Townsend, the county clerk.⁵⁵ They lived at 610 Lubbock Street amongst Anglo neighbors.⁵⁶ In 1930, the census enumerator marked Patricio’s race as “Mex” (Mexican), reminding him of his racial difference from Lola, who was marked “W” (White).⁵⁷ However, Patricio was not ashamed of his Mexican background, as indicated his

⁵² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 4 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 11B, Enumeration District: 77, accessed June 14, 2021 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵³ “Gutierrez Recital,” *The Houston Post*, October 21, 1917, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608874/m1/45/>; Katherine Lively, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1917, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁴ “Gutierrez-Smith,” *Houston Post*, July 7, 1929, accessed June 14, 2021, GenealogyBank.

⁵⁵ Harris County Clerk’s Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County, Texas, Marriage Records*, Patricio Gutierrez with Lola B. Smith, File No. 204, July 6, 1929, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁶ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 47A, Enumeration District: 44, accessed June 14, 2021 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

involvement in Mexican clubs such as Club Mexico.⁵⁸ That a dark-skinned Mexican who did not sacrifice his identity could freely marry an Anglo woman is one of the most significant markers of acceptance.⁵⁹ This outcome must be viewed through the intersecting dynamics of music and talent, evident when the *Houston Chronicle* labeled him a musical “pioneer” in the Bayou City.⁶⁰

It’s clear that some Mexican bands and musicians leveraged their musical talents, which allowed them to navigate Houston’s social world on their accord. They also built bridges between Anglo and Mexican society, as demonstrated by the Mexican community’s aforementioned role in the 1914 No-Tsu-Oh. Following in their footsteps was another musician, Emilio Ugalde, a composer and pianist.

Emilio Ugalde

Forming Social Ties through Music and Talent

On March 19, 1916, Emilio boarded a train traveling from Mexico City to the United States. “Considered a great artist in his chosen line in Mexico,” the “celebrated Mexican pianist” who studied in Paris, felt forced to flee his country’s turmoil. Three days later, the twenty-five-year-old, dark-skinned, five-foot, five-inch man arrived at Laredo, Texas. By June 1916, Emilio settled into Houston’s Montrose area at 1203 Cleburne Avenue living with Edward Anton Rulfs, an Anglo man from Kentucky. Immediately, Emilio began training Anglo music students. One of those pupils was Pearl Nichols, a twenty-one-year-old Anglo woman from Sherman, Texas, who sought training as a pianist under Emilio. An instant romance formed between the two, leading to their

⁵⁸ “Notas Sociales de Houston, Tex,” *La Prensa*, September 15, 1933, accessed June 14, 2021, GenealogyBank.

⁵⁹ See the following source for an image indicating Patricio’s skin tone, “Patricio Gutierrez,” *Houston Chronicle*, November 5, 1933, accessed June 14, 2021, GenealogyBank.

⁶⁰ “First Blitz Orchestra,” October 23, 1932, *Houston Chronicle*, accessed June 14, 2021, GenealogyBank.

marriage in February of 1919. This marriage between a Mexican and an Anglo was publicly touted in Houston's newspapers. Even further, their inter-ethnic sex was made public with the announcement of their daughter's birth, Lenore, in 1920. An important concern of contemporary Anglo men was the protection of chastity, and implied in the announcement was that an Anglo woman had sex with a Mexican male.⁶¹ The mixed couple were members of the Renaissance society, a local Anglo club.⁶²

Forming Economic Ties

Emilio's association with Anglos was further entrenched with a series of business partnerships in the 1920s. In 1926, Emilio partnered with Kentuckian Virginous Gordon Gaines to operate the Baldwin Music company, a piano store. The following year, Emilio joined the Carter Music company as a salesman, and in 1929, he formed the American Conservatory of Music, offering piano, voice, and violin instruction. The Mexican musician leveraged his talents to access Anglo spaces in early twentieth-century Houston. Emilio formed social ties with Houston's community out of this cultural space, most notably through his marriage. Further evidence of these social ties was present in his naturalization application, in which Emilio obtained the signature of two Anglo witnesses. One of those was his initial roommate, Edward.⁶³

⁶¹ This mixed race family of Anne Farrar Hyde's work on the antebellum West where white settlers accommodated ethnic groups through intermarriage because of economic and social connections. Hyde found that the Civil War hardened racial lines particularly due to the importance of land ownership when the expansion of agriculture. See *Empires, Nations, and Families : a History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Examples of intermarriage by musicians like Patricio Gutierrez or Emilio Ugalde demonstrate is that Anglo accommodation continued into the 1900s.

⁶² "Mr. and Mrs. Emile Ugalde In New York," *The Houston Post*, June 22, 1919, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht610122/m1/67/>.

⁶³ "Birth of Baby Announced," *The Houston Post*, February 1, 1920, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht607625/m1/11/>; "Dallas Concert Choir To Be Heard At Auditorium Friday," *The Houston Post*, June 30, 1916, accessed October 21,

Thus, in the first thirty years of Houston's twentieth century, leveraging music and talent were critical to inclusion amongst Anglos. While mainly men benefited early on from these dynamics, the 1920s brought women into the fold as they too capitalized on their talent, as made evident through the lives of Mimi Ypiña and Eva Perez.

Mimi Ypiña

Like their male counterparts, female performers were able to gain acceptance amongst Anglo society. One of those Mexicanas was Mimí Ypiña, a respected and trained vocalist who continued the early pattern set by Ugalde and Gutierrez into the 1920s and '30s.

Music and Talent: The Houston Conservatory of Music

Born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, seventeen-year-old Mimi immigrated to the United States with her mother in 1925, entering through El Paso. By 1928, they settled in Fifth Ward Houston at 1301 Harrington. According to the 1930 census, she found work as an operator for a stationary company, most likely to help her widowed mother. Unable to speak English, a determined Mimi attended night school three times a week to become bilingual. In addition to work and language

2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608127/m1/3/>; "Emilio Ugalde Acquires Interest In Baldwin Firm," *Houston Post*, May 19, 1926, accessed October 21, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Emilio Ugalde Joins Carter Music Force," *Houston Post*, December 11, 1927, accessed October 21, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Musical Instruction," *Houston Post*, August 7, 1929, accessed October 21, 2020, GenealogyBank; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Ignacio Emilio Ugalde, File No. 2254, 15 May 1916, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed October 21, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 50A, Enumeration District: 122, accessed October 21, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; United States, Selective Service System, *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, Edward Anton Rulfs, 12 September 1918, Serial No. 4439, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, M1509, Registration State: Texas; Registration County: Harris; Roll: 4582, accessed October 21, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

courses, Mimi pursued her childhood singing ambitions by securing enrollment into the Houston Conservatory of Music.⁶⁴

At the conservatory, she studied under Clarence Albert Hammond, the Mississippian director. Edging out her fellow Anglo pupils, Mimi received the M. E. Foster scholarship, granting her four years of tuition and a study abroad opportunity in Milan, Italy. Later, Caroline Bryan Chapman and Johnelle Bryan, leaders of Houston's early performance art scene, awarded her a scholarship. Mimi's musical talents and association with the Conservatory of Music provided her access to multiple Anglo audiences. She performed for many Jewish clubs, judges, prominent businessmen, women's clubs and was continuously headlined in *The Houston Post*.⁶⁵ Yet, while Mimi found much success, she built Anglo-Mexican reciprocal relationships when she recruited Hammond to participate in Mexican activities.

⁶⁴ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 15B, Enumeration District: 3, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; "Singer Gives Program Here," *Houston Post*, November 15, 1928, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁶⁵ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 1A, Enumeration District: 83, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Mimi Ypina, File No. 9444. 26 January 1954, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; "Bryan-Chapman Scholarship Is Announced," September 29, 1929, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Jewish Students To Give Program," *Houston Post*, October 21, 1928, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Jewish Students To Hear Dannenbaum," *Houston Post*, October 23, 1928, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Senorita Mimi Ypina," *Houston Post*, February 17, 1929, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Mimi Ypina to Sing Wednesday At Dinner Here," December 15, 1929, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Woman's City Club," *Houston Post*, December 29, 1929, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "College Women's Club To Sponsor Mexican Program," *Houston Chronicle*, October 26, 1930, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank.

Building Cultural Bridges

Mimi used her connections built in Anglo cultural spaces to find support for her involvement amongst the Mexican community. The first was the 1929 Cinco de Mayo celebration, where she secured the participation of Professor Hammond, her musical director. After graduating from the conservatory in 1933, Mimi was highly sought after by Mexican clubs. One of those was Club Mexico, who repeatedly publicized her performance as part of their cultural society. Another was the well-known Club Mexico Bello. During that performance, Mimi was again able to secure Professor Hammond's participation. Not only did Mimi perform, but she helped establish Mexican clubs such as El Dramatico Artistico Mitla, where she served as secretary. This club was founded to provide opportunities for Mexicans to study and engage in drama. At their inaugural meeting, the duo of Mimi and Hammond appeared once more. Hammond accompanied Mimi on the piano as she sang songs of various cultural backgrounds, such as "Silver Moon" and "Maria Elena."⁶⁶ Another Mexicana, Eva Perez, followed suit. She found status and networked with the Anglo community through her musical talents.

Eva Perez

Eva's parents, Manuel and Luisa, were born in Tamaulipas in the 1870s, and married in 1895. In June of 1915, they crossed the Laredo bridge and made their way to Houston. Once here, they settled into Fifth Ward at 1016 McKee. Manuel found work as a machinist for the railroad. Immigrating with them were their six children, including seven-year-old Eva. Census records indicate the young daughter attended school and was bilingual by 1920. By this time, the family

⁶⁶ "Club Mexico Will Present Program," *Houston Chronicle*, June 18, 1933, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Program Is Given By Mexican Club," *Houston Chronicle*, August 13, 1933, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Dramatic Club," *Houston Chronicle*, October 17, 1933, accessed November 18, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Nuevo Club Artístico en Houston, Texas," *Prensa*, October 8, 1933, accessed November 30, 2020, GenealogyBank.

had moved to 1715 Main, living amongst Anglo neighbors.⁶⁷ Like Mimi, Eva found prominence and status through her artistic talents in the 1920s.

Music and Talent: Cultural Emergence

Eva made her first public appearance in 1925 when she sang with an all-Anglo chorus sponsored by the Y.W.C.A. The Houston amateur baseball association recruited her to perform at their 1929 part in the City Hall auditorium. There she performed a Spanish tango with Carlos Cortez, which was reported to have been received “most favorably.” That same year, the pair performed Spanish dances at the Miller Theater in Herman Park for the Kiwanis Knot Hole Gang. In 1930, Eva entertained the Lions club, a prominent civic group, with Spanish dances. Not only was her audience Anglo, but so was her dancing partner, Curtis Farrington.⁶⁸ Eva continued to entertain Anglo Houston throughout the 1930s, but in this decade, she leveraged her prominence to become a major figure in building bridges between prominent Anglos and the Mexican community.

Employment and Clubs

Following her 1920s success as a representative of Mexican artistic talent, Eva secured several positions in employment and clubs in 1930. First, Eva cemented her prominence in society by working as secretary to the Foreign Trade Manager, T.L. Evans. In addition, she was sworn in as an emergency enumerator by the census supervisor to assist with non-English-speaking

⁶⁷ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Census Place: Houston Ward 5 Houston, Harris, Texas; Pages: 16A, Enumeration District: 88, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991*, Eva Heizer, File No. 6625, 2 April 1945, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; The National Archives at Fort Worth, TX, accessed November 18, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁶⁸ “Prexy Meyer Welcomes Big Crowd,” *Houston Post*, March 12, 1929, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Knot Hole Gang Party Big Success,” *Houston Post*, August 20, 1929, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; “With The Girl Reserves,” *Houston Post*, January 9, 1927, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank.

families.⁶⁹ Aside from finding employment alongside Anglo men, Eva participated with Anglo women in clubs and became a leader amongst her fellow Mexicanas.

With the aim of Americanization, a Houston-based Pan-American Club first appeared in April of 1920. Initially, membership consisted of twelve Mexicanas, but it grew to twenty-four in May. The women incorporated parliamentary procedures and elected Elouise Diaz as president.⁷⁰ Ten years later, in 1930, Eva's peers elected her to serve as the recreation chairman of the Pan-American Club, working alongside Anglo women and Mexicanas. She represented the club in front of prestigious political and economic figures. For example, she entertained Senator Tom Connally and Houston's Rotary Club with a Mexican national dance at a foreign trade dinner.⁷¹ Soon after, Eva was instrumental in organizing Mexicans by helping form Club Chapultepec.

Eva's friend, Estella Reyes, searched for a club to join in the 1930s that was representative of her ethnicity. Estella and others took to the YWCA to find a club but were not satisfied with the existing clubs, such as the Pan-American. As Estella recalled, Eva led the effort to organize Club Chapultepec. When recruiting the founding members, Eva targeted young women of her similar background. After meeting Eva at the Chamber of Commerce for lunch, Estella accepted her membership invitation. Eva's peers viewed her as a "north side girl." This identity was associated with "advance[ed] education," "better homes," and being off "better economically," which was

⁶⁹ "Lions Club to Hear Spanish Program," *Houston Post*, April 16, 1930, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Civic Bodies Help To Check Census Lists," *Houston Chronicle*, April 18, 1930, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁷⁰ "Americanization is Keynote of Organization's Work Here," *The Houston Post*, May 19, 1920, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607816/m1/1/>.

⁷¹ "Y.W.C.A. Notes," *Houston Post*, September 21, 1930, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Pan-American Dinner Artists," *Houston Post*, October 5, 1930, accessed December 2, 2020, GenealogyBank.

mainly seen because of her dad's "steady job" with the railroad. In fact, their meeting was at Eva's home.⁷²

The group did not want to lose its Mexican heritage and wanted to maintain traditions and customs through the club. Needing a meeting place, Eva met with the YWCA director and secured a room there. Still, the YWCA questioned why they wanted to be separate and pushed them to join existing YWCA groups, but the young women refused. "They [Anglo women] were not Mexican-Americans," expressed Estella. In addition to maintaining their heritage, the group wanted to study and further their education. They arranged for speakers on subjects such as the family and "conditions in the home, work, wages, law, [and] justice." The group discussed discrimination against the Mexican people and decided to write a letter outlining injustices. Estella felt writing a letter was the "proper way" to express criticism. They shared the letter with the African-American YWCA, which printed it in their newsletter. This led to Club Chapultepec's Anglo director being replaced. Later, Estella wrote a Spanish version that she planned on presenting at a convention but was persuaded by the Mexican consul not to do so.⁷³

Club Chapultepec reveals how Eva, a "north side girl," leveraged her prominence in Houston's music scene to organize Mexican girls socially. Her artistic acceptance by Anglos was essential to their inclusion at the YWCA. Yet, we also view the limits of her clout when the group attempted to voice their discontent with existing structures. This helps make clear that the inclusion

⁷² Estella Reyes Oral History, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 15 June 1979, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/estella-reyes_OH261-2a.php.

⁷³ Ibid., Mexicans were not the only ones walking this tightrope of the black/white binary. The Jewish community also encountered a racial system that was created without their initial presence causing them to negotiate their identity, for more see Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

of Mexicans was influenced by how they supported or expanded the existing infrastructure; in this case, the Houston performance arts scene.

Conclusion

At the turn of the twentieth century, Mexican bands became a much sought-after entertainment in Anglo venues. This established music as a significant dynamic that influenced Mexican inclusion social-culturally. Participating in Houston's most prestigious civic celebration, No-Tsu-Oh, intersected this dynamic of music with race and class. No-Tsu-Oh was a segregated event for Anglos; yet, Mexican national bands were incorporated and featured in 1907. Music, race, and class intersected to form an access point for the local community. Those Mexicans who could claim a racial link to Spanish ancestry and were viewed as higher-class were welcomed into the 1914 No-Tsu-Oh parade.

Building on this music dynamic were those Mexican men and women gifted with talent. The intersection of these two dynamics influenced their integration into Houston's performing arts scene. Once included in Anglo performances, they furthered their acceptance economically or through social clubs. The most well-known artist was Patricio Gutierrez, who was a founding member of the Houston Symphony. As a local celebrity, Anglo women prided themselves in recruiting his talent. Emilio Ugalde was respected for his musical talent and was able to gain employment as a music instructor for Anglo students. Further, he and an Anglo man even went into business together as co-owners of a music store. Mimi Ypiña was viewed as so talented that she was accepted into the Conservatory of Music and then performed for various Anglo audiences. Her acceptance cascaded socially when she participated in Mexican social clubs. Eva Perez also performed for Anglo audiences as a dancer to Spanish music. Socially, she furthered her acceptance through social clubs and city employment.

Like Chapter 1's case studies, the question of how representative these individuals are arises, but extant sources make it difficult to quantify Mexicans within Anglo social-cultural spaces. Even though the number of case studies in this chapter is limited, the fact of the matter is that they occurred, which presents what was possible in Houston between 1900-1940. Cultural bridges were formed and complicate interpretations arguing that "projecting a Mexican image, no matter how positive it might seem to Mexicans, would not be accepted by Anglo society."⁷⁴ This rigid assertion is complicated by every Mexican in this chapter who did not hide their ethnicity but crossed back and forth between cultures. To understand these diverse experiences, one must consider intersecting dynamics within Houston's civic celebrations and its performing arts scene.

⁷⁴ Arturo F. Rosales, "Shifting Self-Perceptions and Ethnic Consciousness Among Mexicans in Houston, 1908-1946," *Aztlán* 16, no. 1-2 (1987): 90.

Chapter 6: Policing Recreation

In direct contradiction to those Mexicano/as able to leverage music and talent and obtain social-cultural inclusion were those who experienced exclusion by Anglos within social-cultural spaces of movies, dance halls, and recreational drugs. The dynamics of race, nationality, class, gender, morality, and language shaped the discrimination, segregation, criminalization, and incarceration of Mexicans. The first two chapter sections review the discriminatory practices against Mexicans at Anglo-owned theatres and dance halls; then, an examination of the raids and closures of Mexican-owned dancehalls takes place. A quick history of violent local policing sets a context of Mexican-police relations for the last section on the criminalization and incarceration of Mexicans based on newly minted marijuana laws.

Race and Gender at the Movies

The social-cultural space reviewed in this section is that of movie theatres. On August 3, 1911, an unnamed Mexican paid his admission to a local theater. Soon after choosing his seat, an employee began beating him with a club and shoved him out of the theater. Immediately, the Mexican hired a lawyer and had the employee fined. In spite, the owner then placed a sign at the theater's entrance reading something along the lines of "Mexican admission: 50 cents," whereas Anglo admission was only five cents.¹ The esteemed J.J. Mercado, Sr., a Spanish instructor, secured the aid of Consul Cesar Canseco from Galveston, who consulted with the Chief of Police Duff Voss to rectify the situation. The chief ordered the removal of the sign "on the ground that it

¹ "Cincuenta Centavos la Entrada Para los Mexicanos," *Cronica*, August 10, 1911, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; Translation of "Mexican admission: 50 cents" is translated from *La Prensa's* publication of "Cincuenta Centavos la Entrada Para los Mexicanos," but I am not certain what the sign read in English.

was humiliating and discriminating against the Mexicans.”² As remembered by Ernest Eguia, this discrimination continued into the 1920s, who recalled Mexicans having to sit upstairs in some of Houston’s theaters.³ Others, like Catalina Sandoval, recollected never being turned down admission to movies or any discriminatory signs.⁴ As demonstrated by Catalina, gender is important to consider because it could intersect with race to influence exclusion between men and women. Race, though, was central to discrimination in movie theatres. The beating of an unnamed Mexican, racially targeted admission pricing or segregated seating were discriminatory practices intended to limit Mexican’s access socially. In these instances, exclusion occurred on two different levels. First, the thousand percent price increase was designed to restrict Mexican attendance by making it unaffordable. Second, Anglos differentiated themselves from Mexicans, thus excluding the latter from being grouped with the former.

Thus, such was the messiness of Mexicans and culture in Houston’s early twentieth century. Those with artistic talents such as Patricio Gutierrez and Eva Perez freely navigated Houston’s social spaces and associated with Anglos. On the other hand, “common” Mexicans who attempted to navigate Houston’s cultural spaces on their accord could have met resistance by “common” Anglos. As a result, their ability to freely participate in social-cultural recreation was not only limited by local Anglo denizens but became part of a greater exclusionary policing effort.

² Ibid., Discrimination Alleged,” *The Houston Post*, August 1, 1911, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604699/m1/9/>.

³ Ernest Eguia, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 25 February 1988, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/ernest-egui_a_OH369.php.

⁴ Catalina Sandoval, interview by Thomas Kreneck and Emma Pérez, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 3 February 1989, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/catalina-sandoval_OH377.php.

Mexican Dancehalls, Houston's Board of Censors, and the "Clean-Up Squad"

This section shifts the social-cultural space to dance halls and demonstrates how morality converged with race and gender to exclude Mexicans from participating in society, socially and economically. In 1910, the City of Houston established a Board of Censors whose role was to supervise and inspect various entertainment spaces, including public amusements and theaters. One of the first three members was George M. Bailey, an editor of *The Houston Post*.⁵ By 1919, dance halls were a target of this board, and an ordinance was proposed to regulate such spaces.⁶

Background of Mexicans and Dancing

Little is known of the specifics regarding Mexican dance halls in the early twentieth century, but the scant evidence suggests that these were spaces frequented by men and women seeking leisure. Manuel Gamio's 1926-1927 study of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles gives us some insight into their recreation. Men, such as Bonaifacio Ortega, were laborers who frequented dance halls for leisure.⁷ These men saw Mexican dance halls as a "good time," particularly enjoying "American music because one can dance very well with the jazz music."⁸ Women like Elisa Silva used these dance halls for income. At the age of twenty, she immigrated to the United States in 1923 with her mother and sisters. She sought work to help her younger sister obtain an education, but was unsuccessful because of her inability to speak English.

⁵ "Censors Ready," *The Houston Post*, December 13, 1910, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth604257/m1/11/>.

⁶ "Chaperons Opposed by Proprietors for Dance Ordinance City Proposes," *The Houston Post*, March 18, 1919, accessed July 3, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610010/m1/10/>.

⁷ Manuel Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 25-27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-27; 47.

Eventually, she found employment at a dance hall after a female friend of hers suggested it. She described her work to Gamio as such:

My work consists of dancing as much as I can with everyone who comes. At the beginning I didn't like this work because I had to dance with anyone, but I have finally gotten used to it and now I don't care, because I do it in order to earn my living. Generally I manage to make from \$20.00 to \$30.00 a week, for we get half of what is charged for each dance. Each dance is worth ten cents so that if I dance, for example, fifty dances in a night I earn \$2.50. Since the dances are short, ten cents being charged for just going around the ball-room, one can dance as many as a hundred. It all depends on how many men come who want to dance. Besides there are some who will give you a present of a dollar or two. This work is what suits me best for I don't need to know any English here. It is true that at times I get a desire to look for another job, because I get very tired. One has to come at 7.30 in the evening and one goes at 12:30, and sometimes at 1 in the morning. One leaves almost dead on Saturdays because many Mexican people come from the nearby towns and they dance and dance with one all night. In Mexico this work might perhaps not be considered respectable, but I don't lose anything here by doing it. It is true that some men at times make propositions to me which are insulting, but everything is fixed by just telling them no. If they insist one can have them taken out of the hall by the police.⁹

While women used dance halls for income, many also found it a source of amusement like men. Isobel Sandoval reported that she worked as a waitress, “but it turned out [that she] worked twelve hours a day and...was paid very little.” She favored the dance hall describing it in the following manner:

There I pass away the time happily, dancing and whiling away the time with boy friends, and many times we go out on a spree. There have been times when I have been having a good time all night and all day and I have only bathed and then gone the next night to the hall and gone on dancing, the boys and girls admiring my stamina.¹⁰

Women like Elisa may have had internal moral battles with their work, as demonstrated when “sometimes before coming to the dance hall [she] would go to church, even if it only be to pray a little.”¹¹ Fathers, like Anastacio Cortés, linked these establishments with immorality and forbade

⁹ Ibid., 160-161.

¹⁰ Ibid., 245.

¹¹ Ibid., 162.

their daughters from amusements.¹² These male and female recreation patterns regarding dancing were not exclusive to Los Angeles as they also took place in Chicago.¹³

As these examples clarify, Mexican men and women frequented dance halls as recreational spaces in the early twentieth century. Still, it should be considered that some of these establishments promoted sex work. For example, one Anglo woman in Chicago supplemented her income through sex work at a local dancehall three times weekly.¹⁴ Like those of other ethnicities at the time, some of these dance halls were places of sex work, but this is not true of all, as demonstrated by Gamio's findings.¹⁵ Regardless of a loose connection, immigrant dance halls became intertwined with contemporary notions of coerced white prostitutes as white slaves.¹⁶ This association was contemporarily embedded in the federal White Slave Traffic Act, also known as the Mann Act, which made it a felony to transport "any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose" across state lines.¹⁷ Historian Mia Brett found that "'white slavery' served to criminalize immigrant others, especially Jews, police

¹² Ibid., 209.

¹³ Gabriela F. Arrendondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation 1916-1939*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2008), 129-130.

¹⁴ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 151.

¹⁵ Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century* (New York Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 98.

¹⁶ Mia Brett, "'Ten Thousand Bigamists In New York': The Criminalization Of Jewish Immigrants Using White Slavery Panics," *The Gotham Center for New York City History*, October 27, 2020, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.gothamcenter.org/blog/ten-thousand-bigamists-in-new-york>.

¹⁷ The White-Slave Traffic Act or the Mann Act. 36 Stat. 825 (Pub. Law 61-277). 18 U.S.C. §§2421-2424, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/36/STATUTE-36-Pg825a.pdf>.

interracial relationships, and racialize those who engaged in certain crimes.”¹⁸ Like Jewish immigrant women, Houston-based Mexican women were believed to be used for coerced sex work in dance halls, necessitating government intervention.

Race, Gender, and Morality in Dancehalls

The recreational activity, dancing, of Mexicans became a focus of the Board of Censors. Anglo officials' raids and closures of Mexican dance halls were grounded in the intersection of gender and morality. In one interview, the board of censor's secretary, Mrs. F. W. Vaughn, clearly espoused this implied connection. She reported that there were “more Mexican dance halls in Houston than of all other kinds put together” where “immorality has been flourishing.” Vaughn linked Mexican women to dance hall immorality by mentioning that “a considerable influx of Mexican women from San Antonio and other places” had occurred in recent months.¹⁹ Another government worker, Mary A. Corbin, who worked with Mexicans under the Social Service Bureau, reported that rooming houses “r[a]n in connection with these dance halls,” describing them as a “menace.” She claimed that “sporting Mexicans, those who dress in silk shirts and have abundant leisure” “imported” Mexican women to “work and steal for them.”²⁰

No specific evidence of this charge is available, but it was not unusual for Anglos to attach unsubstantiated notions of sexual immorality when the living arrangements of ethnic communities did not match the dominant society's.²¹ Non-normative living arrangements “produced queer

¹⁸ Mia Brett, “Ten Thousand Bigamists In New York.”

¹⁹ “Revokes Permits Granted to Mexican Dance Halls,” *The Houston Post*, July 9, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610141/m1/12/>.

²⁰ “Houston's Mexican Element Is Neglected, Report Shows,” *The Houston Post*, August 3, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608427/m1/14/>.

²¹ For more on this see Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 35-43.

domesticity, such as multiple women and children living in a female-dominated household “ or “the affiliation of vast communities of men in bunkhouses.” Queer not in the sense of homosexuality, but that single men and women living together challenged “respectable middle-class, heterosexual marriage.”²² Historians have found that saloons and pool halls were masculine spaces of leisure where single Mexican men socialized while drinking alcohol, and some involved themselves with prostitutes.²³ Perhaps such illicit activity was occurring at some of these dance halls, but as will be covered, contemporaries pointed out that specific violations of vice did not exist at all dance halls. Many of these dance halls seemed to be venues where Mexicans, and some Anglos, legitimately went dancing for amusement, but the evidence is limited. In the end, contemporary depictions of immorality, whether accurate or not, were what mattered. Race, gender, and morality all converged to create a perceived need to protect Mexican women from Mexican men.

In addition to government workers, popular culture in Houston exacerbated these correlations of immorality with Mexican dance halls. For example, the Iris Theatre showed “The Golden Gift.”²⁴ The film depicted Mexicans in these dance halls as preying on white women in despair. They were portrayed as a last resort for mothers deserted by their husbands to make ends

²² Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13-14.

²³ Jose M. Alamillo. *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960*. United States: University of Illinois Press, 2006, 57-68.

²⁴ “Golden Gift – Iris,” *The Houston Post*, April 10, 1922, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610693/m1/12/>; Films have the “power to emotionalize history like no other medium” and can “fuel intercultural...hostility.” For more, Richard V. Francaviglia, Jerry Rodnitzky, and Peter C Rollins, *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 88-89.

meet.²⁵ In another instance, *The Houston Post* printed one fictitious story adding to the imagery of immoral Mexican women as pervasive of Mexican dance halls. In the story, two friends from Mexico, now living in the Second Ward together, both fell in love with the “deliciously beautiful” Rosita. She reportedly played both friends against each other. One night, Manuel caught Rosita and Pablo dancing, causing a fight to break out between both men. Both survived the fight, but the friendship did not as Pablo returned to Mexico.²⁶ These popular culture depictions relied on existing tropes to reinforce existing beliefs about Mexican immorality. For example, since the nineteenth century, Mexicans performing or viewing a fandango (a type of dance) were identified with “lewd passions and lasciviousness.”²⁷ The fictive Rosita played on the “harlot” stereotype who tainted society with her promiscuity.²⁸ What these reports and movies missed is that patrons also came from Anglo backgrounds. For example, railroad contractor, J.A. Adams, attended a Mexican dancehall on the 800 block of Congress, located across the Market Square.²⁹ Regardless, these government workers and popular culture served to intersect morality with race to justify the next steps of exclusion.

²⁵ “The Golden Gift,” American Film Institute, <http://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/MovieDetails/9435>.

²⁶ “Girl Ends ‘Perfect Friendship’ of Latins,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, November 17, 1924, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607878/m1/1/>.

²⁷ Arnolde De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 37.

²⁸ Pettit, Arthur G. Pettit and Dennis E. Showalter, *Images of the Mexican-American in Fiction and Film* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980), 61-64.

²⁹ “Mexican Man and Woman Are Suspected of Robbery,” *The Houston Post*, May 18, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608855/m1/49/>.

Social Exclusion: Raiding the Dancehalls

Acting on this unsubstantiated connection of dance halls, rooming houses, and vice, local law enforcement began targeting Mexican dance halls in early 1919. One of the earliest raids took place on March 27, when police specifically raided Mexican dance halls and arrested twenty-five Mexican men and women. While many of the men were let go, eighteen of the women were brought to the United States health clinic to be examined.³⁰ In June of 1919, the superintendent of police, Searcy Baker, formally recommended that the twenty-one Mexican dance halls be closed by the Board of Censors. Chief Baker claimed that rampant vice was being practiced in connection to rooming houses in each location. At least one of the board members advocated for the Mexican community, arguing that they should have someplace for amusement, and closings should be based on specific instances of violations.³¹ Their plea was to no avail, and notices of revoked permits were sent out to dance hall proprietors in July. *The Houston Post* noted that no specific charges were made and indicated that closings were based on police beliefs of immorality rather than evidence.³² The closings garnered attention city-wide. In the Houston Heights, Reverend W. P. West delivered a speech titled, "Is It Right to Close the Mexican Dance Halls and Allow the Others to Run." The pastor of the Baptist Temple believed dancing was detrimental to the youth and criticized the city for not holding more dance halls accountable.³³

³⁰ "Raid Mexican Dance," *The Houston Post*, March 28, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608188/m1/7/>.

³¹ "Chief Favors Closing Mexican Dance Halls," *The Houston Post*, June 3, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610562/m1/10/>.

³² "Revokes Permits Granted to Mexican Dance Halls," *The Houston Post*, July 9, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth610141/m1/12/>.

³³ "Baptist Services," *The Houston Post*, July 20, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608818/m1/27/>; "Denounces Dancing," *The Houston Post*, July 21, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018,

As indicated by one of the censor board members and *The Houston Post* article, the connection between vice and Mexican dance halls was formed out of sweeping generalizations based on limited evidence. This did not matter, though, because the morals of Mexican women were perceived to be in question. This immorality was enough justification for shutting down these dance halls, and by doing so, blocked many Mexicans from their social amusements. In addition to social exclusion, proprietors faced economic limitations through these closings.

Economic Exclusion: Mike Cruz versus the City of Houston

One of the proprietors, Mike Cruz, sought to challenge the city's decision to close his dance hall located at 2211 Congress Avenue in 1919. Cruz attained legal counsel by Turnley and Clark, who filed a petition for an injunction against the City in the Fifty-Fifth district court of Justice Ewing Boyd.³⁴ It is possible that Cruz's residence allowed him access to one of the law office's attorneys, Virgil M. Clark. The 1920 city directory indicates that the two only lived seven blocks away from each other in Magnolia Park.³⁵

Cruz's counsel argued that dance halls were not specifically mentioned in the Board of Censors ordinance and claimed discrimination.³⁶ In August, Judge Boyd granted Mike Cruz an injunction on the basis that no explicit mention of "dance halls" was in the ordinance. He also stated that no censor board violations were ever brought to Cruz's attention and dance halls were not inherently immoral or indecent. Boyd ruled that specific regulations should be made so that

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609953/m1/5/>.

³⁴ "Dance Hall Proprietor Seeking an Injunction" *The Houston Post*, July 18, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610377/m1/12/>.

³⁵ Virgil M. Clark, Mike Cruz, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1920, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

³⁶ "Court Defers Action on Mexican Dance Halls," *The Houston Post*, August 1, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609102/m1/7/>.

law-abiding citizens can be free to enjoy their leisure while violators could be dealt with accordingly.³⁷

The city complied and passed regulations on dance halls the very same month.³⁸ A permit was now required to run an establishment, which cost two dollars every thirty days and a one-time bond of a thousand dollars. An applicant had to be of “good moral character,” and the board could revoke the permit if “vice, immorality, disease, or infraction of law and order” occurred. Separate restrooms for men and women were also now required.³⁹ These regulations only deepened the intersecting dynamics of morality and gender. For example, *good moral character* became an arbitrary barrier used to exclude undesirable Mexicans. Unisex restrooms were now deemed abnormal, setting notions of proper behavior between men and women that had no room for non-normative living arrangements.

Even though Justice Boyd ruled that Mexicans were entitled to spaces of entertainment, raids continued years later. In 1922, a dance hall at Louisiana and Preston was raided by three detectives after receiving numerous complaints from neighborhood residents. One hundred Mexican men and women, along with six whites, were arrested. Some of the Mexicans were charged with loitering and vagrancy.⁴⁰ By 1923, a “clean up squad” was formed consisting of Night Chief Bob Martin, special investigator George Andrew, and fourteen detectives. A raid of the

³⁷ *Mike Cruse vs. City of Houston, et al.*, 19, 574 (55th District Court 1919), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>.

³⁸ “City Censor Board Maintains Control Of Public Dances,” *The Houston Post*, August 12, 1919, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609141/m1/11/>.

³⁹ J.G. Hautier, *The Revised Code of Ordinances of the City of Houston of 1922*, December 4, 1922, Harris County, Texas, 307.

⁴⁰ “Raid Nets 100 Women and Men in Mexican Dance Hall,” *The Houston Post*, March 12, 1922, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph608642/m1/23/>.

Mexican dance hall at Milam and Commerce netted fifteen Mexicans. The men were charged with loitering and the women with vagrancy.⁴¹ While new regulations centered on morality, resulting charges of loitering and vagrancy were not related to ethical violations of proper behavior between men and women. This was the principal justification for policing Mexican dance halls since raids began in 1919; yet, there was a constant inability to surface concrete evidence of related violations. Still, the intersection of race, gender, and morality in these spaces was enough to produce exclusionary experiences for some Mexicans.

Anglo Dancehalls and Mexicans at Luna Park

On June 26, 1924, Luna Park, an amusement park, opened in the Houston Heights on Houston Avenue and White Oak Bayou. It featured various rollercoasters, a vast “picnic grove,” and a dance hall.⁴² Within two months, dynamics of race, nationality, class, and language converged in the park’s dance hall to become a site of Mexican exclusion.

Race and Nationality: Refusing Jesus’s Entrance

On August 20, Jesus Prieto Laurens, along with a Mexicano and two Mexicana friends, entered Luna Park for a night of amusement. Jesus, an Ohio University graduate, was well-known amongst the Anglo professional class as “a member of a prominent Mexican family.” He was the brother of Jorge Laurens, former governor of San Luis Potosi and Houston Mexican consulate. As he and his companions entered the Luna Park dance hall, Jesus, a “moreno,” was stopped by an attendant, who then asked Jesus for his nationality. After Jesus responded with “Mexican,” he was refused entry. Jesus demanded the manager, an Anglo woman, to whom he protested the denial due to his nationality. 46-year-old Deputy Constable Joseph E. Naquin, born in Louisiana, was

⁴¹ “City Police Stage Clean-up, Get 118 Men, 14 Women,” *The Houston Post*, January 14, 1923, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph610108/m1/1/>.

⁴² “Luna Park,” *The Houston Post*, June 26, 1924, accessed May 31, 2021, *GenealogyBank*.

working the event that night in plain clothes and offered to remove him forcibly. Naquin grabbed Jesus's arm, who then struck the plain-clothed officer. A uniformed officer interjected, and the policemen placed Jesus inside an automobile where Constable Naquin proceeded to beat the young Mexican. Jesus was jailed, charged with simple assault, then released with a \$300 bond.⁴³ Amongst everyday Anglos in common recreational spaces, Jorge's distinguished status was not recognized. Rather than being embraced, as he surely was in other cultural arenas, Jesus was grouped racially as a Mexican based on nationality, which somehow threatened the sanctity of Anglo dance halls in Luna Park.

Race, Nationality, Class, Language: Working for the Consulate

Upon hearing about Jesus's treatment, the current consul, Hermenegildo Valdés, sent his chancellor, Antonio Cavazos, and a female volunteer to verify the dance hall restrictions at Luna Park. Upon entering the dance hall with his Mexicana companion, Chancellor Cavazos was asked for his nationality, to which he responded, "Mexican." Like Jesus, Cavazos was denied entry but asked to speak to McMillan, the owner. The chancellor informed McMillan that he worked for the Mexican consulate, changing the owner's tone. McMillan then "personally invited" Cavazos, but stated he could still not admit the Mexicana. Once again, race and nationality were initially intertwined to racialize Cavazos as Mexican, forming discrimination. Yet, the dynamic of class, or being associated with the consulate, then combined with his racialized status to develop an access point.

Chancellor Cavazos returned to Consul Verdes with his verification of discrimination, which the consul relayed to Houston's Mayor, Oscar Holcombe. Consul Verdes demanded that

⁴³ "Grand Jurors Probe Charge," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, August 22, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph607963/m1/1/>.

Holcombe investigate and remedy the affair, threatening to remove the Mexican consulate from Houston. The San Antonio Consul General Alejandro Lubbert sent a strong condemnation of the events to the Mexican embassy in Washington.⁴⁴ Under intense scrutiny, Mayor Holcombe responded and assured that Houston's citizens lamented these events. They desired to arrive at a better understanding between citizens of both countries, promoting goodwill and friendship.⁴⁵ The City Manager, Claude Bell, reached an agreement with Luna Park officials that Mexicans would have the "same privileges as American citizens at the Luna Park dance hall...so long as they conduct themselves properly."⁴⁶ Of course, while Houston's Anglo leaders and elite may have understood the political need to placate the Mexican consulate, the ground-level Anglo did not have this perspective and continued their discrimination.

Race, Nationality, and Language: Continued Discrimination

On August 31, after buying tickets, once again Mexicans, described as "moreno," were denied entry at the Luna Park dance hall. *La Prensa* described these individuals as coming from families "reconocida honorabilidad" [recognized as honorable]. Other Mexicans described as "color blanco" [white-complexion] were allowed entry because they were mistaken as either Italian or some other European nationality. They were only removed from the dance hall once they began speaking Spanish.⁴⁷ In this instance, race now became identifiable by color, explicitly being

⁴⁴ "Mexico Scores Ferguson Speech," *San Antonio Light*, August 23, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁴⁵ "Dio Una Satisfaccion El Mayor De Houston, Texas A La Colonia Mexicana," *La Prensa*, September 3, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁴⁶ "All The Same-Now," *The Mexia Weekly Herald*, September 4, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht292434/m1/2/>.

⁴⁷ "Ha Hubido Nuevas Humillaciones De Mexicanos," *La Prensa*, September 6, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

darker-skinned. This was enough to tie one to the Mexican nationality, which was not deemed welcomed at Luna Park's dance hall. Not even class, or being considered honorable, could overcome complexion. A lighter-skinned Mexican could have been associated with European nationality, granting him/her access until they began speaking Spanish. At this point, language intersected with race and nationality. Language was a marker that identified one's nationality and race. Thus, the convergence of race, nationality, and language shaped the discrimination of Mexicans at Luna Park.

Sitting in legal limbo were the catalysts for the awareness given to these acts of discrimination, Jesus Laurens and Joseph Naquin. On August 26, the deputy constable was indicted by a grand jury on charges of assault against Jesus. His trial began on September 10, and he was acquitted. The same day, Jesus pled guilty to his assault charges against Naquin.⁴⁸ No more is known of any proceeding discriminatory events, but apparently, Mexicans prevailed in their battle for acceptance at Luna Park. In 1928, Mexican Independence Day was celebrated at Luna Park that consisted of a two-day program presided by the current consul, Daniel Garza. Symbolic of their triumph over exclusion, the celebration capped off with a dance.⁴⁹

In spaces such as Luna Park dancehalls, race, nationality, class, and language converged to shape the boundaries of one's social-cultural participation. The precedent had been set that it was the place of some Anglos to police recreational behavior by Mexicans, denying their participation

⁴⁸ "Grand Jurors Bill Officer," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, August 28, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607932/m1/1/>; "Naquin Trial Set For Today," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Naquin Found Not Guilty," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 11, 1924, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607851/m1/2/>.

⁴⁹ "Mexicans Plan Holiday Fete," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, September 15, 1928, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

in certain amusements such as dancing. And such was the perspective of local law enforcement heading into the 1930s. In this decade, a new enforcement campaign emerged targeting Mexicans in a new crusade against immorality and narcotics.

Mexicans and the Houston Police

The Clean-Up Squad and Deputy Constable Naguin represented an intensifying inimical relationship between the police department and Mexicans in the 1920s. As viewed through the actions of the Chief of Police Duff Voss, police leadership may have placated to political pressure, but the ground-level policeman each held their preconceptions of Mexicans and treated them accordingly. For some, this meant a lack of value for Mexican life, as incidents of police brutality and killings demonstrate.⁵⁰ Examining these incidents further clarifies the intense campaign brought upon the recreational drug use of the Mexican community as one where patrolling policemen viewed themselves as protectors of social decorum against a Mexican threat.

Juan Salvidar, Agatipo Salazar, and Felipe Gonzales

In July of 1927, Juan Salvidar, “Agatipo” Salazar, and Felipe Gonzales were working one early Sunday morning. The National Theater Supply company hired the trio to work on the Azteca, the Mexican theatre. That morning, two officers, C.E. Houck and C.B. Stewart, who regularly patrolled Congress, entered the Azteca and pulled the three men outside. They questioned the men then released them back to their boss, Ice Girard. Ice informed the officers that the men were employees of his company. Later that morning, at 4 AM, as the trio left work, the policemen were waiting for them and followed them to the corner of Congress and Hamilton. Once again, they stopped them, but this time, they beat them with their fists and pistols. The current Mexican consul,

⁵⁰ For more on history of the relationship between the Houston Police Department and Mexicans, see Melanie Lorie, “Racial Injustice in Houston, Texas: The Mexican American Mobilization Against the Police Killing of Joe Campos Torres”. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017 and Dwight D. Watson, *Race and the Houston Police Department, 1930–1990: A Change Did Come* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 110-129.

Barrera Guerra, intervened in the affair and demanded that Chief of Police T. C. Goodson investigate the affair. After a month-long inquiry, Goodson discharged Stewart and suspended Houck for five days.⁵¹ This pattern of police targeting Mexicans continued into the 1930s with the high-profile case of Frederico Valdez.

Frederico Valdez

Born in 1905, Frederico Valdez immigrated to the United States in 1916. By 1930, he was living in Houston, working as a laborer for the railroad.⁵² On the early morning of May 5, 1932, two men reported being held up by four Mexicans. One of the victims, Thomas Barrett, believed that he knew which direction the men headed. The reporting officer, Lieutenant Margiotta, assigned Detective Angus Morrison and L.C. Weese to the case. Around 1 A.M., they drove Barrett to the intersection of Runnels and Navigation, where he identified a group of Mexicans as his assailants, one of those being Frederico Valdez. Detective Morrison chased Frederico, whom Barrett identified as the man who cut his hand. Detective Morrison and Frederico were in an alley when the officer reported that Valdez advanced towards him with a long-bladed knife. The officer drew his pistol and fired two shots when Valdez dismissed commands to halt. At the age of 27, Frederico was dead. The same day, a grand jury acquitted Morrison of murder.⁵³

⁵¹ “2 Dice-Shooting Policemen Fired,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, July 15, 1927, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Police Officers Pay Penalty For Beating Mexicans,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, July 16, 1927, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Charges Probed As Cops Patrol Beats,” *Houston Post-Dispatch*, July 14, 1927, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁵² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, Census Place: Justice Precinct 1 Houston, Harris, Texas; Page: 14A, Enumeration District: 0060, accessed April 21, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵³ “Officer Is Exonerated In Slaying,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 5, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

Dissatisfied with the hasty investigation, the current Mexican consulate, J. A. Diaz, consulted two doctors, Angel Rivera Soto and an Anglo with the surname Davis. Both concluded that Frederico was shot in the back and not from the front as claimed by Morrison, contradicting his self-defense claim. In addition, Consul Diaz secured various testimonies that Frederico was not carrying a knife at the time. With this new evidence, he and lawyer Manuel C. Gonzalez persuaded District Attorney O'Brien Stevens to re-open the case. After meeting with the consulate and lawyer, current Houston Mayor, Walter E. Monteith, suspended Morrison until the probe was complete.⁵⁴ On Monday, May 16, the grand jury reconvened to hear the new evidence that a defenseless Frederico was shot in the back by Detective Morrison. Still, the grand jury was not convinced and once again exonerated. Shortly after, he was reinstated on the police force.⁵⁵

Entering the 1930s, there was a troubled relationship between the Mexican community and the Houston Police Department. The latter consistently excluded the former from due process, whether through blatant police brutality or enforcing Anglo social standards of acceptable recreational behavior in dancehalls. With the criminalization of narcotics, the pattern that followed dancehalls was again repeated. A segment of Mexicans was associated with a practice that was deemed to bring immorality into the city; then, law enforcement stepped in to police the community. Those found guilty of newly minted narcotic laws faced severe exclusion from society: criminalization and incarceration.

⁵⁴ "El Crimen De Houston Sera Aclarado," *La Prensa*, May 18, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Probe in Slaying Of Mexican by Officer Will Be Reopened," *Houston Chronicle*, May 11, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Mexican's Slayer Suspended From Force For Probe," *Houston Chronicle*, May 12, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁵⁵ "Jurors Reopen Investigation Of Mexican's Death," *Houston Chronicle*, May 16, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank; "Accused Detective No-Billed by Jury," *The Tri-Cities Sun*, May 19, 1932, accessed December 14, 2020, GenealogyBank.

The Loco Weed

This section shifts to the social-cultural space of recreational drugs, specifically that of marijuana. Historians have found that the majority of Mexicans were not marijuana users and held beliefs that it was a dangerous drug.⁵⁶ Still, there was a segment of Mexican users and dealers, such as Isabel Ugarte, who underwent a distinct experience in the Bayou City, bearing the brunt of a law enforcement campaign against marijuana.

Isabel was born in Texas in 1905 to Mexican immigrants. Over time, she attended school for at least three years and became literate. Raised a Methodist, she would marry but eventually divorced. Isabel found work as a laborer at some point, but new narcotic laws in the 1930s would upend her life. After witnessing her sell a marijuana cigarette in 1934, Houston's vice squad searched her home. There they found 169 cigarettes hidden in a drawer, clock, and cans. Soon after, the four-foot, nine-inch, 130 pound woman found herself serving a one-year sentence at Huntsville State Prison as Convict Number 75849.⁵⁷ As will be reviewed, Mexicans like Isabel were scapegoats for a perceived decline of morality amongst Anglo juveniles in Houston.

Houston Mexicans and Marijuana in the 1920s

In the 1920s, marijuana was a common recreational drug found in Houston, and local police officers regulating it formed associations between the drug and the Mexican community. In 1927, a black woman named Jessie Thompson approached a Mexican woman with the last name Gonzales. With a dollar in her hand, Jessie asked if Gonzales had any griefus (marijuana).

⁵⁶ Adam R. Rathge, "Cannabis Cures: American Medicine, Mexican Marijuana, and the Origins of the War on Weed, 1840-1937." Order No. 10607740, Boston College, 2017. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/dissertations-theses/cannabis-cures-american-medicine-mexican/docview/1947270241/se-2?accountid=7107>, 137.

⁵⁷ "Big Drive On Marihuana Cases Slated," *Houston Chronicle*, April 8, 1934, accessed August 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Convict Registers*, Isabel Ugarte, Vols. 1998/038-138-1998/038-176, accessed August 2, 2020. <http://ancestry.com>.

Gonzales retrieved some from her home and made the exchange. Suddenly, officers appeared without a search warrant and arrested the Mexicana. Jessie had complained to them about marijuana dealers and led them to Gonzales. During her trial, Gonzales testified that she did not sell Jessie marijuana; instead, she gifted the drugs to her. Gonzales claimed she had not requested a dollar from Jessie, but when the officers came in, they witnessed the unsolicited transaction of money. Whether true or not, this Mexicana understood the technicality between gifting and selling marijuana which was the difference between lawful and criminal at the time. Because of this defense, jurors were instructed to acquit her if they believed her defense of giving away marijuana, not selling it. The jurors found her guilty for selling marijuana and fined her \$25. Soon after, Gonzales hired a lawyer, Warren P. Castle, and filed an appeal. They claimed that the officer's testimony was procured on an illegal search which "injured" her. Further, they argued that Jessie and the officer were accomplices. Eventually, the Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed the conviction.⁵⁸

In another incident, City Detective Tice Wilkins recalled an incident where they went to a "Mexican house" to destroy marijuana plants with axes. Once they arrived, the property owner, a Mexican woman, blocked their entrance claiming she was a high school graduate who knew her rights. She threatened the police with legal recourse if they destroyed her crop, which she used to manufacture tea. The police retreated with their axes back to the police station, and no further action took place.⁵⁹ During the 1920s, enforcement was local, with no state laws regulating criminalizing marijuana. These incidents demonstrate how the Houston Police Department and the

⁵⁸ Gonzales vs. State, Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas, 299 S.W. 901, 108 Tex. Crim. 253 (1927), <https://casetext.com/case/gonzales-v-state-46>, accessed July 30, 2020.

⁵⁹ "Ordinance On Marihuana Is Planned Here," *Houston Chronicle*, May 25, 1931, accessed July 30, 2020, GenealogyBank.

Mexican community came into contact over the narcotic early on. Over time, state forces pushed towards the criminalization of the narcotic. To support this campaign, the drug built on this association with Mexicans.

Race and Morality: Constructing Criminalization

Up to 1931, state law did not prevent marijuana from being legally possessed or sold in Texas; rather, it was a local matter. In that year, a flurry of anti-marijuana sentiment developed state-wide, anchored in association with Mexicans. The drug was labeled a “Mexican drug” and widely known as the “loco [crazy] weed.” A state bill passed in April of 1931 criminalized behavior associated with the narcotic for the first time as a felony. A first offense of dispensing, selling, delivering, transporting, distributing, prescribing, or trafficking could lead to a fine of \$2000 and/or imprisonment up to five years. A second offense could lead to a fine of up to \$5000 and/or imprisonment of up to ten years.⁶⁰ “Addicts” were not targeted for felonies with this state law; their consumption was considered a misdemeanor when being charged. They were viewed as victims of the growing system who needed help through hospitalization or other methods.⁶¹ Race was a major dynamic at the state level, as viewed through the attached labels of “Mexican drug” and “loco weed.” Establishing Mexicans as fixed to the origins of the narcotic associated them as

⁶⁰ “The State and Narcotics,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 17, 1931, accessed July 28, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Marihuana, or ‘Loco Weed,’ Used For ‘Invigorating Smoke,’ Added to List of Banned Narcotics” *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1931, accessed July 28, 2020, GenealogyBank; 42nd Texas Legislature, “Art. 725a. Regulating traffic in narcotics Section 1,” *Supplement to the 1928 Complete Texas Statutes*, 1931, 642, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.sll.texas.gov/library-resources/collections/historical-texas-statutes/bookreader/1931/-page/642/>.

⁶¹ “Ordinance On Marihuana Is Planned Here,” *Houston Chronicle*; 42nd Texas Legislature, “Art. 725a. Regulating traffic in narcotics Seciton 8,” *Supplement to the 1928 Complete Texas Statutes*, 1931, 646, accessed June 17, 2021, <https://www.sll.texas.gov/library-resources/collections/historical-texas-statutes/bookreader/1931/-page/646/>.

the root of vice. Now defined as part of the problem, policing Mexicans became part of the solution.

At the local level, the intersection of race and morality was cemented by local law enforcement and their supporters, who painted a troubled Anglo youth under attack by Mexicans.⁶² For example, when it came to Houston's young Anglo schoolboys, Chief County Probation Officer J. W. Mills believed their criminality to be "misdeeds," with the emphasis needing to be placed on "dope peddlers."⁶³ Through this selective criminalization, the brunt of solving Houston's immoral marijuana problem was felt by the Mexican population across town as they became the racial scapegoats. This convergence of race and morality led to heavy policing of Mexicans that was not visible with the Anglo community. Not only would they be excluded from being worthy of reform as were Anglo marijuana users, but they were also marked as undesirable through criminalization and/or removed from society through imprisonment.

Exclusion through Criminalization

The Houston Police Department and the judicial system were complicit in this selective criminalization that marred Mexican's societal status as felons, and even worse, removed them from society through incarceration. To criminalize someone works to exclude them from society by marking them as non-normative and undesirable.

The local criminalization of Mexicans began with a weekend campaign on May 22, 1931. That Friday evening, thirty-five-year-old Cayolana Lopez sold three marijuana cigarettes to an

⁶² The criminalization of Mexicans and marijuana were similar to those of other ethnicities and alcohol at the time. For more see Lisa McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016).

⁶³ "Drive Planned On Peddlers Of Marijuana," *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1931, accessed July 28, 2020, GenealogyBank.

officer of Houston's Vice Squad. He was indicted on a felony by a grand jury the following month. This was the first indictment in Harris County under the new state law.⁶⁴ On Saturday, police focused on the Mexican-dominated population of Girard Street where they found a patch of the narcotic.⁶⁵ Based on drug's racialization as the *loco [crazy] weed*, it was fitting that enforcement of the new state laws began within Mexican communities. Based on the local belief that they undermined the immoral misdeeds of Anglo users, initial and future arrests concentrated on Mexican men and women in the 1930s.

One known example is that of a Mexicana arrested in July of 1931 through the use of informants and marked money. City Detective A. C. Thornton, a narcotic squad member, employed an agent to purchase three marijuana cigarettes from a Mexicana. When Thornton arrested her, he found the marked money in her possession. The Mexican woman hired Stanley Beard, a defense attorney, to represent her. Their defense was that officers utilizing the marked money strategy were accomplices and "not competent to testify," based on a district court ruling. Justice J. M. Ray, the local court magistrate, immediately dispelled this defense. To cast doubt on his credibility, Beard tried to inquire as to whether the police department was paying the police agent, but the presiding judge interrupted with, "That's none of your business!"⁶⁶

Another example is Felix Ramos, who tried employing medicinal reasoning in court. When forty-two-year-old Felix was charged with possession, he argued that applying boiled marijuana

⁶⁴ "Narcotic Squad Organized Here Under New Law," *Houston Chronicle*, May 23, 1931, accessed July 30, 2020, GenealogyBank; "First Indictment Is Made on Dope Count," *Houston Chronicle*, June 16, 1931, accessed July 31, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁶⁵ "Ordinance On Marihuana Is Planned Here," *Houston Chronicle*.

⁶⁶ "Use Of Marked Money In Narcotic Arrest Leads To Heated Legal Clash," *Houston Chronicle*, July 22, 1931, accessed July 31, 2020, GenealogyBank.

as a poultice relieved rheumatism. Judge Langston King derisively responded, “Oh, yeah?” Ramos was fined twenty-five dollars and court costs. Walking away, Felix muttered, “It is really good for the rheumatism.” To which Judge King answered, “I expect it is, but not used as a poultice.”⁶⁷

Perhaps unknowingly, these Mexicans faced criminalization born out of the earlier convergence of race and morality. This criminalization marked them as felons under the new law, which would have affected their participation in society. For example, using marijuana would have precluded them from joining some of the emerging Mexican social clubs at the time, such as Club Recreativo Tenochtitlan.⁶⁸ Having that criminal marking of marijuana was a sign of character that produced intraethnic exclusion. Even worse, though, was being removed from society via incarceration, as was the case with Juan Tejada.

Juan and his wife, Felicitas, were both born in the 1890s in Mexico.⁶⁹ The couple stored and sold weed at their home on 1911 Runnels. One night, they unknowingly sold three cigarettes to Officer George Glass for twenty cents each. The next day, their home was raided, and the couple was arrested in 1934 for possession and sale. Over \$700 was also seized in the raid. Juan was tried and sentenced to six years in prison at Huntsville. At the time of his arrest, Juan was the breadwinner, employed as a waiter. His six-year sentence left Felicitas without their household income, but she immediately found work as a tortilla maker. After one year, Juan was transferred

⁶⁷ “Marihuana’s Use As Poultice Is Man’s Defense,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 3, 1931, accessed July 31, 2020, GenealogyBank.

⁶⁸ Alfred J. Hernandez, interview by Thomas Kreneck, digitized tape recording, HMRC Oral History Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas, 15 January 1979, <https://cdm17006.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/Interviews/id/99/rec/3>.

⁶⁹ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Juan Tejada, File No. 31907, 11 April 1963, accessed August 2, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Felicitas Tejada, File No. 27308, 20 June 1946, accessed August 2, 2020, <http://ancestry.com>.

to the Blue Ridge Prison Farm. Three years later, in 1937, Governor Alfred granted Juan a reprieve. With conditions of reporting to the parole board periodically, Juan returned back to Felicita.⁷⁰ The two overcame this hardship and found work together as dishwashers at the Rice Hotel.⁷¹ However, being incarcerated meant physical exclusion from society for Juan. Even upon returning, Juan did not return to being a waiter, but was employed as a dishwasher. A waiter was a visible presence within the restaurant, while a felon dishwasher could be hidden from clientele.

Parenthood could overcome the intersection of race and morality, lending sympathy to a Mexican's cause when arrested for narcotics. Born in Stonewall, Texas, in 1910, Joseph Lozano married Gloria Garcia in 1933. The two found residence at 211 Hutchins and expected their first child in 1934.⁷² That same year "Joe" was arrested on possession and faced trial before Judge Whit Boyd. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years. Joe pleaded with the judge, "Please give me a suspended sentence. My wife is going to have a baby and she and the baby need me." A smiling Judge Boyd replied, "Will you name the baby after me?" "I sure will, judge," answered the desperate father. The judge acquiesced, "All right, I'll give you five years suspended." Judge Boyd met Lozano's daughter three years later, which became a spectacle for the *Houston*

⁷⁰ "Mexican Couple Are Charged After Marihuana Raid," *Houston Chronicle*, May 5, 1934, accessed August 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Convict Registers*, Juan Tejada, Vols. 1998/038-138-1998/038-176, accessed August 2, 2020. <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷¹ Juan Tejada, Houston, Texas City Directory, 1937, from Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷² Harris County Clerk's Office; Houston, Texas, *Harris County, Texas, Marriage Records*, Jose Lozano with Gloria Garcia, File No. 13842, October 23, 1933, accessed August 2, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>; United States, Selective Service System, *World War II Draft Registration Cards for Texas, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*, Joe Lindo Lozano, 17 November 1940, Serial No. 4647, St. Louis, Missouri, National Archives, Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System*, 147; Box: 915, accessed August 7, 2020 <http://ancestry.com>.

Chronicle. A picture of Judge Boyd posing next to “Señorita White Boyd Lozano” was published.⁷³ While seemingly rare, having a dependent affected one’s criminalization.

Marijuana’s criminalization converged race and morality, and these dynamics formed societal exclusion for Mexicans. The *loco weed* was attached to them, while Anglo morality was introduced as being under attack, which led to a concerted effort of policing Mexicans, even when it was clear that Anglos were also involved in the narcotic as users.

Conclusion

Examining social-cultural spaces of recreation (movies, dance halls, narcotics) reveals how intersecting dynamics of race, gender, morality, citizenship, language, and class shaped Mexican exclusion. In movie theatres and dance halls, this exclusion outright restricted Mexicans from entering these venues. Some Anglo theatres regulated Mexican access by discriminately charging them higher prices or through segregated seating. In these venues, Mexicans were simultaneously included and excluded. On the one hand, they were allowed to watch movies with Anglo audiences, but at some theatres, there was an ostensible differentiation between the two groups. By establishing separate ticket prices and seating, Anglos were differentiating Mexicans from them. In these spaces, it was being made clear that they were excluded from the dominant society.

Some Mexicans looking to dance sought out dancehalls which became sites of exclusion or inclusion as dynamics of race, gender, morality, citizenship, class, and language intersected. At the Luna Park Anglo dancehall, the Mexican nationality became detached from whiteness.

⁷³ “Freed Man to Name New Baby For Judge Boyd,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 4, 1934, accessed August 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Namesake Seen By Judge Boyd For First Time,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 22, 1936, accessed August 2, 2020, GenealogyBank; “Child Named For Judge Boyd,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 23, 1936, accessed August 2, 2020, GenealogyBank.

Mexican entrants were questioned about their nationality, which became the racial basis for denying their entrance. Language, or speaking Spanish, was also another marker used to racially distinguish Mexicans from Anglos, then exclude them. Mexican-owned dance halls intersected with morality and gender to deny Mexicans from participating in recreation. City officials and popular culture manufactured the unsubstantiated claims of Mexican women utilized for immoral purposes in these dance halls. This set the basis for raids and closings of Mexican dance by local law enforcement.

The discussion around criminalizing the recreational drug marijuana intersected race and morality, which influenced the exclusion of Mexicans. This exclusion was visible through societal restrictions because of criminalization or incarceration. Marijuana was viewed as threatening the behavior of Anglo youth. This morality intersected with race when newspapers, government officials, and local law enforcement racialized the *loco weed*. Mexicans became the focus of a city-wide narcotic crackdown on dealers while focusing on reform for users. Those who were incarcerated faced a hardened exclusion since they were physically removed from society. Non-incarcerated Mexicans arrested for marijuana were still criminalized, meaning their societal or economic status would be limited. For example, having been associated with marijuana meant limited economic and social opportunities. In other words, their degree of access or participation was restricted by their marijuana arrest and/or conviction.

Juxtaposing Chapter 5 with 6 shows that Arnoldo De León's interpretation that "white society disparagingly called barrio residents "Mexicans" was contextual. For those like Mimi Ypiña, their Mexicaness was not the same as someone like Mike Cruz. The latter Mexican was associated with immorality, whereas the former was linked to vocal talent. This chapter examined movies, dance halls, and marijuana to tease out the fluidity of being Mexican as it related to

exclusion. For example, in one space race intersected with citizenship; in another, it converged with morality. As demonstrated within social-cultural spaces between 1900-1940, not all exclusion functioned similarly.

Conclusion

In 1908, Houston demolished its old 1883 courtroom located downtown at the corner of Congress St. and Fannin St. They temporarily held court proceedings across the street in the Prince Theater building until November 1910, when construction of the new courthouse was finalized. Telling of the expanding public presence of women was the new addition of a ladies restroom in the 1910 courthouse, which was not present in the 1883 building.¹ Mexicanas who asserted their social, economic, and legal rights when filing for divorce were among the users of these new facilities.

Civil court cases took place in four Harris County district courts: the 11th, 55th, 61st, and 80th. One of those was brought forth was a divorce case in the 80th by Salud Ybarra de Miranda against her husband, Apolino Miranda. 40-year-old Judge John D. Harvey led the Eightieth, which was the only district that held monthly terms. Because of this unique schedule, divorce cases were frequently filed there since obtaining a divorce was quicker. In addition, contemporaries cited the high number of cases handled by Judge Harvey due to his laxity in granting divorces.²

In 1892, Salud married Francisco Lopez in Mexico. They immigrated to Texas in 1904 and became citizens. Three years later, Francisco visited Mexico and was impressed by the Mexican military. Salud was later informed that Francisco had been killed. Believing her husband was dead, she remarried on July 11, 1917, to Apolino Miranda. Without notice, Salud's former husband,

¹ Fast Cut Films, *The 1910 Harris County Courthouse*, Video, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VHks4EhS8Q>.

² "Lawyers Praise Judge Harvey," *The Houston Post*, July 24, 1924, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608604/m1/9/>; "J.D. Harvey Named New District Judge," *The Houston Post*, June 8, 1915, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth607068/m1/1/>; "10,445 Divorces," *The Houston Post*, July 25, 1924, accessed February 11, 2020, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth608760/m1/13/>.

Francisco, re-appeared in September. Salud left Apolino and “re-cohabited” with Francisco at 2508 Franklin. On May 12, 1919, Francisco would die of natural causes. Eight months later, Salud filed for divorce against Apolino in the 80th District Court. On January 23, 1920, Apolino failed to appear even though being notified. Without an attorney, Salud pled her case and was granted her petition by the court. The cost of the suit was to be taxed against her.³

Although one of the most peculiar divorce cases, Salud’s decision to return to Francisco while formally married to Apolino is indicative of the social freedom many women exercised in choosing their lifelong partners. Her decision to formally divorce Apolino after her husband’s death was the exertion of her legal rights. Even more impressive was her ability to do without legal counsel, which indicates a level of intellect required to present her case. What explains her experience of inclusion? A couple of dynamics surfaced. First, her formal citizenship is important to consider as it indicates she began a process of assimilation. Filing in Judge Harvey’s courtroom also indicates her knowledge and shrewd navigation of Houston’s legal institutions. Second, language, or speaking English, was essential to her ability to maneuver institutions as she articulated herself in court. While Salud may have still been proud of her Mexican identity, her experience cannot be simplified to exclusion or “Lo Mexicano” as the current historiography defines this periodization. In fact, her story is only one out of 294 civil court cases involving Mexicans between 1908-1924. She was also only one out of the ninety-one plaintiff women seeking a divorce in that timespan. Like Salud, sixty other women filed in the Eightieth over the different district courts. They, too, were aware of the common knowledge that this courtroom led

³ *Salud Ybarra de Miranda v. Apolino Miranda*, 6, 535 (80th District Court 1920), <https://www.hcdistrictclerk.com/edocs/public/search.aspx>; Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*, Poncho Lopez, File No. 16007, 12 May 1919, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

to a speedy divorce over the other courts.⁴ These women represent the diversity of pre-1940 Mexican experiences in Houston that complicate a homogenizing interpretation.

For Mexicans in Houston between 1900-1940, there was no holistic experience defining a single “colonia,” but instead sets of experiences across economic, learning, and social-cultural spaces. Homogenizing all Mexicans under a shared experience is to construct “a paradigm of culture as a unified system of values and beliefs.” This paradigm emphasizes “community strength, collective consciousness, and active agency of people,” but it “encapsulate[s] each culture, isolating it from its historical and social context. Power relations within each culture are deemphasized, and power relations between cultures are ignored.” Viewing the Mexican experience as heterogeneous and diverse constructs “a paradigm of culture as a series of conflicts over meaning played out along such dividing lines as race, class, and gender...uncovering power relations in every aspect of life.”⁵ Considering the intersecting dynamics shaping simultaneously occurring inclusion and exclusion teases out power relations relative to access and participation. In other words, by historicizing Mexicans as a unified group (colonia), we neglect their heterogeneity which was contextually shaped internally and externally, forming varying outcomes.

To recover heterogeneous histories is no small task, and I encountered this challenge in my dissertation. Early twentieth-century sources of Mexicans in Houston are extant, especially those of women, but new research methods provide fresh strategies. For Houston, as I look at the

⁴ These Mexican women speak to a long history of using state institutions to curb patriarchal power through divorce. For more, see Miroslava Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

⁵ Peggy Pascoe, “Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage,” in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women’s West*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Susan H. Armitage (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 75-76.

amount of keywords time did not allow me to research, it becomes clear there is still much more to the story of Mexicans in Houston between 1900-1940. And researching those keywords will just uncover new keywords to be digitally mined. In addition, I was able to locate Houston histories in Spanish newspapers such as San Antonio's Spanish newspaper, *La Prensa*. As more Spanish newspapers in other cities become digitized, those also become possibilities for the OCR technology. My dissertation makes these digital realities clear and will undoubtedly expand or complicate the new truths established by my work. As historians, we cannot solely rely on established archives; we must begin building our own digital archives. The consequences of ignoring this new digital methodology mean overlooking voices like Mike Cruz, Clara Barrera, and Margaret Florez, who form new paradigms of our history.

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