

BORDER INTIMACIES: STUDENT ACTIVISM, REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, AND QUEER
RIGHTS IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 1968-2000

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, "Border Intimacies: Student Activism, Reproductive Justice, and Queer Rights in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1968-2000," studies the formation of queer and Chicana identities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. It explores how these identities formed while combatting racism, sexism, and homophobia along the U.S.-Mexico Border. Even as the goal of the dissertation is to recover voices for queer Chicanas, it also explores general Chicana/Latina history and the contributions made to challenge their racialized positions in the United States. In this dissertation, I argue that Chicana and queer people organized around their non-normative identities to disrupt Anglo, patriarchal domination in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It examines how (queer) Chicana built coalitions with other identity groups while mobilizing for education reform, reproductive justice, and queer rights. Chicana people needed to mobilize against Anglo domination despite Anglos making up a minority of the Valley's population, but disproportionality wielded significant political, economic, and social power over Chicanas in the Valley that left Chicanas silenced. Therefore, the struggle of Chicana, queer, and queer Chicana people in those spaces offer a crucial lens for understanding the operation of Anglo, patriarchal power both in the Valley and along the border. Their resistance to Anglo, patriarchal power best seen through the mistreatment of Chicana students in the public schools, the exploitation of Chicana labor, especially Chicanas, and the hostilities queer Chicana people faced in accessing health care during a public health crisis during the AIDS Epidemic. Also, while these groups initially acted separately from one another, such as Chicana students only engaging with other Chicana students. These movements gradually bled into one another as

activists participated in multiple groups either through their shared identities or a desire to see an expansion of social justice.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, FINDING PRIDE IN THE VALLEY

On June 24, 2018, Valley AIDS Council (VAC) and the South Texas Equality Project (STEP) hosted the fifth annual “Pride in the Park” in the city of McAllen, Texas located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (the Valley). “Pride in the Park” is a celebration and reminder of the struggle of LGBTQ rights in the Valley and the United States.¹ Much like other pride events, McAllen hosts theirs at the end of June, in memory of the Stonewall Inn Riots of June 28, 1969, in New York City. It was at Stonewall that saw the transformation of the Homophile Movement into the Gay Liberation Movement.² The Stonewall Inn Riots saw queer people rioting against the police after a series of police raids in Greenwich Village. The latest raid at the Stonewall Inn bar became the final straw with, primarily, queer people of color pushing back against the police. While Marsha P. Johnson, a trans African American woman, being cited as one of the first people to attack the police on the second night of the riots after shattering a police cruiser's windshields. The Stonewall Inn Riots became a rallying point for queer people nationwide as riots and protests in queer communities soon followed to challenge their second-class treatment, and continues to serve as one of the most critical moments in queer history.

¹ This dissertation alternates between using *LGBTQ* and *queer* to identify those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer amongst other identities such as pansexual, intersex, gender non-conforming, and asexual. To minimize confusion, as generally accepted by other scholars in queer studies, I choose to use the word "queer" as a catchall term unless the situation requires a more specific identifier. Examples of this include when referring to individuals, groups, or organizations. Also, with the utilization of Queer Theory, the word queer explores not just LGBTQ sexualities, but also identity and queerness as it falls into debates over normative and deviant behavior. Normative behavior meaning behaviors that society upholds and defends such as heterosexuality, while deviant behavior reflects that which society persecutes such as homosexuality and queerness.

² The Homophile Movement was an early version of the gay rights movement that developed after World War II with middle-class queer activists in positions of power: two of the most visible organizations being the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis. By 1970, more radical queer and trans' rights organizations would emerge to address the racial and gender identity gaps of the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis.

In McAllen, “Pride in the Park” featured queer people, their families, and allies mingling through both queer and Chicana/Mexican cultural activities.³ These included drag and mariachi performances, playing *Loteria* (a game similar to bingo), and plenty of dancing.⁴ For 2018, the organizers chose the theme “Pride = Power” to remind attendees not only of the importance of celebrating pride but to remain civically engaged in furthering the work of queer activism. The choice of “Pride = Power” echoes the AIDS Epidemic slogan “Silence = Death” that queer activists used to highlight the federal and state government’s silence on the epidemic resulted in more deaths than necessary. The theme “Pride = Power” became especially crucial in a time where queer lives and rights are under constant assault. These attacks range from general homophobia, housing displacement of queer and trans individuals, debates over religious exceptions in serving queer people, health care discrimination from both the medical professionals and insurance providers, trans people’s accessibility to public restrooms and changing rooms, and the high rates of murder transgender women face. The visibility of threats to queer people further represented with the family of Frank Escalante, a Valley native and victim of the 2016 shooting at the gay club, Pulse, in Orlando, Florida. Moreover, in emphasizing the importance of activism, the organizers invited labor rights leader and Civil Rights icon, Dolores Huerta. She spoke on her history of activism and linked the shared struggles

³ “Chicana/Chicanxs” is the gender-inclusive form of Chicano/Chicana, mostly used within activist and more activist-centered academic circles. Like with the word queer, this dissertation will use Chicana whenever referring to Chicano/Chicana as a whole unless it is necessary to use Chicano/Chicana when referring to individuals, groups, organizations, or other situations when appropriate. Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández offers a more extensive history of the “x” as it appeared in the history of Chicana/Latina activism and how it since been utilized by queer Chicana and the pushback they experience. Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, “Affective Communities and Millennial Desires: Latina, or Why My Computer Won’t Recognize Latino/a,” *Cultural Dynamics* Vol. 29, No. 3 (August 2017): 141-143, DOI: 10.1177/0921374017727853.

⁴ Eduardo Martinez, “Planning underway for biggest LGBTQ celebration in RGV,” *Neta*, April 6, 2018, Last Accessed February 27, 2019, <https://netargv.com/2018/04/06/planning-underway-for-biggest-lgbtq-celebration-in-rgv/>; Bmujica, “Local Pride continues to grow,” *The Monitor*, June 24, 2018, Last Accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.themonitor.com/2018/06/24/local-pride-continues-to-grow/>.

of the queer community with the activists she worked with to improve the conditions of migrants, Latinxs, and women.⁵

Even with events like “Pride in the Park” and the heightened visibility of queer people, these celebrations did not negate the long history of homophobia that endangered the lives of queer, Valley residents. Being a majority Chicano region so heavily tied to Catholicism⁶ and a gender culture tied to machismo, queer people experienced a significant amount of discrimination.⁷ Even as 20th century Valley history showed resistance against segregation and an Anglo minority dominating over a Chicano region, this period also saw further pushback against queer people, despite many of these queer people coming from Chicano families. Progress events like “Pride in the Park” and its predecessors built came from the decades of resistance and activism. It would take until 1988 for the first queer advocacy group Valley Voice to form. Valley Voice would construct space for queer people to openly be themselves and to challenge the status quo of homophobia. It would also organize the first pride rally in the Valley during the early 1990s. The group defined their mission as “provid[ing] a structured group

⁵ "Latinx/Latinxs" like Chicano is the gender-inclusive form of Latino/Latina. This dissertation will mostly use Chicano only but may use Latinx when making broader statements on people of Latin American origins and culture or during appropriate situations as I do when using Chicano/Chicana instead of Chicano. Eduardo Martinez, "Civil Rights leader Dolores Huerta to Speak at Pride in the Park in McAllen," *Neta*, June 21, 2018, Last Accessed February 27, 2019, <https://netargv.com/2018/06/21/civil-rights-leader-dolores-huerta-to-speak-at-pride-in-the-park-in-mcallen/>; Bmujica.

⁶ Although, in the case of religion, Catholicism is no more homophobic than other Christian-faiths, this statement is meant to reflect the dominance of the Christian faith over the region that sees to the homophobia within the faith applied against queer people.

⁷ "Machismo" meaning the normative expression of masculinity for Chicano/Latino men that frequently is rooted in toxic masculinity through violence and sexual conquest. Although, this dissertation also recognizes, much like with other Chicano/Latinx scholars, that machismo can appear in any culture and is not exclusive to Chicano/Latino men. The criticism of machismo goes as far back as scholars and activists since the 1970s opposed how machismo encouraged dangerous expression of masculinity (be it through violence or promiscuity) with machismo also being used by Anglos as a racist tool to vilify Chicano/Latino manhood as inherently dangerous even as Anglo men exhibited similar behavior but did not experience such criticism. For a critique against the uncritical association of machismo with Chicano/Latino men, see: Lionel Cantu, Jr., *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 75-77.

experience for the lesbian-gay community...[and] activities that focus on reinforcing self-esteem and positive health behaviors.”⁸

I argue in this dissertation that Chicax and queer people organized around their non-normative identities to disrupt Anglo, patriarchal domination in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. They did so through their activism for education, reproductive health, and public health reform, which would trickle out into other spaces and forge broader coalitions with other identity groups. The ultimate results would see that through Chicax resistance to Anglo, patriarchal domination that it sees an expansion of civil rights and the institution of crucial reform even when conservative pushback undid some of the progress made. This dissertation studies how queer and Chicax identities interacted with one another as queer Chicaxs constructed communities while combatting racism, sexism, and homophobia along the U.S.-Mexico Border. Despite the minority status of Anglos, they disproportionality wielded significant political, economic, and social power over Chicaxs in the Valley that left them silenced. Therefore, the struggle of Chicaxs and queer Chicaxs in those spaces offer a crucial lens for understanding the operation of Anglo, patriarchal power both in the Valley and along the border.⁹ Their resistance to Anglo, patriarchal power best seen through the mistreatment of Chicax students in the public schools, control and policing of Chicana’s reproductive rights, and the hostilities queer Chicax people faced in accessing health care during a public health crisis during the AIDS Epidemic. Also, while these

⁸ Gabriel Sanchez, “Valley Voice: The Rio Grande Valley’s First LGBTQ Advocacy Group,” *Neta*, October 23, 2017, Last Accessed January 25, 2019. https://netargv.com/2017/10/23/valley-voice-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group/?link_id=2&can_id=22beb753190493c6f71ce81d94bc9400&source=email-the-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group&email_referrer=email_252234&email_subject=the-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group.

⁹ I use the term “Anglo patriarchy” as tied to feminist and queers of color critique of patriarchy as rooted in early feminist arguments about the dominance/superiority of (white) men in society used to subjugated women, and people of color and queer people. Patriarchy is tied to both the dominance of the father/husband in family units and men in positions of power within politics and business. Sherry B. Ortner, “Too Soon for Post-Feminism: The Ongoing Life of Patriarchy in Neoliberal America,” *History and Anthropology* vol. 25, no. 4, (August 2014): 533, DOI: [10.1080/02757206.2014.930458](https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930458).

groups initially acted separately from one another, such as Chicax students only engaging with other Chicax students, these movements gradually intersected into one another as activists participated in multiple groups either through their shared identities or a broader desire to see social justice for all.

In breaking down the three, major sections of this dissertation, I seek to explore how these movements for reform in education, reproductive rights, and public health grew upon one another as the Civil Rights Movement already swept most of the United States. The first section, education, examines the role of Chicax students challenging racism within the Valley's public education system. Like in other school protests, Chicax students in the Valley mobilized to address the needs of a Chicax community and the operation of whiteness in schooling that demeaned non-white students. The second section, reproductive rights, focuses around the realm of Chicana's reproductive health. Activism over reproductive health serves as an extension over public health fights in the Valley, but this focus specifically exposes the reproductive health resources available to Chicanas during the most vulnerable moments of their lives: pregnancy. It examines how Chicanas fought to attain access for prenatal care and culminates over debates surrounding access to birth control and abortions. And the third section, public health, is shown how it affects Chicaxs across gender and sexual orientation, but primarily focuses on queer Chicaxs. The analysis on public health follows the history of the AIDS Epidemic in the Valley to uncover how queer Chicaxs struggled to mobilize for civil rights while combatting a disease that was devastating the queer community nationwide.

In exploring these three movements, this dissertation develops how these movements developed through an examination of these group identities and how they categorized themselves. This dissertation operates with multiple identity categories but the most critical of them are tied

to race, gender, and sexuality.¹⁰ It examines identity relationships from three specific lenses: Chicax students/Anglo educators, Chicax women/Anglo doctors and politicians, and queer Chicaxs/straight Chicaxs.

I specifically choose to use Anglo rather than white when discussing white Americans in recognition of the racial diversity within Chicax/Latinx groups. While in the United States, Chicax/Latinx is thought of as a race because of U.S. racial politics, Chicax/Latinx refers to ethnicity, not a race. And given the presence of race within Latin America and Chicax/Latinx communities, it is possible for a Chicax person to also be white and operate a complicated space in terms of race and class, however, still suffer in a marginalized position due to U.S. racial politics. Therefore, I use Anglo to identify white Americans to minimize confusion between them and white Chicax/Latinx people.

When exploring the relationship of Chicaxs students/Anglos educators, the section on education discusses the distinction between Chicaxs students/Anglos educators that made discrimination of Chicax students sustainable. It explores how whiteness from an Anglo-lens operated in the public education system that privileged Anglo social and cultural norms that, consciously and unconsciously, constructed a racist pedagogy where administrators and educators viewed Chicax students as intellectually inferior to Anglo students. And this conflict in identity between Chicax students/Anglos educators is most visible with regards to education; this discussion is by no means limited to just education as it echoes across this dissertation when exploring labor and public health. The distinctions between racial identities transfers itself into

¹⁰ “Identity” is used in this dissertation to refer to the labels people apply to themselves or others in political, social, and cultural categories. While I do use certain identity categories in broad terms, like “queer” to apply to anyone who encompasses an LGBTQ identity, individuals may not see these categories applying to themselves or may utilize multiple identity categories.

gender and sexuality with Chicax men often filling the role of Anglos in their relationship with Chicax women and queer Chicaxs.

As for the relationship between Chicax women/Anglo doctors and politicians, the section on labor explores their dichotomy through the operation of gender norms, as they exist in the Valley. It considers how gendered concepts such as machismo and marianismo are applied onto Chicaxs to justify behaviors that promote toxic masculinity, while subjugating Chicax women and queer Chicaxs.¹¹ For Chicax men, there is an expectation for them to behave in aggressive manner, while Chicax men and Anglos also engaging in the policing of Chicax women's sexuality, specifically their reproductive rights. So Chicax women's experiences see them having to combat the racism and sexism that existed as they entered sought medical care, but also saw limitations in how they could preserve their health from Anglo politicians pushing for restrictions on reproductive rights such as access to birth control and abortion. These restrictions and conservative pushback would echo the experiences of queer Chicaxs in public health surrounding the AIDS Epidemic.

Like the distinctions between Chicaxs students/Anglos educators and Chicax women/Anglo doctors and politicians, the divisions between queer Chicaxs/straight Chicaxs operates in similar manners but through different rhetoric from the lens of sexuality. Race and gender distinctions also apply for queer Chicaxs as they face certain expectations and limitations on how they can express their queerness in public spaces, as they are perceived as crossing gender and racial lines. However, in terms of sexuality, their queerness applies a

¹¹ "Marianismo" is often seen as the opposite of "machismo" even though marianismo ideology is built to promote male dominance of women through female domesticity and chastity until marriage. Whereas machismo expresses traits of toxic masculinity, marianismo constructs a system of oppressing women with much of the early scholarship on marianismo, creating a narrative of victim-blaming rather than exploring how women survived and challenged the system. Like machismo, marianismo is not exclusive to Chicana/Latina women as it appears in other patriarchal societies. Tracy Bachrach Ehlers, "Debunking Marianismo: Economic Vulnerability and Survival Strategies among Guatemalan Wives," *Ethnology* vol. 30 No. 1 (January 1991): 1-2, DOI: 10.2307/3773494.

different target onto them as seen in the discussion of public health where queer Chicanxs are denied access to health care with their sexual activities being interpreted as deviant and worthy of any misfortune that befalls them as seen with the growth of the AIDS Epidemic. In exploring this queer connection with deviance, I explain the deeper divisions between heteronormativity and queerness as the heteronormative ideal that state authority and cultures attempts to project as it regulates gender and sexual expressions, population expansion, and social control.¹² In this respect, it shows queer Chicanxs not just as those engaging in same-sex sex or who identified as gay, but it also recognizes those engaging in queer behaviors such as deviating or interpreted as deviating from gender norms.

This dissertation is also heavily influenced from Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional theory. Intersectional theory emerged as a critique to feminist theory and legal theory's narrow focus on womanhood from the lens of white women that excluded women of color and women across class and religious lines.¹³ Intersectional theory since expanded to recognize sexual orientation and gender identity in the makeup of an individual's identity and how that reflects their lived experiences. I utilize intersectional theory when examining Chicanx people to see them on the lens of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class as it relates to their experiences and conflicts in the Valley. Like the examination of Chicanx students/Anglo educators, Chicanx women/Anglo doctors and politicians, and queer Chicanxs/straight Chicanxs, this dissertation recognizes how these conflicts operate but the presence of internalized conflict.

¹² "Heteronormativity" meaning the enforcement of a rigid, gender binary that sees society organized in expressions of what is "normal" along with a heterosexual lens. Marcus Herz and Thomas Johansson, "The Normativity of the Concept of Heteronormativity," *Journal of Homosexuality* vol 62 no. 8 (April 2015): 1010, DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2015.1021631. For an explanation of how Queer Theory understands queerness as disruptive to state authority see: Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), Kindle Edition, 17-18 and 111-112.

¹³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 140-141.

As seen in Chapter IV, while Chicane women experienced heightened discrimination from Anglo doctors and politicians, they also experienced gender discrimination from Chicane men as Chicane men sought to maintain their patriarchal authority over Chicane women as they wielded less social power and capital compared to Anglo men.

This dissertation expands upon my Master's thesis, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance Along the Lower Rio Grande Valley," which began my interest in exploring the queerness of the Valley. I argued that the Valley's queer narratives expose a queer borderland where queer experiences ranging from leisure, family politics, and the AIDS Epidemic promoted both refuge and oppression for queer people with queer identity undergoing constant renegotiation.¹⁴ However, the thesis suffered limitations from a majority of the analysis focused on the experiences of gay men and men who engaged in sex with men, whereas this dissertation does more to include the voices of women both queer and straight. The dissertation also links queer narratives with other civil rights struggles in the Valley. This dissertation does more to bridge the operation and resistance that makes up queerness with heteronormative institutions, the inclusion of Chicane activism in the Valley, and the various organizations that developed before and after the AIDS Epidemic to address issues of sex and sexuality.

And in terms of the chronology, the scope of this dissertation examines the lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas from 1968-2000. This dissertation addresses the consequences of the Civil Rights Movement, and the development of the Chicano Movement as both movements expand in the Valley in 1968.¹⁵ It explores the growth of women's liberation and gay liberation

¹⁴ Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016) 8.

¹⁵ I choose to refer to the movement as the Chicano Movement rather than renaming it the Chicane Movement to highlight the history as activists of the time referred to as the "Chicano Movement" and as leaving it as the "Chicano Movement" preserves the subsequent criticism that Chicanas and Chicane would make both from activist and academic perspectives. The movement while an attempt to bring justice for all Chicane, the movement became identified as one that prioritized Chicano men at the expense of Chicanas and Chicane. When discussing the

but from the contexts of how it operated in the Valley, and how Valley culture made these movements different. And this dissertation ends at 2000 largely as the American psyche and politics on the borderlands are significantly transformed after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks as the Valley post-9/11 changes drastically as does the rest of the United States in furthering the image of the border as a dangerous space. The post-9/11 climate made is so the American public sees the border as a wild, uncivilized space that saw the Valley as a target of media and political criticism.¹⁶ However, since the 2016 U.S. presidential election and start of the Donald Trump Administration, the rhetoric surrounding the border has only worsened with the government shutdown over funding a border wall that placed a significant spotlight on the Valley.¹⁷ This dissertation seeks to unmake such a portrayal of the Valley to recognize it as a border space with a far richer history influenced by what was occurring nationwide but also from conflicts brewing in its own backyard. It exposes a fundamental misinterpretation of the American public's understanding of the border as seeing the Valley for the complicated space where people resist authority to reclaim their sense of identity and power that it dismantles the illusions of the wild, untamed space that is so often portrayed in representations of the border.

In discussing this research, my dissertation prioritizes three historiographical as it relates to the lives of Chicanxs and queer people on the border. I incorporate Chicanx, Queer, and Borderlands historiography as these fields touch critical basis for the spaces and persons this dissertation covers. Once again, the Valley is a borderland space where politics, economics, and culture are tied to the operations of the U.S.-Mexico border. Therefore knowing the history of the

historiographical intervention in Chicanx History, the criticism of feminists and queer scholarship explores the history of the movement and the field itself.

¹⁶ Miguel Antonio Levario, *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 120-124.

¹⁷ Gregory J. Wallace, "How the shutdown has backfired on Trump and put an end to 'the wall'," *The Hill*, January 23, 2019, Last accessed January 25, 2019. <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/426620-how-the-shutdown-has-backfired-on-trump-and-put-an-end-to-the-wall>.

borderlands is crucial to understanding how the Valley is similar and different to other borderland spaces. Meanwhile, an understanding of Chicana and Queer History is necessary as the identity groups are tied to these histories. To construct the Valley's Chicana and queer history, it is necessary to know the Chicana and queer narratives for people outside of the Valley. The following sections thus reviews the major literature and theoretical ties this dissertation shares with other scholars.

Building upon the scholarship of Chicana/Latina scholars, this dissertation follows the growing trend within the field to broaden the analytical scope to include how gender and sexuality factored into the formation of Chicana/Latina identities and influenced their political engagement. The focus on gender and sexuality emerged as a critique of the early wave of Chicana History. Inspired by the Chicana Movement, the Chicana scholars of the 1960s and 1970s focused their research as a recovery project of Chicana History, primarily people of Mexican heritage, prior to World War II with some diving as far back as the Spanish colonial past to uncover the climate that made the Chicana present. Their research arose as an effort to see Chicanas in American History as the histories of Chicana people were ignored or alerted to minimize their contributions.¹⁸ As the field grew, the goals of Chicana historians broadened beyond recovering the history through discussion on the significance and struggles of Chicanas throughout U.S. history. Chicana historians constructed new analytical frameworks when it came to exploring racial categories and identity that benefited not just Chicana historians, but also other fields, particularly for racial and ethnic histories.¹⁹ Chicana scholars introduced into the

¹⁸ 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); Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: "The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Arnoldo De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes towards Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Carlos Kevin Blanton, ed., *A Promising Problem: The New Chicana/o History* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2016), 1-3 and 15.

historiography the questions of American citizenship both in meaning and in practice. They explored the contradiction of Mexican-Americans in the United States legally having full-citizenship but how that did not translate into their lived experience due to the discrimination they faced.

In covering the 1960s-1990s, this dissertation touches upon Mario Garcia's generational theory in highlighting how Mexican-American and Chicana identity came to manufacture conflict within the Valley.²⁰ While a generational theory is insufficient in genuinely capturing all differences and intersections within and between generations, Garcia's theory provides a useful starting point as it shows a divide between identity groups that even as they shared larger goals, the means to achieve those shared goals is what sparked tension. The typically older and more socially conservative nature of those Garcia identified as part of the Mexican-American generation came into conflict with the younger and more progressive/radical Chicano generation as the two sides saw two different approaches in how to address political, social, and economic justice. A similar process occurred in the Valley as student-led walkouts occurred alongside other forms of protest with typically older Mexican-Americans being more critical of younger Chicanos, although, not to in the same scope and size as they did in urban centers.

Within the early wave of Chicana historiography, there was mounting criticism against the field, one of the most frequent criticisms best reflected in the narrow focus on men. Beginning in the 1980s, but taking off during the 1990s, the growth of Chicana/feminist historians saw them actively challenging the field's almost single-minded focus on telling the histories of Chicano men, while ignoring the roles and discrimination women faced. Amongst this early generation of Chicana scholars was Vicki Ruiz. She began to write extensively on

²⁰ Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity: 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 2-4.

Chicana's labor in factories and along the U.S.-Mexican border to better understand not just the workplace culture women constructed as they sought to support their families, but also how they utilized race, gender, and class to challenge oppressive labor conditions.²¹ More recently, the feminist interpretation of Chicana history expanded to call out a need for a more critical, queer lens, as seen with Maylei Blackwell's *Chicana Power*. Blackwell follows the groundwork that Ruiz and other Chicana scholars created in exploring how women supported and added their dialogue in challenging male-centric hierarchies within the Movement. However, her most remarkable contribution is her inclusion of the spread and usage of anti-queer rhetoric amongst Chicano spaces, while also showing its effects on lesbian Chicanas and those coded as queer.²² What Blackwell does is demonstrate the hostility towards queer people in the Movement as an extension for misogynistic and patriarchal rhetoric that flourished to dismiss the concerns and criticisms of Chicanas. This dissertation builds upon the analytical framework of Ruiz, Blackwell, and other Chicana scholars. The feminist turn within the field established the foundation for the queer turn as it is developing as it broadens how the Chicana experience differs from Chicano/Chicana narratives.

Lastly, within Chicana historiography, there is a more significant push for awareness of race and ethnicity outside of just a black and white binary. While early Chicana historiography appeared as a critique of the limitations of racial/ethnic analysis in American historiography, it became limited due to the focus of a white/Anglo and Chicana binary. It lost the importance surrounding questions of blackness and discrimination that helped to shape the need for a Chicana critique on race. And while this dissertation does not actively include African

²¹ Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), XIV-XVI.

²² Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2011), 43-44, 74-76, and 96-98.

Americans, due to their population being so small in the Valley, it does follow more recent trends in the scholarship in reuniting how discourses on Chicanxs/Latinxs and their identity formation is connected to the black and white racial binary even as its categories are redefined to focus on a Chicax/Latinx critique. Examples of this redefinition include Lilia Fernandez's *Brown in the Windy City*. Fernandez focuses on Mexicans and Puerto Ricans building community in Chicago, while also highlighting how they navigated the city's racial politics alongside other racial and ethnic minorities.²³ She discussed how Mexicans and Puerto Ricans faced similar forms of discrimination and resided in the same neighborhoods as other minorities, but the cultural differences between minority groups sparked different tensions from the discrimination that Anglos placed upon these groups. This dissertation follows a similar formula as the Valley's racial politics often conflict with Anglo norms and Mexican traditions, but also how anti-Mexican rhetoric in the Valley often resembles language used against African Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities in the United States.

Much like Chicax historiography, Queer History emerged in the 1980s as a response to the civil rights struggle of queer people in the 1970s and the tragedy of the AIDS Epidemic of the 1980s. Similar to the recovery projects of early Chicax historians, John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics Sexual Communities* is one of the first historical studies on queer people. In it, he examined queer activism before the 1960s and the participation of queer soldiers during World War II. He would highlight the significance of the Homophile Movement in his focus on activists from the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis who broke crucial groundwork for the queer rights. He would even recognize the radicalism specifically of the early Mattachine Society as founders like Harry Hay openly identified as a Communist, but the Mattachine Society

²³ Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 13-17.

became increasingly conservative and shut out its more radical left-leaning members to make queer rights more palatable during the Red Scare and McCarthyism.²⁴ It would see the Homophile Movement becoming viewed in queer spaces as a more assimilationist-based activism like the Mexican-American generation in Chicana History. Moreover, he established the significance of urban spaces as leading to the construction of queer identities as more people migrated into the cities and moved away from their families that they could safely explore their sexuality and eventually constructed identities around them.²⁵ As one of the first historians to discuss queer persons, D'Emilio set a critical foundation for examining queer lives with urban centers and national politics taking center stage that continues to shape the field.

The 1990s saw a significant explosion of queer scholarship that addressed the gaps within D'Emilio's research through an examination of centering queer lives pre-WWII, in rural spaces, and through women's experiences. George Chauncey's *Gay New York* explored the construction of our modern conception of the closet through examining how gender and sexual politics in New York City during the late 19th century and early 20th century created national ramifications for American understanding of queer sexualities.²⁶ Abandoning urban spaces, John Howard was amongst the first to discuss queerness in rural America. While other queer historians would reference rural spaces, most often as places where queer people migrated out of in favor of cities, Howard developed rural spaces as an important center for the formation of queer identities. In *Men Like That*, Howard discusses queer men's experiences in Mississippi to argue local gender and sexual politics, as well as those imported from urban conceptions as Chauncey's *Gay New*

²⁴ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Kindle Edition, Location 1223.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Location 270, 286, 290.

²⁶ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 6 and 9.

York explored, created rural, queer identities.²⁷ However, both works amongst many others did much to expand the field's knowledge of queer male histories but ignored or minimized the contributions of queer women. Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* being amongst the first to actively explore the histories of queer women and how they shaped Queer History. Like Chauncey, Faderman explored how modern conceptions lesbian identities emerged from the early 20th century as the Victorian norms of close female relationships as sexologists and other experts increasingly sexualized female relationships that gradually built anti-lesbian rhetoric.²⁸ The active assault upon lesbians helped to develop their movement for equality and also helped them in creating ties with gay men to create an increasingly national gay rights movement, while also forming organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis that proved crucial in combatting homophobia.²⁹

The scholarship of the 1990s did more than the recovery projects of the 1980s as they pushed the chronology, regional scope, and gender/sexual boundaries that queer historians examined. However, the field also suffered a racial problem as most queer histories are written even in the 1990s ignored and minimized queer people of color. Exceptions include James Sears who, like Howard, wrote on southern, queer life, but also bridged it with discussions of the black and white racial politics of the South.³⁰ A more recent example includes E. Patrick Johnson's *Sweet Tea*, who analyzes a collection of oral histories on queer, Black men, and how they navigated southern culture through their racialized and sexualized experiences. Ultimately, Johnson finds the complexity of queer Black narratives as filtered through southern politics of

²⁷ John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (University of Chicago Press; Chicago, 1999), XIV and 12.

²⁸ Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 149 and 186

³⁰ James T. Sears, *Growing Up Gay in the South: Race, Gender, and Journeys of the Spirit* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1991), 4 and 10-12.

respectability that often focuses on whiteness to justify their discrimination as Black men.

Meanwhile, their sexual differences as homosexuals alienates them from Black institutions such as the Black church that play a crucial role in constructing black unity in the South, leaving queer Black people exceptionally vulnerable as they became excluded from southern communities and Black communities, a similar process occurring for queer Chicanxs in the Valley.³¹

In the last eighteen years, the attempts to rectify this problem continues an upward growth, especially as more queer people of color have entered the field as historians. Their work on a racial turn to queer history includes not just the addition of African American, Asian American, Chicanx/Latinx narratives, but a broader inclusion of homophobia within their communities, the racism within queer communities, new questions surrounding trans identity, and more significant problems with U.S. immigration. They also began discussions on seeing queerness less from a lens of people who identified as gay or lesbian, but to see queerness in behavior such as deviating from gender norms within their cultural and social groups or being interpreted as deviating from gender norms. Margot Canady's *The Straight State* paired American responses to changing immigration patterns in the mid/late 20th century and race together with sexuality as immigrants from Latin America became seen as sexually promiscuous, while immigrants from Asia became interpreted as queer, especially in the case of Asian men. Also, where older immigration rhetoric emphasized immigrants' threat to white (Anglo) womanhood, the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the late 20th century saw immigrants as potentially gay and a threat to white (Anglo), American manhood.³²

³¹ E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2-3, 24, and 183.

³² Margot Canady, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), Kindle Edition, 8, 19-20, and 27-28.

More recent scholarships show scholars building on this relation between race and immigration through a broader focus on Latin/Caribbean culture as it coincides with discussions on queerness shaping both the local and immigrant communities as national rhetoric attempts to rewrite how locals perceive queerness. This dissertation follows that trend, while less so in the realm of immigration, but in how this process of queerness and national rhetoric relates to local communities as seen with the works of Susana Peña, Mireya Loza, and Julio Capó, Jr. In *Oye Loca*, Peña explored the growth of a gay Cuban population in Miami as a response to the Mariel boatlifts of the 1980s. The response of both Anglos and straight Cubans saw to a rise of homophobia in the city even as queer Cubans played a crucial role in the expansion of queer culture and gay rights in the city.³³ For Loza, she sees queerness like Peña in a more intimate manner through her analysis on the queerness of Bracero workers. The examination of Braceros as possibly includes discussion on whether or not some Braceros engaged in same-sex sex, but on a more broader discussion of “queer domestics” as the absence of women forced Braceros into a deeply, homosocial world allowed some to drift away from normative, family values be it through sex or labor and social norms.³⁴ Whereas for Capó, he highlights in *Welcome to Fairyland* a much lengthier queer history for Miami as, like Chauncey, he sees to early 20th century Miami grew in part due to its queerness, which saw the interpretation of the city as exotic due to the culture that its Caribbean immigrant population brought. He further stated queer people, minorities, and immigrants could exploit such notions of exoticness to their benefit as it allowed them power within the city's heavily tourist-based economy that they could not in more

³³ Susana Peña, *Oye Loca: From the Mariel Boatlift to Gay Cuban Miami* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 15 and 22-23.

³⁴ Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 67-68.

industrial and agricultural economies.³⁵ This dissertation follows the newer trend within queer historiography through the inclusion of how race shapes queer narratives, but also how race and sexuality factor into public policies through an exploration of queerness in the Valley as a bordered space where mobility between countries is relatively easy.

Lastly, Borderlands historiography helps to shape the outer scope of the dissertation due to the Valley sitting on the American side of the U.S.-Mexican border. The realities of border culture and politics are inescapable, especially when following the modern politics of the border. Unlike Chicana and Queer History, Borderlands has lengthier history. Borderlands History emerged from Herbert Bolton's pursuit of the Spanish past in the U.S. Southwest that see the transition from Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis as Bolton recognized the presence of Native Americans and the Spanish in the region. And following Bolton, scholars like Carlos Castañeda would introduce Mexican narratives, specifically Mexicans in Texas, in a continuation of the peoples that resided on the Southwest and along the borderlands. Taking Castaneda further, scholars like Carey McWilliams analyzed the borderlands with a more critical lens and explore the long-contested nature of the borderlands as space where politics, economies, people, and environment collide.³⁶ It is through this contestation that occurs on the border that borderlands theory developed as a means to explore the porous nature of the border as everything clashes and blends. In the case of the Valley, this dissertation dives into a more intimate examination of the border based more on lived experiences rather than economic and political debates. People in the Valley experienced the porous nature of the border in different ways. For some, it means that they live on the American side of the border but work on the Mexican side or

³⁵ Julio Capó, Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami before 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), Kindle Edition, Introduction.

³⁶ Pekka Hämaäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 98, No. 2 (September 2011): 340-341 and 347-350.

vice versa. Also, as mentioned earlier, that even for people living and working on the American side that they most often have family on the Mexican side and do travel back and forth. This movement was especially true during the period of the late 1960s-2000 when border travel did not require as much documentation as it does presently. For people in the Valley, they see daily how the border is porous as their lives, and the culture of this space represents elements of both American and Mexican culture and at times creates something uniquely their own.

The field at large however tends to stray more towards the construction of immigration issues and border security due to contemporary battles over immigration and the militarization of the border. As historians like Miguel Levario notes, the contestation of the border changed in the 20th century and sparked a significant deal of funding that turned the southern border into a militarized zone.³⁷ This policy change created a visible change for people in the Valley, particularly as Valley residents have family on both sides of the border. Whereas other critiques of border policy, such as those from Eithne Luibhéid and Ana Elizabeth Rosales, highlight immigration and labor issues. Luibhéid offers a critical perspective on immigration patterns, primarily as her research does not exclusively focus on the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands and she offers some of the earliest research, although only at a gay-lesbian level analysis, on the significance of queerness in the immigration experience. She notes the various means in which immigration policies factor into not only who is allowed into the country but takes an increasingly racialized rhetoric that targets immigrants of color, but she also demonstrates this hostility grows, as Canady noted too, around queer persons or people perceived as queer.³⁸ Luibhéid points to customs and border patrol agents using the label of queerness to deny immigrants admittance to the country. Meanwhile, Rosales finds even as the United States has a

³⁷ Levario, 2 and 6.

sharp need for the economic labor of Mexican, and other Latin American, immigrants that they impose such severe policies to limit their ability to maintain work that is not highly exploitive. However, historians tend to overlook the intimate consequences of immigration when looking at relationships immigrants have with those in their home countries or forge abroad that as a consequence of exploitive immigration policies quickly destabilize.³⁹ As Rosales and other borderlands/immigration scholars demonstrate that this process is disruptive to family lives and other personal relationships, very few scholars have seen this process through a queer lens. When discussing queerness, scholars usually only view queerness as an individual is away from the family so the individual can openly express their queerness or a queer person losing their family support network. However, nothing in the historiography views queer people leaving other queer people such as their partners or chosen family.⁴⁰

However, this dissertation adds another layer to Borderlands History. Like Rosales, this dissertation highlights questions of the family into borderlands as queer people experience more significant conflicts with their families due to their sexuality. What assists in the unique nature of this dissertation is the significance of movement across the border for leisurely and sexual activity. In this case, queer people are not necessarily engaging in sex tourism the way other Americans do it terms of looking at sex workers, although, queer people do meet with sex workers. The intervention this dissertation places into Borderlands historiography is for queer people traveling between the borders; they use this bordered space to hide their queerness on one

³⁸ Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), ix-xi

³⁹ Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), Kindle Edition, 4-7.

⁴⁰ Chosen family is a common term within the LGBTQ community that refers to the family that queer people create, especially in cases where their biological family has disowned them. In many cases, queer people will refer to individuals as “mother” and “sister” to identify how they view their relationship with another queer person.

side while celebrating it on another as they party in queer spaces and safely pursue their same-sex interests outside of the family gaze.

Overall, the effort to bridge these three historiographies while seemingly herculean is nevertheless crucial when discussing queer, Latinx lives on the borderlands. Actually, it is very achievable. This dissertation will address political, geographic, social, and intimate realities that operate in the Valley. It creates a case where the border is intimately tied to queer lives just as the historiography already accepted for Chicanx/Latinx lives. It expands on the porous nature of the border and the way that identity categories regularly clash more so on the border than they do in other spaces where they may appear as more static. Most importantly, it follows the continuing trend of intersectional analysis in these historiographies that attempts to see the lived experiences not just from their class, racial/ethnic, and gender lenses but links them together amongst others.⁴¹ A significant contribution for this project is the intervention of how queer Chicanxs fit into Chicanx/Latinx, Queer, and Borderlands Histories. So in recovering a queer past in the Valley, it demonstrates how queer Chicanxs are not just part of these histories, but also play an active role in shaping change in the Valley and on the borderlands from the challenges they produce to national politics and foreign policy.

And to demonstrate the transformative changes queer Chicanxs can produce, this dissertation incorporates theoretical foundations on the process of the racialized “Other” and homonationalism. The process of the “Other” is not unfamiliar as it takes on multiple forms, through race, gender, and sexual orientation as some examples, as a means of defining differences between people that creates the illusion of what is normative behavior, while

⁴¹ Crenshaw, 140-141.

justifying the subjugation of outside groups.⁴² This dissertation does not disagree with this process; it only seeks to connect more of these differences in defining the “Other” as queer Chicanxs/Latinxs specifically face an “Other” process that encompasses more categories to justify their discrimination. Also, it expands on how the “Other” is also tied to place and how even for groups labeled as the “Other” can see that criteria different on the border versus non-border communities. The scholarship on the “Other” while recognizes that place factors into what makes a person and group the “Other,” it is often not as explicit as it needs to be. Like in the case of undocumented immigrants, their “Other” status on a bordered environment sees more acceptance and tolerance versus what they may experience away from the border.

Whereas the ideas of the “Other” are useful in understanding both the discrimination of Chicanxs/Latinxs and queer Chicanxs/Latinxs, it is the concept of homonationalism that provides a unique understanding of both groups and the border itself. The theory originates from Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*, which documents the development of the use of terrorist to identify Middle Eastern and Muslims in the Post-9/11 United States, as it relates to their “Othering” process in relation to U.S. foreign policy. Homonationalism is an extension of homonormativity as it relates to the normative performance of queerness that often falls upon the norms of a queer, white middle class, similar to the politics of respectability rooted in the white, middle class.⁴³ Homonationalism expresses itself as a continuation of American Exceptionalism and imperialism as the U.S. overemphasizes its acceptance of queer people to critique foreign

⁴² Zuleyka Zevallos, “What is Otherness?,” *The Other Sociologist*, October 14, 2014, Last Accessed March 26, 2019. <https://othersociologist.com/otherness-resources/>.

⁴³ “Homonormativity” is similar to heteronormativity but as a critique from queer people about queer people. Homonormativity operates as a critique against a normative operation of queerness as what is often deemed as respectable behaviors or expressions of queerness falls under white, middle class norms but with white, gay men and lesbians defining what is normative. Critiques against homonormativity also see how queer people of color and their needs are often left in the margins of the larger community and debates over queer rights. For further explanation on “homonormativity” see: Herz & Johansson, 1010-1011. For further explanation of homonationalism: Jasbir K Puar,

nations, mainly majority Muslim nations, while simultaneously criminalizing queer persons domestically.⁴⁴ However, what is more nefarious with homonationalism, as Puar puts it, is how queer people themselves are guilty of utilizing such rhetoric and blindly endorsing American imperialism as a means of protection, which results in the further “Othering” of Muslims.⁴⁵ However, this process is not exclusive to queer Americans in terms of American policy in the Middle East as other minority groups domestically and globally incorporate such rhetoric to minimize their status as “the other” to ensure their survival and acceptance within the spaces they reside. What is unique about this scenario is how Puar examines queerness in this process, which usually is rarely seen, in academia, in such a position of power.

While this dissertation does not utilize homonationalism as a means of exploring anti-Muslim rhetoric in the Valley as this dissertation covers pre-9/11, it does explore how it applies when it comes to an understanding of the U.S.-Mexican border. In the tenth anniversary edition, Puar herself calls on historians to explore a pre-9/11 homonationalism as she discusses the rise of President Donald Trump and his fascination with linking terrorism to the border.⁴⁶ In answering her call, this dissertation sees the development of national security with heightened policing of the border, mostly through organized crime rather than terrorism, but how this trickles down to Valley residents too. For many in the Valley, the needs to emphasize their Americanness and citizenship while ignoring their Mexican ties helps to shape their sense of American exceptionalism and policing of the border. For the Valley's queer residents, as post-9/11 homonormative rhetoric sees Muslims as a threat to queer people globally, the queer Valley carries a mixed relationship to the border. Partly there is blame for the border itself as being

Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times, 2017 Edition, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2-3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-14 and 18-19.

dangerous for queer bodies from its over policing and a general presence of homophobia. Many would place the blame on Mexico for anti-queer violence, however, doing so fails to recognize the harm that queer people face on the American side of the border even which is equally bad or, at times, worse.

In terms of its source base, this dissertation incorporates archival materials, interviews, and popular culture materials such as film and music. For archival material, this dissertation incorporates collection housed at Texas A&M University – College Station and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley – Edinburg (UTRGV). The Cushing Archives at Texas A&M houses one of the most extensive collections of LGBTQ materials in the state, the Don Kelly Collection, which includes an assortment of newspapers, pamphlets, books, and magazines about LGBTQ history, most of it based on or inspired by, events in Texas. With the dissertation focusing on Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, both UTRGV campuses have archives dedicated to housing Valley history. The Edinburg campus's archives are particularly useful as it houses various records on Valley life, most notable being the Campeny Collection that focuses specifically on racialized violence. Files included in the Campeny Collection include reports on police brutality and acts of violence the Border Patrol committed between the 1970s-1990s. Other documents included at the Edinburg archive are various newspapers both in English and Spanish, crime reports, local government statistics, artistic work inspired from the Valley, and houses some documentation on local response to the AIDS Epidemic.

The second major contributor of sources comes from interviews on Valley locals. For my Master's thesis, I conducted about twenty interviews of queer people from the Valley to explain the transformation of queer lives in the Valley, but also how the Valley itself changed both in terms of demographics, culture, politics, and economics. The reference questions I utilized asked

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

general biographical questions of each interviewee such as where are they from, what was their family like, and what were their educational and professional experiences like before diving into more intimate realms of gender and sexuality. The interviews are lacking in diversity as I primarily only had the opportunity to interview gay men from Hidalgo and Cameron Counties with only few women included. Luckily, I did have the fortune of interviewing Oscar Lopez, a former health educator for VAC, his interview serving as a critical source for Chapter VI.

The third major contributor to sources is popular culture material, such as film, television, literature, music, and popular culture magazines and articles. While there is not much on popular culture material centered on the Valley, except for the occasional film that uses it as a setting, many filmmakers, actors, and other artists do come from the Valley and bring their experiences to a broader audience. Tejano music, in particular, is not only popular in the Valley, but many Tejano musicians come from the Valley, which helps to support its popularity further. These popular culture materials further shape the Valley and also informs its residence of the national rhetoric surrounding Chicanxs/Latinxs, but also how its residents are expected to view others, particularly queer people. Due to the Valley distance from major urban areas and its gender/sexual conservatism, most residents only encounters queer representation through media, which include campy characters, flamboyant villains, and tragic narratives that limit both how straight and queer residents view queer identities. This limited representation then forced a narrow image of queerness that straight residents imposed upon queer people, but also helped some queer people to forge or remake their sense of queerness. However, to understand how queerness presented itself by the 1980s and 1990s when queer rights became more visible in the Valley, it is crucial to see the forms queerness took in previous decades as understood through popular culture.

However, in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, myself like other graduate students and academics that are attempting to complete research found themselves in quite the struggle. The pandemic saw to a lengthy closure of archives, lockdowns and quarantines of non-essential workers, and travel restrictions that made accessing the materials and individuals that I initially planned impossible. Due to this health crisis, I have relied increasingly on digital archives and databases to fill the gaps in my research and conclusions, especially when it comes to looking across the U.S.-Mexico border. Databases like Newspapers.com's Texas Collection and the University of North Texas's Portal to Texas History proved an invaluable resource in attaining some newspaper articles, letters, and pamphlets to help further this research into Chicana student activism and women's reproductive health in the Valley.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I serves as the introduction, and Chapter II establishes the local operation of heteronormativity within this bordered space and provides a glimpse into the lived experiences of people in the Valley. Chapters III-VI address the social movements and spaces that served as resistance to heteronormativity within the Valley. These movements and spaces acted to challenge the heteronormative, status quo as it derailed how power structures operated. These youth-led and women's movements in challenging Anglo heteronormativity displays a lens for exploring queerness of Chicanas through racialized and feminist lenses. Chapter VII concludes with a brief analysis of how to view success in a historical sense not as a total victory in that the status quo is forever abolished, but recognition for the incremental victories even as setbacks occurred. In the case of Chicana students, even with changes in educational policies that allowed them greater respect, many institutional problems remain, or new ones were constructed to create new limitations. The same applies when looking at labor and queer rights.

Chapter II provides an overview of Hidalgo and Cameron Counties between 1968-2000. It examines their demographics, politics, faith, and culture with the heteronormative/patriarchal structure of local institutions such as the schools and hospitals and social/leisure spaces that subsequent chapters disrupt. It also briefly links this period with the Valley prior to 1968, exploring the changing status of the Valley and the border from Spanish colonization onto World War II. It especially pays tribute to the earlier activism of migrant farmworkers as it set the stage for Chicana students to protest racism in the public education system as they showed solidarity with migrant students. It also includes the cultural heritage of the Valley, such as residents' relationship with Catholicism and how American citizenship defines the space, but also the gendered burdens that machismo and marianismo imposed in creating a gender binary. This chapter also introduces some of the most significant transformations occurring as Chicanos gradually attained more power. The forms of power include more obvious examples such as Chicanos entering political office and the growth of its middle class, but also changes in where Chicanos could live. Lastly, it explores questions of the border and crime as the responses surrounding the contemporary "crisis on the border" find their genesis at this time.

Chapter III serves as a case study on the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts of November 14th, 1968. The walkouts occurred when Chicana students at Edcouch-Elsa High School, fed up with their mistreatment at the hands of teachers and administrators, organized a walkout. Inspired by Civil Rights activists, these Valley students sustained a month-long protest, and even after many were suspended and expelled for their protest, the students with the support of their parents took the Edcouch-Elsa School District to court with the judge siding with the students. In this chapter, the Chicano Movement in the Valley operates not only as a movement for Civil Rights, but also as a rhetorical expression of queerness through these students and their families disruption of a

patriarchal power structure, seen as Edcouch-Elsa ISD, that sought to preserve the subordinated position of Mexican/Mexican-American students through an Anglo-centric forms of normative behaviors. In challenging the patriarchal authority and their position as "the other," these students asserted their agency, which ultimately reinforced rights for their migrant peers and allowed all students the right to use Spanish outside of restricted classroom spaces and the insertion of Mexican/Mexican-America history into the curriculum. The story of the walkouts taking a queer lens and fighting normativity/heteronormativity through this act of resistance to patriarchy and Anglo-centrism as these students challenged their marginalization to see the legitimization of their ethnic/racial identity. And in resisting the school district, this youth-led movement saw to the students remaking their own identities in relation to the education system and the broader Valley community, which is where the insertion of oral histories come especially crucial to understanding these changes as the narratives oral histories provide the ability to get a more intimate portrayal of such changes that cannot be so easily found in more traditionally published sources.

Chapter IV explores the state of Chicana's reproductive health in the Rio Grande Valley from 1970-2000. It briefly summarizes the longer history of women's reproductive health nationally and in the state of Texas, while demonstrating how Chicanas specifically mobilized for access to reproductive health care while combating patriarchy and the Church. It also considers the role of medical providers in how doctors failed to acknowledge the needs of Chicanas compared to their Anglo counterparts, which left Chicanas vulnerable to accidents that put their bodies and pregnancies at risk. It also analyzes the contemporary situation of women's reproductive rights in Texas as of 2013, and how the expanded efforts to regulate women's bodies placed a greater demand on reproductive healthcare on the border. Chicanas specifically

crossing the border to access affordable birth control and necessary abortions while Texas governors and the legislature stripped funding for hospitals and clinics that provided such services.

Chapter V follows the creation of public queer spaces through two, popular gay bars in McAllen during the 1970s and 1980s: Duffy's Tavern and PBDs. This chapter sees how the growth of these bars provided not only a crucial space where queer people could socialize but also the broader development of the Valley's queer culture. Before the opening of these bars, the options of where queer people could socialize were limited to privacy of homes or outside the Valley, be it other cities like Corpus Christi and San Antonio or across the border in Mexico. In having local queer spaces, it allowed Valley queers opportunities to explore their sexualities and develop relationships in a more accessible manner. However, gays bars also carry another crucial significance as being a space where ideas of civil rights form. As a space where so many queer people gather, gay bars would face constant harassment from the public and police to threaten the refuge the bars provide. In resisting this harassment, gay bars also serve as a space to host events promoting queer rights and where activists could easily find one another to develop more formal organizations outside of the bars.

Chapter VI ends on a somber note through an analysis of the devastation AIDS Epidemic caused in the Valley. This chapter explores the Valley's response to an epidemic that spread throughout the country as locals combatted the real-life consequences of the disease, misinformation, and a lack of resources that put their lives in danger. It sees the development of organizations and activists in minimizing the epidemic's damages to save lives. Some of these organizations included individuals who participated in these earlier movements in the Valley to resist insufficient heteronormative institutions in the schools and government that was now

directly endangering the queer community. As an extension of Chapter IV, this chapter also sees the broader significance of women in the queer rights movement as many early queer organizations in the Valley were founded and led by queer women.

In conclusion, this dissertation approaches the border and the rhetoric surrounding it from the perspective of its residents to demonstrate how the history of the border is more than just the representations of violence that popular culture, media outlets, and politicians make it seem. It also studies how queer Chicaxs/Latinxs continue to explore their sexualities and forge a new community within a marginalized border community. Examining the queer lens of the border than can offer borderlands historians a framework of studying the border that pushes for a more intimate examination of the people who reside on the border. Lastly, it exposes the levels in which narrative surrounding are constructed and deconstructed as the presence of queerness blurs all sense of normativity.

CHAPTER II

DEFINING *EL VALLE*

In this chapter, I provide a basic overview of what is the Lower Rio Grande Valley, while subsequent chapters analyze more precise moments and themes in Valley history between 1968-2000.⁴⁷ This chapter explores six significant components to understanding the Valley as a whole. First, it explores the geographical makeup of the Valley to better understand what the Valley looks like and the communities that this dissertation discusses. Second, it briefly examines the broader history of the Valley before colonization, the arrival of the Spanish, and eventually the arrival of Anglos and how that transformed the Valley.⁴⁸ Third, it provides a breakdown of the demographic profile of the Valley after World War II as changes in population and income levels altered the Valley socially and culturally. Fourth, it broadly investigates the operation of politics and power in the Valley with particular reflection on how the demographic changes in the previous section created new challenges to the political status quo. Fifth, it defines what is considered a unique Valley culture. It also examines what Valley residents adopted from Anglo and Mexican cultures that make up this hybridized space, especially when it comes to normative behavior and gender roles. Lastly, with an understanding of what Valley culture is, this chapter defines what Queer Valley culture is and how it relates to queer culture in the United States and northern Mexico in this period. It is through understanding these six components that exposes the origins of how education reform, women's reproductive health, and queer activism mobilized in the Valley.

⁴⁷ The Valley is also referred to as El Valle in Spanish with some bilingual and Spanish-language documents referring to it as such.

Geographically, the Valley sits along the end of the Rio Grande River⁴⁹ Four counties at the southern tip of Texas are most commonly used to identify the Valley: Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, and Starr counties. The geographic location of the Valley also makes it a direct neighbor to northern Mexico, making this space tied to transnational politics and economics even as it retains a certain degree of isolation because these four counties did not undergo massive urbanization until the 2000s. However, this urban development is centered in Hidalgo and Cameron counties, leaving Starr and Willacy counties excluded from such development. It is also this proximity to Mexico that resulted in such a significant Mexican population and a cultural heritage tied more directly to Mexico, as seen with other border communities along the southwestern United States, including El Paso and Eagle Pass in Texas.

This dissertation primarily focuses on Hidalgo and Cameron counties. These two counties are where the majority of Valley residents live with over one million residents between them as of 2018.⁵⁰ The focus on these two counties, in particular, comes with the two, largest cities in the Valley, Brownsville (Cameron) and McAllen (Hidalgo), which is where the population is most heavily concentrated and where conflicts over culture, identity, gender, and sexuality are most visible. However, even the border operates differently between these two cities as much of Brownsville neighbors Mexico. In contrast, only a small percentage of McAllen is physically connected to Mexico. These cities slightly differing proximity to the border resulted in a different response to border politics. McAllen is more concerned with commerce and an economic relationship with Mexico. In comparison, Brownsville's relationship to Mexico, while

⁴⁸ Anglos-Americans referring to a racial demographic and in the context of the United States as a nation exerting its influence through its citizens and eventually its governmental influence. This influence seeing the reinforcement of Anglo cultural, political, gender, and sexual norms upon non-Anglos both in the United States and abroad.

⁴⁹ The Valley is portrayed in both media and film, however, the Valley sit is a broad flat floodplain at the end of the Rio Grande River. Also, the Rio Grande River is referred to as the Rio Bravo in Mexico.

⁵⁰ Rick Kelley, "Numbers Show Dramatic Leveling in Valley Growth," *The Monitor* (June 17, 2019), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.themonitor.com/2019/06/17/numbers-show-dramatic-leveling-valley-growth/>.

also commercial, sees stronger social and cultural ties. Now, that does not mean the opposite is not true for both cities. Brownsville does have a transactional relationship with Mexico, and McAllen has a social and cultural relationship with Mexico too. However, it is necessary to understand the differences in relationship to Mexico that these cities have as it helps to identify the local identities and histories based upon these geographical gaps.

Next, I briefly discuss the broader Valley history before the main timeframe of this dissertation. Along with understanding the geographic makeup of the Valley, it is also crucial to understand its earlier history when exploring why the status quo needed disruption and how Chicanxs in the Valley mobilized before 1968.

Before European contact, the primary ethno-linguistic group of Native Americans living along what is now the Valley is categorized under the Coahuiltecan with their estimated point of arrival being around 10,000 BCE.⁵¹ While the exact geography of where Coahuiltecan resided varied due to their nomadism around family units, they did live on both sides of the Rio Grande. Some Coahuiltecan extended as far north as modern-day San Antonio. But they mostly remained further south, most likely to stay away from the Apaches and Comanche that resided along northern and central Texas. And due to the environment, the Coahuiltecan survived as nomadic hunter-gatherers. Those who lived close to the river created permanent structures as the

⁵¹ Coahuiltecan is used in the anthropological sense to highlight the geographic space of Native Americans living along the South Texas Plains. The Natives of South Texas included groups of various linguistic backgrounds that often engaged in war with one another prior to the arrival of the Spanish. As for the point of arrival, this is based upon data collected from the National Park Service from research on South Padre Island with the data also displaying the presence of Karankawas tribe that populated the area from Corpus Christi to Galveston. National Park Services, "Natives," Last Updated: October 18, 2018, Last Accessed March 11, 2020. <https://www.nps.gov/pais/learn/historyculture/natives.htm>.

fertile land and the access to freshwater allowed for more stability, unlike northern parts of the Valley, which has more arid land and fewer freshwater sources.⁵²

Once the Spanish arrived, the Coahuiltecs underwent constant assaults and suffered extensively from colonization efforts. European diseases like smallpox and measles were the primary killers of the Coahuiltecs as it was for other Native Americans. However, the settling of the Spanish in northeastern Mexico and South Texas after Alonso de León's expedition of 1686 led to constant skirmishes and wars between the two for dominance over the region. The Spanish emerged victorious around the end of the 18th century even as indigenous resistance continued throughout Spanish, colonial rule.⁵³ The Spanish grew more extensive in the 1740s-1750s with major successes in establishing permanent settlements.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as the Spanish did to other indigenous groups and Africans, the Coahuiltecs were forced into the *encomienda* system as slaves to work on Spanish-owned plantations and forced into the Spanish/Catholic missions that gradually dotted the region.⁵⁵ In resistance to Spanish dominances, Natives would flee these *encomiendas* as would other slaves on plantations, but many would also remain living on the *encomiendas* because of protection from food scarcity and the military protections present on the *encomiendas* that proved the community from hostile Native groups.⁵⁶

⁵² James M. Smallwood, *The Indian Texans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 30-31; "South Texas Plains: Who Were the 'Coahuiltecs'?" Texas Beyond History (September 8, 2006), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://texasbeyondhistory.net/st-plains/peoples/coahuiltecs.html>.

⁵³ Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Denton: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 20-22; David La Vere, *The Texas Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 99-101.

⁵⁴ McAllen, 26-32.

⁵⁵ La Vere, 99-101; Smallwood, 30-31; "The Early Days of La Feria: Native South Texans - The Coahuiltecs," *La Feria News* (February 20, 2015), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://laferianews.net/?p=4294>; Texas Beyond History "South Texas Plains," *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Coahuiltecan Indians," Last Accessed December 13, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmcah>

⁵⁶ John P. Schmal, "Indigenous Nuevo León: Land of the Coahuiltecs," *Indigenous Mexico* (October 9, 2019) Last Accessed October 29, 2020. <https://indigenousemexico.org/nuevo-leon/indigenous-nuevo-leon-land-of-the-coahuiltecs/>.

Eventually, the Coahuiltecan who were not killed in the conflicts or by disease would blend into the growing Mestizo population with other Spanish, Native American, and African peoples.⁵⁷ The Mestizo population and North American-raised Spanish population would undergo different conflicts with the Spanish Crown and Catholic Church, with these colonies battling for their independence with the colony of New Spain becoming Mexico, which included the Valley. However, Mexican ownership of the Valley and the Texas territory as a whole would be short-lived once Anglos from the United States immigrated into the territory and fomented the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), marking the revolution as one based on racial animosity of Anglo Texans against Mexicans.⁵⁸ Even as these Anglo revolutionaries knew that they needed the resources and financial support of Tejano elites to successfully overthrow the Mexican government's control over Texas, but the aftermath of the Revolution saw these same Tejanos losing land and power to Anglos often through intimidation and violence.⁵⁹

Once the Revolution ended, the Texas territory fell to Anglo control, being remade into the short-lived Republic of Texas. However, numerous disputes would occur between the 1830s-1840s, as Mexico would claim the Valley as part of its territory with Mexico arguing over the proximity of the border. This dispute would continue especially once the United States annexed Texas in 1845, serving as one of the primary justifications for the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848). This dispute of where the U.S.-Mexico border existed would lead to much confusion, especially when it came to which nation controlled the Valley. The Americans argued the border was the

⁵⁷ There is a deep and complicated history with mestizo identity as well as criticism against the term. However, for this dissertation, I use the term solely to highlight the mixing of races and ethnicities as it occurred in Latin American and the U.S. Southwest. Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "'Mestizo' and mulatto': Mixed-race identities among U.S. Hispanics," Pew Research Center, July 10, 2015, Last accessed December 28, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/10/mestizo-and-mulatto-mixed-race-identities-unique-to-hispanics/>.

⁵⁸ John Emory Dean, *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), Digital Edition, 23.

⁵⁹ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans In the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 26-27.

Rio Grande, which put the Valley as an American territory. At the same time, Mexico claimed the border was the Nueces River, which was just south of San Antonio.⁶⁰ Once the United States won the war, the border was officially recognized as the Rio Grande to solidify the Valley as U.S. territory. However, war's end did not end the violence in the Valley or the state. Like after the Texas Revolution, the aftermath of the U.S.-Mexico War would see a continuation of violence directed at Chicana people. Segregationist policies would apply onto people of Mexican heritage, while racialized violence would see Chicana people becoming victims of lynchings much like African Americans across the South.⁶¹ Also, it would see to state-sponsored violence with the Texas Rangers and starting in the 1920s with Border Patrol agents assaulting and killing Chicanas across the border.⁶² Despite the violence and into the 20th century, it also sowed the seeds of massive, economic exploitation of the Valley as a border community.

At the end of the 19th century, a transnational gaze would fall onto the Valley from both sides of the border. On the American side, Anglo farm interests and land developers saw a profit in the development of the Valley. Anglos would refer to the Valley as the "Magic Valley" to help lure businesses and investments into the Valley for their profit following a growth in the agricultural industry and the rail lines that connected the Valley to other parts of the country.⁶³ Anglos would not do so alone as wealthy Chicanas would participate in this process such as the McAllen family.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, in Mexico, the administration of Porfirio Diaz took part in efforts

⁶⁰ "Mexican-American War," History.com (November 9, 2009, Updated June 6, 2019), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.history.com/topics/mexican-american-war/mexican-american-war>.

⁶¹ Montejano, 82-85.

⁶² Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 59-62; Monica Muñoz-Martínez, "Recuperating Histories of Violence in the Americas: Vernacular History-Making on the U.S.-Mexico Border," *American Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2014): 665-667.

⁶³ Montejano, 107-108.

⁶⁴ Patriarch of the McAllen family, John McAllen, would marry Salome Balli, a wealthy Chicana woman, to expand his access to economic power in the Valley. A deep dive of the McAllen family's patriarch and matriarch in Chapter III.

to modernize Mexico through industrialization.⁶⁵ While President Diaz focused mostly on and around Mexico City, Americans and other wealthy investors generated immense wealth in Mexican industries as the railroad connected northern Mexico and the U.S., further developing the economic capital flowing across the U.S.-Mexico border.⁶⁶ Most of this growth would only profit already wealthy individuals as more impoverished Mexicans suffered under Diaz's modernization campaign, sparking the widespread economic inequality that helped catalyze the Mexican Revolution of 1910. However, the modernization efforts and growth of the agricultural industries occurring on both sides of the border throughout the 20th century deepened the Valley's ties to international finances that would boom after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 despite the harm NAFTA did to workers on the border.⁶⁷ The ease with which goods crossed the border and the favoritism shown to corporations came at the expense of agricultural and industrial workers. Wages remained low, as did poor working conditions and the closure of family-owned farms and businesses.

However, it is this history of modernization that sparked pushback from workers, especially those in the agricultural sector. The Farm Workers Movement took off in the United States through the United Farm Workers formation, mobilizing workers in the Valley and along the border.⁶⁸ Farmworkers in the Valley would protest unfair working conditions as they did

⁶⁵ Juan Carlos Moreno-Brid and Jaime Ros, *Development and Growth in the Mexican Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5-6; Steven Bunker, *Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Diaz* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 7.

⁶⁶ Juan Mora-Torres, *The Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo Leon, 1848-1910* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 10; Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 9; Bunker, 37.

⁶⁷ Chad Richardson, *Batos, Bolillos, Pochos, and Pelados: Class and Culture on the South Texas Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), Kindle Edition, Location 220, 541, and 2164; David Bacon, *The Children of NAFTA: Labor Wars on the U.S./Mexico Border* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 2004), 13, 48, and 49.

⁶⁸ Montejano, 283-284; Richardson, Loc 506 and 545. While not focusing on the UFW activists, Mexican workers protested in through other organizations across the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, especially Mexican women. 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), xv and 106; Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 110-112.

elsewhere. It also made their protests different, though, as many of these workers were migrating back and forth from Mexico. Furthermore, due to the proximity of the Valley to the border, it meant a higher level of vulnerability for these workers as it was easier for them to get replaced, which made their activism all the more crucial and difficult sustain.⁶⁹

The demographics of the Valley would shift from the growth of Anglo-owned farms while also becoming increasingly dependent upon Chicanx and other migrant laborers. Later in the 20th century, more shifts would occur from an expansion of migrant workers and “Winter Texans.”⁷⁰ It would also experience population growth near the end of the 20th century due to more people across the country electing to live in the Valley full-time. Part of these numbers would also come from former Valley residents who left upon finishing high school to pursue higher education and careers outside of the Valley returning to the Valley to start new businesses or jobs, raise their families, and care for their aging relatives.⁷¹ No matter the motivations behind moving to the Valley, the population there experienced continued growth since the end of WWII. However, these numbers are somewhat inaccurate and perpetually on the lower side due to census reports not always documenting every resident of a space, primarily since the Valley is known to have a significant population of (undocumented) immigrants.⁷²

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “Winter Texans” is a commonly used phrase in the Valley that refers primarily to Anglos from northern states and Canada who reside in the Valley during the winter months. However, “Winter Texans” is increasingly used for non-Anglos as well, such as Chicanxs who are not from the Valley who choose to move there during winter.

⁷¹ From the various interviews I conducted, there are some reoccurring reasons from Valley residents who left the Valley only to return years later. They most often cited business-related opportunities, raising their families, and caring for elder relatives (typically their parents) amongst their primary motives for returning. Few cited the Valley’s low-cost of living as motivation to return. Bobby, interviewed by Michael Rangel, telephone interview with author, Lubbock, January 6, 2016; Michael, interview by Michael Rangel, personal interview, McAllen, July 7, 2016.

⁷² Efforts to document undocumented immigrants have grown in recent years as their presence is well-known in colonias, however, getting an accurate number of undocumented and documented immigrants remained a persistent problem as immigration policies came into affect on the Valley. Chad Richardson and Rosalva Resendiz, *On the Edge of the Law: Culture, Labor, and Deviance on the South Texas Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 124.

The Valley would undergo several population boom throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but some of the most significant would occur based on the 1980 and 1990 census records. From the 1960 census, the population was rather small, reflecting the more rural nature of the Valley during this time, like McAllen, Brownsville, and Harlingen were only small cities. For example in Cameron County, the cities of Brownsville, Harlingen, and San Benito's total population were only slightly above 151,000 people in 1960.⁷³ However, as former residents began to migrate back to the Valley between 1980-1990 as well as increased immigration from Mexico and Central America, the 1990 census reflected this population growth with the Brownsville-Harlingen-San Benito area's total population rising to 167,822 people.⁷⁴ The population of the Valley would further explode as documented between the 2000-2010 census that coincided with the urbanization of the Valley as the city of Brownsville alone would have a total population of 183,392 people.⁷⁵ McAllen would experience similar growth as 1990 census shows a population of over 84,000 people rising to over 143,000 in the 2010 census.⁷⁶

As more factories and non-agricultural industries took root in the Valley, it allowed for more urban development, which allowed for a growth in population as well as the start of the diversification of its population. The 1960 census notes the presence of African Americans, Native Americans, and specific Asian demographics, which included Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, and Malayan as part of the demographics that the census noted. However,

⁷³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States. Census of Population: 1960. Volume I: Characteristics of the Population," U.S. Department of Commerce. Part 45, Texas. 45-667.

⁷⁴ United States Bureau of the Census, "1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics," U.S. Department of Commerce. Texas 5, 8, 12.

⁷⁵ United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Brownsville City, Texas; Cameron County, Texas; Hidalgo County, Texas," Last Accessed December 28, 2019.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/brownsvillecitytexas,cameroncountytexas,hidalgocountytexas/PST045218>.

⁷⁶ United States Bureau of the Census, "1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics," Texas 8; United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: McAllen City, Texas; Hidalgo County, Texas," Last Accessed October 30, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mcallencitytexas,hidalgocountytexas/PST045219>.

these other minority groups were relatively minuscule compared to the “White” category. However, the “White” racial category in the census is remarkably misleading. Latinx people carried the legal recognition of being counted as White, since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, however, census documentation mostly ignored Latinx heritage except on certain recording years where they made some effort to recognize Mexican as a classification while other Latinx people like Puerto Ricans would get categorized as Black.⁷⁷ It would remain somewhat inconsistent until in the 1970 census when the census introduced the term Hispanic.⁷⁸ Previous representation appeared inconsistently in census records when it came to documenting Latinx people such as the case of the 1960 census which included “Persons of Mexican birth or ancestry who are not definitely of Indian or other non-white race are classified as white.”⁷⁹ Those with visibly indigenous physical features, most likely based on skin color, might self-identify as Native Americans, or the enumerators may have taken it upon themselves to record them as such on census forms. The inclusion of Hispanic into the census allowed for more precise documentation of those with Latinx heritage, especially with early efforts to highlight those of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban heritage specifically, while ignoring other Latin American nationalities.

Moreover, without much notation on if residents were of Latinx heritage on the prior census, it makes dividing Latinx residents from Anglo residents difficult unless reviewing their surnames. A method of documenting surnames that is not always accurate as some Anglos and other European ethnic groups have surnames that are commonly associated with Spanish

⁷⁷ Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), Chapter 1.

⁷⁸ There would be a brief exception to this classification in the 1930 census, which did recognize “Mexican” as a category. D’vera Cohn, “Census History: Counting Hispanics,” Pew Research Center (March 3, 2010), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/03/03/census-history-counting-hispanics-2/>

⁷⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, “The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States,” Part 45, Texas. Introduction, xx.

heritage.⁸⁰ Furthermore, this problem does not include another issue coming from the erasure of the *colonia* population along the border as they are routinely ignored and undercounted.⁸¹

With the inclusion of the term Hispanic in the census, despite the problematic nature of the term, it allowed for greater recognition of the diversity and more accurately counted people of Latinx heritage.⁸² As the information on the census became broader such as including housing conditions, it allowed for a more accurate representation of the Valley and the rapidly changing demographics of the region. For example, where the Asian population in the Valley during 1960 was only a few hundred in both Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, by the 1990 census, that number rose to over a 1000 Asians in Hidalgo County alone.⁸³ These demographic changes highlight an increasingly diverse Valley but also demonstrate how the push for civil rights and changes in politics would undergo significant changes between 1968-2000.

The political roots of the Valley carry a relatively consistent history due to the Anglo population mostly maintaining control. It was only after the Civil Rights Movement did the Valley, like other places in the American South, saw a change in local politics with people of Chicanx heritage gaining political power. These changes allowed for proper recognition of the

⁸⁰ For example, my last name "Rangel" while it is a known Spanish-surname, it also appears as a common German-surname. This problem makes it difficult to sort out many Spanish-surnames from other European groups to find as an accurate number as possible. It also does not include the issue if a person of Latin heritage changed their last name to a more Anglo sounding one or if a Latinx woman married an Anglo man. Elizabeth Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 158.

⁸¹ *Colonias* are unincorporated, slum-like territories along the U.S.-Mexico border that are primarily populated by Latinx persons. These impoverished areas lack virtually every form of public resources from clean drinking water to public schools. It is commonly viewed as a community made up of undocumented immigrants. Gaby Galvin, "On the Border, Out of the Shadows: In Texas' poorest communities, substandard living conditions and health concerns about – but local efforts are proving hope," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 16, 2018, Last Accessed: September 2, 2020. <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2018-05-16/americas-third-world-border-colonias-in-texas-struggle-to-attain-services>.

⁸² Cohn, "Census History: Counting Hispanics."

⁸³ The number from the 1960 Census is a reflection based upon the collection of Japanese, Filipino, and Malayan descent as specific by that census report. Meanwhile, the 1990 Census includes both Asian and Pacific Islanders in their total of Asian descent. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States. Census of Population: 1960. Volume I: Characteristics of the Population," U.S. Department of Commerce. Part 45,

demographics of the region as Chicanxs made up a majority of the population, which made their needs and demands heard.

Before the 1970s, most elected officials in the Valley were often Anglo or wealthy Chicanxs. Despite being a minority population, Anglos wielded a disproportionate amount of political power in the Valley that they used to maintain control for much of the late nineteenth and twentieth century.⁸⁴ Anglo domination in politics transferred beyond just elected office and played a crucial role in preserving racism in the public education and health care systems. While this dissertation sees a more in-depth discussion of both public education and public health in the following chapters, the Anglo politicians spent about a century drafting legislation ensured that other Anglos received access to quality education and health care.⁸⁵ At the same time, the majority Chicancx population was left without and struggling to resist such discrimination. The discrepancies in access to quality school and medical care ensured limited opportunities for Chicanxs.⁸⁶ These inconsistencies ensured that Chicancx concerns were not considered legitimate enough because of the racism that operated in public health.⁸⁷ This discussion on racism within public health goes beyond the labeling of racial and ethnic minorities as a potential health danger to the Anglo population, which public health historians have long documented.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it also highlights how health care workers mistreat minorities due to racial biases that include

Texas. Introduction, xx; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics," Texas 41.

⁸⁴ Evan Anders, "Boss Rule and Constituent Interests: South Texas Politics During the Progressive Era," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* Vol. 84, No. 3 (January 1981): 269; Montejano, 133, 143, and 147-148.

⁸⁵ Jennifer Rose Nájera, *Troublemakers, Religiosos, or Radicals? Everyday Acts of Racial Integration in a South Texas Community*, Dissertation (Dec 2005) University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Special Collections, 1 and 18-19.

⁸⁶ Montejano, 191-195; Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 38.

⁸⁷ Montejano, 191-195.

⁸⁸ Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Kindle Edition, 6-8 and 19; John McKiernan Gonzalez, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 67

poorer etiquette to minority patients or outright dismissing their healthcare concerns, which leaves minorities more susceptible to misdiagnosed injuries and diseases.⁸⁹

These political implications would also affect homeownership policies in the Valley. Like elsewhere in Jim Crow America, the Valley suffered from similar laws that restricted who could own homes in a particular area regardless of income.⁹⁰ Many deeds written at this time explicitly state that Mexicans, Blacks, and other minorities could not buy some houses. These restrictions forced minorities to reside in impoverished areas if they could not pass as Anglos.⁹¹ In one such deed, it explicitly states, “No person of any race other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or lot in said Cedar Place Subdivision, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of residents in said Subdivision of a different race, domiciled with an owner or tenant.”⁹² It would take until the 1970s for these restrictions to become illegal. However, there remain efforts to maintain this segregation even in the Valley through income barriers and the creation of gated communities that specifically target minorities.⁹³

A significant portion of Valley history sees most local politicians winning into elected office as Democrats. Prior the 1940s, Valley Democrats maintained their support for racial

⁸⁹ Monique Tello, MD, MPH, “Racism and Discrimination in Health Care: Providers and Patients,” Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Health Blog (January 16, 2017), Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/racism-discrimination-health-care-providers-patients-2017011611015>.

⁹⁰ AAPF: The African American Policy Forum, “Segregation,” Last Accessed December 28, 2019. <https://aapf.org/segregation>. Similar segregation policies would also be applied onto Chicanxs as they were onto Blacks.

⁹¹ Various deeds to land and houses came with clauses that forbade Chicanxs from owning and residing in the space. Gordon Griffin, Notary Public in and for Hidalgo County, Texas “#36205 Jane Gabel Thompson et VIR The State of Texas County of Hidalgo Restriction to the Public.” April 24-25, 1940. 289-291. A copy of this form was gifted to me from my uncle who works in the office of deeds in Hidalgo County, Texas.

⁹² Quote appears in Article VIII of document. *Ibid.*, 290.

⁹³ Rubén O. Martinez, eds., *Latinos in the Midwest*, “Institutional Obstacles to Incorporation: Latino Immigrant Experiences in a Midsize Rust-Belt City” by Theo J. Majka and Linda C. Majka, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), Digital Edition; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 114-115.

segregation, the political disenfranchisement and economic inequalities of Chicanxs.⁹⁴ As World War II began, the support for segregation declined as more Chicanxs fought against segregation with the support of Anglos and the Valley's Democratic Party. However, the push for an increasingly democratic Valley came with significant resistance from Anglos but also from wealthy Chicanxs too who profited from the racial status quo.

Politics in the Valley tend to err on the conservative side of the political spectrum even as this region tends to vote Democratic for local, state, and national elections.⁹⁵ Furthermore, as the Valley has undergone what we would call liberal and progressive changes through policy action, it is unwise to confuse Valley voters and politics as fundamentally tied to liberalism or progressivism. Valley politics may encourage leftist support when it comes to issues like racial discrimination and immigration reform. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, that does not always translate to other voting issues as it pertains to women's reproductive rights and queer rights.⁹⁶ When it comes to issues like gender and sexual equality or policing along the U.S.-Mexican border, conservative ideologies tend to win in part due to the patriarchal roots as they operate in the Valley, most often seen through the lens of machismo and the Catholic faith that dominate the region. It is this conservatism that while the Valley largely votes for Democratic politicians, these Democrats tend to draft and vote for more conservative leaning policies at the

⁹⁴ Similar debates appear in the 1930s between Progressive Democrats and Conservative Democrats as they argued over the future of South Texas. Anders, 269; Montejano, 162-163, 195 and 262-264.

⁹⁵ Anders and Montejano both point to an early history of conservative politics dominating the Valley even with Democrats elected into office. The push for conservatives lingers to the present as both locals and non-locals understand the conservative leaning of many Chicanxs even as they continue to vote for Democrats on racial issues, but support more conservative Democrats or are willing to vote in Republicans for the U.S. Senate or presidency when it comes to issues like abortion and gay rights. Elizabeth Pierson, "Republican leaders aim for McAllen legislative seat," *The Brownsville Herald*, September 6, 2005. https://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/local/republican-leaders-aim-for-mcallen-legislative-seat/article_b37764ae-17dd-5a5d-9aed-db05bb1c28a3.html; Jay Root, "Abbott Sets Sights on 'The Bluest Part of a Red State'," *Texas Tribune*, September 21, 2014. <https://www.texastribune.org/2014/09/21/abbott-hunt-hispanic-votes/>; Teo Armus and Hannah Wiley, "Ted Cruz targets conservative Hispanics in deep-blue Rio Grande Valley," *Texas Tribune*, October 30, 2018. <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/10/30/ted-cruz-beto-orourke-texas-rio-grande-valley/>.

Texas Legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. And this conservatism allows Republicans to take advantage of the Valley to their benefit as seen with President Ronald Reagan winning Cameron County during his 1984 reelection, pushing Republicans to pay closer attention to the Valley as seen with President Donald Trump's visits to the Valley.⁹⁷

In speaking on culture, while the Valley's population is becoming increasingly diverse, Valley culture still carries a degree of consistency when looking at the emphasis of Mexican culture. However, that does not mean all Chicaxs in the Valley behave and share the same beliefs. It is necessary to recognize that culture varies even within the Valley. Given that Valley is a majority Chicax population, it shares strong cultural ties with Mexico. And based on demographics, this culture ties itself heavily to Catholic traditions.

The Catholic heritage of the Valley plays a critical role in shaping its culture and identity for people on the border. Due to the role Spanish colonization played in shaping the Valley, Catholicism dominates the region even as more religious faiths, including those outside of the Christian denominations, are growing in size.⁹⁸ The popularity of Catholicism in the Valley shapes much of its cultural heritage as expectations of family formation, civic duty, and morality have its ties to Catholic teachings. Although this connection to Catholicism differs for Chicaxs in the Valley, then it does for other racial and ethnic groups and regions of the United States.

Typically, U.S. Catholicism is closer to the European traditions except along its southern borders where places like the Valley experienced a deeper connection to the Latin American

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Haynes Johnson and David Maraniss, "Looking Ahead in the Rio Grande Valley," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1988, Last Accessed December 28, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/09/19/looking-ahead-in-the-rio-grande-valley/f713b2c8-5244-47ff-b12b-b720638be4a7/>; Rick Jervis, "As Trump visit border, McAllen residents ask: What crisis?" *USA Today*, January 10, 2019, Last Accessed: October 31, 2020. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/01/10/trump-visits-border-mcallen-residents-ask-what-crisis/2535007002/>.

traditions of Catholicism that openly mixed elements of the European traditions with Indigenous and African religious and spiritual traditions.⁹⁹ Although the European and Latin American traditions considerably overlap in terms of their teachings, the Latin American traditions tend to skew more along the lines of progressive ideologies and are not quite as rigid as the European traditions. Examples of this include liberation theology as it is was formed and popularized in Latin American churches as a means of promoting social justice for oppressed people.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, European churches tend to promote stricter obedience to authority.¹⁰¹ And while liberation theology never took off entirely in the Valley as it did in Latin America, elements of it did reach the Valley. For example, Anglo Catholics attempted or successfully prevented Chicano Catholics from participating in certain Mexican Catholic traditions such as *El Día de Los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) or kneeling before the altar as Anglos viewed such practices as foreign or pagan rather a part of Catholic, cultural traditions.¹⁰² And its teaching did affect how the Catholic Church operated on the border community as different Churches would incorporate elements of Latin American Catholic traditions while others remained closer to European traditions.

⁹⁸ Felipe Hinojosa, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 2 and 18-24.

⁹⁹ Paul E. Sigmund, "Latin American Catholicism's Opening to the Left," *The Review of Politics* Vol. 35, No. 1 (January 1973): 63-65; John Frederick Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America: From Conquest to Revolution and Beyond* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4-5 and 95.

¹⁰⁰ Schwaller, 249-250.

¹⁰¹ This observation comes from several readings and contemporary news reports over the Catholic Church in the United States as it varies differently by region and ethnicity. Catholic Churches with a robust Latinx population tend to be more progressive either through more visibly lending their voice to different social justice causes. Compared to Catholic Churches with a robust (Anglo) European population as they tend to be more visibly conservative and resistant to social justice causes. And although liberation theology largely dissipated since the 1990s, vestiges of it remain in the contemporary Church as it relates to Latinx populations. Olivia Singer, "Liberation Theology in Latin America," *Modern Latin America web supplement for 8th Edition*, Brown University Libraries, Last Accessed December 28, 2019. <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-15-culture-and-society/essays-on-culture-and-society/liberation-theology-in-latin-america/>.

¹⁰² Examples of such division as they appeared in La Feria, Texas where Anglo and Mexican Catholics constantly clashed over how to practice their faiths in the Church and in public. See: Jennifer R Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 44-47.

The most visible representation of this Catholic heritage comes from the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle in San Juan. This original wooden chapel was built in 1920 and would see the construction of a larger shrine completed in 1954. Built in devotion to the Virgin Mary as the Latin American Catholic traditions pay greater tribute to her above all other Saints due to the Native American heritage often connecting women/femininity with piety and peace.¹⁰³ Tragically, a small plane would crash into the shrine in 1970, destroying the shrine. Miraculously, of the 200 people at the shrine, none were injured, and no one died except for the pilot. The shrine was rebuilt in 1976 and Pope John Paul II would declare the shrine a basilica in 1999, making the San Juan shrine a site of holy pilgrimage for Catholics.¹⁰⁴

Valley culture, like other heavily Chicano areas in Texas, ties itself to a Tejano culture and a ranching heritage that goes back to the colonial era. “Tejano” as a term typically identifies persons of Mexican-American heritage from Texas, although, as Daniel D. Arreola notes, that such terms are not without conflict, as some individuals come to identify themselves as Tejano without ever residing in Texas.¹⁰⁵ And Tejano culture is furthered tied to the visual representations, mannerisms, and other cultural links such as food and music as a hybridization of American/Texan and Mexican customs.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “Our History,” Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan Del Valle National Shrine, Last Accessed December 13, 2019. <https://www.olsjbasilica.org/about-us/history>. For a discussion on the indigenous connection to women as peacekeepers and the significance of the Virgin Mary as a symbol for indigenous people review: Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), Kindle Edition, Location 189 and 566.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* According to their website, the basilica is one of the most visited shrines in the United States as it receives around a million visitors every year.

¹⁰⁵ Daniel D. Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 8.

¹⁰⁶ Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, eds., *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 122-123; Guadalupe San Miguel, *Tejano Proud: Tex-Mex Music in the Twentieth Century* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 5-6

For Chicane men, in particular, the Valley's Tejano culture reflects itself in the fashion aesthetic of the *vaquero* (cowboy).¹⁰⁷ Even in the present-day Valley, it is still common to see Chicane men regardless of age and no matter the occasion dressed in boots, a long-sleeved shirt tucked into their jeans, and a cowboy hat. And this visible representation of Tejano culture is all the more apparent as one visits the Valley and observes as many Chicane men who do not work on a ranch or in the agricultural sector yet continue to adopt this aesthetic. Whereas for Chicane women, Tejano culture sees women incorporate similar fashions as Chicane men in terms of wearing boots and other clothing appropriate for agricultural work. Chicane women also incorporate more traditional feminine fashions with dresses. However, contemporary Tejano culture sees more women dressing in clothing typically associated with men as gendered norms of clothing have generally relaxed for women in the last twenty-thirty years.¹⁰⁸

Like fashion, Tejano music remains popular amongst the Chicane population in the Valley and throughout South Texas to this day. Like the Valley itself, Tejano music is a hybrid genre created on the borderlands. It blends several musical styles as it adopts instruments and tones from Central European, Mexican, and other Latin American traditions to create its unique sound.¹⁰⁹ The popularity of Tejano music grew as it was something distinctly Chicane that distanced itself from other American and Mexican musical genres that often dismissed the talents of Chicane musicians. Tejano music's popularity would explode towards the late 1980s and early

¹⁰⁷ Martin W. Sandler, *Vaqueros: America's First Cowmen* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001), 25.

¹⁰⁸ Part of this evidence comes from reviewing multiple yearbooks from Valley public schools and advertising from local newspapers. Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016), 22. For other examples see: Edinburg Junior High, *The Wildcat '76*, (Edinburg, Tx: Graduating Class of 1976); Edinburg High School, *Edinburg High School Bobcats On Stage '79*, (Edinburg, Tx: Graduating Class of 1979); Edinburg High School, *Soaring into the '80s*, (Edinburg, Tx: Graduating Class of 1980); Sharyland High School, *El Cascabel 1986*, (Mission, Tx: Graduating Class of 1986).

¹⁰⁹ The history of Tejano music sees Central Europeans musicians fleeing northern Mexico during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and arriving in South Texas, where they performed on rancheros alongside Chicane musicians for a Chicane audience. Manuel H. Peña, *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 29; San Miguel, 5.

1990s as performers like Corpus Christi-native, Selena Quintanilla-Perez, would crossover from an almost exclusive Chicana audiences to appeal to Mexican and Anglo American audiences.¹¹⁰

In particular, Selena would play a crucial role in facilitating the crossover appeal of Chicana, Latina, and Latin American musicians.¹¹¹ At the height of her popularity, both Spanish and English radio stations played her songs. Selena's success also broke barriers for Chicana women as male musicians largely dominated Tejano music, so when she won a Grammy, it proved to the music industry and other musicians the talent of female musicians. Furthermore, in appealing to such a diverse audience, Selena's fame would create opportunities for other Latina musicians. Female musicians like Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, and Becky G built upon Selena's success as a crossover musician while still retaining Latin beats and Spanish lyrics in their music.¹¹² The significance of musicians like Selena, even after her tragic death, is still felt throughout the Valley, and elsewhere, as her music continues to air on local radio, at every family party, at *quinceañeras* (fifteenth birthday parties), and public events alongside growing interests of studying Selena through Chicana feminism and queer Chicana theory.¹¹³ And even as more American genres of rock, hip-hop, and pop music thrive in the Valley alongside other Spanish genres such as reggaeton, Tejano music's presence sees that it will not fade from the popular culture anytime soon.

While this discussion on Valley culture explored areas like religion and ethnic ties, a discussion on culture also requires an understanding of gender. Due to the Valley's experiences

¹¹⁰ Peña, 184; San Miguel, 89-91.

¹¹¹ San Miguel, 110-112; Michelle Habell-Pallán and Mary Romero, *Latino/a Popular Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 117-119.

¹¹² Entertainer, Jennifer Lopez, would, in particular, owe her fame to Selena after portraying her in the self-titled biopic released two years after Selena's murder. *Selena* (1997)

¹¹³ Deborah Paredez, *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 28 and 161; Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 192-193; Maria Morales and Brianne Tracy, "25 Years After Losing Selena:

with colonization and Catholicism, they affected how gender norms developed as providing limitations to how people can express themselves. As noted in the previous chapter, the concepts of machismo and marianismo apply a set of codes that promotes narrow expressions of gender while also created a complicated hierarchy of power.¹¹⁴ As Chicanxs experienced discrimination against Anglos, this binary expressed itself in the discrimination of Chicanx women from Chicanx men.¹¹⁵ Chapters IV, V, and VI provide more meaningful case studies of how Chicanxs in the Valley would challenge the gendered culture that limited their ability to affectively attain reproductive and sexual healthcare without accusations of sexual immorality; this section provides a critical overview of the culture that sparked Chicanx women and queer Chicanx resistance.¹¹⁶

As discussed in the introduction, machismo and marianismo as concepts are not restricted only to Chicanx or Latinx people; however, the roles these concepts play in constructing gender cannot go ignored.¹¹⁷ Machismo in shaping the Chicanx man reflected in expressions of hypermasculinity that often include sexual conquest of women, physically dominating other men, be it through violence or athleticism, and strict control over their families as the husband and

The Late Queen of Tejano Music Still Reigns—And Her Family is Ensuring that She Will Never be Forgotten,” *People Magazine*, March 23, 2020, 55-57.

¹¹⁴ Tracy Bachrach Ehlers, "Debunking Marianismo: Economic Vulnerability and Survival Strategies among Guatemalan Wives," *Ethnology* Vol. 30, No. 1, (January 1991): 1-2. DOI: 10.2307/3773494; Lionel Cantu, Jr., *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 75-77

¹¹⁵ Richardson, Location 3231; Michael Hames-Garcia and Erneso Javier Martinez, eds., *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 121-122.

¹¹⁶ These accusations would affect men and women, and queer and straight people differently. Straight men would not receive questioning or harassment based on their (perceived) sexual history, whereas straight women and queer people experienced heightened questioning and harassment from medical providers regardless of their real sexual history. Example: a queer man would have medical providers harassing him for engaging in anal intercourse once with another man even when using a condom, whereas a straight man who never used a condom and engaged in sex with multiple women would not experience such harassment. Such treatment was not limited to the Valley, but such views remain persistent.

¹¹⁷ Alfredo Mirande, *Hombres Y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 66.

father.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, marianismo for the Chicana women promotes the chastity of women, appearing submissive to men, and to fulfill the role of wife and mother.¹¹⁹ And from this gender binary, it promoted a strict gender code that blatantly discriminates against women. It pushed women into a marginalized position where their voices and concerns largely ignored as their sexuality underwent constant policing.¹²⁰ This gender binary also constructed a prohibition of queerness that promoted the marginalization and silencing of queer Chicanos. Similar to other communities, this prohibition resulted in various forms of homophobia that ranged from ignoring queerness to outright violence, even on those who appeared as a little queer. For some Chicanos, it led to further division as more conservative Chicanos believed that homosexuality/queerness originates in Anglo or European culture, and therefore, queer Chicanos became viewed as race traitors.¹²¹ This ideology reflecting the links that Chicanos made in overemphasizing Indigenous roots and the continued association of La Malinche as a race traitor.

Building upon the Valley's gender culture, it exposes the operation of family culture and politics. Gender roles reinforce the power of the Chicana husband/father over his family. Although this role is by no means exclusive only to the Chicana/Latina household as patriarchal driven cultures all express the dominance of the male over the household.¹²² The cultural heritage of the Valley yields greater power of the Chicana man over his family. The

¹¹⁸ David Abalos, *The Latino Male: A Radical Redefinition*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 11 and 21.

¹¹⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Fourth Edition (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 1987), 103-104; Gloria Gonzalez-Lopez, *Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 38-39

¹²⁰ Blackwell, 30-31 and 96-98.

¹²¹ The discussion of homosexuality and queerness as tied to being "race traitors" is not limited to Chicana or Latina people. Similar discussions also appear in Black, Native American, and Asian communities as they view homosexuality/queerness as originating from Anglo culture. This discussion also appears in white supremacist circles, too, as they interpret homosexuality and queerness as belonging and originating to racial minorities and, therefore, responsible for tainting whiteness. Paul Allatson, "'Siempre Feliz en Mi Falda': Luis Alfaro's Simulative Challenge" *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2 (1999): 212-214; Sandra Marie Loughrin, "Queer Chicano Families: The Importance of Converging Literature on Queer Families, Chicano Families, and Chicano Queers," *Sociology Compass* Vol. 9, No. 3 (2015): 228.

discrimination of the Chicana man in public from an Anglo dominated society pushes the Chicana man to express greater control over his household while aggravating the discrimination that Chicana women experience at the hand of the Chicana men.¹²³ Much of the cultural behavior manifests itself on the premise of respect for family hierarchy.¹²⁴ Even adult children demonstrate submission to their parents with such respect not always being fairly reciprocated, especially for Chicana women who experience more control by their parents even as adults when compared to their other male relatives.¹²⁵ This family culture demonstrates a gendered difference where the Chicana male dominates the family and only expects financial support as parents enter old age even as the expectation for Chicana women to display more care and sacrifice their emotional well-being for the family on top of financial support.¹²⁶ However, that does not mean that Chicana women blindly accepted such control. Many would actively pushback against their family's control from moving away from the Valley or forcing their brothers to share the emotional burden of the family.

While Valley culture expresses itself along with a bordered identity through a blending of American and Mexican norms, the unstable divisions of power also breed a culture of repression.

¹²² Richard Rodriguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 19-23.

¹²³ Dionne Espinoza, "Revolutionary Sisters: Women's Solidarity And Collective Identification Among Chicana Brown Berets In East Los Angeles, 1967-1970," *Aztlan*, 26:1 (Spring 2001): 32-33; Blackwell, 30-31 and 96-98.

¹²⁴ Rodriguez, *Next of Kin*, 44-45.

¹²⁵ Melissa M. Ertl, et al., "Longitudinal Associations between Marianismo Beliefs and Acculturative Stress among Latina Immigrants during Initial Years in the United States," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 66 (6), (November 2019): 665-77. DOI:10.1037/cou0000361. This study included Latinas from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. And while this study focused on Latinas in Miami-Dade County, Florida, Latina women that I intervned for the dissertation and based on other readings experienced similar pressures from their family as this study reports.

¹²⁶ Juan Castillo, "Latina Researcher: Is Strict, Controlling Parenting Hurting Our Kids?" *NBC News*, June 25, 2015, Last Accessed: December 14, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/new-take-respeto-authoritarian-parenting-among-latinos-n381131>; Ebelia Hernández, "Balancing Dreams and Realities: The College Choice Process for High-Achieving Latinas," *Journal of Latinos and Education* 14 (3) (January 2015): 204 and 208-209. While Hernández's article does not express a negative portrayal of family influence in the college decision process as many of the Latinas in the article chose a school closer to home. It is more at a symbolic level that Latinas are more willing to make this sacrifice than Latinos.

Anglo dominance in economics and politics created a culture of discrimination that marks Chicaxs people and their culture as inferior to Anglo cultural norms. Moreover, even within Chicax culture, even with its ties to spirituality and family, it constructs a culture that privileges Chicax men. At the same time, it silences and limits the contributions of Chicax women and queer Chicaxs.

Understanding Valley culture helps to expose what makes queer culture in the Valley. Queerness in the Valley expresses itself like a border culture, recognizing how much of Valley culture is tied to the border. Queer Valley culture blends Valley culture, Chicax culture, and American culture to construct something unique onto itself.

When away from the homophobic and patriarchal elements of the Valley, queer Chicaxs express themselves in ways that blur gender norms. The most visible expressions come in the form of dress. Queer Chicaxs often utilized appropriate gendered clothing for their gender, like the Tejano fashion aesthetic, which was popular amongst queer Chicax men.¹²⁷ Queer Chicax men are also known for being more open to blurring those fashion norms, emphasizing flamboyance clothing, and engaging in cross-dressing, while queer women regardless of race often dress in “men’s” clothing out of comfort or to portray their sense of masculinity.¹²⁸

During the 1970s and part of the 1980s, it was still reasonably uncommon to see Chicax women in jeans and t-shirts outside of the home as that was considered masculine clothing. Queer women often served as the primary figures in challenging notions of gendered clothing as they wore clothes and colors that society associated with men, mostly out of the comfort and

¹²⁷ Ramon H. Rivera-Servera, *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 176-177. While this section of monograph focused on gay Chicaxs and bars in Arizona, similar behavior and fashion occurred in the Valley too when looking at styles of dress.

¹²⁸ Aída Hurtado and Norma E. Cantú, *MeXicana Fashion: Politics, Self-Adornment, and Identity Construction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 224-225.

utility that traditionally men's clothes offers.¹²⁹ For queer men, they too would blur these gendered lines through certain fabric choices and colors, but less often in wearing feminine clothing due there being physical danger or potential criminal charges in men wearing a dress than a woman wearing jeans.¹³⁰ While uncommon, it did not mean that queer men did not wear feminine fashion, as there was a drag scene in the Valley and along the border, although it was far more underground compared to urban spaces both in and out of the state.¹³¹

Aside from these fashion markers, information on queer culture in the Valley is limited due to the operations of the closet. Queer Chicanxs experienced a chilling silence that left them unable to explore their sexuality in public, unlike their heterosexual peers, as visible signs of same-sex relationships such as holding hands could lead to violence. Like other rural spaces, they existed limitations in where they could explore their queerness in social spaces as there were very few gay bars and nightclubs within driving distance.¹³² For the 1970s, there was only one active gay bar in the Valley located in McAllen with it taking until the 1980s for another to open in McAllen and one to open in Brownsville. The limited options for a nightlife meant that queer Chicanxs relied on house parties to interact with one another, which meant two significant barriers.¹³³ First, queer Chicanxs would need to privately know other queer Chicanxs, which was challenging to do when everyone stayed in the closet to survive the homophobia in the Valley.

¹²⁹ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Heresy: A Feminist Perspective on the Lesbian Sexual Revolution* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1993), 127-128; Mary McAuliffe and Sonja Tiernan, *Tribades, Tommies and Transgressives: Histories of Sexualities: Volume I* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), 302.

¹³⁰ In the United States and elsewhere, individuals could have criminal charges filed against them for engaging in cross-dressing. Within the United States, some anti-cross-dressing laws tied directly to sodomy laws. Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2-3 and 14.

¹³¹ It would take until the 1980s before a proper drag scene would form in the Valley when enough gay bars opened that were willing to allow drag performance as public officials and police officers were quick to criminalize queer spaces. While this experience was not limited to the Valley, the Valley being a smaller community and further away from major cities meant it was easier to target and ignore queer people. Rangel, 50-52.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 49-51.

¹³³ Gabriel Sanchez, Lecture, McAllen Public Library, McAllen, Texas, June 9, 2016.

And second, queer Chicanxs would need to be homeowners so that they could host parties.¹³⁴

These few options for queer Chicanxs to publicly interact also translated to the absence of other activities that did not involve bars. It would take until the 1980s for queer student organizations to form at the local universities, and it was not until the 1990s that queer-affirming churches opened their doors. And with limited spaces to socialize and affirm their queerness, it meant more limited means of them to resist patriarchal control. However, it is during the AIDS crisis that the Valley's queer community would begin to find each other and mobilize to challenge their discrimination in the community.

In building the eventual coalitions of students, labor, and queer rights, these movements arose in the Valley from its history of colonization and oppression. The need for Chicantx activism developed from the loss of power Chicanxs experienced as the Anglo population grew and consolidated more power despite their apparent differences in population. However, Chicantx activism also developed alongside the cultural heritage of the Valley that saw its resilience and spirituality to bridge these communities together to challenge the status quo. The following chapters explore how the Valley's history and culture as it shaped these movements for social justice.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

VIVA LA RAZA

In this chapter, I take the demographic background of the Valley to examine the gradual transformation of its public education system. Schooling in the Valley operated in similar capacities as it did elsewhere in the country. However, the Valley demographics is what made residents, particularly students, respond so radical in terms of challenging the racism within the schools. This chapter specifically examines the 1968 student walks at Edcouch-Elsa High School that lasted for over a month and marked a turning point for the education of Chicax students in the Valley. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the general history of how public education operated in the Valley through a racist system that limited the options of Chicax students and actively punished them for being Chicax. The second section follows the story of the Edcouch-Else Walkouts with the broader Chicano Movement as Chicax students nationwide fought for education reform alongside other civil rights activists.¹³⁵ And the third explores the trial, the consequences, the memory of the walkouts themselves, and a gendered and queer reading of the walkouts to examine how these Chicax students, their families, and supporters successfully changed the Valley's public education system. It also marked the gradual turning point politically within the Valley as more Chicax people entered positions of power to ensure the dismantling of Anglo dominated systems. It further analyzes the walkouts themselves as acts of resistance to white supremacy for their promotions of Chicax identity into the curriculum, which would prove a crucial first step in diminishing the power of patriarchy and gendered hierarchies too by recognizing the presence of women as activists and

the oppressive means that they experienced. And in criticizing gender, I highlight how these Chicana students directly challenged the Edcouch-Elsa administration from the racist and sexist mistreatment that they experienced from a school counselor, while recognizing how the racialized and gendered harassment also operated on a reinforcement of heteronormativity at the expense of queer expression. Furthermore, this reading of the walkouts demonstrates that the racialized positions of Chicana allowed them to build a broader coalition and fight beyond just for themselves as these students saw solidarity with each other not just as residents, but also fought for immigrant/migrant students. This broadening in scope would prove necessary when fighting for civil rights as coalition forming with diverse groups would prove a crucial tool to ending forms of racism but sexism and homophobia too.

The historical climate surrounding the challenges to accessing quality public education is not a new debate in U.S. history. Education is a constantly reoccurring theme in U.S. politics since the start of the public education system in the 19th century with debates over who should have access to schools, what the curriculum should be, and the duties of educators in the classroom being amongst some of the most frequent discussions. However, in the mid-20th century, we started to see more involvement from the students themselves in how education was approached instead of the attention falling exclusively on the wishes of parents, educators, and politicians.

With the start of the Civil Rights Movement, it was often high school and college students themselves on the front lines of issues surrounding the future of education. It is well documented in the history of Jim Crow and the consequences of *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) in manufacturing “separate but equal” created an intentional division in education access for Black

¹³⁵ Louis Sahagún, “East L.A., 1968: ‘Walkout!’ The day high school students helped ignite the Chicano power movement,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2018, Last Accessed: November 1, 2020.

Americans, but it also extended out to Americans regardless of class, ethnicity, and race.¹³⁶ The legacy of Jim Crow and *Plessey v. Ferguson* saw an educational hierarchy that ensured the creation of lower quality schools, overworked teachers, cultural and class divisions, and the distancing of students from engaging in intersectional solidarity and resistance with people outside of their communities.¹³⁷ However, the Civil Rights Movement itself dismantled many of those barriers with the elimination of Jim Crow and the overturning of *Plessey v. Ferguson* with court decisions in the 1950s and 1960s like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In addition, one crucial case prior to *Brown* in the Supreme Court that helped to dismantle pieces of *Plessey* came from the case of *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) in California. The Mendez case originated with Mexican-American families finding difficulty of enrolling their children into Orange County schools with Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez bringing suit against Westminster School District.¹³⁸ The Mendez family found that only some of their kids could enroll into the white/Anglo schools, while others had to enroll in the Mexican schools based on their skin color.¹³⁹ The courts ultimately ruled in favor of the Mendez and other families based on the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause, while not ruling "separate but equal" as unconstitutional, but putting a significant dent in the "separate but equal" argument. Despite these legal victories in dismantling elements of racism in public education, many of the problems these civil rights activists and

<https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-1968-east-la-walkouts-20180301-htlstory.html>.

¹³⁶ Examples of studies on African American educational experiences include: C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹³⁷ Max Krochmal discusses the significance in an interethnic coalition in Texas as sparking transformative Civil Rights activism, but further explains how difficult it was to maintain that cooperation for long-term gains. The efforts became dismantled, particularly from working class Anglos as they sided against people of color. Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 5-7 and 408-410.

¹³⁸ And added dimension but not as discussed in the case being that Felicitas was Puerto Rican woman, but the suit focuses on Mexican-Americans not Puerto Ricans too. Puerto Ricans also suffered under from segregation policies and citizenship questions, and also engaged in coalition/civil rights activism alongside Chicaxs.

court cases challenged still remain in place or have morphed into something different. Examples of these contemporary struggles in education include the expansion of shutting down public schools for poor test schools and the creation of charter schools that are immune from much of the state oversight even as they can still access public funds.¹⁴⁰

Texas and the Valley experienced similar hurdles in education as they occurred nationwide. Although, the issues surrounding education differ in the Valley compared to other locations, there are also many similarities. In the case of the 21st century, it is increasingly becoming a zone where a myriad of problems surrounding public educations collide that makes the Valley story a space where all the national issues are playing out all at once. The Valley also experiences debates over bilingual education, access to technology, the closing of schools due to poor test scores, problems with special education programs, overworked and underpaid teachers, racism directed towards students from teachers and staff members, and the increasing presence of police officers in the schools for disciplinary actions and protection in cases of school shootings.

In leading to the events that culminated into the 1968 Edcouch-Elsa Walkout, Jim Crow laws would target Chicanxs in the Valley. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the population of Blacks and Asians were small in comparison to the Chicanx population. And in needing to assert their dominance, Anglo politicians and wealthy Anglos ensured they held the power within school districts to separate their children from interaction with Chicanx children. In most towns,

¹³⁹ Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity: 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 56-57; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Texas Mexican Americans & Postwar Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 2015), 26-28.

¹⁴⁰ Denisa R. Superville, "Closing Failing Schools Doesn't Help Most Students, Study Finds," *Education Week* (August 24, 2017) Last Accessed: January 28, 2020. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/08/24/closing-failing-schools-doesnt-help-most-students.html>; Peter Greene, "Charter Schools Have a Big Problem, and Rebranding Won't Help," *The Progressive* (May 9, 2019) Last Accessed: January 28, 2020. <https://progressive.org/public-school-shakedown/charter-schools-have-a-big-problem-and-rebranding-wont-help-greene-190509/>.

the train tracks would often serve as the visible border between Anglo and Chicana housing alongside major roads that would serve as the divisions within school districts.¹⁴¹ Most often, Chicana people would attend schools in the south side of train tracks or major roads, as was the case for McAllen, exceptions primarily occurred with wealthier Chicana families who could use their wealth and often skin color to send their children to the Anglo schools.¹⁴² Meanwhile, some communities would intentionally divide a town to create a separate school district within the city limits. In the city of Mission, there are two school districts that operate in the city's boundaries: Mission Consolidated Independent School District (MCISD) and Sharyland Independent School District (Sharyland ISD). MCISD would serve all students, but the majority of the student population would be of Chicana heritage, while Sharyland ISD was created in the east side of Mission to educate only Anglo students.¹⁴³ Post-*Brown v. Board*, Sharyland ISD would eventually desegregate like other schools did, but Sharyland hosted a significant Anglo student population as de facto segregation happens on class lines with wealthy Chicana and Mexican families typically attending Sharyland schools unless they went to private schools.¹⁴⁴ Contemporary Sharyland resembles more like the majority of the Valley as it has a majority Chicana/Mexican student body, however, it also features more students from impoverished

¹⁴¹ Pamela Colloff, "Unholy Act," *Texas Monthly* (April 2005), Last Accessed February 26, 2020, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/unholy-act/>.

¹⁴² Chad Richardson, *Batos, Bolillos, Pochos, and Pelados: Class and Culture on the South Texas Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), Kindle Edition, Loc 2475 and 2633.

¹⁴³ United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Property Multiple Property Documentation Form," February 1998/June 1998, Last Accessed January 28, 2020, Section E Page 42, Section E Page 43, and Section F Page 80, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/NR/pdfs/64500644/64500644.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Mexican nationals meaning Mexican citizens who have some form of residency in the United States. In the Valley, Mexican nationals are typically used to refer to middle class and wealthy Mexicans from northern Mexico, although, Mexican nationals could also refer to any Mexican regardless of social class.

families as most of the wealthier Chicana and Mexican students are attending private or charter schools.¹⁴⁵

Aside from these segregated schools, the Valley students experienced other struggles when it came to public education. As historians like Lynn Marie Getz, Carlos Blanton, Guadalupe San Miguel, and Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez documented, the discrimination Chicana students experienced operated on multiple levels. Chicana students indeed faced the racialized discrimination as other ethnic and racial minorities faced in school, but they also faced linguistic challenges with many being non-English speakers or English as a second language speakers (ESL). The linguistic barriers appear as a reoccurring theme when it comes to the education of Chicana students across the country, but is especially problematic when looking at border communities with a significant Chicana population. As these historians discuss, bilingual education existed on these border communities prior to the 20th century without much conflict and allowed Chicana students to reasonably thrive in the classroom.¹⁴⁶ However, as politicians and communities pushed for increased racialization of Chicana people, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, these sentiments dismantled what little access and benefits Chicana students had within the public education system.¹⁴⁷ It increased the language barriers and tighter control of Anglos in schooling that both denied the use of non-English languages in the classroom and also increased the difficulty of Chicana becoming educators. Much of these barriers remained until the start of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century even as Mexican-American and Chicana activists resisted such policies as soon as they were enacted through the

¹⁴⁵ “Sharyland High School” *U.S. News & World Report*, Last Accessed November 2, 2020.

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/texas/districts/sharyland-isd/sharyland-high-school-19886>.

¹⁴⁶ Lynn Marie Getz, *Schools of Their Own: The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 14-16; Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 3-4 and 11; Rivas-Rodriguez, 22-27.

formation of organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in 1929.¹⁴⁸ The actions of Mexican-American and LULAC activists proved a crucial role in dismantling anti-Mexican oppression nationwide despite their opposition towards Mexican/Latinx immigrants.¹⁴⁹ This opposition arose as part of the Mexican-American activism emphasizing their American citizenship to protect their civil liberties, which often resulted in these same activists either ignoring the plight of Mexican/Latinx immigrant or supporting the discrimination.¹⁵⁰ These views on immigration and citizenship would appear as a stark contrast from the Chicano activists many of whom were the children or grandchildren of these Mexican-American activists who saw solidarity with immigrants or these Chicano activists came from immigrant families. The rift on immigration reform would serve as an example of the generational divide from Mexican-American and Chicano activists, a divide that Mario T. García started critiquing.¹⁵¹ However, through the crucial work of activists and scholars like George I. Sánchez, organizations like LULAC set a necessary foundation in opposing discrimination. And while more conservative than Chicano activists would have liked, LULAC and the Mexican-American generation had to resist a far more conservative climate to fight for the legitimacy and citizenship of Latinx people. Despite their dissatisfaction with LULAC, Chicano activists took Sánchez and LULAC's foundation and radicalize it to strengthen their ability to challenge racism locally and nationwide.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 23-26; Darius Echeverría, *Aztlán Arizona: Mexican American Educational Empowerment, 1968-1978* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 12-13.

¹⁴⁸ Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education*, 92-100; Rivas-Rodriguez, 26-27.

¹⁴⁹ Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sanchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 145-146.

¹⁵⁰ Carlos K. Blanton, "The Citizenship Sacrifice: Mexican Americans, the Saunders-Leonard Report, and the Politics of Immigration, 1951-1952" *Western Historical Quarterly* 40, (Autumn 2009): 300 and 310-314.

¹⁵¹ García, *Mexican Americans*, 15-16 and 299-302.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 244.

The linguistic barriers were not the only struggles many Chicax students faced. For some, the immigration issue was tied directly with their education experiences. Many Chicax students came from migrant and immigrant families that worked in agriculture industry, typically as crop pickers.¹⁵³ The roots of the agricultural experience for many migrant families came from the experiences of workers under the Bracero Program during World War II and other guest worker programs that utilized laborers from Mexico to work on American farms. Initiatives like the Bracero Program only took adult men as workers who left their families behind in Mexico even as adult women and children worked in American-owned industries on the Mexican side of the border.¹⁵⁴ And as other initiatives came to replace Bracero Program, these new programs did allow and utilized the labor of women and children from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. The growth of an immigrant population and their importance to American agribusiness coincided with greater discrimination. Their targets to racist rhetoric and racial violence came regardless if these workers and their families carried citizenship status as they faced hostility nationwide from their constant migrations. These same businesses dependent upon migrant and immigrant labor did very little to protect their workers, while also actively exploiting their labor. Many of whom who would become victims to technological developments in agriculture and Operation Wetback in June 1954 that saw the mass deportation of Mexican

¹⁵³ Based upon documentation from the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts, the students and local reporters emphasized migrant workers most often working as crop pickers at this time. However, as other scholars like Perla Guerrero document, the number of migrant workers in manufacturing and agricultural factories would grow starting in the 1980s. See Perla Guerrero's "Chicana/o History as Southern History: Race, Place, and the US South": Carlos K Blanton, ed., *A Promising Problem: The New Chicana/o History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 85 and 88-89.

¹⁵⁴ Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 5; Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), Kindle Edition, 1 and 7; Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 2-4.

laborers.¹⁵⁵ Organizations like César Chávez and Dolores Huertas's The United Farm Workers (UFW) addressed the issues surrounding farm workers such as working conditions, housing, and wages. The chapters of the UFW and other farm worker organization would form in the Valley too with Valley farm worker mobilizing to challenge their discrimination and labor abuses.¹⁵⁶ However, also tied to the experiences of migrant, farm workers came from the access to education for their children and the inconsistent nature of education. Due to migrant work often requiring statewide travel, migrant students experienced gaps in their education during the time they relocated and the variations in curriculum across state lines. Factored in with the discrimination that Chicana students already experienced in a segregated and racist public education system, it ensured that migrant students experience far worse treatment than other Chicana students.

By recognizing this broader history of Chicana experiences in public education, this overview allows for a deeper examination of how the Valley came to become a site for the Chicana Walkouts as they occurred nationwide. Racism, linguistic barriers, and migrant harassment created a climate where Chicana students in the Valley finally decided enough was enough. And in November 1968, they mobilized and fought against these injustices.

The story of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts is not unique to the Valley. Starting at Wilson High School in East Los Angeles in March 1, 1968, Chicana students across the United States organized walkouts in protest of the injustices that they faced in their schools.¹⁵⁷ While most of the Chicana Walkouts occurred in East L.A., many more occurred across the state of California

¹⁵⁵ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 271-273.

¹⁵⁶ Montejano, 283-284; Richardson, Loc 506 and 545.

¹⁵⁷ United Way Greater Los Angeles, "The Walkout – How a Student Movement in 1968 Changed Schools Forever (Part 1 of 3)," February 26, 2018, Last Accessed: November 2, 2020. <https://www.unitedwayla.org/en/news-resources/blog/1968Walkouts/>.

and nationally.¹⁵⁸ These protests all attempted to address the various concerns of Chicana students when it came to discriminatory policies and protesting a Eurocentric curriculum that eventually tied Chicana student activism with the broader Chicana Movement.¹⁵⁹ This student activism also saw Chicana students collaborating more with other Latina ethnic groups like Puerto Ricans and Cubans as well as other racial minorities like Black Americans and Asian Americans as their needs and demands often intersected.

The racial climate of the Valley factored into what sparked Chicana students to walkout at Edcouch-Elsa High School, while also setting a foundation for other schools in the Valley to initiate similar protests. While the scope in education access changed in the Valley with construction of junior high and high schools for Chicana students, numerous problems persisted in terms of how Chicanas got educated. Even as the student body of these secondary schools remained geographically segregated because of housing discrimination policies, it is within the schools themselves that another form of segregation occurred. Despite the Valley's majority Chicana population, very few or no teachers were of Chicana heritage.¹⁶⁰ Most teachers in the Valley, especially in secondary schools, identified as Anglo, creating cultural barriers between teachers and students that got exaggerated in terms of seeing Chicana students as intellectually inferior.¹⁶¹ For students at Edcouch-Elsa High, this ideology of inferiority targeted Chicanas that were year-round residents of the Valley and migrant students. Also, it is this ideology of

¹⁵⁸ Sahagún.

¹⁵⁹ Ian Haney-López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 18-24; Mario T. García and Sal Castro, *Blowout! Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 7-9

¹⁶⁰ Jennifer Rose Nájera, *Troublemakers, Religiosos, or Radicals? Everyday Acts of Racial Integration in a South Texas Community*, Dissertation (Dec 2005) University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Special Collections, 111 and 181. Not limited to just the Valley, but present all along the border in places like Laredo. See: Aurora Sanchez Hodgden, *The Importance of a Teacher's Racial/Ethnic Background as a Factor in a Student's Academic Achievement: A Study of Mexican-Americans in Laredo, Texas*, Dissertation, 1990, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Special Collections, 16 and 57-58.

¹⁶¹ Hodgden, 16 and 57-58.

inferiority that further saw Chicaxs as disciplinary problems, which given that both teachers and administrators at the time were majority Anglo, it saw to the creation of policies that unfairly punished Chicax students for exerting agency while their Anglo peers received praise.¹⁶² These policies and active punishment of Chicax students further supported the systems of white supremacy in the Valley as a disciplinary record at school limited Chicax career possibilities and further education, while many more Chicax students simply dropped out of school rather than deal with the daily, racist harassment.¹⁶³ This manifestation of white supremacy in the education system therefore explains why Chicax students at Edcouch-Elsa High utilized the walkouts with success as other Chicaxs students did nationwide.

Inspired from the East L.A. Walkouts, students at Edcouch-Elsa saw a model of how they could protest against white supremacy and the discrimination they experience. The Edcouch-Elsa students emulated the East L.A. Walkouts, and felt motivated after the April 1968 walkouts at Sidney Lanier High School and Edgewood High School in San Antonio proved that Chicax Texans could successfully challenge Anglo domination in the state.¹⁶⁴

After spending several weekends planning their protest with some support from their parents, the students of Edcouch-Elsa High initiated their month long protest on November 14, 1968.¹⁶⁵ An estimate of around 140-200 of the 700 students enrolled walked out of their classrooms at the start of the school day, at 8 a.m., with others following not long afterward and

¹⁶² Cristina M. Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout," *The Monitor* (November 14, 2018), Last Accessed February 11, 2020. <https://www.themonitor.com/2018/11/14/1968-edcouch-elsa-high-school-demonstrators-recall-discrimination-walkout/>; Nájera, 25-26

¹⁶³ Hodgden, 62; Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout."

¹⁶⁴ Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout"; Baldemar James Barrera, "We Want Better Education!": The Chicano Student Movement for Educational Reform in South Texas." Dissertation. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico (May 2007), 84-85 and 99-100.

¹⁶⁵ Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout."

went to the parking lot with their protest receiving not just local attention, but also received national attention.¹⁶⁶

The students involved made a list of fifteen demands that I have summarized but I also chose to include direct quotes¹⁶⁷ to emphasize the students' demands and the abuses that they faced:

1. That no student or teacher who participated in the protest face disciplinary actions.
2. That teachers or administrators cannot punish students for participation of clubs or organization unaffiliated with the school.
3. Students elect their student council members.
4. That the schools will stop giving students excessive and unfair penalties/punishments for minor infractions. They included many examples one of which included "student suspended three days for failure to keep appointment with teacher after school: student suspended for three days for failing to stand at a school pep rally"
5. That teachers and administrators cannot use "profanity or abusive language in presence of students and in no case shall any teacher or administrator lay a hand on a student."
6. That tardy or absent students still be granted access to the class without punishment until their excuses are verified.
7. That the school cafeteria should lower the cost of food or serve better quality food.
8. For students to be allowed to speak Spanish without punishment.
9. To see Chicano¹⁶⁸ history incorporated into the curriculum, especially when discussing the history of the Southwest and Texas that shows respect to Mexican history and culture.
10. That all students have access to college prep courses.
11. That the school hire more counselors for students, and the expansion of career fairs and programs to help Chicanos with enrolling into and paying for college.
12. The prohibition of blatant discrimination against Chicano students.
13. That the reformation of hall passes so that there are clear rules into acquiring one and that students can leave the classroom with permission without excessive questioning from teachers.
14. That the school pays closer attention to ensuring the success of migrant students. One example included was that teachers grant migrant students access to tests since teachers often did not allow migrant students take tests early.
15. That the school needs to be renovated. Examples included working fans and heaters for the comfort of both students and teachers, and working restrooms.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ These direct quotes are in quotation marks.

¹⁶⁸ Since I am summarizing their demands and in some cases directly quoting, I will use Chicano here instead of Chicanx.

¹⁶⁹ Fully detailed versions of the fifteen demands with more examples in each demand and fully written in the language of the students appears in: Nolene Rodges, "140 Students Boycott Classes at Edcouch-Elsa High," *The Monitor* (November 14, 1968), Front Page and 2A. Nov 1 – Dec 31, 1968, Microfilm, McAllen Public Library.

Following the publishing of their demands and the protests, Principal Melvin Pipkin with support of the school board and Superintendent A.W. Bell would suspend over a 100 students for three days and going as far to expel over 40 students.¹⁷⁰ The suspension and expulsion of the students, naturally, resulted in pushback from students, their families, and the broader community as they viewed suspension too harsh of a punishment given the nature of the students' protest. While the student protestors did not turn to violence, the police present at the protest even went as far as arresting six students who were key organizers in the walkout with one of the protestors getting placed under house arrest.¹⁷¹

Principal Pipkin would justify his actions to the public as a defense of the school and community, even after it became clear that he previously ignored the students decrying the school's mistreatment of Chicana and migrant students previously. Pipkin would famously say, "We will not yield on[e] iota as long as I am principal. The students will not dictate the policy."¹⁷² Even with the, largely Anglo, support Pipkin received, there still remained those in the Anglo community who questioned his actions. An Anglo policeman, Jake Foley, would recognize the orderly and polite nature of the student protestors, while, simultaneously, labeling the parent supporters outside the school as acting militant.¹⁷³

Still, the students persisted. They chose to walkout immediately at the beginning of the school day to target the state funds that the school received based upon student attendance. The

¹⁷⁰ Stett Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968," *The Brownsville Herald* (December 14, 1998), Last Accessed: February 11, 2020.

https://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/education/former-edcouch-elsa-students-remember-the-walkout-of/article_359d0489-1eec-5605-a1a8-ea4c5e73ba89.html

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Rodges, "140 Students Boycott Classes at Edcouch-Elsa," Front Page.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

students identified the school's need for funds and how it was tied directly to their demands to see a broader improvement for the school as a whole.

Despite the well-intentioned nature of the students, their protests did not go without criticism, especially from the Anglo population. Anglos in the Valley largely asserted that these students not only were incapable of organizing such a protest without outside support, but also affirmed that students had no legitimate ground to protest.¹⁷⁴ These efforts to ignore Chicana claims of discrimination came as an organized effort from the Anglo population to minimize and ignore their own discriminatory practices. Such acts are not exclusive to the Valley or within this period. Throughout the Civil Rights Movement and into the present, Anglos and those in positions of power use rhetoric of legitimacy to dismiss claims of discrimination from minorities and dissenting groups. In the case of Edcouch-Elsa, Anglos would counter Chicana students' claims of discrimination by exerting that the students getting punished already violated school policies and happened to be Chicana rather than acknowledge that some faculty and staff enforced school policies inconsistently to punish Chicana students while ignoring Anglo students' misconduct.¹⁷⁵ Despite the efforts of Edcouch-Elsa students and other Chicana activists, while initiating some reform, Chicana/Latina students still disproportionately face punishment in public schooling compared to their Anglo counterparts. And because of this disproportionate punishment, it contributes to the mass incarceration of Chicana/Latina students when looking at the school-to-prison pipeline.¹⁷⁶

Before the fiftieth anniversary of the protests, former mayor of Elsa, Neal Galloway, went so far to claim that the students' protests made race relations between Anglos and Chicana

¹⁷⁴ Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968."

¹⁷⁵ Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout."

worse while also claiming the protestors drove businesses and teachers away from town.¹⁷⁷ He would also criticize the students for disrupting the system in their protesting. Meanwhile, his wife, Fran Galloway, who worked as a seventh grade teacher at the time would attack the students' intelligence on multiple levels as she accused them of being manipulated into protesting because she believed "some students could not even spell those demands, much less make them up."¹⁷⁸ She would further assert that while students did face punishment for speaking Spanish, it had less to do with them speaking Spanish, but it was because they were saying awful words that would have gotten them punished had they spoke in English too.¹⁷⁹

In response to the suspension and expulsion after the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts, parents of the students and Chicana organizations rallied around the students to see them not only get their punishments reversed but to see the school district reprimanded for mishandling and discriminating against the students. Early efforts saw attorney Bob Sanchez from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) representing the students and attempting to work with the principal and school board before ultimately turning to the courts for intervention. MALDEF would emerge as a collective of lawyers to challenge anti-Mexican discrimination nationwide, while working towards various issues would prove crucial in promoting education justice.¹⁸⁰ With Sanchez and MALDEF pushing the local courts, the students' punishment eventually got reversed and the work began to institute change that trickled to other public schools across the Valley even as the memory of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts are largely forgotten in the contemporary Valley. This section explores how the students' legal

¹⁷⁶ Sabrina McDaniel, "The School to Prison Pipeline: Zero Tolerance Policy," *Medium*, May 7, 2018, Last Accessed November 3, 2020. <https://medium.com/@sabortiz2194/the-school-to-prison-pipeline-zero-tolerance-policy-e30d0290af67>.

¹⁷⁷ Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968."

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Rivas-Rodriguez, 67-68

defense challenged the efforts of the school to maintain its authority, while also examining the changes occurring in the Valley that saw the court displaying greater sympathy for the Chicana students instead of the Anglo administrators.

The initial trial began as early as November 18 with Bob Sanchez representing the students. The case would eventually appear before Judge Reynaldo Guerra Garza, a John F. Kennedy appointee and first Mexican-American federal district judge with a history of Chicana activism.¹⁸¹ Sanchez would get Judge Garza to partially reverse the suspension and expulsion of the students with Judge Garza ruling that because the students were engaged in protest that the school could only remove the students after a hearing.¹⁸² This early verdict forced administrators into a defensive position to prove the risks the protesting students placed onto the school environment. However, the school did exploit this verdict to maintain all the expulsions and most of the suspensions. It prompted Sanchez and the students' families to push for further litigation in an effort to reverse the school's decision with another trial on November 26 that continued until December 19.¹⁸³

In the meantime, the school's decision to expel the original five of the students and several more after the hearings prompted their parents to relocate them to another school. The expulsion proved a major barrier for the students, especially given that their expulsions came from protesting Edcouch-Elsa High. The few high schools in Hidalgo County close to Edcouch-Elsa refused to admit these students. In particular, PSJA High School in Pharr saw trouble from its own Chicana student population as the looming threat of students organizing there arose in

¹⁸¹ Norman Rozeff, "Garza, Reynaldo Guerra (1915-2004)," Handbook of Texas Online, Last Accessed: November 3, 2020, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/garza-reynaldo-guerra>.

¹⁸² "As Result of Hearings 30 More Expelled at E-E," *The Monitor* (December 2, 1968) 1 and 3A. Nov 1 – Dec 31, 1968, Microfilm, McAllen Public Library.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*; Barrera, 145-149.

response to the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts.¹⁸⁴ In the case of PSJA, the administrators prevented a walkout as they started to listen and incorporate students' demands for reform.¹⁸⁵ Luckily for these expelled students, La Joya High School in La Joya located west of Mission did enroll the students. However, the driving distance between Edcouch and La Joya is almost an hour, proving a great inconvenience for these families. It especially hindered the lives of these students and their families as this period in the Valley had a small Chicana population that owned cars and the complete absence of public transportation.¹⁸⁶ These families pulled together their funds to purchase a school bus that they could use to transport their children back and forth from Edcouch to La Joya.¹⁸⁷

In court, Principal Pipkin and Superintendent Bell's legal counsel argued on behalf of the school district. Their claims reinforced the belief that the students had no grounds to protest since the items that they demanded reform did not exist at the school. They sought to debunk the claims to protest such as asserting that students were not punished for speaking Spanish, Chicana students were not punished unfairly, and that the migrant students indeed had all the support that they needed. As for infrastructure demands, the defendants focused on the poor budget of the school as to why such demands are impossible to meet. These counterarguments allowed the school district to delegitimize the student protestors' work.¹⁸⁸

However, the students' attorney, Bob Sanchez, objected the school district's claims. He did so with the support of the families as well as outside groups like Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), and the Political

¹⁸⁴ PSJA operates under PSJA ISD, which encompasses three, small towns: Pharr, San Juan, and Alamo.

¹⁸⁵ Virginia Armstrong, "The City of Palms PSJA Students Have Demands," *The Monitor* (December 1, 1968) 1. Nov 1 – Dec 31, 1968, Microfilm, McAllen Public Library.

¹⁸⁶ Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968.," Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016), 58.

¹⁸⁷ Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968."

Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO). He continued pursuing the students' claims of the various injustices they faced while at school. Through testimony of the students and their parents, Sanchez focused his case on addressing the grounds of civil rights violations to build his case from the work of other cases regarding the issue of students' civil rights as the school violated the students' first and fourteenth amendment rights.¹⁸⁹

The court case took only a month of litigation before reaching a final verdict. By December 19, Judge Garza ruled in favor of the students. He confirmed that the school violated the civil rights of the students through suspending and expelling them for protesting, while also recognizing the legitimacy of the students' demands.¹⁹⁰ His ruling saw to the school immediately reversing the suspensions and expulsions, while also removing them from the students' records.¹⁹¹ He further ruled that the expelled students be allowed to reenroll at the start of the spring semester in January since the school was closed for the winter break.¹⁹²

While the court favored sided with the Chicax students and allowed some degree to Chicax students, the battle for reform was not over. Even with their records cleared, the punished students continued to experience harassment from teachers and administrators.¹⁹³ Some would drop out or transfer to other schools, while seniors would see the school refusing to sign their diplomas.¹⁹⁴ Still, the school instituted gradual reform in the aftermath of the walkout and trial. The school did promote services for migrant students to help with their educational success, while policing of students speaking Spanish gradually diminished.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Barrera, 141-142.

¹⁹⁰ "Judge Garza Rules To Reinstate Edcouch-Elsa High Students," *Valley Morning Star*, Harlingen, Texas (December 19, 1968), Front Page and Page 2. Newspapers.com – Texas Collection. <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/46663020>.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Norma R. Cuellar, "The Edcouch-Elsa Walkout," Research Paper, University of Texas-Pan American. June 29, 1984, 10.

The activism of Edcouch-Elsa Walkout proved a direct challenge to the Anglo, patriarchal domination of local education. While the students themselves did not cite any direct gendered bias or even resisting Anglo male domination as male and female Chicax students faced punishment for the walkout, their stories also lend to a gendered critique of note. However, there is no apparent means of examining an overtly queer dimension in terms of looking at LGBTQ-identifying students, but there are means of examining a theoretical queerness in the walkout.

In his 2007 dissertation, Baldemar James Barrera conducted interviews from former students of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout with these former students highlighting the discrimination that they faced from faculty and administrators. Most do explore the inconsistent punishment of Chicax students when it came to following school dress code or having to use faulty/broken typewriters instead of the new ones that Anglo students used, however, a few of the interviews and Barrera's research uncover some gendered gems to coincide with the racism that Chicax students experienced.¹⁹⁵

In exploring the gendered experiences of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts, former school Counselor Gretchen Sorensen repeatedly is mentioned in the interviews for her harassment and racial bias towards Chicax students. Barrera cited numerous instances of Counselor Sorensen's abuses, however, missed an opportunity in his dissertation to discuss the gendered dimensions of the harassment. The appearance and role in Anglo women supporting racism, white supremacy, and sexism is not shocking in U.S. History as Anglo women often leverage what power they can even as Anglo men treat Anglo women as inferior to them.¹⁹⁶ Despite the harm that white

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 9-11.

¹⁹⁵ Barrera, 117-119.

¹⁹⁶ Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7; Jenn M. Jackson, "Women Have Always Been a Part of White

supremacy and sexism does to Anglo women, its continued presence could ensure that even if interpreted as inferior to Anglo men that Anglo women could leverage their whiteness to have superiority over men and women of color, especially directed towards Black men and women. Counselor Sorensen represents that trend when examining her mistreatment of Chicax students as participating in the disproportionate punishment of Chicax students for violating dress code policies or offering career counseling that discouraged Chicax students from pursuing career and educational opportunities than their Anglo peers.¹⁹⁷

However, it is Counselor Sorensen's targeting of Chicax students that also carries a gendered lens. In terms of male students' physical appearance, Chicax boys had a more rigid form of masculinity placed on them through the school's dress code policies compared to Anglo boys. Counselor Sorensen would actively apply the school's clean-shaven policies onto Chicax boys unlike Anglo boys who could get away with growing facial hair without harassment. Barrera's interviews include two instances where former students mention Counselor Sorensen and other administrators allowing Anglo boys to leave facial hair like sideburns or keep their hair a little longer, while Chicax boys risked disciplinary action.¹⁹⁸ Also, Counselor Sorensen would also carry responsibility for at least attempting to raise military recruitment amongst Chicax boys, but not Anglo boys, as she actively encouraged Chicax boys into military service but did not do the same to Anglo boys who she encouraged into college.¹⁹⁹ While the military also operates as a hyper-masculine space that many boys and young men enlist into, in Edcouch-Elsa, it appears more that Chicax boys need to become cannon fodder for the military and Anglo

Supremacy," *Teen Vogue*, July 1, 2020, Last Accessed: November 4, 2020.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/women-white-supremacy-history-america>. I also include this reference to *Teen Vogue* in recognition that these discussions of white women's relationship to white supremacy is not happening only in academic spheres, but that journalists and activists recognize the role of white womanhood in reinforcing white supremacist domination.

¹⁹⁷ Barrera, 115-119.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115 and 117.

boys should attain higher academic pursuits and avoid military service. And since Counselor Sorensen's advice occurred during the Vietnam War, it holds racial undertone too as soldiers of color faced higher injuries and casualties throughout the Vietnam War, an observation not lost to the Chicax boys.²⁰⁰

The gendered scope of Counselor Sorensen did not end with Chicax boys, as Chicax girls would also suffer from her advice and actions. Like Chicax boys, Chicax girls experienced disproportionate enforcement of the school dress code policy. Chicax girls took more caution around Counselor Sorensen as she would closely monitor things like skirt lengths, whereas, Anglo girls could walk freely.²⁰¹ The gendered and racial implications here reinforcing an image that Counselor Sorensen, an Anglo woman, could trust Anglo girls to act appropriately and dress modestly, while Chicax girls were not worthy of such trust and needed closer policing. And other instances prove certainly an effort to control the image of girl's sexuality in the high school. Barrera includes a story from a student who attempted to advocate on behalf of a friend's girlfriend to undo Counselor Sorensen's efforts to have the girlfriend drop out, who also was Chicax, because she got pregnant.²⁰² While unclear if Counselor Sorensen advocate for similar or different advice to Anglo girls who got pregnant, Counselor Sorensen remained persistence in getting a pregnant Chicax girl to drop out and also punished the friend on three-days suspension for criticizing her judgment.²⁰³

The operations of race and, to an extent, gender is apparent in the background of the Edcouch-Elsa walkout, especially when looking at Counselor Sorensen's actions towards Chicax students. However, the queer dimensions of the walkout are far more challenging to

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 116.

uncover. Being that the walkouts during a more openly homophobic period in the Valley, it is difficult to assess if any students identified somewhere in the LGBTQ community or consciously knew of their sexuality during their high school years without personally interviewing these former students. However, this dissertation already made exceptions to examine queer identity not only from the lens of a person's sexual orientation, but from gender identity and the expression of non-normative behaviors. Within the 1960s, U.S. culture underwent a sexual and gender revolution that sees the more open blurring of gender lines from the emergence of a counterculture that see women performing more masculine behaviors and dress while men performed more feminine behavior and dress, especially as represented in popular culture.²⁰⁴ The inconsistent means in which teachers and administrators like Counselor Sorensen enforced dress code policies had the unintentional benefit of queering Anglo students, while denying Chicana students freedom of expression. In allowing Anglo girls to get away with skirt lengths, they could exert their sexuality in ways that Chicana girls could not. And, perhaps more obviously, in allowing Anglo boys to keep their hair a little longer than the average length for boys, it meant Anglo boys could adopt a more feminine appearance unlike Chicana boys. It is through clothing and hair that queer-identifying people often uncover their queerness such as girls/women cutting their hair drastically short and boys/men wearing more colorful clothing choices, or at the very least exert a non-heteronormative gender expression.²⁰⁵ However, the Edcouch-Elsa case also reinforces anti-queerness in Chicana communities in that the policing of Chicana appearance denied queer Chicanas or more gender-fluid straight Chicanas to the opportunity to express

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Drake Stutesman and Louise Wallenberg, *Film, Fashion, and the 1960s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 19-21.

²⁰⁵ Sofia Barrett-Ibarria, "How Fashion is a Powerful Form of Affirmation for Many Queer People," *Huffpost*, October 22, 2019, Last Accessed: November 4, 2020. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/queer-fashion-style_1_5da6176fe4b002e33e76336e.

themselves at school, while also reinforcing a Chicax heteronormativity. In not allowing Chicax boys to grow their hair longer or Chicax girls to wear masculine clothing, it left a reinforcement of heteronormative gender expressions amongst Chicax youths that they would unintentionally protest in calling for a decline in regulation and equal enforcement of school policies across race and gender.

The memory of the walkouts is far more complicated than the walkouts and the trial itself. Valley residents celebrate the walkout during its anniversaries and certainly both students and faculty benefited from the actions of the Edcouch-Elsa students. This section highlights the problems surrounding the walkout's memory with the general public or, more preciously, their lack of a memory. This section covers the thirtieth and fiftieth anniversary of the walkouts alongside how the memory of walkouts is not preserved as well as other walkouts.

For any event, the positive or negative, the decade anniversaries always illicit the most attention. Grouping those years in ten also allows for the most reflection in terms of recognizing how much things change and how much remains. In the case of the Edcouch-Elsa walkouts, there was immediate change as recognized in this chapter's previous sections. The school instituted some of the changes from the students' list of demands. And with one walkout already occurring as the federal court sided with the students, other school districts across the Valley paid attention and started instituting changes of their own.²⁰⁶ As previously noted, Brownsville and PSJA ISD did not experience quite as much trouble given that their schools tended to look positively on Chicax students compared to Edcouch-Elsa. However, schools quickly removed any ban they had on the prohibition of Spanish, while also promoting more services for migrant

²⁰⁶ Armstrong, "The City of Palms," 1

students and make college prep courses accessible to Chicax students.²⁰⁷ Also, while Chicax teachers already worked at the schools, the districts began to work harder in recruiting Chicaxs with the population of Chicax teachers and administrators in the public schools booming in the 1980s with their numbers equal or exceeding Anglo teachers and administrators in some schools.²⁰⁸ These changes in demographics allowed for a stronger push in these changes that the Edcouch-Elsa called for, while also ensuring that the incoming generations of Chicax students did not face the same levels of harassment as Chicax students in the 1960s did.²⁰⁹

As mentioned in the previous section, the memory of the walkouts saw to those embittered from the experience. The criticism of the Galloways being just two voices that vocalized their criticism of the walkouts and asserting that the students did more harm to the community than good. Even other Chicaxs claimed that the walkouts harmed the community through arguing that the students made up the charges against the school. The few Chicax teachers working at Edcouch-Elsa brought up claims that Chicaxs experienced no discrimination, or that things were not as bad as the students claimed.²¹⁰ Teachers like Genoveva Garcia criticized some of the students' claims such as "bad food, poor counseling services, lack of migrant student support" as problems of a poor school district, not a racist one.²¹¹ Whereas other teachers like Homero Diaz could recognize the discrimination Chicax students experienced at the school, but not to the degree of needing to protest.²¹² In many cases, other Chicaxs would criticize the students for protesting and dismissed any claims that the students

²⁰⁷ Danya Perez-Hernandez, "50 years later, Edcouch-Elsa walkout participants take the stage, inspire youth," *The Monitor* (November 15, 2018) Last Accessed February 28, 2020. <https://www.themonitor.com/2018/11/15/50-years-later-edcouch-elsa-walkout-participants-take-the-stage-inspire-youth/>; Garcia, "1968 Edcouch-Elsa High School demonstrators recall discrimination, walkout"; Nájera, 111 and 181; Cuellar, 9.

²⁰⁸ Nájera, 111 and 181.

²⁰⁹ Barrera, 151-152.

²¹⁰ Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968."

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

made against the school. Their statements matched the Galloways statements in asserting that the students' actions only made race relations worse for Chicanxs. However, the amount of Chicanxs on the side of the school and Anglos appear as a minority as at least from those who are documented as vocalizing their criticism with news coverage showing more people in favor of the students or appearing as neutral to the walkouts.²¹³

The press coverage of the walkouts affirmed this conclusion as Chicanxs across the Valley noted how the aftermath of the walkouts changed school policies in both Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. Across the Valley, more Chicanxs noted feeling safer within the schools as they could more openly express themselves culturally and linguistically and also felt their schools actually supported them.²¹⁴

However, aside from these decade anniversaries, the memory of the walkout is largely forgotten. While the walkout is memorialized at Edcouch-Elsa high and schools, the walkouts rarely get taught or not at all in the neighboring school districts. Valley history itself is largely untold in Valley schools with most students not knowing about the Coahuiltecan, the colonization of the Valley, or how the Valley became known as the Valley. While spaces like the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg does a fantastic job in documenting Valley history, the materials from their exhibits are wildly unknown to the average public school student, making these students ignorant of their own local history.²¹⁵ Even as the school curriculum itself

²¹³ Again, this statement is based on documented criticism and conclusions reached from other reporters. It is quite possible that more people in the Valley both Anglos and Latinx objected to the student walkouts but did so in private. Perez-Hernandez, "50 years later, Edcouch-Elsa walkout participants take the stage, inspire youth"; Holbrook, "Former Edcouch-Elsa students remember the walkout of 1968,"; Armstrong, "The City of Palms PSJA Students Have Demands," 1.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ This is both comes from personal reflection and engaging with other Valley students. I did not learn of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout until graduate school. I attended public school in Mission from 5th Grade to 12th Grade and not once did the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout get mentioned. The Walkout is largely ignored in other spaces as after taking a trip to the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg as recently as January 2020, its displays on the

prides itself in being more inclusive of racial and ethnic histories, there are problems that persist in terms of how the histories of Chicanxs and other minorities is taught. The erasure of the Valley's history from Valley schools itself in the present ensures the comfortably of a white supremacist power structure, even with Chicanxs in power, that erases the progress the Edcouch-Elsa students fought to create.

Overall, the operation of racism and white supremacy in the American public education system is no stranger to the public when it comes to studying Black History. This chapter only served to highlight a single case in a predominantly Mexican/Chicanx community to explore how Chicanxs addressed racism in the public schools. The Chicanx students of Edcouch-Elsa High School as they chose to challenge the racism and manifestation of white supremacy at their school. In walking out of campus, they denied their school access to funds and under a capitalistic system, the only way to significantly hurt those in power most often is through hurting their pocketbook. The court trials that followed also took an unexpected turn in favoring the students, an outcome that no one, most certainly the administrators, did not expect. With favor of the court, the students' demands saw to a transformation of their local community and the gradual transformation for the majority of the Valley too as Chicanxs students experienced greater respect and treatment equal to their Anglo classmates. Even as many Anglos and Chicanxs too bemoaned the actions of the students, the students' work came a crucial moment both in Valley and U.S. History to show resistance against bigotry.

Valley between 1950-1980 pays no mention of the Edcouch-Elsa Walkout. Younger Chicanx activists in the Valley are working on publishing more and educating others about the Walkout's history.

CHAPTER IV

MATERNAL BORDERS

In this chapter, I highlight the evolution of women's reproductive health in the Valley. It follows the period between 1970-2000 to explore how Chicanas²¹⁶ utilized healthcare, and the obstacles they came across as women of color from living in an impoverished region, racism within the medical field, and the legislative assaults upon women's reproductive rights. This chapter incorporates the argument that control over women's reproduction is directly tied to patriarchy and ignores the needs of women.²¹⁷ I further argue that how the misunderstandings of women's reproductive health and minority culture allowed local and state actors to impose control over women's bodies that limited their access to proper healthcare. It also the presence of medical accidents built on the premise of doctors, and some cases midwives, failing to accurately diagnosis and treat pregnant women as the medial field grapples with internalized sexism and racism that results in a high percentage of women of color dying while in labor or postpartum. And how the inadequacies of the medical field when specifically looking at pregnant women of color could also further put newborn children in danger.

This chapter incorporates the reproductive justice framework to understand the reproductive needs of Chicana women beyond just having abortion access, but also highlighting the racial and ethnic discrimination in healthcare, the financial barriers, and the added issue of citizenship status as the Valley sits along the U.S.-Mexico border. It further documents the

²¹⁶ In this chapter, I choose to use Chicanas/Latinas rather than Chicanax/Latinx given the narrower focus on women's reproductive health, while prioritizing the use of Chicana when discussing the Valley. While I recognize that not all people with a female reproductive system identify as a woman, I choose to remain using female gendered terms due to the literature that I am referencing and critiquing is centered on women's experiences. And given the relative absence of analysis on women in the Valley, it appears more appropriate that I rely on such gendered terminology.

formation of reproductive clinics such as Planned Parenthood in the Valley as primary care services for Chicanas/Latinas who elect not to cross over to Mexico. And, it also addresses the complications of the Valley's Catholic and Mexican cultures with traditionally Anglo patriarchal control that make accessing reproductive healthcare that much more difficult for Chicanas. It concludes with the contemporary struggles over women's reproductive care in the Valley. It includes the battle to maintain abortion access. While at the same time, the state and federal government curtail women's reproductive access more broadly.

I utilize the frameworks of reproductive justice and intersectionality from feminist theory to deconstruct the methods of control over Chicanas/Latinas on the American side of the U.S.-Mexico border. Using these frameworks it also provides the space for a comparative analysis over the differences of experiences between Anglo and Chicana women. The Valley's population is majority Chicana with people primarily of Mexican heritage. Still, Anglos between the 1970s and until the 1990s wielded a disproportionate amount of political and social power despite their minority status. Understanding how power operates, it demonstrates the discrepancies in medical care between Chicana and Anglo women.

Forms of intersectionality appeared in feminist theory before with women of color leading the charge against the Anglo-centrism of feminism.²¹⁸ The criticism primarily originated from Black women who recognized the means in which white feminists would shun the interests and experiences of Black women to further a feminist agenda that largely benefited only white women.²¹⁹ However, it would take until the late 1980s and 1990s for the critique to further

²¹⁷ Zakiya Luna and Kristin Luker, "Reproductive Justice," *The Annual Review of Law and Social Science* (September 2013): 330-331.

²¹⁸ For a collection of such criticism, see: Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Suny Press: Albany, 1981).

²¹⁹ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 19.

spread. Intersectional thought emerged in 1991 as a black feminist response to the weaknesses within the feminist discourse that often explored feminism through the lens of a white woman. Legal scholar and activist, Kimberlé Crenshaw developed intersectionality to examine other means of oppression for, particularly from the experience of Black women, to see how factors like race and class hinder women's access to equality and social justice.²²⁰ The push for intersectionality would begin a new wave of scholarship that examined the broader experiences of women of color, but also looking at differences amongst women of color themselves such as analysis on Black middle class women compared to Black working class women.

This criticism of feminism would further a Latina critique built on similar grounds as Black feminism. Latina scholars like Vicki Ruiz, Suzanne Oboler, Laura Briggs, Natalia Molina, Mayeli Blackwell, and Sonia Hernández demonstrated the role of intersectionality when studying Latinx people for the complicated role that citizenship and immigration status factors into social justice.²²¹ As previously, the difference between Mexican-Americans and the Chicano generations, the issue of citizenship would see the Mexican-American generation advocacy for equality ignoring the discrimination that Mexican/Latinx immigrants based on arguments of citizenship compared to the Chicano generation that advocated for citizens and immigrants. And now, when looking at borderland spaces like the Valley, it becomes more apparent given that majority Latinx population and the significant presence of (undocumented) immigrants residing

²²⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 140-141.

²²¹ Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2011); Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California

along the borderland. Furthermore, criticism from historians like Vicki Ruiz and Sonia Hernández offers important recognition for the role of women and motherhood when it comes to organizing movements and pushing for equality. Hernández proves especially insightful when examining women as labor organizers on the borderlands as using the gendered rhetoric and expectations of women/motherhood to turn it not just for the care and protection of their families but to promote justice for the larger community.²²² As with reproductive health, Latinx women use this gendered rhetoric of motherhood to emphasize the prioritization and protection of their health so that they could better provide and care for the health of their families.

Like intersectionality, while ideas of reproductive justice existed in varying degrees within women's rights movements, it took until the 1990s for the definition of reproductive justice that we understand today to take root. The reproductive justice framework emerged to address three distinct issues: the right to have a child, the right not to have a child, and the right to parent the child.²²³ In focusing on these three definitions specifically, it allowed for activists and scholars to see beyond the focus of birth control and abortion access that previously dominated the discourse but also to see the obstacles that women faced when attempting to get pregnant and parent their children. This transition came as a critique from women of color who saw a constant social, political, and legal harassment that did not appear for white, middle-class women. Specifically, women of color did not have the privilege of safely receiving treatment while pregnant and delivering their children without facing inadequate healthcare or even facing

Press, 2014) Kindle Edition; Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

²²² Hernández, 90-93.

²²³ Luna and Luker, 328; Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), Digital Edition, 1 and 4.

medical abuses such as sterilization without their consent.²²⁴ And in viewing reproductive justice in the context of the borderlands, it demonstrates a major need in this space that reflects other regions of the country but also carries unique problems. As previously stated, careful thought is needed when studying Latinx and (undocumented) immigrant populations. However, the access to reproductive healthcare both grew and declined depending on the political will, but also depending upon the rhetoric that dominates the country regarding women's access to healthcare. In the case of *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which legalized abortions, many American including Christian activists recognized the needs for women's access to abortions, as many women performed self-induced abortions that resulted in severe injuries or death.²²⁵ However, as the Religious Right grew to political power in the 1980s, Americans' attitudes towards abortion shifted in opposition and would affect how communities previously in favor or neutral towards abortion access would become increasingly hostile towards the procedure.²²⁶

Aside from medical reports, a significant portion of the literature on reproductive health mostly comes from the scholarship of sociologists and legal scholars. Historians largely ignore the significance of reproductive health in their research of public health and fail to connect how the rhetoric involved with reproductive health often reflects discourse on public policy when analyzing U.S. history. However, several historians have done the crucial work in bridging this gap as they make connections to reproductive health and justice to their research on the history of public health and public policy to examine the deeper connections that gender, class, and race play in these fields.

²²⁴ Kathryn Kruse, "The History of Forced Sterilization in the United States," *Our Bodies Ourselves* October 1, 2014, Last Accessed November 5, 2020. <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/book-excerpts/health-article/forced-sterilization/>.

²²⁵ Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 45; Rosemary Nossiff, *Before Roe: Abortion Policy in the States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 81-82.

The most frequently used examples of taking reproductive justice into consideration of historical analysis in U.S. history comes from studies on Black women during slavery and Chinese women that led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As many scholars noted in both cases, it is the control over women's reproduction that facilitated stricter regulation over women's reproductive potential.²²⁷ In the case of Black slaves, the goal was to see Black women always producing children. Plantation owners wanted a larger labor force to expand their profits on the plantation and support other capitalistic ventures, such as renting slaves since renting slave labor was still cheaper than hiring poor white or freed Black laborers.²²⁸ The focus on forcing Black women's pregnancy also coincided with a belief in the hypersexuality of African women that justified the sexual abuse these women would suffer at the hands of their masters and overseers.²²⁹ Then with emancipation and the prohibition of slavery, the focus came to reduce the Black population. Campaigns appeared to deport Black people to Africa that coincided with Jim Crow laws in the South that further limited Black people's rights to justice. This deportation campaign coincided with the Eugenics Movement that also saw reproductive experiments and forced sterilizations of Black women to control their supposed hypersexuality.²³⁰ However, the reproductive injustices to Chinese women took a different form than what Black women experienced. As many historians have documented, Anglos almost immediately labeled Chinese women as hypersexual and prostitutes upon arrival to the United

²²⁶ Daniel K. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement Before Roe V. Wade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 254-256.

²²⁷ Luna and Luker, 331 and 333; Jeanne Flavin, *Our Bodies Our Crimes: The Policing of Reproduction in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 5 and 13.

²²⁸ Deidre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 43-44.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 57 and 75.

²³⁰ Briggs, 18; Flavin, 33; Ross and Solinger, 30-35.

States.²³¹ While some Chinese women did engage in prostitution, most looked for non-sex-related work and simply attempted to start a new life with their families. However, as scholars like Natalia Molina note, the obsession with Chinese women's supposed sexuality led to higher harassment from Anglo reformers who also targeted Chinese men. These reformers labeled Chinese men as effeminate for their physical appearances and the labor they performed while diminishing the success of Chinese-owned businesses for harming Anglo-owned businesses.²³² Eventually, these Anglo reformers passed one of the most extreme forms of immigration restrictions with the Chinese Exclusion Act that specifically prohibited Chinese immigration into the United States for fear over Chinese women's sexuality and the success of Chinese immigrants as a whole. The discourses to regulate Chinese immigration and sexuality reflected similar public policy efforts directed towards Latinx people that would control Latinx people's access to healthcare.

The control over immigration, especially immigrant women's bodies, translated soon to Mexican and Latina women, starting in the 20th century, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. The 20th century saw an effort to regulate the reproduction of citizens and immigrants alike to maintain an Anglo-majority population, while further repressing the population of people of color and/or immigrants. The focus on controlling Latinas centered on the American Southwest, where the largest percentage of Latinx people, primarily of Mexican heritage, resided. However, as the Latinx population grew and spread to other parts of the country such as the Midwest and East Coast, similar efforts to regulate and control their reproduction would emerge.

²³¹ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 86-90; Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2002), 37.

²³² *Ibid.*

Since the annexation of Texas and the land acquired from the U.S.-Mexican War of 1848, U.S. politics grew conflicted over how to accommodate its new Latinx population. And even after categorizing Latinxs as legally white, the experiences of Latinxs proved the opposite as whiteness was not shown to Latinx people in practice as their experiences with racialization saw to similar methods of discrimination as other minorities such as what happened with African Americans.²³³ U.S. racial politics Latinxs denied access to voting and holding political office, it forced Latinx people into inferior segregated facilities, and made Latinx people victims of racialized violence from state agents and vigilantes.²³⁴ This mistreatment translated to Latinxs becoming immigrants on the land they already occupied with the mistreatment and rhetoric becoming increasingly hostile over the late 19th century and into the 20th century. U.S. immigration laws attempted to slow and block Latinas from crossing the border while exploiting the labor of Latino men for the agriculture and industrial sectors during the early and mid 20th century. In the case of Latinas, U.S. industries exploited them too, most cases this exploitation appeared from separation from their partners that limited their ability to start and raise their families as most visibly seen through the Bracero Program.²³⁵ And other cases saw to greater exploitation of Latinas also working in U.S.-owned factories (*maquiladoras*) in their home countries and along the Mexican side of the border or after immigrating to the United States.²³⁶ These efforts to exploit Chicanas created a political climate in the Valley that disproportionately

²³³ Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, Location 152-176.

²³⁴ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 112-113; Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 19-21; Monica Munoz Martinez, "Recuperating Histories of Violence in the Americas: Vernacular History-Making on the US-Mexico Border" *American Quarterly* Vol. 66, No. 3 (September 2014): 662 and 665-667.

²³⁵ Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando El Espiritu: Bracero Families Confront the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), Kindle Edition, 4-7; Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 68 and 73-78.

targeted the reproductive rights of Chicanas while allowing Anglos to retain access to medical resources.

It is through an examination of medical care and reproductive health that we see the greatest assault upon Latinas' bodily autonomy. While the United States has a complicated history with eugenics and sterilizations, it is Latinx, Black, and Native American women that experienced an abuse and abundance of doctors performing sterilizations. Women of color would cite numerous instances of going for routine medical procedures or delivering their children at local hospitals then later learn that the doctors sterilized them after they were medicated.²³⁷ One of the most egregious of cases would become publically known and go to federal court in *Madrigal v. Quilligan* (1978).

In Los Angeles, Antonia Hernández a newly barred lawyer working for Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice would sue on behalf of a group of Latina women who were sterilized at several Los Angeles County hospitals between 1971-1974, targeting Dr. James Quilligan the county head for obstetricians.²³⁸ Although, the practice of tying tubes and sterilizing Latina women happened earlier, they focused on this timeframe due to the amount of women who felt safe enough to come forward. Hernández would argue on behalf these women that the hospital sterilized these women without their consent after Dr. Bernard Rosenfeld leaked information that hospital staff would forge documents, wait until these women too drugged to protest, or intentionally withhold information that would lead these patients to reject the procedures, or even trick their husbands into signing the paperwork by convincing them that their wives would die

²³⁶ Chad Richardson and Rosalva Resendiz, *On the Edge of the Law: Culture, Labor, and Deviance on the South Texas Border* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 2006), 122; Sonia Hernández, *Working Women into the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 4-5.

²³⁷ Ross and Silinger, 30-35.

²³⁸ Carole Joffe and Jennifer Reich, eds., *Reproduction and Society: Interdisciplinary Readings* (New York: Routledge, 2015), Digital Edition, 33-34.

from another pregnancy.²³⁹ And most of these women were not aware that the hospital sterilized them until they attempted to get pregnant again, and in some cases, it resulted in some of their husbands leaving these women who believed that their wives sterilized themselves to get away with cheating.²⁴⁰ Tragically, the judge would rule in favor of Quilligan and the hospitals stating physicians had the right to overrule patient's requests if they view the procedures as necessary/life-saving, particularly using arguments of overpopulation, despite the overwhelming evidence of a eugenics history in forced sterilization of women of color.²⁴¹ Fortunately, the controversy and public reception of the trial saw to changes in hospital policy when looking at forms and other paperwork now being required to be written in multiple languages, hiring staff fluent in other languages to describe procedures to patients, establishing waiting period between certain procedures, and removing the termination of welfare benefits for rejecting sterilization procedures.²⁴² It is through instances like the Quilligan case that would leave Latinas and other women of color feeling uncomfortable with accessing medical care as similar cases appeared nationwide, including in El Paso.²⁴³

Throughout the 20th century, women's access to all forms of healthcare in the Valley, not just abortion access, depended upon both their class and race. Anglo women mostly experienced positive outcomes as they did not experience harassment from healthcare providers concerning their pregnancies. Although poorer Anglo women saw some mistreatment, it never reached the heights that Chicanas experienced regardless of their class background. While middle-class and

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39

²⁴¹ History of Eugenics, "Madrigal vs. Quilligan" Last Accessed: November 6, 2020.

<https://www.historyofeugenics.com/madrigal-vs-quilligan>; Claudia Dreifus, "Consent. Can a New Film Bring Justice?" *The Nation*, January 27, 2016, Last Accessed: November 6, 2020.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/a-group-of-mexican-immigrant-women-were-sterilized-without-their-consent-can-a-new-film-bring-justice-where-the-courts-failed/>.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

wealthy Chicanas could afford the financial costs and travel to access healthcare, Chicanas would still experience a degree of inequality when accessing healthcare.²⁴⁴ Some doctors would make wilder assumptions on a Chicana patient's sexual history but would not do the same to a Anglo patient, such as assuming promiscuity or prostitution when looking at a pregnant, young Chicana.²⁴⁵ These views operated despite many Chicanas actually marrying younger than their Anglo counterparts or that Chicana and Anglo women were equally as promiscuous. Some Chicanas could escape these negative assumptions depending on their skin color and family history. Chicanas who could display Anglo features and emphasize a more Spanish heritage could overcome the negative stereotypes that Mexican heritage carried. In emphasizing European heritage, Chicans in general could distance themselves from the Mexican concept of *Mestizaje*. *Mestizaje's* emphasis of the blend of European, Native, and sometimes African heritage while praised in Mexico, and other parts of Latin America, was seen as dangerous and race-mixing in a Jim Crow era America.²⁴⁶ So for Chicanas who could stress stronger European connections, they avoid some harassment. It would also allow some Chicanas to marry Anglo men and further display a degree of whiteness, which allowed them social protections and class mobility. That norm in the 20th century would run in contrary to the earlier experiences of Chicana people in the Southwest.

²⁴³ William Steif, "Suits aimed at practice of forced sterilization," *El Paso Herald-Post* (November 3, 1977), Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/68970527/>.

²⁴⁴ Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Kindle Edition, Location 100. Although this study focuses on Los Angeles, a similar process occurred across the American Southwest that saw fewer options for Latinas in healthcare access, particularly when looking at pregnant Latinas seeking birth options.

²⁴⁵ This problem remains a persistent issue. Even when doctors do not actively judge or harass patients, the perception remains, which prevents Latinas from talking to their doctors or seeking out reproductive healthcare at all. Kell Julliard, et al., "What Latina Patients Don't Tell Their Doctors: A Qualitative Study," *Annals of Family Medicine* Vol 6., No. 6 (November/December 2008): 547.

²⁴⁶ Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "'Mestizo' and mulatto': Mixed-race identities among U.S. Hispanics," Pew Research Center, July 10, 2015, Last accessed December 28, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/10/mestizo-and-mulatto-mixed-race-identities-unique-to-hispanics/>.

During the arrival of Anglos into Texas and other parts of the Southwest, Anglo men would pursue marriage with wealthy Chicana women to gain access and ownership to her family's lands.²⁴⁷ One of the most visible instances of this pursuit came in the founding of the City of McAllen. Many are aware of John McAllen being the namesake for the city and his ownership of the McAllen Ranch, but fewer know of his wife. María Salomé Ballí de la Garza was wealthy Tejana²⁴⁸ heiress with her family's lands going back to Spanish colonization and married another Anglo, John Young of Brownsville, until he passed.²⁴⁹ She would also continue to purchase lands and opened businesses across the Valley, building on her late husband and family's wealth before she married John McAllen.²⁵⁰ Ballí and other wealthy Tejanos like her family would make similar moves across the Valley as they married into Anglo families to preserve and expand their wealth and power. So even as Anglos grew in wealth and power, these older, wealthy Tejano families could keep up with the changing times, allowing them not just social capital in the Valley but broader power in state and federal politics.

However, the 1950s saw more efforts to change Chicanas' access to reproductive care. With the growth of Civil Rights activism sweeping the country, organized efforts in the Valley saw the need to increase the quality of healthcare for Chicana people too. While many Chicana people traveled to the Mexican cities of Reynosa and Matamoros for healthcare, activists and healthcare providers changed access to medical care that diminished some of the racist hostilities

²⁴⁷ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans In the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 8-9.

²⁴⁸ Given the period that Ballí came from, she and her family would have identified as a Tejano/Tejana, therefore, I recognize this specific distinction.

²⁴⁹ Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen, *I Would Rather Sleep in Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant* (Denton: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 125-126.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 129 and 201.

to allow Chicana people to access healthcare in the United States.²⁵¹ These changes coincided with a growing reform for migrant laborers working in the citrus fields and other industries along the border, which included support from the United Farm Workers.²⁵²

Also, the local Catholic Churches stepped up, mostly through the actions of nuns who helped establish local clinics for Chicana patients. In Catholic culture, nuns play crucial roles in community assistance more so than the priesthood, the presence of nuns ensures a constant feminine presence in community care as nuns often run the Catholic healthcare facilities and schools even if under the supervision of the male priesthood. In Brownsville, the Sisters' Council of the Diocese of Brownsville would create Su Clinica a low-cost clinic with Sister Angela Murdaugh, while leading the program, also providing midwife services for pregnant patients.²⁵³ While this push to keep sisterhood locked within the feminine stereotype as caregiver does reinforce patriarchal notions of gender, it does not diminish the importance of the sisterhood's role in health and education as they ensure access is available to the most vulnerable in society. This role is especially true under the Latin American traditions of the Catholic Church, which places greater emphasis on caring for the poor, and sick, which also allowed women in the Church to leverage power to ensure that these people received necessary services. In the Valley,

²⁵¹ However, there continues to remain a reliance on Mexico clinics, pharmacies, and other medical providers due to the high costs of medical care in the United States. Emily Ramshaw, "On the Border, Long Lives Despite Dismal Statistics," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2011, Last Accessed April 18, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/us/16texpectancy.html>; Sarah Varney, "Texas' Struggling Rio Grande Valley Presses for Medicaid Expansion," Kaiser Health News, May 21, 2013, Last Accessed September 15, 2020.

<https://khn.org/news/texas-border-counties-medicaid/>; Rocio Villalobos, "Valley residents turning to Mexico for affordable Insulin prices," *Valley Central News*, December 16, 2019, Last Accessed September 15, 2020.

<https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/valley-residents-turning-to-mexico-for-affordable-insulin-prices/>.
²⁵² Montejano, 283-284; Chad Richardson, *Batos, Bolillos, Pochos, and Pelados: Class and Culture on the South Texas Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), Kindle Edition, Location 506 and 545.

²⁵³ "Willacy Commissioners Ponder Needs of Clinic," *Valley Morning Star* (March 13 1974), Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/42419778>; "New York Nurse Midwives Recruited by Su Clinica," *Valley Morning Star* (November 4, 1974), 6, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/41519245>; "Sisters Council In Brownsville Announces Officers," *Valley Morning Star* (May 25, 1975), 34, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/48364409>.

nuns would also play a crucial in immigration as they often ran and supervised refuge assistance. This belief in caring for the sick and poor would again appear at the height of the AIDS Epidemic with Sister Marian Strohmeier and other nuns running a local AIDS hospice, Casa Merced, which cared for gay men and trans persons when the Catholic Church largely abandoned the LGBTQ community to suffer and die alone.²⁵⁴

Unfortunately, this increased access to healthcare for Chicana people also followed a closer watch over Chicana sexuality. The policing of Chicana sexuality appeared not only from their families who monitored the type of men that their daughters associated with, her level of engagement with church activities, and what she did during her leisurely time, but the wider public also began to take a vested interest in policing Chicanas. This policing saw to closer scrutiny over Chicanas in public spaces, but also seeing more policies that punished Chicana sexuality, a process similarly occurring for other women, which coincided with the start of the modern Feminist Movement. And this policing coincided with the 1950s and 1960s seeing a push for women having access to birth control. This push followed the verdict of the Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) which legalized a right to privacy and access to birth control, but primarily only did so for married couples.²⁵⁵ The verdict gradually expanded to include single individuals and the right to privacy would become a major precedent in other cases regarding adult sexuality. With the *Griswold v. Connecticut* verdict, the 1970s saw several new clinics opening that provided birth control or previously established clinics now including

²⁵⁴ Local LGBTQ historian Gabriel Sanchez is also working on a documentary on the Valley's queer past and revitalized the memory of Casa Merced, which I confirmed with one of my interview subjects, Michael, who's trans sibling would receive care at Casa Merced before passing away from AIDS-related complications. Gabriel Sanchez, Lecture, McAllen Public Library, McAllen, Texas, June 9, 2016; Michael, interview by Michael Rangel, personal interview, McAllen, July 7, 2016.

²⁵⁵ "Griswold v. Connecticut," Oyez, Last Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1964/496>.

birth control services.²⁵⁶ However, most activists and providers focused only on married women having access to birth control while encouraging unmarried women to rely on abstinence. Eventually, single women would attain access to birth control, and later abortion services after *Roe v. Wade* (1973). This expansion of birth control services, while beneficial for all women, helped Anglo women disproportionately because of the costs of birth control, but also Chicanas had to overcome cultural biases rooted in machismo/marianismo and Catholic traditions, which discouraged and prohibited birth control use.²⁵⁷ Ironically, when looking at who encouraged birth control access in the Rio Grande Valley, some of the strongest proponents came from pastors at local Protestant churches. Pastors like Reverend Bruce Galloway, Reverend Jim Lofton, and their wives would sit on the boards of these healthcare providers and birth control programs, furthering the access to reproductive health services as they saw a growing need based on their experiences with their congregations.²⁵⁸

Access to reproductive healthcare continued to grow to the benefit of Chicanas. In Hidalgo and Cameron counties, where most residents of Valley reside, more Planned Parenthood clinics opened their doors. Planned Parenthood Association of Hidalgo County covered Hidalgo County and parts of the neighboring Starr County, while Planned Parenthood of South Texas extended its reach into Cameron County and parts of Willacy County. It ensured that Valley

²⁵⁶ “Steering Committee to Planned Parenthood Clinic Set Up Here,” *Valley Morning Star* (March 12, 1965), 2, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/42812834>.

²⁵⁷ Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2011), 74-76 and 96-98; Riki Wilchins, *Gender Norms & Intersectionality: Connecting Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 148-149; Oscar Lopez, interview by Michael Rangel, personal interview, McAllen, January 7, 2019.

²⁵⁸ “Steering Committee to Planned Parenthood Clinic Set Up Here”; “Family Planning Group Preparing to Organize Here,” *Valley Morning Star* (May 13, 1965), 2, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/41310037>; “Planned Parenthood Association Urges Weslaco Center Support,” *Valley Morning Star* (July 1, 1966), 2, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/44889488>; “Willacy Commissioners Ponder Needs of Clinic.”

residents could consistently access reproductive healthcare services that included birth control screenings, STD/STI testing and treatment, and other reproductive wellness services.

Between the 1970s and early 1990s, Planned Parenthood operated as a welcomed member of the Valley community. Health educators from Planned Parenthood even had access to teach sex education to the local public schools.²⁵⁹ These health educators mostly focused on pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted infections (STI) prevention, prioritizing the instruction of heterosexual sexual intercourse.²⁶⁰ These sex education courses allowed Valley students to attain necessary and life-saving instruction on their bodies, but also birth control, condom use, and how to reduce chances of attaining STIs and know where to get tested so not to risk an untreated STI developing health complications like sterility or kidney damage.²⁶¹

However, when the AIDS Epidemic swept the country, Planned Parenthood played a crucial role in creating services for HIV-positive patients alongside other hospitals and activists in the Valley. These groups worked together to create the Valley AIDS Council (VAC) with their early mission focusing on testing and educating the public about HIV/AIDS then eventually transitioned to include treatment once HIV medication became available.²⁶² The inclusion of AIDS into the fight for reproductive health appeared as crucial in the Valley. In places outside of the Valley, most HIV patients often identified as gay men, but the Valley saw a higher number of straight, often Chicana women and children contracting the disease. The reason why women and children saw a higher rate of transmission came from the infidelity of men. The culture of machismo in

²⁵⁹ “Valley Briefs,” *Valley Morning Star* (October 9, 1977), 41, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/50638047>.

²⁶⁰ Although, regardless of sexuality, students would benefit from discussions of STIs, the focus on pregnancy prevention would limit who benefited the most from sex education courses.

²⁶¹ Family Care of Kent, “The Long-Term Effects of STDs” September 13, 2019, Last Accessed November 7, 2020. <https://www.familycareofkent.com/the-long-term-effects-of-stds/>. STIs are also more commonly referred to as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

²⁶² “Mission & History,” Valley AIDS Council, Last Accessed February 25, 2019, <https://www.valleyaids.org/mission--history.html>.

the Valley allowed for Chicano men's sexual promiscuity that included engaging in sex with multiple women and prostitutes and even allowed for some protection in having sex with other men if they were the dominant partners.²⁶³ These men would contract HIV and other STIs from their affairs, while also refusing to wear condoms, then would pass the disease onto their wives, girlfriends, and other partners. And since many Chicanas often did not use any form of birth control due to religious objections, they would become pregnant and unknowingly pass HIV onto their children.²⁶⁴ Chicanas would only become aware of their HIV status during their pregnancy or after childbirth.

And whereas Black women suffered from the myth of the “welfare queen” starting in the 1980s, the 1990s saw an increase in the stereotype of pregnant Latinas crossing the border to give birth so their children would become citizens.²⁶⁵ The American right wing's popularization of the “anchor baby” myth affected Latinxs regardless of their citizenship status. Federal and state lawmakers with the support of right-wing activists used the myth to criminalize Latinx citizens and immigrants further as they already did to Black citizens in the manufacturing of the “welfare queen” myth. Even in the Valley with a majority Chicano population, the “anchor baby” myth became a powerful tool in diminishing access to reproductive health services since many of the women who could receive lower-cost care often were immigrants. This vilification of immigrants saw a decrease in funds to healthcare providers like Planned Parenthood, who offered affordable services to immigrants. Some withheld funding from a sincere belief in the “anchor baby” and “welfare queen” myths, while others denied support for funding after constant

²⁶³ Oscar interview. At the time of the interview, Oscar Lopez works as the Vice-President of Advocacy, Policy, Education, and Media at Valley AIDS Council (VAC) in McAllen, Texas, who started working with VAC during its founding in 1988.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Molina, *Fit to be Citizens*, 90 and 185; Clara Long and Brian Root, “The ‘Anchor Baby’ Myth: Having children who are US citizens is rarely a factor in immigration decisions,” Human Rights Watch, September 2, 2015, Last Accessed April 18, 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/02/anchor-baby-myth#>.

harassment from ring-wing activists. These myths from right-wing politicians such as Iowa Representative Steve King and activists would become a crucial tool in the 2000s and 2010s that further diminished support for women's reproductive health as the focus fell squarely onto the morality associated with the use of birth control and abortions rather than the focus on the needs of women.²⁶⁶

However, problems did occur that threatened the stability and access to reproductive care for Chicanas outside of the political realm. While campaigns of misinformation and punishing impoverished women served as easy targets for those opposed to forms of reproductive healthcare, there were instances for credible concern. In those cases, it often fell into the gray area of medical accidents where the rare complications were used to vilify reproductive health practices.

In 1977, the trial of a midwife sparked significant controversy in the Valley and across South Texas. As a practice, midwifery was a crucial one in rural places like the Valley, where hospital care is not always a feasible option for many women. The geographic distance and costs of hospitals forced many women across the Valley to rely on midwives to monitor pregnancies and assist in delivery. In parts of the Valley, the lack of many families own vehicles and the overwhelming lack of public transportation made traveling to the hospital challenging, especially paying the high costs of ambulances.²⁶⁷ The presence of midwives would prove a crucial, local

²⁶⁶ This process began much earlier since the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, as noted by scholars like Leslie Regan, but right-wing activism targeting abortion access has only grown. Reagan, 246-249. And for a study focusing on the success and growth of right-wing grassroots activism, see: Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2-4 and 270-272; Mónica Novoa, "Drop the I-Word: Debunking the Racist 'Anchor baby' Myth," Colorlines.com, February 15, 2011, Last Accessed September 16, 2020. <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/drop-i-word-debunking-racist-anchor-baby-myth>; Joerg Dreweke, "Coercion is at the Heart of Social Conservatives' Reproductive Health Agenda," Guttmacher Institute, February 7, 2018, Last Accessed: September 16, 2020. <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2018/02/coercion-heart-social-conservatives-reproductive-health-agenda#>.

²⁶⁷ Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016), 54.

resource to ensure women safely delivered their children, but the lack of hospital resources could prove a danger in rare cases. One of these tragic cases ultimately resulted in a Brownsville family suing their midwife, Miguel Orihuela, for brain damage that they alleged he caused to their newborn son.

The case of Miguel Orihuela involved him delivering baby boy, Juan Martin Valenciano, in a Brownsville home. Orihuela's record showed no prior issues regarding his midwifery practice that would warrant his behavior or techniques as unethical. However, during this birth, Orihuela is accused of inflicting brain damage upon the newborn as he used forceps to help the mother with delivery.²⁶⁸ It is worth mentioning that the forceps that the Valenciano family sued Orihuela for using is the same device that doctors would use in the hospital setting.²⁶⁹ Although doctors and midwives gradually removed this device from the inventory because of the potential risks associated with brain damage for newborns becoming better known.

The baby's parents would bring suit against Orihuela a week after the delivery because of noticeable dents on the baby's head that doctors and nurses believed associated with brain damage. Although, the doctor could not confirm if the baby did suffer from any brain damage until after the baby reached five months.²⁷⁰ The trial became a major concern for other local midwives as they felt the potential of having their practices come under closer scrutiny or

²⁶⁸ "Midwife trial off to fast start," *San Antonio Express* (November 8, 1977), 3, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/77675534>; "Corpus jury gets midwife case," *San Antonio Express* (November 11, 1977), 12, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/77675768>; "Deliberations to be resumed," *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* (November 11, 1977), 3, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/31299252>.

²⁶⁹ "Midwifery trial to go to jury," *The Paris News* (November 10, 1977), 3, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/13400710>; "Midwife Defense Witness Heard in Trial Session," *Valley Morning Star* (November 10, 1977), 2, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/44090171>. For continued contemporary use of forceps: Julie Y. Lo, M.D., "Your Pregnancy Matters: What moms should know about forceps and vacuum deliveries," UT Southwestern Medical Center (March 22, 2016) Last Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://utswmed.org/medblog/forceps-vacuum-delivery/>.

²⁷⁰ "Midwife trial off to fast start"; "Midwifery trial to go to jury."

shutting down entirely with doctors also vocalizing their support of Orihuela to ensure care remained accessible to women.²⁷¹ While Texas's legal system does provide legal protection for midwives, the security of midwives was a delicate matter, especially when it came to midwives of color. Oddly enough, Orihuela's gender did not appear as a hindrance or benefit in the trial or how the media report the trial as the focus remained on the question of standard midwife practices.

After initial deadlocking with the jury, the Orihuela case ultimately resulted in a mistrial in his favor; however, it left local midwives in a more vulnerable position.²⁷² And given that midwifery is a female-dominated field, the trial sparked greater mistrust of midwives with the public fearing potential risks to their children during delivery. Oddly enough, the trial made no mention of Orihuela's gender or questioning his sexuality as a male midwife. No records from the trial as I have accessed provides any confirmation if Orihuela faced probing over his gender or sexual orientation as a male working in a female-dominated industry often resulted in those men being accused of being gay and/or pedophiles. In this case, the trial appeared to focus solely on his profession, however, further research is necessary to confirm if this observation is true.

However, the Orihuela trial and other similar cases resulted in the diminishing status of midwives nationwide and created numerous myths to discredit their value in caring for pregnant women. The most common stereotypes against midwives, assuming that they engaged in pseudoscience or *brujería* (witchcraft) rather than recognizing that midwives also followed medical practices but relied on less chemical-based interventions. These negative assumptions of

²⁷¹ "Corpus jury gets midwife case."

²⁷² "Midwife jury told to keep trying," *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* (November 14, 1977), 11, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/31299601>; "Brownsville midwife jury declares itself deadlocked," *San Antonio Express* (November 15, 1977), 3, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/77676126>; "Orihuela Mistrial Declared," *Valley Morning Star* (November 15, 1977) 1, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/44093356>.

midwives allowed greater power for hospitals to exert control over women's bodies and a greater pool of profit, while ultimately inflicting psychological harm onto women through a reduction of choice and care during this vulnerable moment of their lives.²⁷³

However, the impoverished nature of the Valley and lack of hospitals over such a wide space of land ensured that the practice of midwifery did not end, as midwives remained a crucial resource for Chicanas. With a lack of proper transportation and few doctors to cover these four counties, it remained necessary for midwives to cover the areas that doctors could not. The continued presence of midwives allowed pregnant Chicanas access to affordable care outside of hospitals and clinics.²⁷⁴ It would take until the late 1990s, and early 2000s when the population and average income level grew enough were more hospitals became established that more Chicanas relied on hospital deliveries for their pregnancies. And for those who could not access Valley hospitals, they continued to rely on midwives or travel across the border to use Mexican hospitals.

However, despite decades of activism and the rarity of cases where women had complications resulting from abortions at hospitals, Conservative politicians would increasingly target abortion access rather than focus on addressing Latinas and other women of color's ability to properly access reproductive health care. The attack on abortion access would result in a challenge and diminishment of women, especially women of color's reproductive health between

²⁷³ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 2010, Second Edition, (New York: The Feminist Press, 1973), 9-10, 15-16 and 19.

²⁷⁴ However, the affordability of midwifery, at least in the United States, is on a decline. The cost of midwives is often comparable or more expensive than care in hospitals. In some cases, midwife services are cheaper than hospitals but are still high enough and not covered by insurance companies that some pregnant women still opt for hospital births. Valeria Fernández, "In Az., Push to Revive Mexican Midwifery," National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice, December 28, 2011, Last Accessed September 17, 2020.

<https://www.latinainstitute.org/en/inthenews/in-az-push-to-revive-mexican-midwifery>; Claire Lampen, "It Shouldn't Be This Expensive to Have a Baby," *The Cut*, January 6, 2020, Last Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://www.thecut.com/2020/01/study-finds-maternity-care-costs-average-usd4500-out-of-pocket.html>; Amanda

the 1980s-2000s. However, the attack on reproductive rights exploded in the 2010s especially in places like Texas, which saw a renewed surge of assaults due to the 2008 Presidential Election results that had Democratic Senator Barack Obama winning the election with healthcare a crucial component of his platform. And while not the most vocal of proponents for abortion, now President Obama would become a source of major outrage for the right wing and pro-life movements.²⁷⁵ The justification for the outrage came with President Obama's signature legislation, the Affordable Care Act of 2009 (ACA) that attempted to alleviate some of the issues with access to affordable healthcare with the legislation also paying particular attention to women's health and birth control coverage.²⁷⁶

The backlash to the ACA, dubbed Obamacare by the right, came swift. It largely became viewed as a gross overstep of the federal government's power. Still, the pro-life movement would view the ACA as supporting sexual promiscuity and abortion despite the ACA not making any changes to abortion coverage that conflicted with the Hyde Amendment.²⁷⁷ However, the damage was done. Republican-dominated states brought lawsuits and attempted to derail the ACA, especially for its provisions on birth control.

Outraged over the ACA, the Texas legislature and then-Governor Rick Perry drafted legislation to limit funds to clinics that offered birth control, abortion services, or even counseled

Krupa, MSc, "This Is How Much It Costs to Have a Home Birth in America," Parents.com, May 7, 2020, Last Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://www.parents.com/pregnancy/giving-birth/home/home-birth-cost-in-america/>.

²⁷⁵ Although, it is also likely that President Obama being African American and biracial played a significant role in the outrage. Legal scholar Michelle Alexander would go so far as to reinforce the notions of race and Obama when it comes to the War on Drugs to describe how while Obama confessed to engaging in illicit drugs that he did little to end the decriminalization of people of color. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 2012 Reprint, (New Press: New York, 2010), 251-255.

²⁷⁶ Healthcare.gov, "Health benefits and coverage: Birth control benefits," Last accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.healthcare.gov/coverage/birth-control-benefits/>.

²⁷⁷ Kate Zernike, "Republican Health Plan Could End Insurance Coverage of Abortion," *The New York Times* (March 10, 2017) Last accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/health/republican-health-plan-insurance-abortion-coverage.html>.

for abortions.²⁷⁸ The assault upon women's reproductive rights in Texas and nationwide became known as the War on Women in the media and was further co-opted by pro-choice activists.²⁷⁹ The legislative efforts in Texas saw major funding cuts to the state's Planned Parenthood clinics and other smaller clinics that provided reproductive health services.²⁸⁰ This targeting of clinics occurred to further limit women's access to birth control, especially with conservatives repeating the myths of the "welfare queen" and "anchor babies" to vilify Black and Latina women.²⁸¹

The 2013 assault came to a head when the Texas legislature passed a sweeping abortion ban on the state that closed all but a handful of abortion clinics. This ban proved especially damaging for the Valley as the only abortion provider, Whole Women's Health, that served women across the Valley, was forced to shut its doors down.²⁸² Valley women's only choices for an abortion was to travel hundreds of miles north to San Antonio, cross the border to take their chances at Mexican clinics, or engage in forms of self-termination.²⁸³ The closure of Whole Women's Health led to a major lawsuit that reversed Texas's ban but also prompted Senator

²⁷⁸ Karen McVeigh, "Rick Perry signs wide-ranging Texas bill to limit access to abortion," *The Guardian* (July 18, 2013), Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/18/rick-perry-texas-abortion-bill>.

²⁷⁹ Heather Long, "The War on Women: A look back at the turbulent 2012 for American females," *The Guardian* (March 4, 2013), Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/03/war-on-women-timeline-2012>; NOW: National Organization for Women, "War on Women's Reproductive Rights Escalates in the States in 2013," August 2013, Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://now.org/resource/war-on-womens-reproductive-rights-escalates-in-the-states-in-2013/>.

²⁸⁰ Morgan Smith, Becca Aaronson, and Shefali Luthra, "Abortion Bill Finally Bound for Perry's Desk," *The Texas Tribune* (July 13, 2013) Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.texastribune.org/2013/07/13/texas-abortion-regulations-debate-nears-climax/>; Christine Ayala, "What is left of Planned Parenthood in Texas," *The Dallas Morning News* (September 18, 2015) Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2015/09/18/what-is-left-of-planned-parenthood-in-texas/>.

²⁸¹ Molina, *Fit to be Citizens*, 90 and 185; Beth Reinhard and National Journal, "The Return of the Welfare Queen: Republicans see class warfare as a winning message, but they risk hurting the blue-collar whites the party depends on," *The Atlantic*, December 14, 2013, Last Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/12/the-return-of-the-welfare-queen/282337/>; Kinsey Hasstedt, "The State of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the State of Texas: A Cautionary Tale," Guttmacher Institute, March 16, 2014, Last Accessed September 17, 2020. <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2014/03/state-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-state-texas-cautionary-tale>; Long and Root, "The 'Anchor Baby' Myth."

²⁸² Danielle Paquette and Sandhya Somashekhar, "South Texas's only abortion clinic is battleground for major Supreme Court case," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2016, last accessed April 20, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/south-texas-only-abortion-clinic-is-battleground-for-major-supreme-court-case/2016/03/01/b93adc00-da5e-11e5-81ae-7491b9b9e7df_story.html.

Wendy Davis to statewide and even national fame for her historic filibuster in the Texas statehouse to show Democratic opposition to the ban.²⁸⁴ And even after losing the gubernatorial race of 2014 to Greg Abbott, Davis's campaign and actions proved effective in ensuring Texans played closer attention to their state's efforts to legislate against women's health.

However, women continue to have new obstacles thrown in accessing reproductive healthcare. Abbott's governorship in Texas demonstrates assaults upon women accessing birth control and abortion services, especially when it comes to Latinas and other women of color maintaining affordable access. The restriction of funding saw to many clinics and health centers that provided birth control counseling getting shutdown or having their funding drastically diminished, which affected Latinas who have no insurance and relied on lower-cost/free services that these clinics once offered.²⁸⁵ And under the presidency of Donald Trump, it would see the appointment of more judges who are anti-choice and anti-women's reproductive rights, further diminishing the rights of women.²⁸⁶ The push to restrict women's reproductive access becomes a devastating tool that harms women's reproductive wellness as options for health providers vanished and prompt women to travel further and further for their healthcare, leaving poor and minority women unable to easily access healthcare which puts their lives in greater danger.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Peter Weber, "Wendy Davis' stunning filibuster of a Texas abortion bill," *The Week* (June 26, 2013) Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://theweek.com/articles/462815/wendy-davis-stunning-filibuster-texas-abortion-bill>; Alana Rocha, Justin Dehn, Todd Wiseman, and Tenoch Aztecatl, "Running out the clock: The Wendy Davis abortion filibuster, 5 years later," *The Texas Tribune* (June 25, 2018) Last Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/06/25/wendy-davis-abortion-filibuster-five-year-anniversary/>.

²⁸⁵ W. Gardner Selby and Rebekah Allen, "Texas Gov. Greg Abbot signs bill to block taxpayer money from going to abortion providers," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 10, 2019, Last Accessed: November 7, 2020. <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2019/06/10/texas-gov-greg-abbott-signs-bill-to-block-taxpayer-money-from-going-to-abortion-providers/>.

²⁸⁶ Emily McLain, "Opinion: With Trump appointing anti-abortion judges, the fight for reproductive freedom is critical," *Street Roots*, August 10, 2020, Last Accessed: November 7, 2020. <https://www.streetroots.org/news/2020/08/10/opinion-trump-appointing-anti-abortion-judges-fight-reproductive-freedom-critical>; Lawrence Hurley, "Trump-appointed justice could signal major Supreme Court shift on abortion," *Reuters*, September 23, 2020, Last Accessed: November 7, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-court-abortion/trump-appointed-justice-could-signal-major-supreme-court-shift-on-abortion-idUSKCN26E1S6>.

Overall, reproductive health in the Valley undergoes a constant cycle of progress and repression as it does nationwide. As Valley women largely maintained greater access to reproductive healthcare through specialty clinics and programs based to cover the costs for lower-income women, limitations continued to exist to access reproductive healthcare. Local, state, and federal efforts to diminish women's access to birth control and abortion services remain a constant problem. These problems coincide with the cultural barriers for Latinas to overcome as sexism and machismo dominates part of the Latinx culture. At the same time, also the legacy racism of the Valley continues to plague parts of the medical field. And with heightened policing of the border, Latinas' access to alternative services are becoming increasingly scarce as they are losing more affordable healthcare in Mexico at the same time that some U.S. clinics are facing closures that further the obstacles that women face. However, resistance remains as Latinas and others continue the struggle to protect and expand reproductive health services despite the efforts of those in power who continue to spread propaganda that leaves poor and women of color labeled unfit mothers and therefore denied equal opportunities to access motherhood on their terms.

CHAPTER V

WHERE THE QUEERS GO

In this chapter, I examine the construction and exploration of queer identities and spaces in the Valley. This chapter looks between the 1970s and 1980s to understand how queer people socialized during a heightened period of liberation and homophobia before the start of the AIDS Epidemic. In covering this topic, I choose to explore the significance of social space in the making of queer identities and uplifting of queer people in an isolating space. I discuss two popular queer social spaces: Duffy's Tavern and PBDs in McAllen, Texas. These gay bars served as some of the most important social spaces at this time, where queer people could metaphorically let their hair down and interact with one another without fear of repercussions. While exploring the significance of gay bars in the making of queer identity and community, I also highlight the importance of other spaces like clubs and religious organizations outside of Valley nightlife. With the dangers of being seen as queer in public creating an environment where queer lives experienced discrimination, I take the time to examine alternative spaces such as house parties and other private spaces that queer persons utilized to avoid harassment and violence. For those unable to travel to queer bars or afraid of being seen in one, the presence of these queer house parties allowed a degree of safety to replicate those experiences in a different environment. It is here that Jasbir Puar's homonationalism is most visible. As the United States began to soften its stance on queer people globally, the country itself would continue to harass and criminalize queer people domestically, which ignited a more radical queer activism. However, the early wave of activism largely only benefited Anglo queers with queer people of color having to fight harder to have their voices and concerns heard. Meanwhile, homonationalism itself also

played a role on the border with queer Mexicans often crossing the border to escape Mexican homophobia only to see its operation in Valley such as the self-policing occurring in Valley queer bars.

Primarily, this exploration of queer spaces benefited the queer Latinx community because even with Anglo owners of these clubs and bars, the majority Latinx patrons ensured that these spaces could not utilize the racist practices of other social spaces without risk of going out of business. This chapter also attempts to make connections, if any, exist, of the civil rights dimensions of Valley queer bars. Across the country, queer bars proved a crucial rallying space for queer people to discuss and mobilize civil action against the homophobia that placed their lives in peril. While it is unclear if a Compton's Cafeteria and Stonewall Inn Riots equivalent occurred in the Valley, that does not mean that Valley queer bars did not usher transformative moments to Valley culture.²⁸⁷ The radicalism of Valley queer bars acted subtler than their urban counterparts.

Lastly, this chapter also makes connections of leisure and nightlife with border crossings. The intervention here seeks to follow a trend of exploring the leisurely dimensions of the border rather than immigration, industrialization, or violence. As mentioned in previous chapters, this U.S.-Mexican border acted far more porous then it does in recent times. More people could easily cross back and forth, which allowed for a vibrant nightlife scene to develop on both sides, particularly in the cities of Northern Mexico. And it is here that homonationalism appears once more. It appears through a consideration of queer Americans crossing the border as their privilege and wealth as tourists allowed them the luxury of exploiting local Mexicans and sex

²⁸⁷ The Compton's Cafeteria Riots of 1966 in San Francisco were a precursor to the Stonewall Inn Riots. Like Stonewall, the Compton Riots showed queer people with drag queens and trans women fighting against police for arresting men dressing as women. The Compton Riots are not as well known as the Stonewall Inn Riots that

workers without considering the harm done like their heterosexual counterparts.²⁸⁸ This unfortunate process occurred even as some would find security in Mexico. It is in Mexico where many Valley residents would travel to party as Mexico had more nightlife venues, and the distance allowed for queer Valley people to explore their sexuality without the surveillance of their families.

When documenting queer histories, some of the easiest ways to highlight a queer past is through looking at public spaces like gay bars and clubs. Newspapers and broadcasts would document these queer spaces, most often as dens of vice and crime where police conducted raids to target queer people. Whereas, queer individuals would remember these spaces more fondly as spaces where they first could proudly and safely experience their queer identities. The focus on queer public spaces provides some of the most useful body of sources that historians could use to recover a queer past. This chapter follows that trend in analyzing Valley queerness.

In discussing queerness in social spaces, John D’Emilio’s groundbreaking work on Queer History referenced queer bars in general terms to highlight the formation and spread of queer identities during the 1930s-1960s.²⁸⁹ In *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, his analysis proved a crucial foundation for seeing queer identity from the lens of queer people as the previous scholarship and popular imagination saw queerness as constructed from the hostile views of reformers, intellectuals, and politicians.²⁹⁰ He shattered that stigma in correcting such

followed a few years later. It still served a crucial act of resistance not just from the queer community but also as a significant act of transgender activism.

²⁸⁸ Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, 2017 Edition, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 62-67.

²⁸⁹ In his monograph, D’Emilio uses gay and lesbian rather than queer as using queer as a categorical catchall was not used in the period he was writing. To maintain terms and minimize confusion, I choose to continue to use queer rather than regularly switch from labels like gay and lesbian unless making direct quotes or references.

²⁹⁰ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970*, Second Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Kindle Edition, Location 286.

assumptions in documenting the discussions that queer people had inside and outside of queer spaces.

Other historians followed similarly when highlighting a queer past. These scholars focused less on how the heterosexual public perceived queer identities and instead prioritized the writings and discourses that the queer community produced. However, the focus on nightlife remained a persistent theme within earlier queer scholarship. Many sources outside of oral histories tended to focus on clubs and bars as spaces where a significant number of queer people congregated.

Even Allen Bérubé's study on queer soldiers in World War II tended to focus on queer nightlife in collaboration with the military and health records that he utilized. In *Coming Out Under Fire*, Bérubé documented the ferocity in which the U.S. military targeted queer soldiers as military officers patrolled queer bars to catch the soldiers who visited these spaces to arrest them. At the same time, no such equivalent existed for heterosexual soldiers.²⁹¹ This harassment and arrest of queer soldiers occurred in contrast to the military's own queerness, as Bérubé demonstrates when exploring the presence of drag performances at military bases and medical professionals acknowledging the inherent queer nature of homosocial spaces like the military that promoted same-sex interactions that could deviate from heteronormativity such as men engaging in domestic work that they would not otherwise.²⁹²

Subsequent historians continued this trend of examining the role of nightlife and public spaces in the making of queer identities. George Chauncey's *Gay New York* proved one of the most compelling examples in recovering a queer past. He examined the existence of a pre-closet New York from the 1890s until the eve of World War II to demonstrate how vibrant queer

²⁹¹ Allen Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Kindle Edition, Location 2282, 2399, 2819, and 2844.

spaces existed and operated as intense surveillance and homophobia began to take form.²⁹³

Similar processes occurred for lesbians, as Lillian Faderman demonstrated in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*. Whereas most spaces that D’Emilio and Chauncey discussed primarily focused on queer male identity, Faderman highlighted the significance of female-only spaces that allowed for lesbian identities to develop over the 20th century. However, lesbians also benefited from their female identities, unlike queer men, as U.S. society largely accepted female intimacy that allowed lesbians to hide in plain sight and utilize spaces outside of bars like athletic societies and university clubs.²⁹⁴

Furthermore, while queer spaces are known for the significance of creating a refuge, these scholars, amongst others, recognized the dangers that revolved around queer spaces. The presence of police did not go ignored in any of these analyses as the police are seen as the largest harasses of queer spaces. However, this scholarship also recognizes the dangers of the average citizen. Studies on Queer History always acknowledge the role of politicians in the drafting of anti-queer legislation and the police's roles in enforcing such legislation such as cross-dressing prohibition and sodomy laws. However, not much discussion focuses on the public's anti-queer actions.²⁹⁵

Josh Sides’ *Erotic City* provides a useful overview of sexuality in San Francisco during the 20th century from straight and queer sexuality. His acknowledgment of the transition of violence from the general public onto queer people and hippies helps to explore the role of the

²⁹² Bérubé, Location 1209, 1649, and 1964.

²⁹³ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 1 and 9.

²⁹⁴ Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 6-7.

²⁹⁵ For details on cross-dressing, see: Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). For reference on sodomy laws, see: Dale Carpenter, *Flagrant Conduct: The Story of Lawrence v. Texas How a Bedroom Arrest Decriminalized Gay Americans* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2012).

public in harming queer spaces.²⁹⁶ This level of violence is expanded upon with Christopher Haight's discussion of anti-gay violence during the 1980s that often occurred out of queer spaces as a reflection of the public's homophobia and growing anxiety over the AIDS Epidemic.²⁹⁷ These anxieties culminated in violence onto queer people, but also in the importance of these queer spaces and neighborhoods despite the violence that occurred. Christina Hanhardt's *Safe Space* examines how these spaces created a necessary refuge for queer people to build community and mobilize for progress. Even as the consequences of such progress allowed more straight persons into queer spaces that make them less accessible and friendly of queer POCs.²⁹⁸ The primary means of which came from straight individuals and families moving into gay neighborhoods, effectively pricing queer people out of the communities that they built similar to the gentrification process of Anglos pricing out communities of color from their neighborhoods.²⁹⁹

Finding space for queer people in the Valley is difficult even in the present. There is a reliance on spaces further away from the main strips of bars and clubs that typically dot the downtown streets. The few spaces that do operate downtown, visitors experience a harsh degree of harassment from heterosexual visitors that patronize other nightclubs and bars. However, that still does not discredit the importance of these queer spaces.

²⁹⁶ Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 156-159.

²⁹⁷ Christopher Haight, "The Silence is Killing Us: Hate Crimes, Criminal Justice, and the Gay Rights Movement in Texas, 1990-1995," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 1 (July 2016): 25-26.

²⁹⁸ Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), Kindle Edition, 4-7 and 13.

²⁹⁹ Feargus O'Sullivan, "The 'gaytrification' effect: why gay neighbourhoods are being priced out," *The Guardian*, January 13, 2016, Last Accessed: November 9, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/jan/13/end-of-gaytrification-cities-lgbt-communities-gentrification-gay-villages>. Feargus O'Sullivan's article primarily examines the process of gentrification on gay neighborhoods in London, but also spends time discussing its affects in the U.S. like at New York City.

Even as nightlife grew in the 20th century with young people exploring spaces like bars and dance halls, queer people did not have equivalent spaces in the Valley. Instead, queer people utilized other forms of public spaces or relied on private residences. In the case of residences, house parties proved a useful tool in creating a private queer space away from the homophobia and sexism of the public.³⁰⁰ Granted, there existed obstacles in residences, too, that mostly reflected cost. Queer Anglos had an easier time renting and purchasing homes because they typically had access to higher-paying jobs and could successfully apply for loans instead of queer Chicanxs who experienced higher burdens.³⁰¹ Also, Chicancx culture typically frowned on adult children moving out of the family home until after marriage, even adult sons who could afford to move struggled to resist the parental pressures to remain home.³⁰² The financial and cultural barriers then ensured many queer Chicanxs relied on friends or queer relatives' ability to host parties as they continued to hide from their family's watchful eyes. Queer Chicanxs would go to any space where they could let their guard down and embrace their queerness safely without running the risk of being outed and having their families disown them.

Aside from private residences, queer people in the Valley, like elsewhere, relied on common public spaces like parks and motels to engage in queerness. However, when using spaces like parks and motels, it is solely to engage in sex, unlike private residents or even clubs where communication and socializing takes precedence. There also existed a greater danger in using spaces like parks because these spaces are open to the general public at all hours, creating a greater danger for queer people if discovered. Engaging in public sex did not exist only in parks,

³⁰⁰ Gabriel Sanchez, Lecture, McAllen Public Library, McAllen, Texas, June 9, 2016.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² This cultural tradition has declined significantly in recent decades. While the Latinx family does not rush their adult children to leave the same way that the Anglo family does upon turning eighteen, it is not uncommon to see adult children choosing to stay home. In many cases, these adult children will have children and still live in their parents' home. Usually, these adult children are attempting to finish school if they are attending a local institution or building their careers to afford an apartment or house.

but many queer people also utilized unfenced spaces like the citrus fields, which comprised much of the Valley's non-residential and commercial spaces. Due to the size of the citrus fields, the fields acted as a cover for queer sex, especially for the men that worked on the fields.³⁰³

However, like their straight counterparts, queer people also utilized other spaces like motel rooms, to explore their sexuality with some degree of privacy. Although, they could not afford to use motels to host queer parties like straight people could, the ability to use hotels for one-on-one or small group interactions allowed for a degree of freedom. As queer people primarily still used only for sex, the privacy of the rooms allowed for a degree of security that could not exist in parks. And in relying on parks, queer people left themselves increasingly vulnerable to arrest, as police knew which parks that queer people frequented.³⁰⁴ And being that the Valley is a smaller environment, they did not have the same level of alternatives as urban queer spaces. A few adult theaters and bookstores did operate starting in the 1980s, but never to the level of cities.³⁰⁵ And heterosexual men seek queer, anonymous sex at these queer public spaces as much as queer men.³⁰⁶ Unlike the urban centers, bathhouses did not operate in the Valley, which further limited the options where queer people could go.

³⁰³ Bobby, interviewed by Michael Rangel, telephone interview with author, Lubbock, Texas, January 6, 2016.

³⁰⁴ While queer people are typically associated with sex in public spaces, it is not exclusive to them. Heterosexual couples also engage in public sex, as do men who do identify as heterosexual but still engage in same-sex sex.

³⁰⁵ Adult theaters and bookstores serve as a private, public space to engage in sex. Some adult theaters act as a regular movie theater, while most have private theater rooms and booths that make it possible for individual, couple, or group sex play with a degree of privacy. Unlike spaces like parks, individuals have to be over 18 years old and pay to access these spaces, which eliminates the risks of minors wandering into these spaces. Brian Douglas and Richard Tewksbury, "Theaters and Sex: An examination of anonymous sexual encounters," *Deviant Behavior* 29 (January 1, 2008): 4-5. DOI: 10.1080/08900520701382880.

³⁰⁶ Discussions on the sexuality of straight men engaging in sex with other men recognize the straight men's identity and the complexity of their sexuality. These discussions see straight men in these cases from three different lenses: they are bisexual or gay but cannot live a queer lifestyle because of the stigma associated with it, they enjoy queer sex but are still straight, or they are engaging in queer sex out of desperation for intimacy or boredom. Maria Knight Lapinski, Mary E. Braz, and Erin K. Maloney, "The Down Low, Social Stigma, and Risky Sexual Behaviors: Insights from African-American Men Who Have Sex With Men," *Journal of Homosexuality* 57 (May 1, 2010): 611. DOI: 10.1080/00918361003712020.

However, Valley residents did not rely on the Valley alone for seeking queer spaces. Those who could afford transportation would leave the Valley for urban spaces like Corpus Christi, San Antonio, or Houston that had a more thriving queer scene.³⁰⁷ Or for others, they would travel to Mexican cities like Reynosa that slowly developed its queer spaces between the 1970s and 1980s that would become increasingly popular. Houston especially would become a major queer city since the 1960s, the Montrose neighborhood became known as a gay neighborhood where many queer Houstonians resided and created their community and opened queer-supportive businesses. Also, it is queer Houstonians that would prove crucial in spreading knowledge of queer culture as Houston served as the base for Texas's queer print culture that published various newspapers, magazines, and other queer-focused texts. One of the most important being *This Week in Texas (TWT)*, a weekly published gay travel guide that listed queer-friendly and owned businesses across the state that also included queer-focused news and health reports, especially where to get tested during the beginning of the AIDS Epidemic. It is from publications like *TWT* that helped Valley residents to find queer spaces inside and outside of the Valley.

However, for queer people in the Valley, the inability to properly access or form public spaces proved a tool for limiting the visibility of queerness and the ability to build community. It left queer identities to the shadows that could only be expressed in hazardous environments such as parks or required people to travel to urban centers outside of the Valley, a luxury inaccessible to many. The lack of options eventually prompted many queer residents to create spaces for queer people that could operate outside of the lens of only sexual intercourse but to interact as a

³⁰⁷ Many Valley residents did not have vehicles, which made driving outside of the Valley a luxury. Many would rely on buses to leave. Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016), 53-54.

community. Starting in the 1970s, the first gay bar, Duffy's Tavern, would open its doors, which would gradually pave the way for other gay bars across the Valley.

In my Master's Thesis, I dedicated an entire chapter to the origins and history of Duffy's Tavern. I documented the queerness of this space and the homophobia that operated in the city of McAllen that prevented it from genuinely embracing its importance as a queer refuge.³⁰⁸ However, it also highlighted a period of transition that gradually opened the business further for queer interactions that pushed the conservative boundaries of the Valley and eventually paved the way for other queer bars and nightclubs.³⁰⁹ Rather than purely rehashing that chapter of the thesis, this section here attempts to contextualize further the role and significance of Duffy's Tavern in building a queer space for the Valley while also putting it into conversation with queerness in Texas and northern Mexico.

The origins of Duffy's Tavern does not stand out as it operated as any other bar would, but it experienced a radical transformation in seeking profits. Duffy's Tavern originally opened in January 1952, owned and operated by an Anglo couple, Frank and Flo Wilder.³¹⁰ It would close and later be reopened in April 1955 under the ownership of another Anglo couple, Helen and George Bruton settled into the Valley from Oklahoma and Colorado, who continuing to operate the Wilder's bar an ordinary bar in downtown McAllen.³¹¹ They likely sought to escape the cold weather as many Anglos transplants thought. Then, they decided to reopen the Wilder's

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-53.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ "Congratulations Elks on the grand opening of your new McAllen Lodge Home Duffy's Tavern. Your friendly place of cheer and relaxation" *The Monitor* (January 30, 1952), 26. Newspapers.com – Texas Collection. <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/292647327/?terms=duffy%27s%2Btavern&pqsid=t34H2KKeFnnQYx2oloddhQ:178000:927448916>; "Get Acquainted with the friendly folks at Duffy's Tavern. The friendliest place in town." *The Monitor* (November 23, 1952), 2. Newspapers.com – Texas Collection. <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/291540753/?terms=duffy%27s%2Btavern&pqsid=t34H2KKeFnnQYx2oloddhQ:178000:927448916>.

³¹¹ "Duffy's Tavern Reopened & Completely Remodeled," *The Monitor* (April 18, 1955), 7. Newspapers.com – Texas Collection.

bar in Downtown McAllen to cater to the locals and tourists while raking in some money. Downtown McAllen would experience a significant decline starting in the 1990s and only recently began to experience revitalization within the last decade. However, the Bruton's downtown was a vibrant center where plenty of businesses flourished. Locals and tourists purchased clothing, jewelry, housewares, and other items while enjoying the border culture that thrived in this Mexican and American space.³¹² And Duffy's Tavern served as one of the many bars and restaurants that operated in downtown as they settled on location along 16th Street.³¹³

In its early years, Duffy's Tavern covered the bills and provided small profit for the Bruton. However, the small profits were not enough as they competed against other bars, especially as George's health declined. The Brutons needed to increase their income pool, which eventually led to the idea to profit from the pink-dollar.³¹⁴ While highly uncommon in the heteronormative culture of the U.S. for straight people to actively seek queer customers, exceptions to this norm like the Brutons did exist, although, these cases were far more common in major urban spaces.

Within a few years, Duffy's Tavern would take the role of the Valley's first gay bar. During the day, Duffy's Tavern operated as a family-friendly space where straight patrons came to relax and unwind after a busy day of shopping downtown. And at night, Duffy's Tavern would transform into a gay bar. The operation of Duffy's Tavern created a safe space for queer

<https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/297196117/?terms=duffy%27s%2Btavern&pqsid=t34H2KKeFnnQYx2oloddhQ:481000:891462998>.

³¹² Rangel, 45.

³¹³ For an advertisement of Duffy's Tavern see: "Remember! The only one in the Valley," *This Week in Texas* vol. 1 no. 15 (July 12-18, 1975), 6. Don Kelly Collection, Cushing Memorial Library and Archive, Texas A&M University.

³¹⁴ The "pink-dollar" as a phrase, refers to the purchasing power of the queer community. For analysis on capitalists' interests in seeking the "pink-dollar" see: John Arkana, "Chasing the Pink Dollar: A Study of Hospitality Related Business that Market to LGBT Consumer; Who's Walking the Walk?" *Academy of Business Research Journal* (April 1, 2015).

residents and tourists to frolic even if the community outside of the bar's doors proved hostile to queer identities.³¹⁵

However, the early years of Duffy's Tavern did match most people's imagination of a gay bar. Not counting the hypersexual and drug-based stereotypes of gay bars in the 1970s, the bar suffered from other limitations that the Brutons imposed upon guests. They had no drag queens or cross-dressers of any kind. No sexual artwork of any kind covered the walls. The lack of a proper dance floor certainly did not promote dancing.³¹⁶ And in a more exaggerated form of the film *Footloose* (1984), men could not dance together or even exchange any type of physical contact such as holding hands. Based on what little exists of the bar's history, the guests did not appear to mind such restrictions. Many of the men who came to the bar were older men. Some likely married to women and had children and were likely deep in the closet themselves. They would not have wanted to risk anyone seeing them at a gay bar that resembled what existed in New York, San Francisco, or Houston. The sexually conservative atmosphere of Duffy's Tavern provided safety where these men could have some degree of queer interactions without feeling the pressure of being perceived as openly queer for stepping into the bar's doors.³¹⁷

It is worth discussing that Duffy's Tavern is not the only bar that would utilize such a conservative atmosphere. It is common knowledge within the queer community that small town and rural gay bars often work with such limitations. These bars either created the rules themselves to protect their community or are operating within the restrictions that towns

³¹⁵ "Duffy's Tavern Reopened & Completely Remodeled"; Rangel, 46.

³¹⁶ Rangel 48.

³¹⁷ While working on my Master's at Texas Tech University, I would be fortunate to meet Ron and his husband at a queer function with Ron mentioning that he briefly worked at Duffy's Tavern. He served as a crucial source for this my thesis and this dissertation for knowing the history of Duffy's. I received more conformation on gay life at Duffy's from local Valley historian and journalist Gabriel Sanchez who intervned other Valley residents with similar stories of Duffy's. Ron, interviewed by Michael Rangel, personal Interview, McAllen, July 5, 2015; Sanchez, Lecture.

themselves imposed.³¹⁸ In the case of restrictions, places like Duffy's Tavern could maintain safety for its guests because of its lack of a sexual atmosphere. Many towns created laws regarding public indecency that prohibited cross-dressing and same-sex displays of public affection that coincided with sodomy laws.³¹⁹ And nationwide, gay bars faced constant harassment and violence from local police departments.³²⁰ The antagonism with the police coincided with McAllen's police department's vicious reputation; especially towards the Chicano population as the McAllen police faced charges of police brutality during the 1970s and 1980s.³²¹ The Brutons and guests likely followed these rules to keep McAllen PD from raiding the bar to arrest guests and shutting the bar down.

However, Duffy's Tavern served as an oddity in other ways. While its nighttime affairs suffered from close policing from the owners and guests too, the bar during the day also carried a connection with sex work. Female sex workers would meet with potential clients in bars like Duffy's Tavern before leaving to engage in sex outside of these bars or at a motel. The presence of (female) sex workers was well known to where even the police barely made an effort to police their presence.³²² That is not to say that sex workers in the Valley experienced a utopian like set up where they could operate freely without fear of harassment from police or violence from clients. Police still arrested sex workers and often sexually harassed any women they detained, while many sex workers also experienced varying degrees of violence from clients.³²³ However,

³¹⁸ Bérubé, Location 2647. In his monograph, Ramón Rivera-Servera highlights a contemporary Latinx gay bar in Phoenix, Arizona, that experiences a similar contrast that emphasizes a more conservative climate with the type of men and music it plays when compared to the younger club that is more liberal. Ramón H. Rivera-Servera, *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 176-177.

³¹⁹ Chauncey, 167-169; Bérubé, Location 2824; Sides, 40-42.

³²⁰ Lilian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 119-121.

³²¹ Brent M.S. Campney, "'A Bunch of Tough Hombres': Police Brutality, Municipal Politics, and Racism in South Texas," *Journal of the Southwest* Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter 2018): 787-788 and 791-792.

³²² Ron interview.

³²³ Campney, 799.

their ability to operate in public spaces like Duffy's Tavern came from a degree of mutual respect from owners and sex workers. In discussing Duffy's peculiar history, former manager of the bar, Ron, spoke that Helen allowed sex workers to meet their clients in the bar. However, they could not engage in any intimate contact, similar to the restrictions she enforced during Duffy's queer hours.³²⁴ Why Helen acted in this manner is unclear. She may have done so because sex workers would bring their clients to the bar for drinks, which would result in a small profit for the bar, or she may have acted to ensure the safety of these sex workers. In providing a space where sex workers could meet and discuss “business” with their clients, it gave sex workers the chance to identify their client and recognize any signs of an encounter with a violent client so that they could remove themselves before it was too late. Given that most of these sex workers were women, it is possible that Helen looked not only to the financial interests gained from alcohol sales but attempted to bridge some degree of solidarity for these working women. It is relatively common knowledge that sex work is dangerous as prostitution is illegal, the risks involved with venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancies, and the potential for physical violence and even murder. Allowing these women to meet at the bar, it is arguable that Helen sought to offer what little protection she could to these women.

The conservative atmosphere of Duffy's Tavern would undergo a transformation in 1975 when Ron would briefly work as the bar manager for around eight months. George's health would decline, causing the Brutons to temporarily relocate to San Antonio to access the city's superior healthcare. Like Brutons, Ron was not from the Valley originally. During this time, Ron served in the Army and took medical leave in the Valley in 1974, where he also worked in healthcare due to his medical training. And like many men, Ron would travel to Duffy's Tavern to experience what little of a gay scene that the Valley could offer. He would eventually develop

³²⁴ Ron interview.

a close relationship with Helen, prompting her to trust him with managing the bar while she took care of a sick George.³²⁵

For much of the summer, Duffy's Tavern operated in the same capacity as it did during Helen's presence. Ron maintained Helen's rules and had the respect of the customers, so they did not experience too much trouble. And Ron would gradually develop a relationship with McAllen PD, similar to what Helen had, to maintain the bar's protection.³²⁶ While a gay man, Ron likely could pass as straight enough for McAllen PD, especially when looking at his military service that carried a significant connection with common beliefs of appropriate masculinity. Even as a gay man, Ron's military service potentially showed to the homophobic institution of policing that he respected heteronormativity enough not to allow the queers to get too out of control. Although Ron had no such intentions or respect for heteronormativity, it is possible to assume that the people like police officers did not know better.

However, like a teenager when their parents leave them alone for the weekend, Ron would gradually bend Helen's rules a little to make the bar a little queerer. It started with a scandalous change in the appearance of management. One night, Ron would wear a somewhat revealing homemade outfit with low-rise jeans provocatively cut and a vest made from gold chains to show off his chest.³²⁷ While not the most revealing outfit that one might see at a gay bar, especially during the Disco era known for nearly nude gogo dancers, it set the tone for the coming changes at Duffy's Tavern, even as he could not allow costumers come in drag because of the police threatening to shut the bar down for crossdressers.³²⁸

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

Ron worked within the bar's limits to create a proper dance floor and changed the jukebox to play something other than Country or Tejano music. The jukebox would play Disco tracks popular during that time with Disco music also popular in the Valley and its gay scene similar nationwide.³²⁹ The playing of Disco music carried the effect of encouraging more dancing, allowing these men the chance to exchange some form of intimacy. And in promoting intimacy, Ron also allowed the men to get away with smaller forms of contact like handholding and hugging. These new rules allowed greater liberation for Duffy's queer customers as they could finally express themselves more openly even as they respected Helen's old rules; they also valued the changes that Ron facilitated.³³⁰

Despite these changes, Ron maintained enough of Helen's old rules to keep more aggressive and sexually charged behaviors from appearing. Kisses between men were kept brief, a peck on the lips the most that they could do. Guests still could not dance too intimately or behave hypersexually, as seen in actions like rubbing/grinding on each other's gentiles or the grabbing of the buttocks. Drug use and underage drinking saw guests immediately thrown out from the bar, as did excessive drinking. And while female sex workers could meet during the daylight hours, male sex workers remained prohibited at the bar.³³¹ If male sex workers did meet at the bar, they operated in a manner where Ron could not notice them. And in acting in the interests of the bar, guests would also see to the self-policing and report any infractions to Ron to protect the space from possible police intrusion. Upon returning to McAllen, Helen would allow Ron's changes to remain as the bar kept its safety, and the customers continued to respect the

³²⁹ Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York City, W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 57-59.

³³⁰ Ron interview.

³³¹ *Ibid.* Ron would discuss this list of rules and what he intentionally looked out for when running the bar.

boundaries of these rules. The queerness of the bar would further grow with Duffy's going so far as to host the Valley's first drag show on July 4, 1975.³³²

While these majors changed occurred, not all of the guests found them satisfying. Typically, critiques for more change came from the younger crowds who wanted more change that would allow a more significant deal of intimacy and sexual liberation than Helen and Ron felt comfortable to provide. Despite these criticisms, Duffy's Tavern retained its diverse age pool of guests until it slowly began to fall into decline as more gay bars opened across the Valley. These newer bars, while many would only briefly remain open, allowing for greater liberties for its queer guests. Still, the possibilities for queer nightlife outside of Duffy's proved quite tempting. Some residents gladly took the drive to Brownsville or made weekend trips to Corpus Christi and San Antonio to the north or would cross the border to explore Mexico's growing gay scene.

The reign of Duffy's Tavern would meet a sad end. In 1983, Helen would pass away, and Ron returned to service and got stationed elsewhere, which left George entirely in charge of the bar. He felt that he could not run the bar alone, prompting him to sell the bar, and the new owners had no intention of letting Duffy's queerness to continue. But even as Duffy's would close its doors for good on its queer clients, its legacy would continue. More gay bars opened across the Valley with some lasting years to continue the changes that Duffy's started to build space and community for the Valley's queer population.

Numerous queer bars opened in the 1980s across the Valley, especially after Duffy's Tavern closed. Many of these bars would not last too long since owning and operating bars proved a risky endeavor business venture that often did not yield much long-term profits. Bars

³³² Gabriel Sanchez, "7 early queer and trans spaces in the Rio Grande Valley," *Neta* (October 26, 2017). <https://netargv.com/2017/10/26/7-early-queer-trans-spaces-rio-grande-valley/>.

and clubs would shutdown due to poor staffing, poor advertising, not yielding to reasonable customer requests, not removing inappropriate and creepy patrons, allowing underage drinking, or another bar or club emerging that had a better scene. However, the difficulties of owning and operating a bar did not stop new queer bars from emerging. One of the most significant of these bars since Duffy's Tavern would also come out of McAllen: PBDs Lounge.

PBDs Lounge would open its doors in February 1984 and remains open to this day with it recently celebrated its 35th anniversary on February 2019. The bar would also carry a famous reputation of its name being an acronym for "Pretty Big Dicks."³³³ A much smaller venue than Duffy's Tavern, PBDs had to limit itself in terms of what people could physically do in such a tight space. During its early years, PBDs only had the bar and a few pool tables but would gradually remove the pool tables to create a dance floor and a stage for drag performances. The bar catered and continues to cater to an older crowd because of its early reputation as a "leather bar," unlike the multi-generational space of Duffy's that Ron developed or the younger crowd that flocked to the newer clubs.³³⁴ Despite catering to an older crowd, PBDs remains a fixture in the Valley queer scene. It also remains a friendly-enough atmosphere that continues to attract customers who are more interested in socializing with friends and enjoying drag performances rather than spending the night dancing.

However, PBDs would not meet everyone's needs, which created a demand for other queer bars that catered to diverse tastes. These queer bars would play significant roles in expanding the queer scene and meeting the changing demographics and attitudes of the Valley. Most of these bars focused on younger clients as they emphasized the size of a larger dance floor that typically attracted younger people who preferred to spend the night dancing, while also

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

including space for drag performances. Club X in McAllen would even succeed in booking drag icon, RuPaul, in 1992 to perform for the Valley, giving the community a taste of the New York drag scene and the eventual superstardom that RuPaul would attain.³³⁵ Jackie O's in McAllen served as a popular lesbian nightclub for over a decade before it eventually closed its doors, while up the street the bars Deloreans and the Cigar Bar while straight bars would also attract a large crowd of queer women who carved out space for themselves.³³⁶ However, some of these bars also catered to very different scenes. Some looked to the growing goth and punk scenes as they played Alternative Rock music. Some retained a Tejano and Country music scene. Queer women also built lesbian bars or took over sections of other clubs and bars. However, the visibility of a drag scene appeared as a common thread for many of these clubs. The subversive nature of men dressing as women and the campy aesthetic of drag would appeal to both queer and straight audiences. And in the case of the Valley, the drag scene there embodied a border identity as many performers adopted personas that embraced a Mexican and Catholic heritage mixed with the conflict over embracing American norms to become a performer unique to the border.

But aside from these nightclubs, other queer attractions would gradually develop such as Lyle's Deck on South Padre Island (the Island), located in Cameron County.³³⁷ Lyle's Deck served a different clientele than other gay bars as it featured not only a bar, but also operated as an adult's only hotel as it was initially a clothing-optional hotel. Lyle's Deck would have national recognition amongst the queer community given the Island's is a beach town and a

³³⁵ *Ibid.* In the case of RuPaul, he would become a pop culture icon throughout the 1990s for his appearances in films, television shows, and music and would briefly have hosted a talk show on VH1 from 1996-1998. RuPaul would achieve true national and international fame with the start of his reality competition show, *RuPaul's Drag Race* starting in 2009, which sees a group of drag queens nationwide competing for the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar."

³³⁶ Rangel, 91.

major tourist destination for the Valley.³³⁷ The presence of queer-friendly business at the beach would prove particularly accessible to queer people and building a queer community on the Island. But unlike PBD's, Lyle's Deck would suffer from changes in management and assorted closings, even as it remains open in the present. Lyle's Deck would eventually get bought and renamed as the Upper Deck Hotel and Bar, but the Upper Deck would close in the 2000s before reopening its doors in the 2010s and remain as one of the few queer-affirming spaces on the Island.

The importance of these nightclubs and bars cannot be understated. They created the most visible representations of a queer Valley that are not visible through other means, such as was the cases of houses and apartments or the accidental nature of stumbling upon the cruising grounds of public parks. A business portrays a domain that anyone can see and where anyone is free to enter, over the age of 18 or 21, in these cases. However, not all queer people like attending bars and nightclubs to socialize with other queer people. In response, organizations would develop to help build the queer community and mobilize for civic action.

At local colleges, students would organize around their queer identities to create some of the first queer organizations in the Valley. Although these organizations only allowed students as members, these organizations often created a friendly-enough atmosphere that hosted events open to the public so that non-students could engage with other queer people. And with its majority, Latinx population, these organizations forced more on the intersections of queer and Latinx identities to build community.

³³⁷ Lyle's Deck since closed and reopened as the Upper Deck Hotel and Bar. Sanchez, "7 early queer and trans space in the Rio Grande Valley."

³³⁸ Advertisements for Lyle's Deck appeared in various queer publications such as *This Week in Texas*, *The Guide*, *Outsmart*, *The Advocate*, and *Montrose Voice*.

Outside of schools, local activists would start a Valley chapter of the Stonewall Democrats in 2009. Unlike clubs or student organizations, Stonewall Democrats would mobilize as a political organization focusing on the protection and expansion of queer rights. They would build upon the activism of other organizations, particularly when looking towards older groups like the Hidalgo County Chapter of Democratic Women that spent years combating racism and sexism.

However, escape from the Valley to pursue queer spaces beyond its borders proved an invaluable tool for queer people. The movement away from hometowns to visit or move to queer spaces in more urban spaces is a well-known narrative within the field and amongst the general public. Queer media continually refers to a gay young man relocating somewhere like New York City or San Francisco to find a community where he is accepted and build his gay utopia.³³⁹ What is not as well discussed is the presence of international tourism and the presence of queer spaces.³⁴⁰

The Valley's proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border makes it the perfect spot to discuss this subject. Valley residents consistently traveled across the border for various reasons: business trips, accessing medical care, visiting relatives, or engaging in tourism. The importance of tourism would manifest itself most visible for queer people on both sides of the border. Queer Valley residents and queer Mexicans traveled across the border to explore queer spaces where few or no people would know them.

³³⁹ Relocation narratives appear throughout queer literature and scholarship in different degrees. Even with the rural focus that scholars like John Howard's *Men Like that: A Southern Queer History*, Scott Herring's *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*, Brock Thompson's *The Un-Natural State: Arkansas and the Queer South* established.

³⁴⁰ Tourism and sexuality are more apparent when looking towards heterosexuality because of the dominance of female sex work, but fewer queer scholars have made the connection of queer people traveling abroad for their vacations and the complications of being queer in other countries and how queer foreigners reinforce similar problems that their heterosexual counterparts do onto locals. Lionel Cantú Jr., "De Ambiente: Queer Tourism and the Shifting Boundaries of Mexican Male Sexualities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* Vol. 8 (January 1,

For many, the lack of pre-existing relationships across the border allowed them the flexibility that they needed to explore their gender and sexual identities. Queer people used the border to forge romantic and sexual relationships as they could have these secret relationships without any concern that they would risk exposure in their home communities. And given the nature of the border along the Valley, no one would question someone deciding to cross the border and stay in the Valley or Mexico for an extended trip. The porous nature of the border with queer sexuality would even result in some queer Americans engaging in sex tourism, especially when looking towards queer tourism in more recent years.³⁴¹

Now, sex tourism is by no means restricted to queer individuals, especially when examining the scholarship of sex tourism in Asian countries.³⁴² A significant portion of scholarship on Mexico exposes how straight Americans utilize sex tourism. American men are significant consumers of Mexican sex workers' labor, going so far as sex workers knowing which Americans to pursue and avoid.³⁴³ While the legality of prostitution varies across the country, many Mexican states would authorize and contain prostitution to certain neighborhoods, *la zonas*, in cities. Reynosa would have its *zona* referred to as Boystown where Mexican and American men could pursue sex workers with similar *zona* operating in other cities.³⁴⁴ But the popularity

2002); Cristóbel Mendoza, "Beyond Sex Tourism: Gay Tourists and Male Sex Workers in Puerto Vallarta (Western Mexico)," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 15 (January 16, 2012).

³⁴¹ Cantú Jr., "De Ambiente," 144-145; Mendoza, "Beyond Sex Tourism," 124-126.

³⁴² Nina Rao, "Sex Tourism in South Asia," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* Vol. 11 (1999), DOI: 10.1108/09596119910250940; Lisa Law, *Sex Work in Southeast Asia: The Place of Desire in a Time of AIDS* (London: Routledge Pacific Rim Geographies, 2000); Nicole Constable, "Reproductive Labor at the Intersection of Three Intimate Industries: Domestic Work, Sex Tourism, and Adoption," *Positions: Asia Critique* Vol. 24, Issue 1 (February 2016).

³⁴³ Alice Cepeda, *A Paradox of Autonomy and Risk: Mexican Sexoservidoras (Sex Workers) on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Dissertation, 2004. University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Special Collections; Alice Cepeda and Kathryn M. Nowotny, "A Border Context of Violence: Mexican Female Sex Workers on the U.S.-Mexico Border," *Violence Against Women* vol. 20, issue 12 (November 2014): 1509-1510.

³⁴⁴ Marlene Medrano, "Sexuality, Migration, and Tourism in the 20th Century U.S.-Mexico Borderlands," *History Compass* vol. 11, no. 3 (March 2013): 235-237; Sarah Luna, "Affective Atmospheres of Terror on the Mexico-U.S. Border: Rumors of Violence in Reynosa's Prostitution Zone," *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 33, issue 1 (March 13, 2018): 61.

and safety of the *zonas* declined in recent years as a result of the drug wars, which leaves many sex workers unable to find clients.

However, while not as widely publicized, these *zonas* allowed for an operation of queerness on the border and through queer sex work. Male sex work is harder to uncover on the streets or in *zonas* unlike female sex work, but in tourists cities like Puerto Vallarta would see to a large amount of male sex workers catering to American tourists. These male sex workers would cater primarily to male Americans despite their own sexual orientation as many male sex workers identify as straight but engage in queer sex work due to its higher demand and potential to make greater profits.³⁴⁵ Although, many queer men also engage in sex work too and use American tourists to further gain financial independence similar to female sex workers do, even as American tourists knowingly exploit Mexican sex workers through financial means or in their exploitation of Mexican patriarchy to get away with abusing sex workers.³⁴⁶

Outside of sex work, border cities like Reynosa and Matamoros's queerness would come less from sex work and more from the operations of queer bars and clubs that border crossers could use to explore their sexuality. The ability to hide across the border proved especially useful to throw who also sought to explore their gender identity as exploring another city's nightlife could allow a cisgender male the opportunity to cross-dress and explore their femininity to uncover their feminine side or in other cases helped individuals to realize their trans identity.³⁴⁷ For queer people prior to the 1980s, these border crossings to find queer spaces in Mexico

³⁴⁵ Mendoza, 126-127.

³⁴⁶ Howard Campbell, "Cultural Seduction: American Men, Mexican Women, Cross-border Attraction," *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 27, issue 3 (September 2007): 269; Mendoza, 127-128; Cepeda and Nowotny, 1509.

³⁴⁷ Elvia R. Arriola, "Queering the Painted Ladies: Gender, Race, Class, and Sexual Identity at the Mexican Border in the Case of Two Paulas," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* vol. 1, issue 3 (December 2002): 679-680. This article focuses on border crossings at Eagle Pass, Texas and Piedra Negras, Coahuila, but the narrative featured does not radically differ from border experiences from the Valley.

proved a crucial lifeline in their social interactions but also uncovering the depths of their queerness.

The fluidity of the border proved a useful tool to engage in queerness. However, as queer spaces developed in the Valley and the stigma surrounding queerness declined, fewer queer residents would make trips to Mexico. And as the level of violence from the cartels rose too, tourism into Mexico experienced a significant decline, as fewer Valley residents would take the risk of traveling to places like Reynosa as Mexican residents and Valley residents would become victims of the violence.³⁴⁸ While Matamoros would have a somewhat easier time protecting its tourism because of its close proximity to Brownsville, it too would remain a casualty of the growing violence.³⁴⁹

This chapter highlighted the methods in which the queer community of the Valley created space for themselves while recognizing its relation to queer spaces nationwide and the presence of queer tourism. Duffy's Tavern demonstrated the complicated nature of building queer space in the Valley as an internal desire of self-preservation mixed with the looming threat of police harassment had queer people allowing restrictions over their identity to have some safety. However, as times changed, queerness in the Valley would flourish as multiple spaces opened to embrace queerness in all of its forms. However, while the queer Valley appears to have an upward trajectory of progress, this chapter did not cover a crucial hindrance and killer of the

³⁴⁸ Christopher Sherman, "Rio Grande Valley residents worry about violence spilling over," *My Plainview*, January 12, 2008, Last Accessed September 24, 2020. <https://www.myplainview.com/news/article/Rio-Grande-Valley-residents-worry-about-violence-8428672.php>; Analise Ortiz, "Valley residents voice concern over violence in Reynosa," *Valley Central*, April 18, 2015, Last Accessed September 24, 2020. <https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/valley-residents-voice-concern-over-violence-in-reynosa/>; Santiago Caicedo, "Experts say Tamaulipas' perception impacts both Mexico and Valley Tourism," *Valley Central*, March 14, 2019, Last Accessed September 24, 2020. <https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/experts-say-tamaulipas-perception-impacts-both-mexico-and-valley-tourism/>.

³⁴⁹ John Burnett, "Matamoros Becomes Ground Zero As Drug War Shifts On Mexican Border," *NPR*, April 1, 2015, Last Accessed: September 24, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/04/01/396581287/matamoros-becomes-ground-zero-as-drug-war-shifts-on-mexican-border>; Deborah Fallows, "'A River, Not a Border': Report

queer community: the AIDS Epidemic. The next chapter covers AIDS in the Valley as it coincided with the formation of these later queer spaces that this chapter discussed.

from Brownsville,” *The Atlantic*, July 14, 2019, Last Accessed: September 24, 2020,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2019/07/a-river-not-a-border-report-from-brownsville/593872/>.

CHAPTER VI

SILENCE = DEATH

In this chapter, I examine the impact of the AIDS Epidemic of the 1980s on the Valley and the response of the community to combat the epidemic. I explore how historians have covered the epidemic then transition to explore the government and local responses to the disease. This chapter, also, plays close attention to how interest and response to the epidemic would undergo peaks and lows based upon who held power and who came back with a positive status.

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) proved as devastating to the Valley as it did globally in how it spread and left many dead until the development of effective medical treatments.³⁵⁰ The most common method of acquiring AIDS/HIV came from sexual intercourse with the exchange of bodily fluids like semen, but those who shared needles for drug use or individuals who came into contact with someone else's blood also saw higher risks of transmission. The transmission through sexual intercourse saw many queer men and men who have sex with men coming back with positive statuses. Prior to the epidemic, those participating in male-on-male sex often did not use condoms, which would minimize the risk of transmitting such fluids. They, however, did not know how this at the onset of the disease. It would take years before scientists and the medical field discovered that bodily fluids like blood and semen transmitted the disease and how effective condoms were in reducing AIDS/HIV transmission. Initially earlier reports labeled AIDS/HIV as a kind of cancerous malady.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ And not all treatment methods proved effective or helpful. Many earlier AIDS/HIV drugs proved more damaging to those infected and killed them faster than the disease would.

³⁵¹ Most commonly known to the public as the "gay cancer."

This chapter also highlights how the Valley would initially respond to the AIDS Epidemic in a way similar to how the state of Texas and many other states responded. That is, with little interest or assistance for those who tested positive for HIV/AIDS. As with other locales, the Valley area would redevelop their methods of assistance as the disease spread further. I also examine the misinformation and consequences of the inability of the Valley to respond accordingly. This poor response inflicted more damage upon residents than necessary. In doing so, this chapter includes testimony from an interview that I conducted with Oscar Lopez, the former Vice-President of Advocacy, Policy, Education, and Media at Valley AIDS Council (VAC), who started working with VAC during its founding in 1988.³⁵² Lastly, this chapter examines the significance of the Valley's proximity to Mexico when addressing the disease. It highlights how AIDS would spread into Mexico from the United States, but U.S. propaganda would attempt to redirect blame for the disease on Mexico and immigrants coming from the southern border. This chapter concludes in covering the contemporary COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic currently affecting the world and how the U.S.'s response largely replicates the mistakes and failures of the U.S. government and public to address the HIV/AIDS Epidemic as seriously as deserved.

Queer scholarship and narratives focusing on more contemporary history have done a phenomenal job at tracking the history surrounding the AIDS Epidemic. Initially, scholarly interest tended to focus solely on New York City where the epidemic saw the most visibility and the most activism to combat it. However, as with the decentralization of New York and the rural turn of Queer History, scholars have since examined the role of the epidemic on a broader scope to see how other places experienced the virus. The focus gradually shifted to San Francisco,

³⁵² Oscar Lopez would leave VAC at 1990 to work in Austin and D.C., continuing to work on public health, but returned to VAC in 2012. At the time of the interview, January 7, 2019, he was still employed with VAC but has

another major epicenter for the epidemic and hotspot for AIDS activism, but historians have since shifted to see the epidemic in assorted states and a national analysis.

Efforts to record the origins and spread of the AIDS Epidemic, from a non-medical/scientific perspective, came as early as 1987 from *San Francisco Chronicle* journalist, Randy Shilts's book *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. *And the Band Played On* served as a crucial foundation in understanding the origins and consequences of the AIDS Epidemic globally, but also how its spread proved significantly more devastating on queer communities. However, Shilts's work would take more controversial turn based on the judgment calls that he made from his conclusions. Shilts's effort on tracing the disease from a person-to-person contact resulted in labeling Canadian flight attendant, Gaëtan Dugas, as the patient potentially responsible for spreading the disease into North America because of Dugas's sexual relations with many men who later became positive for AIDS. And in reporting on Dugas in such a manner, Shilts's writing posited Dugas as the "patient zero" for AIDS. Dugas was unable to defend himself since he already died from AIDS-related complications in 1984.³⁵³ Scholars, scientists, and medical professionals have since debunked Shilts's assertions that Dugas carried any blame for the spread of AIDS in North America as recent data shows AIDS presence going as far back as the 1960s.³⁵⁴ And they have further begun to question Shilts's analytical methods as it took too much of a journalistic perspective rather than the scientific models that the scientific and medical fields prioritized.

since moved on.

³⁵³ Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the Aids Epidemic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 130, 141-147, 157, and 200. Shilts spends a fair portion of his book tracing Dugas's sexual partners and even going so far as to include a conclusion from a doctor that stated Dugas should be locked up in page 200.

³⁵⁴ Michaelleen Doucleff, "Researchers Clear 'Patient Zero' From AIDS Origin Story," *NPR*, October 26, 2016, Last Accessed: September 28, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/10/26/498876985/mystery-solved-how-hiv-came-to-the-u-s>; Deborah Netburn, "How scientists proved the wrong man was blamed for bringing HIV to the U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 2016, Last Accessed: September 28, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/science/sciencenow/la-sci-sn-hiv-genetic-history-20161026-snap-story.html>.

Other criticisms against Shilts's analysis occurred from the queer community when considering Shilts's views on the respectability of queer people. His attack on Dugas came as a result of vilifying Dugas and other gay men's sexual promiscuity, especially from his advocacy of shutting down bathhouses. His overemphasize of taming queer sexual appetites reinforced a homonormative behavior onto queer bodies that stripped queer men's ability to choose when and how they engaged in sex, which indirectly resulted in the public blaming AIDS on the queer community and expanding homophobia.

Despite certain inaccuracies like with Dugas and his homonormative views, Shilts's work proved a crucial foundation in AIDS historiography. And his major contribution would come from his analysis of the U.S. government's inability to address the disease effectively. In part, he assigned this blame on the Ronald Reagan Administration's unwillingness to even discuss AIDS until 1987 since a majority of those who had the virus and died came from the queer community and/or were drug-users. Only when the virus began to affect more people who did not belong to either group and instead came from the straight, Anglo population did the federal government begin to seriously address the epidemic.³⁵⁵

In most cases, covering the history of AIDS often sees queer historians pairing the painful history with other moments of queer history. One of the earliest examples comes from John Howard's *Men Like That*, which also sparked the rural-turn of Queer History in its documentation of queerness in Mississippi from the 1940s into the 1980s. In highlighting the rural experiences of queer people, Howard explains the origins of many people leaving for the cities that John D'Emilio discusses, but also portrays the narratives of queer people who stayed in their rural environments or returned. When discussing AIDS in Mississippi, Howard

highlights the misinformation surrounding the spread of the virus such if it transferred via saliva, and the popular assumptions that queer people deserved to die from the virus.³⁵⁶ And he further demonstrates the importance of the moral majority and religious right in U.S. politics that ultimately made the virus worse in how they attempted to expand the vilification of queer people. However, he also notes a side effect of the crusade against queer people led to wider public knowledge about queer people, culture, and spaces that benefited closeted queer people who now knew where to go for services.³⁵⁷

Following scholars like Howard's footsteps, more queer historians began to embrace efforts to document AIDS History. They highlighted the importance of activist organizations like AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and their disruptive campaigns to bring attention to the devastating consequences of the epidemic. ACT UP's most visible campaign coming from their 1989 "Stop the Church" protest at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in response to Cardinal John Joseph O'Connor's attacks on homosexuality.³⁵⁸ Queer historians, activists, and creative would highlights instances like ACT UP's protests in New York City and San Francisco to explore the desperation and pain of the queer community from the toll that the disease placed upon them.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ Abdallah Fayyad, "The LGBTQ Health Clinic That Faced a Dark Truth About the AIDS Crisis," *The Atlantic*, July 22, 2019, Last Accessed: November 13, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/07/us-aids-policy-lingering-epidemic/594445/>.

³⁵⁶ John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 228-229.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 249-251.

³⁵⁸ Tamar W. Carroll, *Mobilizing New York: AIDS, Antipoverty, and Feminist Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 157-160.

³⁵⁹ Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 191-196; Phil Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer: Labor, Sexuality, and AIDS in the History of Male Flight Attendants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 170; Nurith Aizenman, "How to Demand a Medical Breakthrough: Lessons from the AIDS Fight," *NPR*, February 9, 2019, Last Accessed: September 28, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/02/09/689924838/how-to-demand-a-medical-breakthrough-lessons-from-the-aids-fight>; Michael J. O'Loughlin, "'Pose' revisits controversial AIDS protest inside St. Patrick's Cathedral," *America: The Jesuit Review*, June 21, 2019, Last Accessed: September 28, 2020. <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2019/06/21/pose-revisits-controversial-aids-protest-inside-st-patricks-cathedral>.

Scholars like Josh Sides, Lionel Cantú Jr., and Brock Thompson would keep the attention away from New York as they explored the devastation of AIDS on other parts of the country. Sides's *Erotic City* focused on San Francisco's response to the epidemic. While documenting the affects the virus had on the queer community, Sides also makes an important intervention on how the epidemic disproportionately affected the Black community too. From a lack of access to health care to poor sexual health education that left the Black community, and other minority groups, vulnerable to the virus.³⁶⁰ While less of an AIDS history, Lionel Cantú Jr.'s *The Sexuality of Migration* provides an important overview of the racial/ethnic dimensions of AIDS as it coincided with queer rights. He examines the formation of immigration policy that made it easier to discriminate against queer immigrants, particularly queer Latinxs, with the inclusion of sexual orientation and HIV-status as reasons for barring entry into the United States.³⁶¹ However, queer immigrants found ways around such policies by lying about their sexuality and status, while also building support networks and healthcare initiatives to help other HIV-positive individuals.³⁶² And Thompson also notes AIDS's impact on minority communities in *The Un-Natural State* with his analysis focusing on the Arkansas queer experience. Thompson also provides counterpoints on the assumptions of southern states like Arkansas in demonstrating efforts from local and state governments to combat the epidemic in a meaningful way. State senator Vic Snyder attempted to pass legislation in 1991 to remove homosexuality from the sodomy statute, which would help remove the stigma people faced in getting tested for AIDS/HIV as they risked prosecution for violating sodomy laws.³⁶³ However, opposition from

³⁶⁰ Sides, 196-202.

³⁶¹ Lionel Cantú Jr., *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 50-51.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 150-152.

³⁶³ Brock Thompson, *The Un-Natural State: Arkansas and the Queer South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, 110.

the state's religious groups ensured the legislation did not pass, but it represented an important measure in demonstrating resistance to homophobia to actually promote public health and equality rather than the witch hunts that the religious right used to vilify queer people as they claimed their acts as protecting their communities.³⁶⁴

The visibility of the religious right and other morality-oriented organizations would remain a consistent antagonist in queer and AIDS histories, rightly so as they often used the epidemic to further attack the queer community. Phil Tiemeyer's *Plane Queer* provides some of the most damning history on the paranoia surrounding the epidemic and the vilification of male flight attendants as relating to the consequences of *And the Band Played On*. Tiemeyer addresses the earlier efforts of conservative figures in attempting to see male flight attendants removed in favor of all-female staff, partly due to sexism.³⁶⁵ Their removal also saw a greater push when the myth of Dugas as "patient zero" became increasingly known as spear-heading their removal for fear of further spreading the disease as the public began to associate all male flight attendants with being gay as Tiemeyer takes the time to dismiss many of Shilts's claims and exploring the broader consequences of the book on vilifying the queer community.³⁶⁶ The discussion Tiemeyer, and other historians, provides demonstrates the length in which conservative figures and the Religious Right to punish queer bodies during a epidemic, and exploiting the death toll to further an anti-queer agenda.

How the AIDS Epidemic and the responses to it operated differently when looking at the epidemic from a global and national perspective. The global reaction saw the epidemic taken seriously from how easily it spread through bodily fluids, blood contact, sexual contact, and drug use that left a wider net of people vulnerable to transmission. However, it also sprang

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 110-112.

³⁶⁵ Tiemeyer, 59-62 and 80-83.

problematic reactions. The United States would tighten its immigration policies to make AIDS/HIV status as grounds for barring entry into the country in 1987 that would take until 2010 for it get fully removed from the U.S. immigration policy.³⁶⁷ And entities like the Catholic Church would intervene on the AIDS response in differing ways, depending largely on geography. The Catholic Church and Evangelical churches responded to AIDS in the U.S. and European countries through associating the disease with homosexuality, with the churches associating homosexuality often with pedophilia, and therefore served as God's wrath upon sinners.³⁶⁸ That is to say that there are not exceptions, some Catholic and Evangelical churches did not overly vilify queer people with AIDS, but those churches were the rare exception rather than the norm based on media coverage and reporting from AIDS activists. However, the Catholic Church reacted to AIDS differently in poorer Latin American and African countries with a degree of sympathy as they treated the disease as any other disease and made little mention of its connection to homosexuality.³⁶⁹ And given how little the medical professionals

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 136 and 171-177.

³⁶⁷ Devin Dwyer, "U.S. Ban on HIV-Positive Visitors, Immigrants Expires: Health experts says the 22-year ban reflected ignorance about disease," *ABC News*, January 5, 2010, Last Accessed: September 29, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/united-states-ends-22-year-hiv-travel-ban/story?id=9482817#:~:text=A%20U.S.%20immigration%20measure%20first,they%20obtained%20a%20special%20waiver>.

³⁶⁸ "Reporter's Notebook. What Was Your Biggest Religious Choice? Leaving the Church During the AIDS Epidemic," *The Atlantic*, (June 21, 2016) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/06/leaving-the-church-during-the-aids-epidemic/488177/>; Robert Hunt Ferguson, "Mothers Against Jesse in Congress: Grassroots Maternalism and the Cultural Politics of the AIDS Crisis in North Carolina," *The Journal of Southern History* vol. 83, no. 1 (February 2017): 110-112; Matt Tracy, "Remembering the St. Patrick's Cathedral Protest, 29 Years Later," *GayCityNews*, (December 10, 2018), Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.gaycitynews.com/remembering-the-st-patricks-cathedral-protest-29-years-later/>; Lulu Garcia-Navarro, "How the Catholic Church Aided both the Sick and the Sickness as HIV Spread," *NPR*, (December 1, 2019), Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/01/783932572/how-the-catholic-church-aided-both-the-sick-and-the-sickness-as-hiv-spread>.

³⁶⁹ David Close, *Latin American Politics: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), Digital Edition, Chapter 3; Jason Berry, "A New Inquisition: The Vatican Targets Nuns," *National Catholic Reporter*, December 26, 2012, Last Accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/global-sisters-report/new-inquisition-vatican-targets-us-nuns>; Karen DeYoung, "WashPost: Condoms, Africa, and & the Catholic Church. AIDS Challenges Religious Leaders," ACTUP Historical Archive, (August 13, 2001) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://actupny.org/reports/churchblows.html>.

knew on the nature of the disease, it created a high death toll with little options for treatment and prevention until the 1990s.

However, the U.S.'s national response to AIDS looked different when compared to the global. With the epidemic becoming known to the public in 1981 and its association as the "gay cancer," the Reagan Administration showed no interest in combatting the disease. The administration's lack of a response is a stark contrast to the global response and especially within the country. Doctors and scientists associated with the federal government, including Dr. Anthony Fauci who currently runs the Trump Administration's COVID-19 response, would beg the Reagan Administration for funding and other resources that they would need to study and combat the epidemic only to get rejected.³⁷⁰ It would take until 1987 for President Reagan to even utter the word "AIDS" to the public and recognize the severity of the epidemic and afterward would develop the Presidential Commission on HIV to further AIDS/HIV research.³⁷¹ Some scholars and journalists would claim that President Reagan only took AIDS seriously after long-time friend and fellow actor Rock Hudson contracted AIDS and died that President Reagan began to see AIDS as something worth discussing.³⁷² However, as queer scholars noted, President Reagan's unwillingness to address AIDS for six years had greater consequences as the lack of attention and resources to study the virus and care for the dying resulted in a higher death toll in the United States that disproportionately affected queer, Latinx, and African American

³⁷⁰ "A Timeline of HIV/AIDS," AIDS.gov, last accessed June 29, 2020, <https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/aids-timeline/>; Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5-10; Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 220-225; "Long Before COVID-19, Dr. Anthony Fauci 'Changed Medicine In America Forever'," NPR, April 16, 2020, Last Accessed November 13, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/04/16/834873162/long-before-covid-19-dr-antonio-fauci-changed-medicine-in-america-forever>.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Kat Eschner, "The Hollywood Star Who Confronted the AIDS 'Silent Epidemic': Rock Hudson died of AIDS-related complications on this day in 1985," *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 2, 2017) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/hollywood-star-who-confronted-aids-silent-epidemic-180965059/>. Ann Bausum, *VIRAL: The Fight Against AIDS in America* (New York: Viking, 2019), 41-43.

communities.³⁷³ And when looking to the contemporary COVID-19 Pandemic, under the Administration of President Donald Trump, there are many tragic similarities in both administrations for failing to seriously address a health crisis that resulted in a higher death toll than necessary.³⁷⁴

Granted, the U.S.'s poor response to AIDS is not an isolated case. The United Kingdom also engaged in similar mismanagement of the epidemic under the government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The U.K.'s response saw to ignoring the severity of the epidemic, the campaigns of misinformation, and the further vilification of the U.K.'s queer community.³⁷⁵ And the misinformation held greater consequences in others as seen in some African and Asian countries. Lies about treating and curing the virus would spread. One such lie held greater consequences as claims of people being able to cure themselves of the virus by having sex with a virgin that resulted in a higher rate of rape of women and children, and even babies, which furthered the spread of the disease.³⁷⁶

Texas's statewide response to the epidemic was similar to the national response though as stated in my master's thesis, it is difficult to craft a singular narrative.³⁷⁷ The urban parts of Texas attempted to address the epidemic. Austin, Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio would develop hospices, treatment programs, and advocacy work around AIDS to better educate

³⁷³ Stephen Inrig, *North Carolina & the Problem of AIDS: Advocacy, Politics, and Race in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 22 and 56; Gretchen Gavett, "Timeline: 30 Years of AIDS in Black America," *Frontline* (July 10, 2012) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-30-years-of-aids-in-black-america/>.

³⁷⁴ Joseph P. Williams, "For Those Who've Lived Both, COVID-19 Echoes of the Early AIDS Crisis," *U.S. News*, (April 29, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-04-29/hiv-and-the-coronavirus-pandemic-carries-echoes-of-early-aids-crisis>.

³⁷⁵ Samuel Hallsor, "A Comparison of the Early Responses to AIDS in the UK and the US," *Journal of the Royal Medical Society* vol. 24, issue 1 (Autumn 2017): 58-61.

³⁷⁶ Referred to as the "virgin cleansing myth." Susan Brink, "Fake Cures for AIDS Have a Long And Dreadful History," *NPR* (August 17, 2014) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/07/15/331677282/fake-cures-for-aids-have-a-long-and-dreadful-history>.

³⁷⁷ Rangel 62-63.

Texans and reduce the epidemic's spread.³⁷⁸ However, rural areas and many of the suburbs, which typically aligned with a more conservative mindset, would ignore the epidemic and labeled it as a gay disease until it became an issue for them in the late 1980s. At the same time, the state government would mostly ignore the severity of the epidemic too until 1991 when Governor Ann Richards started pushing for more resources to combat the epidemic's spread.³⁷⁹ Even with these efforts to address the epidemic, these conservative spaces often used the disease to spread the vilification of queer people and the violence done onto them.³⁸⁰

One of the most visible acts of violence against queer Texans came from the murders of Tommy Trimble and John Griffin of Dallas in May 15, 1988. Richard Lee Bednarski and his friends would travel from Mesquite to Oak Lawn, Dallas's gay neighborhood to harass queer people. There, Bednarski and friends would abduct Trimble and Griffin and take them to a park where Bednarski tortured then shot them and left them for dead.³⁸¹ Trimble died immediately while Griffin would die from his injuries at the hospital.³⁸² Bednarski saw Trimble and Griffin as easy targets to exert his homophobia because Trimble was a Black man and Griffin was an overweight, Anglo man. During the trial, Bednarski and his friends used their youth to invoke patriarchal rhetoric; the gay panic defense, which justified extreme violence toward gay men as a defense for young Anglo men from gay predators, a rhetoric also utilized to punish queer people

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-65.

³⁷⁹ Arthur Fredrick Ide, *And Justice for Some: Judge Jack Hampton & the Richard Lee Bednarski Gang* (Dallas: Monument Press, 1990), 24-27; Lisa Belkin, "Texas Judge Eases Sentence for Killer of 2 Homosexuals," *The New York Times* (December 17, 1988). Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916637/>.

³⁸⁰ The anti-queer violence of the AIDS epidemic targeted queer people regardless of race, but it was the attacks and deaths of queer Anglos that typically received more media attention compared to queer people of color.

³⁸¹ Ide, 28-29; Lori Montgomery, "Why judge was easy on gays' killers," *Dallas Times Herald* (December 16, 1988), 1 and 3. Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916176/m1/1/>

³⁸² Ide, 29-30; Lori Montgomery, "Why judge was easy on gays' killers"; Tammye Nash, "Youth convinced in killings of two gays: sentencing phase begins on Monday," *Dallas Voice* 5 no. 29 (November 25, 1988), 3 and 5. Portal to Texas History <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph615968/>

for the epidemic.³⁸³ And in a controversial decision, Judge Jack Hampton sentenced Bednarski to thirty years in prison rather than serving a life sentence, perhaps due to his own homophobic views, which would hinder his bid for reelection.³⁸⁴

And while attaining justice in the courtrooms proved difficult, the apathy from first responders to anti-queer violence proved as difficult of a hurdle. The anti-queer violence in places like Houston got so severe that queer people had to not only hide their queerness but also make certain that they relocated themselves then reported attacks and injuries outside of known gay neighborhoods to receive whatever aid they needed from police or paramedics.³⁸⁵ Following the murder of Trimble and Griffin, the murder of Paul Broussard in the Montrose neighborhood of Houston on July 4, 1991, would further rock the Texas queer community. Nine teenagers and a twenty-year-old from The Woodlands, referred during the trial as the Woodlands Ten, attacked Broussard and his friends. They spent the night drinking when they drove to Montrose where they attacked Broussard and his friends, Cary Anderson and Richard Delaunay, outside a gay bar with knives, pipes, and nail-studded two-by-fours. Broussard's friends managed to escape, but he

³⁸³ Christy Hoppe, "Hampton censured by panel: Judge's remarks called breach of public trust," *Dallas Morning News* (November 29, 1989). Portal to Texas History <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916814/m1/1/>; Lori Montgomery, "Juror back Bednarski's sentence: Victim's homosexuality an issue in deliberations," *Dallas Herald Times* (December 21, 1998), A-1 and A-14. Portal to Texas History <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916599/>; Mark McCormack and Eric Anderson, "The Influence of Declining Homophobia on Men's Gender in the United States: An Argument for the Study of Homohysteria," *Sex Roles* 71 (2014): 111.

³⁸³ Ide, 33-36; Tammye Nash and Dennis Vercher, "Gays and lesbians reject apology issued by judge," *Dallas Voice* 5, No. 34 (December 23, 1988): 3. Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph615808/m1/3/>.

³⁸⁴ The consequences of the trial would do greater harm on Judge Hampton who was censured and would eventually lose an election for a position on the state appellate court. Carolyn Rowley and Dana Shorb, "Letter from Cedar Hill residents to Judge Jack Hampton," letter (December 20, 1988). Portal to Texas History <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc916400/m1/3/>; "Opening Statement of Judge Jack Hampton's Defense Attorney." (198u). Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc915787/m1/1/>.

³⁸⁵ "Grand Jury Indicts Ten Suspects in Broussard Killing: Community Leaders Satisfied with DA's Vigorous Pursuit of Case," *This Week in Texas* vol. 17, no. 22 (August 9-15, 1991), 19 and 33. Don Kelly Collection, Cushing Memorial Library and Archive, Texas A&M University; Andrew Edmonson, "'A Murder in Montrose': Houston Public Media documentary chronicles impact of pivotal moment in Houston LGBT history," *Outsmart Magazine* (June 2016), 105-161. Don Kelly Collection, Cushing Memorial Library and Archive, Texas A&M University.

did not and he was fatally stabbed.³⁸⁶ Initially, paramedics and police demonstrated an unwillingness to help not only in the Broussard case but when it came to treating other queer victims seriously in the AIDS Era.³⁸⁷ In many instances, queer people who needed police or paramedic help would purposely leave Montrose for another neighborhood before calling emergency assistance or died from an inability to call for aid as first responders during this time believed that everyone in Montrose already had AIDS.³⁸⁸ It would take pressure from local activists to force first responders to change and better address queer people in times of need due to the excessive violence in the city.

In the Valley, community leaders handled some health issues effectively, but mismanaged others. The issues of racism, sexism, and classism would prove as major obstacles in how public health got addressed. Anglo and wealthier communities would receive the necessary resources while poorer and minority dominated communities often got left forgotten. And even within these communities, women typically received even less as they faced closer scrutiny for their perceived levels of sexuality and promiscuity.

The climate of public health prior to the epidemic would shape the Valley's response as it did elsewhere. In some respects, the Valley proved better able to handle the epidemic. One crucial factor came from the public schools. Many already instituted sexual-health programs from students and organizations like the Planned Parenthood Association of Hidalgo County and

³⁸⁶ Tammye Nash, "Teen please guilty in Houston murder: outrage over brutal attack of Paul Broussard last summer had mobilized Houston gays and lesbians," *Dallas Voice* 9 no. 3 (May 15, 1992): 11. Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph615739/m1/11/>; "Trial date set in Broussard murder," *Dallas Voice* 7 no. 39 (January 17, 1991): 5. Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph615919/m1/5/>.

³⁸⁷ Lisa Gray, "Ray Hill's change of heart: Paul Broussard's murder taught the nation the phrase 'gay-bashing.' But was it really a hate crime?" *Houston Chronicle* (November 15, 2015) <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/Ray-Hill-6636742.php>; "Paul G. Broussard" Texas Obituary Project, <http://www.texasobituaryproject.org/071291broussard.html>; Ellen Hobbs, "Aggie's death gets little attention," *The Battalion* (July 6, 1991). Don Kelly Collection, Cushing Memorial Library and Archive, Texas A&M University; Melinda Cox, "Candlelight Vigil for Slain Aggie," *The Battalion* (September 5, 1991), 13. Don Kelly Collection, Cushing Memorial Library and Archive, Texas A&M University.

South Texas had a strong enough presence within the community that they also educate on reproductive health.³⁸⁹ During the epidemic, access to sexual health education proved a vital tool in diminishing the transmission of AIDS. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the focus largely centered on pregnancy prevention and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but nonetheless, the Valley already had some groundwork established.

And as stated in Chapter IV, other local organizations did step up to provide health care services to impoverished and heavily Latinx communities to minimize health risks. However, as in the present, funding remained a crucial issue that diminished the ability of these organizations to reach as many people as deemed necessary.³⁹⁰ And this lack of funding also coincides with issues of public health on the border. As more workers came in from Mexico either as general laborers or migrant workers, they would experience a process of “disinfection” during their border crossings. However, Mexican workers did attempt to resist the use of chemical baths as seen in the 1917 Bath Riots at Juarez-El Paso bridge when Carmelita Torres, a maid, started the two day riots in opposition to the chemical baths. Torres would get arrested for the riots and U.S. officials would continue using chemical baths on immigrant workers.³⁹¹ The process would remain until well after World War II primarily with Bracero workers who got sprayed with chemicals that would rid them of germs but the chemical makeup of these sprays made these workers sick and gave many of them cancer.³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ “Valley Briefs,” *Valley Morning Star* (October 9, 1977), 41, Newspapers.com – Texas Collection, <https://newscomtx.newspapers.com/image/50638047>.

³⁹⁰ Eric Janzen, “Texas bill cuts HIV funding, boosts abstinence education,” *KXAN Austin, NBC*, March 31, 2015, Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.kxan.com/news/texas-bill-would-cut-hiv-funding-boost-abstinence-education/>.

³⁹¹ John Burnett, “The Bath Riots: Indignity Along the Mexican Border,” *NPR*, January 28, 2006, Last Accessed November 14, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5176177>.

³⁹² Ranjani Chakraborty, “The dark history of ‘gasoline baths’ at the border,” *Vox* (July 29, 2019) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/2019/7/29/8934848/gasoline-baths-border-mexico-dark-history>; The Bracero

This history of questionable public health would set the Valley up for its response to the epidemic. In some respects, the Valley showed signs of being better prepared for the epidemic as it did not hit them as early as it did in places like New York City. The first positive cases did not hit the Valley until around 1986-1987, although, it is likely that more people had the disease but did not receive proper testing or disclose their status openly.³⁹³ Now, by seeing how other places responded to the epidemic, local leaders and community activists could attempt to create solutions to handle how the Valley would respond. However, the Valley also failed in other ways, as the response did not act as uniformly as it should with certain towns receiving and directing more resources than others. And at times, the Valley would continue to treat AIDS as a queer issue rather than recognizing the impact of the epidemic on everyone.

How AIDS appeared in the Valley is not clear. It is not known if the first AIDS patients contracted the disease from sexual contact, drug use, or blood transfusions, nor does it matter in this case since AIDS already became a global issue. The public already had an awareness of the epidemic as it reported in local news from newspapers and broadcasts, and as people traveled to and from the Valley to bring more news of the epidemic. The scapegoating was not entirely necessary in the Valley given that it did not have a large queer community but had significant international travel because of the border's proximity and how frequent locals traveled across the border that made it difficult to assign blame. However, the accuracy in the information surrounding AIDS would vary depending upon sources. Individual interactions tended to include more inaccurate information, and not always for malicious purposes. For example, some people would blame AIDS on the queer community such as using religious morality to assert AIDS came from a wrathful God angry with sinners, which showed malicious intent. Then, there are

Program, "Dehumanization of Braceros," Last Accessed June 29, 2020.
<https://thebraceroprogram.weebly.com/dehumanization.html>.

cases where people might say that AIDS spread from saliva, a popular myth at the time that gradually became debunked but spread due to a poor understanding of how AIDS spread rather than for malicious intent.³⁹⁴ Luckily, medial staff and news organizations attempted to provide more accurate information on the transmission of AIDS, but they too would suffer from inaccurate information, especially during the early years of the epidemic where less was known about AIDS.

The Valley would perceive the epidemic most commonly from two perspectives. Many would identify AIDS as a gay disease and therefore would use it to justify their homophobia. The epidemic provided a cover to people who wanted to see the queer community suffer, who wanted to promote criminalization of queer people, and violence onto queer bodies. While not every case of anti-queer violence reached the level of the Bednarski case in Dallas, many queer people during that time would describe increased harassment and threats onto them with some physical altercations.³⁹⁵ And other queer people would look at reporting of queer deaths where the deaths showed signs of homicide as a sign of danger in an AIDS climate, especially when looking at border violence as many men who participated in cross-dressing, gender non-conforming individuals, and trans women experienced an already high level of violence.³⁹⁶

The second perspective of AIDS in the Valley showed a kinder lens. Some would see the epidemic solely as epidemic without placing blame on any individuals. They would show less

³⁹³ “A Timeline of AIDS/HIV”

³⁹⁴ Richard A. McKay, *Patient Zero and the Making of the AIDS Epidemic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 342; Avert, “Myths about HIV and AIDS,” Last updated: April 14, 2020. <https://www.avert.org/hiv-transmission-prevention/myths>.

³⁹⁵ Perry N. Halkitis, “Discrimination and homophobia fuel the HIV epidemic in gay and bisexual men,” American Psychological Association (April 2012) <https://www.apa.org/pi/aids/resources/exchange/2012/04/discrimination-homophobia>; Gregg Gonsalves and Peter Staley, “Panic, Paranoia, and Public Health – The AIDS Epidemic’s Lessons for Ebola,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 371, 25 (December 18, 2014).

³⁹⁶ Eduardo Martinez, “Transgender leaders speak out against anti-trans violence in the Rio Grande Valley,” *Neta* (December 3, 2018) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://netargv.com/2018/12/03/transgender-leaders-speak-out-against-anti-trans-violence-in-the-rio-grande-valley/>.

hostility to queer community, but the lack of hostility also dealt with the reality that the Valley has a very small queer community, especially during the 1980s. And instead, these individuals paid closer attention to who tested positive. Unlike the frequent portrayal of AIDS as a gay issue, the Valley saw earlier on that AIDS affected everyone. In fact, many AIDS patients in the Valley were not queer and many who tested positive were in fact heterosexual women and their newborn children.³⁹⁷ Unfortunately, as mentioned in Chapter IV, many men would cheat on their wives or girlfriend with other women or men on both sides of the border, contract the virus, and then pass it to their partners.³⁹⁸ And because of a Catholic and conservative culture that did not openly embrace condom use for men, it left more women vulnerable to exposure, particularly Chicana women. Since the identities of the people contracting AIDS appeared different from their frequent media exposure, it pushed the Valley to address the epidemic more seriously than in other places.³⁹⁹

In combatting the epidemic, the Valley needed to utilize different techniques for diminishing its spread, as there was no one-size-fits-all solution. Since medication did not exist at the time, the primary methods to combating AIDS centered on prevention. More campaigns would develop during the 1980s that promoted methods of reducing the risk of spreading AIDS to sexual partners as well as expanding focus on abstinence and prevention of drug use. These campaigns often already had roots in other programs such as sexual health programs and classes already discussing prevention of pregnancy and STI transmission with AIDS being included into the programming. And in drug use prevention, programs already existed to educate the public on

³⁹⁷ Oscar Lopez, interview by Michael Rangel, personal interview, McAllen, January 7, 2019.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Oscar interview; Marisa Taylor and Jessica DeLeon, "More Valley women being infected with HIV," *The Monitor*, 1 December, 1996, 1 and 10A, File R – HIV/AIDS, Health – Medical Conditions, Reference Files Box 2, Health Medical Conditions and Healthcare, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

the dangers of drug use, while also creating a heightened police state to criminalize and incarcerate drug users and sellers with the “War on Drugs” in full affect.⁴⁰⁰ Unfortunately, these programs would experience massive funding cuts in the 1990s and 2000s as anti-viral drugs became more effective, although, remaining highly expensive and many health insurance providers not covering them, and as more conservative politicians did not see the value in these prevention programs especially when looking towards sex-education classes in public schools where the focus fell to abstinence-only education.⁴⁰¹

When looking towards sex-education in public schools, many school districts during the 1980s would have fully functional sex-education classes available to students. These classes would carry controversy from many parents who did not feel it necessary for schools to educate students on sex, but not to the level of contemporary outrage.⁴⁰² In December 1987, as the epidemic began to hit the Valley, school districts like Mission Consolidate School District (MCISD) would include AIDS/HIV education into their sex-education classes for high school students.⁴⁰³ Several of these school districts already brought in health educators from local hospitals, clinics, and Planned Parenthood to educate on preventing STIs and unwanted pregnancies, so they did not have much difficulty including AIDS/HIV into the curriculum.⁴⁰⁴ Many of the students’ parents would not object to the inclusion of AIDS/HIV into the curriculum

⁴⁰⁰ Erika, interviewed by Michael Rangel, telephone interview with author, Lubbock, March 12, 2016; Peter Sterns, *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Child Rearing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), Kindle Edition, Location 27, 34, and 43.

⁴⁰¹ Janzen.

⁴⁰² Range, 37-38; Oscar interview.

⁴⁰³ “AIDS Prevention Program To Be Implemented by MCISD,” *Progress Times*, December 9, 1987, (Microfilm, Roll 7) Speer Memorial Library, Mission, Texas.

⁴⁰⁴ Bonnie Pfister, “Public support in fighting disease slowly gaining in Valley,” *The Monitor*, 1, December 1996, 10A, File R – HIV/AIDS, Health – Medical Conditions, Reference Files Box 2, Health Medical Conditions and Healthcare, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

as various clinics and organizations hosted sex-education courses for adults since the 1970s.⁴⁰⁵ Although, these classes for adults and students often ignored the queer component of the epidemic, except for mentioning their vulnerability, but little was done to include affirming queerness into the curriculum. And as previously mentioned, these sex-education classes experienced pushback from the community in the 1990s and 2000s as right-wing agendas and ideologies on sexuality began to spread, which saw the removal of comprehensive sex-education in favor of abstinence-only education that further reinforced heterosexuality and erased queerness.⁴⁰⁶ And in these schools, many school districts would shut out experienced and licensed health educators in favor of untrained teachers and activists who could promote this conservative agenda on sexuality that left students vulnerable that briefly resulted in a rise of teen pregnancy and a growth in STIs and AIDS/HIV transmission amongst young people.⁴⁰⁷

With the Epidemic having a broader range of victims in the Valley, the health care response needed to adjust to best meet these needs, even as the anti-gay rhetoric and interpretation of the disease persisted. With a smaller queer population, especially openly queer, women became the figure who were most visible in providing primary care and advocacy work. The health care industry of Valley largely abandoned queer people as it did elsewhere in the country for two reasons. The first being that doctors and hospitals did not want to be associated with AIDS, as they feared it would cause them to lose patients and donors, as they would become known as an “AIDS hospital.”⁴⁰⁸ This association with AIDS also came with a gay label due to the operation and visibility of homophobia within the Valley community, which also

⁴⁰⁵ “AIDS Prevention Program To Be Implemented by MCISD,”; “Valley Briefs: National Family Week,” *Valley Morning Star* (October 9, 1977), 41. Newspapers.com – Texas Collection.

⁴⁰⁶ Lorena García, “‘Now Why Do You Want To Know About That?’: Heteronormativity, Sexism, and Racism in the Sexual (Mis)education of Latina Youth,” *Gender and Society* vol. 23, no. 4 (August 2009): 523-524.

⁴⁰⁷ “New Jersey Gets Low Grade on Sex Education, Group Says,” *Montclair Local* (January 10, 2020) Last Accessed: June 29, 2020. <https://www.montclairlocal.news/2020/01/10/new-jersey-sex-education-montclair/>.

⁴⁰⁸ Oscar interview.

existed with the homophobia coming from some doctors and hospitals. Also, the second, which is less problematic than the first, is that doctors and hospitals in the Valley understood so little about the virus and lacked the specialized training necessary to treat AIDS patients that these doctors knew they would be unable to provide adequate care for patients as knowledge about the virus was still in its infancy and prone to misinformation.⁴⁰⁹ This misinformation included how the disease was transmitted and how to avoid transmission as well as what treatments worked.⁴¹⁰

The abandonment of AIDS patients at the hands of the medical community triggered families, friends, and allies to provide necessary health care for patients. In cases where families did not disown their queer relatives, mothers and sisters were the first line of care for AIDS patients. While not certified to perform proper medical care, as Chicaxs only began to enter the medical field in large numbers in the 1980s in the Valley, these mothers and sisters did what they could.⁴¹¹ The same is true in cases where parents did disown their queer sons, extended family may step in such as grandmothers, aunts, and cousins to provide care, or in other cases, it would be friends of the patients, including other gay men, lesbians, and straight women. However, in the Valley, with the disease targeting heterosexual women and their children, it allowed the opportunity for greater sympathy for AIDS-patients. Outside the Valley, the case of Ryan White would claim national attention when 13 year-old Ryan White became HIV-positive after a blood transfusion and died from AIDS-related complications shortly before his high school

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Celia Farber, "AIDS and the AZT Scandal: SPIN's 1989 Feature, 'Sins of Omission,'" *SPIN*, October 5, 2015, Last Accessed August 30, 2019. <https://www.spin.com/featured/aids-and-the-azt-scandal-spin-1989-feature-sins-of-omission/>.

⁴¹¹ Barbara Aranda-Naranjo, *The Health-Seeking Experiences of Mexican-American Women with HIV/AIDS*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas-Austin, 1997, 7-8. University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

graduation.⁴¹² Figures like White and other AIDS patients who did not identify as queer could garner more sympathy from more accidental transmission of HIV through blood transfusions or child birth, then queer people or drug users could. And despite only sharing sympathy for certain kinds of AIDS patients, it still broadened the attention on the epidemic and assisted in expanding research and funding. Congress passed the Ryan White Program in 1990 that authorized the use of federal funds for education and medication related to HIV/AIDS.⁴¹³

Around this time, the Catholic Church in the Valley also bore a response to the Epidemic. Unlike the European Church and the Church in most of the United States, the Church in the Valley bore a culture more similar to that of the Latin American Churches, which are more progressive due to their interests in social justice and were a bit more proactive in caring for those with AIDS.⁴¹⁴ While the bishop in San Juan, Texas and local priests did not explicitly link the disease to queerness and therefore advocate for the punishing of queer men, the Church itself was not as active as it could have been in helping AIDS patients. However, that did not mean the Church response was completely absent. Nuns always played a crucial role in community service during times of public health crisis with the AIDS Epidemic being no exception. Even without direct church support, Valley nuns stepped up to reconfigured their hospice facility, Casa Merced, in the Pharr and San Juan area to provide urgent care for people dying from AIDS.⁴¹⁵ While most of the nuns' patients were gay men, nuns also provided care for trans people, which exposed the

⁴¹² Marisa Taylor and Jessica DeLeon, 1 and 10A; "Who was Ryan White?" Health Resources & Services Administration, Date Last Reviewed: October 2016, Last Accessed August 30, 2019. <https://hab.hrsa.gov/about-ryan-white-hiv-aids-program/who-was-ryan-white>; Oscar Interview.

⁴¹³ "About the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program," Health Resources and Services Administration, Last Reviewed: February 2019, Last Accessed November 14, 2020. <https://hab.hrsa.gov/about-ryan-white-hiv-aids-program/about-ryan-white-hiv-aids-program>.

⁴¹⁴ David Close, *Latin American Politics: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), Digital Edition, Chapter 3; Jason Berry, "A New Inquisition: The Vatican Targets Nuns," *National Catholic Reporter*, December 26, 2012, Last Accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/global-sisters-report/new-inquisition-vatican-targets-us-nuns>.

nuns to the tragedy and motivated them to respond better to other cases of social justice such as the contemporary immigration crisis and battle over a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border.⁴¹⁶

As in the case where women played a crucial role in the basic health care of AIDS patients, women also led the public advocacy for the Epidemic. However, much like the problems of homophobia that revolved with doctors and hospitals, similar troubles occurred when it came to public advocacy. Given the sexual component of the transmission of AIDS, it guaranteed that activists would need to alter public opinion and challenged the social conservatism that dominated the Valley.

The first significant win in advocacy came with the formation of Valley AIDS Council (VAC) in 1988, which was the first HIV/AIDS clinic in the Valley and remains as the primary testing and treatment center to this day. VAC was founded as a joint mission to address the AIDS Epidemic with health care workers from the Texas Department of Health, the Hidalgo County Health Department, local Planned Parenthood clinics, and local nurses. Most who participated in the advocacy for and creating the clinic were women. And much of VAC's early work focused on education before receiving Ryan White program funds which not only allowed them to transition into testing and treatment, but it allowed them to open an outpatient clinic in Harlingen (1994), and open additional offices in Brownsville and McAllen.⁴¹⁷ Most trained medical officials working in VAC were women, while most of its volunteers were young, queer men and women who sought to aid those in their community. Eventually, VAC not only engaged in

⁴¹⁵ Michael, interview by Michael Rangel, personal interview, McAllen, July 7, 2016; Adrian Castellanos, "Taco Bout It: LGBTQ history in the Rio Grande Valley!" *Neta*, October 27, 2017, Last Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://netargv.com/2017/10/27/taco-bout-lgbtq-history-rio-grande-valley/>.

⁴¹⁶ Karla Barguiarena, "Nun leading effort to feed, shelter immigrants at border," *ABC13 News*, June 23, 2014, Last Accessed February 25, 2019, <https://abc13.com/politics/nun-leading-effort-to-shelter-feed-immigrants-at-border/134930/>; Karen Tumulty, "God on the Border," *Washington Post*, June 23, 2019, Last Accessed February 25, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/god-on-the-border/2018/06/29/b291228e-7b00-11e8-aeec-4d04c8ac6158_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.06e0fe3c7007.

testing and public education but they gradually also made their way into the public schools to teach medically-accurate sex education cases.⁴¹⁸

However, even as VAC addressed a crucial need in the Valley for education and health care that was not enough as the clinics could not tackle homophobic elements to the public perception of the Epidemic. To be more proactive about fighting homophobia, Oscar Lopez and Alicia Lugo, two VAC volunteers, would begin the groundwork to construct an advocacy group to meet the needs of the queer community. After Lopez moved from the Valley, Lugo would start Valley Voice alongside her future partner, Laurie Coffey, dedicated to combatting homophobia as they created a safe space for queer people and educating the public on what it meant to be queer.⁴¹⁹ Valley Voice's advocacy stretched in multiple ways, as it was an age-inclusive organization with adults and teenagers, but also had supporters from members' families. They would create a local magazine called *In Touch* to educate the public and promote a support network for the queer Valley as this magazine featured advice columns, health information, and local and national queer news. They would also organize an "adoption" drive where Valley Voice members would care for those who were HIV-positive as they also gathered donations for the hospices and clinics. Valley Voice would also organize the first pride rally in the Valley in 1994, while also commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall Inn Riots that started the Gay Liberation Movement.⁴²⁰ However, Valley Voice would eventually disband in 1996 after Lugo and Coffey stepped down from a leadership position to raise their grandchildren

⁴¹⁷ "Mission and History," Valley AIDS Council, last accessed June 29, 2020, <https://www.valleyaids.org/mission--history.html>.

⁴¹⁸ Oscar interview.

⁴¹⁹ Gabriel Sanchez, "Valley Voice: The Rio Grande Valley's first known LGBTQ advocacy group," *Neta*, October 23, 2017, Last Accessed February 25, 2019, https://netargv.com/2017/10/23/valley-voice-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group/?link_id=2&can_id=22beb753190493c6f71ce81d94bc9400&source=email-the-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group&email_referrer=email_252234&email_subject=the-rio-grande-valleys-first-known-lgbtq-advocacy-group.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

with the remaining members unable and unwilling to fill the voice Lugo and Coffey left behind.⁴²¹ Yet Valley Voice's legacy remains as new groups formed such as a local chapter of PFLAG, student organizations inside of the local universities and college, gay-friendly churches, and other organizations.

And even with its proximity to the border, the AIDS Epidemic did not truly hit Mexico until the around 1986-1987 around the same time it hit the Valley, after it already hit the majority of United States.⁴²² The recognition that AIDS did not enter countries like Mexico until after the United States dispels the myths of these countries as a greater danger to the U.S., especially when looking at how AIDS entered Mexico. In most cases, like in the United States and elsewhere, the earliest and most frequent victims of the epidemic came from Mexico's queer community and sex workers. They would often become infected due to not always using condoms during sex and the frequency in which they had sex left them at higher risk of exposure.

Mexico City and other tourist destinations served as the biggest hotspots for the epidemic.⁴²³ Americans and Europeans being the source of the epidemic, especially when looking towards their engagement with sex tourism as mentioned in the previous chapter. The epidemic became particularly visible along northern Mexican cities like Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo became easy targets for the epidemic because of the presence of a thriving sex worker economy.⁴²⁴ Particularly, men on both sides of the border from late teens to their elderly

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² Jackie Larson, Oscar H. Reyna, and Judy Zuniga, "AIDS education stressed south of border: Reported cases remain low," 24 June 1990, 9A and 14A, File R – HIV/AIDS, Health – Medical Conditions, Reference Files Box 2, Health Medical Conditions and Healthcare, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

⁴²³ Héctor Carrillo, *The Night is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the Time of AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 209-210 and 215.

⁴²⁴ Alice Cepeda, *A Paradox of Autonomy and Risk: Mexican Sexoservidoras (Sex Workers) on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Dissertation, 2004, 1-4 and 132. University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Special Collections.

years would engage in sex with sex workers that furthered the spread of the epidemic.⁴²⁵ And depending on how much they would pay or their youth, sex workers would allow these men to not use condoms, which left them at greater risk of contracting the virus from these HIV-positive men.⁴²⁶ Which in turn, would make sex workers likely to spread the virus onto other clients, their intimate partners, and children if they became pregnant. And with the anonymity of border crossings, the same would happen to Mexico's queer community as it did with sex workers. Men from the Valley or along other parts of the border would cross the border to engage in sex with queer or questioning Mexican men. And given a culture of machismo that discourage condom usage, particularly amongst Latinx men, it left Mexican men more likely to contract the virus from these American tourists who would then, unknowingly like the sex workers, pass on the virus.⁴²⁷

Looking at border cities like Reynosa and Matamoros would also prove a crucial lens for examining the spread of the epidemic. It is through Mexican sex workers that a significant risk for transmission to Valley men occurs. However, that comes more from a general risk that (unprotected) sex with HIV/AIDS transmission since Mexican sex workers did their diligence in reducing the spread. Mexican sex workers did attempt to encourage condom use with clients and cities did attempt to provide testing centers so that sex workers and locals could know their status.⁴²⁸ Unfortunately, Mexican sex workers did experience obstacles to properly accessing safer sex practices and testing as their clients would pay more for bareback sex to exploit these economically disadvantaged workers and not all healthcare workers treated sex workers well as

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140-144.

⁴²⁷ Cepeda, 140-143; Oscar interview.

⁴²⁸ Cepeda and Nowotny, 1512; Sarah Luna, *Love in the Drug War: Selling Sex and Finding Jesus on the Mexico-U.S. Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 2, 18, 113

patients which prompted many to refuse testing to avoid harassments from healthcare workers.⁴²⁹ Still, sex workers are not the only source for the spread of the epidemic as casual sex between people and drug use along the border also contributed significantly. The movement of people across the border, misunderstandings for the transmission, and not many clinics ensured that the virus could have an easier time spreading, as man-made borders have no power in preventing the spread of a virus.

Debates over immigration policies as they relate to public health remain a reoccurring argument in U.S. policymaking. The most recent COVID-19 outbreak serves as a most recent of the difficulties of balancing immigration and public health from delays in processing green cards and citizenship to bans on people from countries deemed as hot zones.⁴³⁰ Similar delays and restrictions have occurred throughout U.S. immigration history when looking at other health crises such as the 1918 Flu Pandemic or when looking at the prohibition of Chinese immigrants with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.⁴³¹

This history of hysteria towards immigrants in the name of public health would shape U.S. reactions to the AIDS Epidemic. With the virus's association with the queer community, it led to heightened homophobia on a broader scale than previously existed in the country. And, it would further raise the barriers towards immigrants especially queer immigrants. The 1965 Immigration Reform Act featured an amendment that prohibited queer people from immigrating into the United States, which led to immigration officials further policing gender behaviors and

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ President Donald J. Trump, "Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants Who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market During the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak," White House, (April 22, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspending-entry-immigrants-present-risk-u-s-labor-market-economic-recovery-following-covid-19-outbreak/>; United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, "USCIS Response to COVID-19," Last Reviewed June 10, 2020, Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/uscis-response-covid-19>.

perceived sexual history.⁴³² It would take until 1990 to reverse the ban on queer immigrants, but a barrier towards AIDS/HIV immigrants came into effect in 1987.⁴³³ This addition to immigration policy granted immigration officials the authority to test immigrants for AIDS/HIV with a positive status being grounds to deny entry.⁴³⁴ And even after promising to reverse that policy during his campaign, President Bill Clinton would renew the policy in 1993, and it would remain in effect until January 2010.⁴³⁵

Overall, the AIDS Epidemic impacted the Valley as it did in other urban and urbanizing places throughout the country. The Valley's effective responses to the epidemic helped to diminish some of its most damaging potential with the opening of testing and treatment centers, hospice care, and proper sex education courses. No doubt, these responses saved some lives and allowed those who became positive to live for a longer period of time than if they had none of these resources.

However, complacency would prove a major factor in undoing some of this progress. The late 1990s and into the 2000s shows governmental entities and the public ignoring the risks of AIDS/HIV or believing it contained. These programs lost funding and public support, which left the next generation of young people moved exposed to the disease. In the 2010s, the rates of

⁴³¹ Alan M. Kraut, "Immigration, Ethnicity, and the Pandemic," *Public Health Reports* vol. 125, Supplement 3 (2010), 125 and 128, Last Reviewed October 18, 2018. <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/featured-stories-uscis-history-office-and-library/1918-influenza-epidemic-and-bureaus-immigration-and-naturalization>

⁴³² Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), Kindle Edition, 9; Out4Immigration, "LGBT Immigration Highlights," Last Accessed June 25, 2020, <http://out4immigration.org/history.html>.

⁴³³ Out4Immigration; ACT UP, "United States HIV Immigration and Travel Policy," ACT UP Historical Archive, Last Accessed June 25, 2020. <https://actupny.org/actions/Immigration.html#:~:text=The%20HIV%20immigration%20prohibition%20began,legal%20permanent%20residency%20status%20here.>

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*; "Immigration," The Center for HIV Law and Policy, Last Accessed June 25, 2020. <https://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/issues/immigration>.

AIDS/HIV transmission are growing amongst Black and Latinx gay men under the age of 30.⁴³⁶ Even with better drug treatments that are more effective at lowering one's risk of spreading the virus and preventative care that protects people from receiving the virus like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), many health centers lack proper training how to treat and prevent AIDS/HIV exposure or the lack of funding for medications like PrEP ensures that poorer people, typically of minority backgrounds, are less likely to have access to these life-saving medications.⁴³⁷ It ultimately results in the steady spread of AIDS/HIV, and, in worse cases, the rise of the virus's spread. In 2020, Hidalgo and Cameron counties are amongst the list of places that are seeing a rise in AIDS/HIV cases because of these funding cuts and this erasure of sex-education courses for abstinence-only programming.⁴³⁸

These funding cuts and ending of health programs coincided with the anti-queer hysteria of the country that also sparked heightened suspicions of immigrants. The presence of AIDS/HIV in Latin American countries further justified the anti-immigrant stance for many Americans, while pushing the political spectrum rightward so that even those claiming liberal and leftist ideologies had to give into right-wing demands. All of which heightened security along the border too as the fear of protecting American public health met a rise in gang and drug-related violence in Latin America, despite the U.S.'s foreign and economic policies that created the climate for violence.

⁴³⁶ Rae Ellen Bichell, "The AIDS Crisis Hasn't Ended in the Black and Latino Communities," *NPR* (February 25, 2016) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/02/25/467968807/the-aids-crisis-hasnt-ended-in-the-black-and-latino-communities>.

⁴³⁷ PrEP is designed to help reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is popularly considered the "gay birth control pill" as it reduces the chances of catching HIV/AIDS from sex or drug use as the medication prevents HIV from latching onto the body and spreading. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "PrEP," Last reviewed June 4, 2020. Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html>.

⁴³⁸ Abril Preciado, "HIV cases among teens in the Rio Grande Valley on the rise," *Valley Central KVEO* (December 20, 2017) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/std-cases-among-teens-in-the-rio-grande-valley-on-the-rise/>.

The history of AIDS provides a template on how to and how not to react during a health pandemic. The epidemic saw to the quick vilification of queer people that disproportionately affected communities of color who were deemed as less sympathetic victims, prompting the Reagan and H.W. Bush Administrations fail in addressing the seriousness of the situation. Places like the Valley would suffer greatly as a result, prompting local doctors and activists to act more urgently due to the lack of a coordinated federal response. In doing so, these local actors could save lives and reduce some of the suffering that queer communities nationwide and the Valley would come to experience.

However, when looking to the present, the failures and shortcomings of Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton's Administrations went ignored when looking to Donald Trump's Administration and the current COVID-19 pandemic. As many scholars and activists have noted, the inability of the Trump Administration to take COVID-19 seriously created an American climate that resembles the AIDS Epidemic.⁴³⁹ The lack of a coordinated response, the disorganization of the central government, the poor response of state governments, a leadership unwilling to see how vulnerable the public are to exposure, widespread misinformation on transmission, and a propaganda campaign set to discredit the virus.⁴⁴⁰ However, unlike AIDS/HIV, COVID-19 spreads further and easier which made the results far more devastating to

⁴³⁹ John Casey, "Trump's Response to Coronavirus Recalls Reagan Ignoring AIDS," *The Advocate* (February 29, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2020/2/29/trumps-response-coronavirus-recalls-reagan-ignoring-aids>; Zack Beauchamp, "Trump is mishandling coronavirus the way Reagan botched the AIDS epidemic," *Vox* (March 30, 2020) Last Accessed: June 29, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/30/21196856/coronavirus-covid-19-trump-reagan-hiv-aids>; Williams, "For Those Who've Lived Both, COVID-19 Echoes of the Early AIDS Crisis."

⁴⁴⁰ Kiah Collier and Cassandra Pollock, "While other states fighting coronavirus enforce widespread closures, Texas Gov. Greg Abbot Goes with a patchwork system," *Texas Tribune* (March 17, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. https://www.texastribune.org/2020/03/17/experts-say-texas-patchwork-strategy-coronavirus-problem/?utm_campaign=trib-social&utm_content=1584454945&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR2flcSU82CF7j_hecr4EQ9rsGV7BWYw0cnOlr3KtpQJKYMykbdeDa2w8oM; Donnie O'Sullivan, "How Covid-19 misinformation is still going viral," *CNN* (May 9, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/08/tech/covid-viral-misinformation/index.html>.

communities, especially for poor and minority-dominated communities.⁴⁴¹ With a higher death toll in a shorter period of time and little awareness of the long-lasting impacts, Trump's actions, or lack thereof, set the United States for failure.

⁴⁴¹ Maria Godoy, "The Coronavirus Crisis: What Do Coronavirus Racial Disparities Look Like State By State?" *NPR* (May 30, 2020) Last Accessed June 29, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/30/865413079/what-do-coronavirus-racial-disparities-look-like-state-by-state>.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION, *PA'LANTE*

Throughout this dissertation, I explored the history how (queer) Chicanxs challenged and resisted Anglo patriarchal domination of the Lower Rio Grande Valley from 1968-2000. I argued that Chicanx and queer people organized around their non-normative identities to disrupt Anglo domination through an examination of education reform, women's reproductive rights, queer activism, and public health. While politically difficult to control a borderland when thinking in terms of federal governments, the local politics of the Valley saw that Anglos wielded significant power against Chicanxs since the 1900s. However, built upon decades of resistance, the 1968 marked a significant moment where Anglos began to experience a decline in power as seen with the walkouts at Edcouch-Elsa High School. The changes in the Valley continued when examining its history through the lens of women's reproductive rights and queer people accessing public spaces that culminated in a broad coalition to challenge the public health crisis that the AIDS Epidemic sparked.

In examining these topics, I utilized Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional theory and Jasbir Puar's homonationalism analytical frameworks. These methods recognize the internal complexities of individuals and their identities, but also provide insight into how these identities conflict with external forces. Crenshaw's intersectionality acknowledges how individuals carry multiple identities such race, class, and gender, while demonstrating that certain identities can allow a degree of privilege in society or compound their oppression. Intersectionality appears throughout these chapters in recognition of the diversity of the people in the Valley, but also in examining the assorted conflicts. Chapters IV and V most clearly demonstrate these

intersectional views given that Latinas and queer Chicanxs faced harassment from Anglos, but also Chicanx men participated in the process to uphold their patriarchal power over the bodies of women and queer people. Meanwhile, Puar's homonationalism deconstructs the visibility of queerness to demonstrate means that forms of queerness rooted in Anglo norms is used to uphold American Exceptionalism globally even as queer bodies are policed and abused domestically. Chapter V portrays homonationalism in its examination of queer spaces. The homophobia in the Valley required queer people at bars like Duffy's Tavern to self-police themselves in performing their queerness from Anglo respectability or risk arrest. But it also recognizes the abuse of queer Americans who travel across the border into Mexico, exploiting queer Mexicans and sex-workers, putting these locals at risk for tourists' pleasures.

While much of the dissertation examined conflict through the lens of Chicanxs versus Anglos on a racial level, I also recognized that internal conflicts would appear, especially when viewing this history through intersectional and homonationalist lenses. As discussed in Chapter III, the Chicanx and Anglo conflict also carried gendered connotations when considering what is appropriate gendered behavior for an Anglo boy compared to a Chicanx boy. However, another perspective of conflict emerges when considering male versus female Chicanxs as explored in Chapter IV as Chicanx men carry blame for maintaining patriarchal control over Chicanx women. It saw that Chicanx men reconfigured patriarchy to emphasize their control over the lives and health of Chicanx women. Lastly, the perspective of straight versus queer Chicanxs and even straight versus queer Anglos is apparent in Chapter V and VI. Even with racial and ethnic similarities, the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity would serve as an obstacle to equality in the Valley. As seen in spaces like Duffy's Tavern or in the beginning of the AIDS Epidemic, straight Chicanxs and Anglos would harass and enforce their domination over queer

Chicanxs and Anglos to reinforce the heteronormative core of patriarchy. However, even from these lenses of conflict, there is still space for interracial, interethnic, gender, and sexual solidarity that saw to activism that would disrupt the heteronormative, Anglo patriarchal status quo that long held control over the Valley.

In arguing over the decline of Anglo patriarchal domination over the Valley, I open in Chapter II with an examination of the state of the Valley and its long history. Chapter II goes into the Valley's indigenous past and experience with Spain, Mexico, then the United States to highlight the continuous shifts in power. It recognizes that the resistance to Anglo domination did not begin in 1968 with Chicano Walkouts, but developed from a much longer history and also establishes how the shifts in culture and demographics would also facilitate the transformations that occurred between 1968-2000 that is expanded upon in the remaining chapters.

In covering the dissertation's chronology, Chapter III focuses on the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts of 1968 operated as the starting point where Chicancx people delivered a significant blow to Anglo patriarchal domination as seen from Chicancx teenagers actively challenging Anglo administrators control over their education. In walking out, Chicancx teenagers demonstrated the fragility of Anglo control, while diminishing racial and gender discrimination for students across the Valley. Meanwhile, Chapter IV similarly follows this discussion on patriarchy from a more intimate gender examination from the experiences of Latinas accessing reproductive healthcare. Chapter IV provides a broader overview of reproductive healthcare and pregnancy through a reproductive justice framework that recognized how Latinas in the Valley faced assorted obstacles to protect their health and (future) children from medical racism that covered the 1970s. It concludes to examine that despite wins for women that their reproductive

health remains under assault in the Valley and in the United States when highlighting current legislative restrictions to contraception and abortions or the heavy financial burdens that prevent pregnant women from accessing healthcare.

Lastly, Chapters V and VI provide a narrower focus on the Valley's queer dimensions and crisis. Chapter V examines the intimacies of queer spaces from the 1970s-1990s as places that allowed for social interactions, but also recognizes how queer spaces facilitated sexual encounters. The chapter highlights queer bars like Duffy's Tavern and PBDs with their significance in creating the Valley's queer community as these spaces allowed queer Chicanxs and Anglos to know that they were not alone. However, these queer spaces also faced greater scrutiny from the public as seen from Duffy's earlier policies that prohibited male-male intimacies or risk police shutting the bar down. Chapter V also recognized the importance of border crossings and tourism as it related to accessing bars and sex workers. It examined how residents on both sides would use their close proximity to the border to hide their sexual orientations and gender identity as they crossed the border to interact in places where no one knew them thus they could more openly express themselves. Gradually, more queer spaces would open on both sides of the border and with a decline in homophobia overall, it would diminish the need for border crossings even as many residents continued to do so for fun, or in the case of Valley residents to pursue Mexican sex workers. Times would change in the Valley and queer people could engage more openly, but that openness would follow great tragedy. Chapter VI analyzes the Valley's response to the AIDS Epidemic from its start until 2000, and how that resembled and differed from state, federal, and even international responses. The chapter also highlighted the struggles queer people faced from a public health crisis that disproportionality killed them because of how AIDS/HIV got transmitted, but also recognized

how many in the Valley would come to the aid of queer people such as the Catholic nuns who ran Casa Merced, and the medical community and activists that assembled to create Valley AIDS Council. And, tragically, Chapter VI concludes with a reflection on the response to the contemporary COVID-19 pandemic and how much the general response to the pandemic resembled that of the AIDS Epidemic, resulting in an unnecessary loss of life.

Despite how these topics in isolation appear unrelated, this dissertation demonstrated how interconnected nature of these topics. Education, reproductive access, community formation, and public health intersect as these issues come to affect Chicanxs in the Valley on different levels. In some cases these causes for reform naturally reflected an individual's identities while other cases saw individuals recognizing shared discrimination. The need to see elimination of racism, sexism, and homophobia in public schools, reproductive health care, community formation, and public health proves beneficial to all people even as Anglos and some Chicanxs sought to maintain the patriarchal status quo. However, as this dissertation demonstrated even as much of the status quo remains in place that the actions of (queer) Chicanxs between 1968-2000 facilitated crucial changes to expand equality in the Valley with the process continuing through Valley's residents contemporary activism.

In the introduction of this dissertation, I titled it "Finding Pride in the Valley" not only as a tribute to my focus on uncovering the queerness of the Lower Rio Grande Valley but also as a reflection of my complicated and changing relationship with the Valley. I moved there in the early 2000s at 10 years old from Fort Polk, Louisiana. Coming from a military family, the constant relocation every few months to every other year was an experience familiar to me and one that I related to when researching the histories of migrants. However, my time in the Valley differed from previous moves, as it was the final one, as my father would soon retire from the

United States Army. I would remain living in Mission, Texas until I started a Master's program at Texas Tech University and continued at Texas A&M University for my doctorate.

When I first moved to the Valley, I hated it with all my heart. It culturally felt so different compared to the military communities that I grew up in, I hated the heat, I did not get along with the people at my school, and I disliked Mexican food (I prefer Puerto Rican food). Also, having relocated to the Valley, I lost connection with my family. My father typically got stationed around the Midwest or East Coast so we were close enough to his and mom's family in Chicago. But down in the Valley, while I had relatives there, I did not know any of them, and because I did not get along with my cousins there, I became more withdrawn and hated the Valley even more. It did not help that my brother would enlist in the military and get stationed in the Middle East during the U.S. military's early operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and my sister would soon graduate from high school and leave the family after my parents poorly handled her coming out as a lesbian. And being the only one left in the house with my parents and going through puberty, I began to resent my parents, especially as I was coming to terms with my own gayness, for forcing us to live in the Valley where I felt our family got destroyed.

However, my feelings on the Valley changed drastically since leaving, growing up, and doing my research. I have relinquished my resentment for the Valley because it is only a place, and, while my relationships with my family remains complicated, I begun to realize their flaws and at the end of the day, they are as human as anyone else. It is through these experiences that I saw my path to craft this dissertation. In interviewing the people that I did, I found a similar trend for many that shared this conflicting relationship with the Valley but also learning to love it too and finding a sense of pride there.

So despite the pain and the drama, I hold pride in growing up in the Valley. And in this dissertation, I attempted to display such pride in the people whose stories I told and its changing history. To the (queer) Latinx people who sought to build community and create equality for everyone despite the obstacles from other people that would hinder their progress or the tragic reality of public health crises that redirect efforts so that people can survive.

In my Master's thesis, I called my conclusion chapter "Continuing Forward" as I thought of it as a springboard into a dissertation project. I kept the conclusion a simple summary of my thesis's exploration of youth culture and leisure, the formation of queer spaces, and the AIDS Epidemic in the Valley while mentioning the modernization process occurring beginning the 1990s and into the 2000s.⁴⁴² And at the end, I paid recognition to the people that I interviewed and the assorted stories I found while researching to recognize the need to share the voices of people from marginalized spaces. And here in this dissertation, I do the same in recognizing the voices of marginalized people and documenting their contributions to history no matter how tiny they appear in the grand scheme of things.

But here in my dissertation, I also wanted to close it on a more powerful statement that recognizes my experiences and the people that I spent these last seven years studying. I found the word "*Pa'lante*" to beautifully represent the spirit of the dissertation. *Pa'lante* is a contraction of *para adelante* (straight ahead), however, *pa'lante* itself means "forward." Puerto Ricans more frequently use *pa'lante* as a motivational phrase and during protest.⁴⁴³ But here, I find another source of inspiration for *pa'lante* coming from Americana band Hurray for the Ruff Raff's 2017

⁴⁴² Michael A. Rangel, "Queer Valley: Stories of Culture and Resistance along the Lower Rio Grande Valley" (Master's Thesis, Texas Tech University, 2016), 92-94.

⁴⁴³ Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan, "Pa'lante Puerto Rico, Pa'lante," Democracy Now!, July 25, 2019, Last Accessed November 17, 2020. https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/25/palante_puerto_rico.

song “*Pa’lante*.”⁴⁴⁴ The song serves as a pro-Puerto Rican anthem as it discusses the history of colonization and abuses done onto Puerto Rico but the resilience of the people to fight for their survival and moving forward in the face of oppression.⁴⁴⁵ The song goes so far as to sample Nuyorican⁴⁴⁶ poet Pedro Pietri’s poem “Puerto Rican Obituary,” to highlight the suffering of Puerto Rican people, especially as the music video highlights Puerto Rico’s recovery after Hurricane Maria on September 2017.⁴⁴⁷

It is from Hurray for the Riff Raff’s “*Pa’lante*” that I find embodies the struggles I overcame throughout the doctoral program. From the many nights I wanted to drop out, my many bouts with depression, recovering from a broken leg, and trying to complete research during the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the song also embodies the spirit of the dissertation itself. It speaks on the struggles of the people and stories that I highlight, and how they would attempt to overcome the status quo or even simply try to survive.

The final verse of “*Pa’lante*” best encapsulates that message:

To all who came before, we say, ¡*Pa’lante!* To my mother and my father, I say, ¡*Pa’lante!* To Julia, and Sylvia, ¡*Pa’lante!* To all who had to hide, I say, ¡*Pa’lante!* To all who lost their pride, I say, ¡*Pa’lante!* To all who had to survive, I say, ¡*Pa’lante!* To my brothers, and my sisters, I say, ¡*Pa’lante!* ¡*Pa’lante!* ¡*Pa’lante!* To all who came before, we say, ¡*Pa’lante!*⁴⁴⁸

The recognition for the people that came from before reflects the goals of the dissertation in highlighting the assorted conflicts that (queer) Latinx people faced in the Valley. It recognizes the students and parents who fought for a better education for Latinx students at Edcouch-Elsa,

⁴⁴⁴ Hurray for the Riff Raff’s frontwoman is Alynda Segarra is a Puerto Rican woman from the Bronx, New York.

⁴⁴⁵ Hurray for the Riff Raff, “*Pa’lante*,” Track 11 of *The Navigator*, ATO Records, 2017, compact disc.

⁴⁴⁶ Nuyorican refers to a Puerto Rican who is living in New York City.

the women and their families who sought healthcare to promote a healthier pregnancy for Latinas, the queer people who sought to find community in a homophobic environment, and the epidemic that mobilized people into action to save the lives of the less fortunate. Latinx people constantly sought to move forward even as people in positions of power sought to diminish progress and change. Even with uncertainty if the work would do any good that did not stop Latinx people from resisting. It is in that uncertainty that (queer) Latinx people continue to move forward, reclaiming and defending their pride, against bigotry. And it is there that I find my pride from my experiences in the Valley and the spirit of those who came before.

Pa'lante.

⁴⁴⁷ Jessica Diaz-Hurtado, "A Recovering Puerto Rico Stars in Hurray For The Riff Raff's 'Pa'lante' Video," *NPR*, May 21, 2018, Last Accessed: November 17, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/latino/2018/05/21/613052812/a-recovering-puerto-rico-stars-in-hurray-for-the-riff-raffs-palante-video>.

⁴⁴⁸ Hurray for the Riff Raff.

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