

Colonia Mexicana

Mexicans Subject to Modern Empire in Fort Worth, Texas

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Biography

After growing up in San Antonio, Texas, Peter Martínez earned both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in History from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2003 and 2009 respectively before earning a Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of North Texas in 2017. His dissertation, *Ready to Run: Fort Worth's Mexicans in Search of Representation, 1960-2000*, was awarded The 2018 Award for Best Dissertation in Tejana/o Studies by the Tejas Foco for Chicana and Chicano Studies. Currently, Peter Martínez serves as an Associate Professor of History at Tarrant County College.

Much has been written regarding Chicano/a history in the geographical territory that we often refer to as the United States-Mexico borderlands. It is well known that during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, people of Mexican descent lost power, property, and prestige after Anglo Americans moved closer to the Mexican border, but during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the Mexican population in the United States has grown considerably while rapidly spreading north. Metropolitan areas like Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; and the Dallas-Fort Worth area in Texas only held very small Mexican communities at the beginning of the twentieth century, but now each of those areas hold hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Mexicans. As such, it is imperative that historians investigate these urban areas in order to see how each of them has developed over the years while also considering how the predominant Anglo population accepted, or failed to accept, the rising number of Mexicans who introduced themselves to these new spaces. In other words, rather than studying what happened to Mexican communities when Anglo migrants established hegemony in formerly Mexican-dominated communities, historians must consider what has happened to Mexicans who created homes for themselves in Anglo-dominated environments.

As opposed to exploring an internal colonial history model that was made popular in the 1970s by leading, influential Chicano scholars like Rodolfo Acuña, this study explores how the United States viewed and treated Mexicans in Fort Worth, Texas during the first half of the twentieth century through a framework in which Mexican populations have been moved into parts of the United States where their labor is desired along the lines of Chicano scholars, Gilbert G. González and Raúl A. Fernández.¹ While laws recognized both racially white and racially black residents in Fort Worth, Mexicans were treated as foreigners, regardless of

whether or not they were from Mexico. In fact, the bulk of this study explores a community that was originally established around the turn of the twentieth century and had been home to Mexicans for approximately forty years before the community was removed in order to benefit Fort Worth's Anglo-American residents. This community itself might be considered an "internal colony" as the contemporaries often referred to this area as "Little Mexico." Federal, state, and municipal laws governing the city of Fort Worth recognized "whites" and "blacks," and the public education system trained Fort Worth's youth what their place in society should be. Furthermore, statistics allowed Fort Worth the opportunity to manage its residents by using race as a key identifying factor. While Fort Worth may be thought of as a city, its efforts at "people management" and separation of power and privilege by utilizing race as a key determining factor provide evidence that Fort Worth is indeed part of a U.S. Empire.

There is a plethora of scholarly work regarding race in the United States, and Chicano scholarship that addresses the utilization of race to benefit the privileged Euro-American population is rapidly growing, but the concept of racialization as a tool of a U.S. economic empire has much work to be done. Just as influential anthropologists Ann Laura Stoler and James C. Scott argue in their respective works, statistical analysis is often used as a measure to grant privileges to those whom the empire deems are worthy of such benefits.² Fort Worth only had a few Mexican communities in the early twentieth century and at least one of these communities was physically removed specifically to benefit Fort Worth's Euro-American population by the late 1930s. Members of this community primarily served as blue-collar laborers, many of whom worked in some of Fort Worth's prominent downtown hotels and restaurants. Furthermore, many of Fort Worth's early Mexican population arrived by train as

part of the United States' desire for cheap Mexican labor during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Fort Worth was unlike South Texas cities that had relatively high numbers of Mexican residents, but instead, Fort Worth often served as a crossroads for Mexicans looking for work elsewhere in the country - part of an economic structure that moved Mexicans to locations where their cheap and expendable labor was needed. Nevertheless, Mexican communities developed and the area which will for the time be referred to as Little Mexico held a vibrant and established community.

In order to set the discussion of Fort Worth's "Little Mexico" community, this essay will begin at the end. Little Mexico ceased to exist once its population was removed so that the Fort Worth Housing Authority (FWHA) with the backing of the United States Housing Authority (USHA), could construct public housing for white Fort Worth residents in 1939. In addition to constructing the white housing project (named the Ripley Arnold Housing Project), the FWHA also constructed the Butler Place Housing Project which displaced a predominantly black community in order to erect housing for black Fort Worth residents. These two housing projects were the first public housing endeavors in the city of Fort Worth and neither project was intended for Fort Worth's Mexican residents, although authorities insisted that since Mexicans were legally considered white they would be given the opportunity to live in the new housing project. Mexicans had been legally declared part of the "white" race during the mid-nineteenth century with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War, and thus were theoretically deserving of all of the privileges that went along with being white in the United States starting in the mid-nineteenth century but legal declarations of whiteness did not equate to social equality.

Despite the fact that Mexicans were legally defined as white once the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, Anglos in the American Southwest instead began a history of viewing Mexicans as a conquered race, biologically inferior and subservient to Anglo Americans.³ As such, improving conditions for Fort Worth's white residents did not necessarily mean improving conditions for Mexicans in Fort Worth for a couple of reasons. First, Mexicans were not truly considered Americans, but instead, they were viewed as imported, exogenous laborers only residing in the United States for economic purposes.⁴ Second, Mexicans were considered racially inferior so their presence in Fort Worth was a detriment to society. The following pages will show how Mexicans were viewed in Fort Worth and, at times, the Dallas-Fort Worth area during the 1920s and 1930s that led to the removal of Fort Worth's Little Mexico community in the late 1930s.

While North Texas is not an area many people consider when they think about Mexican-American history, Mexican laborers have been desired in North Texas since the late nineteenth century when they began their trek up to Fort Worth once railroad construction from South Texas was completed during the 1870s and 1880s.⁵ By 1890, railroads in Fort Worth provided a direct connection to cities such as Denver, Colorado; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Illinois, and areas in-between. Furthermore, from these aforementioned areas, Mexicans could proceed to cities even further away in search of employment. Although this research does not seek to dig into history much before 1920, the reader should know that Mexicans did not suddenly appear in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in the 1920s, but instead, Mexicans had traveled to and through Fort Worth for several decades and were not totally foreign to the area. In 1910 about 10 percent off all "foreign-born whites" in Fort Worth were of Mexican descent and by

1920 Fort Worth had nearly 4,000 Mexican-born residents, comprising over three and a half percent of Fort Worth's total population and over half of the "foreign-born white" population.⁶ Much of this population was encouraged to come to Fort Worth because cheap labor was needed to help wealthy businessmen and big farm owners make handsome profits. In 1919 *The Dallas Morning News* published an article emphasizing the desire for more Mexican labor in North Texas declaring that Mexicans were needed to replace the "200 of whom are leaving each week for the beet fields of Colorado and Indiana."⁷ The article claimed that Mexicans were usually procured in Fort Worth, San Antonio, Laredo, El Paso, and in New Mexico and subsequently primarily used to serve as track hands on railroads. This system of importing Mexican labor to North Texas was well established by the 1920s and efforts at controlling Mexican populations were well under way.

While Mexicans had established a history for themselves in North Texas by building communities and becoming a part of the urban landscape by the early twentieth century, Anglo-led organizations grew uneasy about the existence of Mexican populations. D.E. Lyday, president of the Texas Farmer's Educational and Co-Operative Union (now the National Farmer's Union) complained that Texas farmers were foolishly letting Mexican laborers leave their farms when Mexican laborers were not needed. Lyday argued that farmers should provide sustenance, shelter, and temporary employment for Mexican laborers so Mexicans would stay on the farm instead of heading to the city when their services were not needed in the fields.⁸ In response to this migration to the city of Fort Worth, in 1921 the president of the Fort Worth Welfare Association (FWWA) pled with the Chamber of Commerce to help find work for Mexicans elsewhere in the state rather than keeping unskilled Mexican laborers in Fort Worth.⁹

Mexicans who were employed in railroad work or other industrial lines in Eastern and Northern states during the summer often came to Fort Worth during the winter months when their services were not needed.

As Fort Worth's migrant Mexican community increased, the manager of the Welfare Association complained that half the Mexicans in Texas were in violation of the law since it was the responsibility of the Anglo employer to ensure Mexicans be returned to Mexico once their labor was no longer needed.¹⁰ If work could not be found for Mexicans in North Texas, there was a chance that those undesired Mexicans would not stay around long. Consequently, not long after FWWA leaders asked for unwanted Mexicans to be relocated were their wishes granted. By June of 1921, approximately 6,000 superfluous Mexicans were transported back to their native land from Dallas and Fort Worth.¹¹ The remaining Mexicans were either gainfully employed or they were expected to contribute to the upcoming local harvest season. Clearly, Fort Worth felt that if Mexicans were unable to serve the purpose for which they were imported, they were of no use to Fort Worth and undesired by Euro-American leaders.

For those Mexicans who created homes for themselves in Fort Worth, education would be needed for their children. Although there were several reports written regarding Fort Worth schools during the 1920s and 1930s, the Mexican population was largely ignored by these publications. This is very telling considering the fact that the United States census tells us that Fort Worth's Mexican families tended to be relatively large with a median family size of 4.63 in 1930. In fact, over 60 percent of Fort Worth's Mexican families had at least four people in the household and there were well over 1,200 Mexican children under the age of ten in 1930 compared to just over 3,300 African-Americans under the age of ten. Yet, while the elementary

school enrollment for African-American students was around 4,000, there were only 662 Mexican children enrolled in Fort Worth elementary schools and a minuscule 21 Mexican students enrolled in junior high and senior high schools.¹² If the numbers would have been remotely proportional then one would expect to see at least twice as many Mexican students enrolled than what was reported. Furthermore, out of the 662 Mexicans enrolled in elementary schools, thirty-six were between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. In fact, according to a publication commonly referred to as *The Strayer Report*, during the 1930-1931 school-year, the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) assigned at least one eighteen-year-old Mexican to “low second grade” and another to “high third grade” while “low first grade” also included a fourteen-year-old Mexican adolescent.

Even though nearly 40 percent of Fort Worth’s African-American and Euro-American students were teenagers, fewer than 10 percent of Fort Worth’s Mexican students were teenagers. *The Strayer Report* included a breakdown of the Mexican population at three Fort Worth elementary schools that account for approximately one-third of the Mexican elementary school population and the breakdown shows us that out of the 231 Mexican students enrolled at these three elementary schools, almost 73 percent were between kindergarten and second grade while the other 27 percent of Mexican students were enrolled in third through sixth grade indicating a significant drop-off for Mexican students after second grade. Meanwhile, George D. Strayer stressed the importance of giving Mexican students a solid two years of education so they could sufficiently learn English before they were old enough “to be of great economic value to his family.”¹³ Another report provides evidence of how people in Fort Worth viewed this era when the author wrote, “If the child is worth educating, one of the greatest

problems is to find where he can make the most of himself.”¹⁴ In other words, not all children were worthy of a good education and a second-grade education was the primary goal established for Fort Worth Mexicans.

In another report published for the FWISD in 1930, it was made clear that not all students were viewed similarly. The two primary goals established by the FWISD were as follows:

1. To furnish training in basic and fundamental subjects which is necessary for practically everyone
2. To unify or integrate by means of the common fundamental training the masses of the people so that they can live and work together in peace and prosperity.¹⁵

In order to mold students into good citizens, the school district aimed at socially developing the individual and training students in establishing social customs while encouraging homogeneous grouping for class work.¹⁶ This homogeneous atmosphere was conducive to the idea of educating two races since schools were primarily constructed for either black students or white students, however, Mexicans did not fit into this two-race ideology.

In order to address some of the Mexican population, prior to 1931 there was only one school maintained specifically for Mexican students and that school was simply called “the Mexican school.” Built as an annex to Peter Smith Elementary within blocks of Fort Worth’s Little Mexico community during the 1926-1927 school-year, the Mexican school was used to educate first and second-grade Mexican children with the intention of integrating older Mexican children into Peter Smith Elementary if Mexican children passed the second grade. The original Mexican school was a two-room, temporary wooden structure valued at about \$1,700 in 1929, which was comparable to the cost of the pathetic school buildings constructed for

black Fort Worth children. In contrast, even the smallest white school in Fort Worth was valued at about \$7,000 in 1929 with many of the white schools valued at close to \$20,000.¹⁷ When Strayer studied the Fort Worth schools, he recommended moving the students out of the Mexican school and incorporating them into the vacant rooms at Peter Smith Elementary. Peter Smith was a brick building with twenty classrooms that educated an under-populated Kindergarten through the sixth grade student body. As evidence of the under-population, Peter Smith's average daily attendance dropped from 621 in the 1925-1926 school-year to 443 in the 1930-1931 school-year. Another recommendation Strayer made in his report was to build another elementary school in the southern section of Fort Worth to address the growing population in that part of town. In response to these suggestions, the FWISD instead closed the Mexican school around 1931 and built Katy Lake Elementary School on the south side of Fort Worth near South Fort Worth Elementary School. Katy Lake was the new Mexican School and was used to instruct Mexican students from grades one to three. Moreover, it was not until shortly after the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954 that the FWISD decided to close Katy Lake Elementary School.

As a result of the high drop-out rate among Mexican students, one might expect to see higher rates of juvenile delinquency among Mexican youths, but this did not appear to be the case. In a 1929 study of juvenile delinquency in Fort Worth, Orie Dexter Monroe, who at the time was a Texas Christian University graduate student, found that Mexicans were no more delinquent than any other race at the time.¹⁸ Over a seventeen-month period, Monroe studied delinquency cases in Tarrant County and found there was 1,115 cases against white youths, 195 cases against black youths, and twenty-seven cases against Mexican youths in that time-frame.

Additionally, there was one case each against an Indian, a Jew, and an Italian. Only 2 percent of all delinquency cases involved a Mexican youth at a time when Mexicans made up close to 4 percent of the population. Monroe justified the proportionate representation by arguing, "Race is not very important in the study of juvenile delinquency in Tarrant County as the population is composed principally of whites and negroes and each race knows its place and accepts its status as a matter of course."¹⁹ Adding confusion to this declaration of racial harmony, Monroe also wrote that "the mal-adjustment of the immigrant is one of the greatest in juvenile delinquency."²⁰ At about the time Monroe published his thesis, over 80 percent of Fort Worth's Mexican population was foreign-born so Monroe's arguments appear to diverge from his own report.

Although Monroe seemed to disregard the fact that a large percentage of Mexicans in Fort Worth were immigrants, only a few years later the FWHA would act upon the belief that Mexicans were not part of the American metropole. During the mid-1930s, deep into the Great Depression, destitute Anglos felt disillusioned by a conservative Fort Worth government that they believed had done little to help those who were economically and physically suffering. Conservative councilmen argued that providing charity and relief to Fort Worth residents would simply educate them to expect charity and relief and not make contributions of their own.²¹ As a result of a deteriorating economy and the spread of slums in the mid-1930s, Fort Worth residents elected members of the People's Progressive Party to take over the city council. The People Progressive Party, led by Texas Christian University (TCU) history professor W.J. Hammond, called for the eradication of slums and a crackdown on prostitution and juvenile delinquency in Fort Worth.

Once Hammond and the People's Progressive Party took control, they set forth on their goals of cleansing Fort Worth of what they considered the filth and demoralization associated with slums. In order to decide what slums to should be cleared, Hammond commissioned TCU sociology professor Dr. Austin L. Porterfield to conduct a study of Fort Worth's blighted areas to decide which area should be chosen for slum clearance. In 1937, Porterfield and a few of his students created an "Index of Disorganization" that allowed them to evaluate what areas were the most demoralized and in need of cleansing. One of the primary goals was to remove a community where the "moral and intellectual level is decidedly low."²² It was argued that people who lived in slums had "a lack of interest in constructive civic enterprise" and "were a menace to the whole community."²³ Since population tracts from the census were unavailable, Porterfield and his students utilized elementary school populations in order to determine each community's level of moral disorganization. By adding the number of arrests, juvenile delinquency cases, forcible detainer cases, prostitution cases, and welfare relief recipients in each elementary school district and then dividing the number of total cases by the elementary school population, Porterfield and his students argued they could justify which areas should be utilized for slum clearance and the construction of public housing.²⁴

While the idea of using elementary school populations may in some instances seem logical to an extent, the utilization of elementary school populations does not account for a variety of factors such as how many adults that do not have kids live in an area or, more pertinent in this case, how many children go to school in a particular area. Furthermore, using data concerning the number of arrests and prostitution cases within districts do not take into account whether or not the perpetrator lived in said district. For instance, Little Mexico was

located in District 2 which had the highest score, but District 2 encompassed about half of downtown Fort Worth meaning that crime surrounding the local downtown nightlife would skew numbers, making Little Mexico, as representative of District 2, look worse than it may have actually been. Moreover, the index did not specifically pertain to a neighborhood, but rather the index encompassed several neighborhoods as well as commercial districts.

Regardless of its faults, the “Index of Disorganization” (See Table I - Appendix) was ultimately utilized by the City of Fort Worth and the USHA to displace residents of Little Mexico in 1938 but how representative were these index numbers of Little Mexico?

When examining what areas should be cleansed, Porterfield and his students completely surveyed each of the areas considered for slum clearance. They knew that Little Mexico was a predominantly Mexican area, and in fact, Little Mexico was about 75 percent Mexican, serving as a home to 620 Mexicans and 113 Mexican families at the time that it was cleared for the construction of white public housing.²⁵ Of these Mexican families, well over half were headed by documented American citizens, but legal status had little to do with whether or not one was truly considered American. The idea of ridding the city of slums was to remove disorganized and demoralized people that caused the city to be sick in a manner of speaking. It was believed that the social malevolence of the community spread like a disease and Anglo Fort Worth residents wanted this disease to be cured.

The Index of Disorganization was used to justify what slum area should be removed but how were Mexicans specifically assessed in this evaluation? In his table on “Active cases of Prostitution” (see Table 2) Porterfield’s student Robert Eugene Baker showed us that Mexicans only constituted six out of 412 total cases of prostitution in Fort Worth (about one and a half

percent) while whites made up 332 cases (80.6 percent) and African Americans had seventy-four cases (about 18 percent).²⁶ Clearly, Mexican prostitutes were not a problem in Fort Worth but perhaps Mexican delinquents had become a problem since the previous report that was conducted about nine years earlier. Again, however, Mexican youths do not appear to have been a problem since out of 5,191 cases ranging from 1933 to 1937, Mexican youths were only involved in 163 (3.1 percent). This number is proportionate to the total Mexican population around this time since Baker claims Mexicans made up about 3.4 percent of Fort Worth's total population by June 1935 (6,005 Mexicans out 175,000 Fort Worth residents).²⁷

If Mexicans were not causing disproportionately high crime problems, one might then think that they were becoming too much of a financial drain on Fort Worth but this was not the case either. There were only a total of nineteen families in all of Little Mexico that were getting relief from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Out of these nineteen, only five families were Mexican. Incredibly, relief cases comprised far and away the highest score for District 2 accounting for 178 cases, yet only five of those cases were from Mexicans in Fort Worth's Little Mexico community. It appears as though Mexicans fared well in the Index of Disorganization until one reads deeper into the report.

As has been stressed repeatedly, while scholars who studied Fort Worth's Mexicans during the 1920s and 1930s rarely if ever accused of Mexicans of being malevolent people, reports repeatedly iterated the desire to have a social structure that recognized whites and blacks since it was argued that blacks and whites understood their respective positions in American society. Conversely, Mexicans were viewed as foreigners who did not have a place in Fort Worth, or indeed a place in American society except as exogenous, low-wage laborers. In

addition to the data collected that would be used to remove the Little Mexico community, Porterfield and his students also learned about *who* lived in these communities which provided for a less empirical approach to slum clearance. Floyd Leggett (another Porterfield student) wrote, "By the process of surveying families and grading areas, both as to quality of houses and the moral level of houses and the moral level of the people... the local housing authority chose the areas which seemed most in need of attention."²⁸ What about the Mexicans in Little Mexico made Anglo residents want to remove their community?

Despite the fact that Mexicans in Little Mexico did not exhibit the worst characteristics as judged by the survey, the reality that Mexicans lived *near* an area that showed low character may have been reason enough to remove Mexicans from this area. During the early twentieth century, it was common for white people to believe that the presence of darker skinned people could have adverse effects on the white population, and Little Mexico was located near a major commercial district on the northwest side of downtown Fort Worth, across from the county courthouse.²⁹ American science during the 1920s and 1930s often claimed that Mexicans were naturally of ill-health because of their racial make-up. Dr. Ellsworth Huntington, a Yale University professor, argued that Mexicans were unable to be highly productive citizens because they lacked adequate mental and physical health.³⁰ In another article, Huntington referred to Mexico as "a nation of invalids."³¹ Among other physical health problems, Mexicans as a race were believed to be more prone to getting tuberculosis and carrying syphilis, so consequently they were considered to be "a constant menace to public health."³² Essentially, Mexicans were not considered to be of good stock as they were looked upon as biologically inferior to western and northern European immigrants.³³ The presence of Mexicans in

downtown Fort Worth threatened the health of the entire city, especially if they were to procreate with white races since the mixture of Mexican blood with white blood could taint the purity of the Euro-American race and weaken the United States from within.³⁴ Fear of Mexican inferior health affecting white society was widespread as Dallas newspaper article argued that the presence of Mexicans constituted “a continuing menace to the physical as well as to the social health of the State.”³⁵ When disease spread, officials in Fort Worth made sure to keep a watchful eye on Mexican communities where conditions were “ideal for breeding disease.”³⁶ Even if Mexicans were not proven to be the source of societal problems in Fort Worth, their presence was a hazard to the physical health of Fort Worth’s white residents.

In a 1937 study of Fort Worth elementary schools, John Elmer Cox wrote, “The Mexicans are the only foreign race of any numbers, and most of them had been born in Fort Worth or had been residents for many years.”³⁷ One wonders if Cox realized the oxymoron in his statement when he argued that Mexicans were both foreign and native at the same time. Nevertheless, this statement clearly indicates how Mexicans were viewed in Fort Worth during the 1930s. Mexicans, like many other migrants to Fort Worth, were a relatively new population in the early twentieth century as Fort Worth’s population grew from about 75,000 in 1910 to about 175,000 in 1935. However, aside from racial distinctions, what separated Mexicans from other new populations was that Mexicans were led by forces of an economic empire that desired Mexican labor. Fort Worth was not necessarily the desired destination of Mexicans but American railroads and agriculture led Mexicans to Fort Worth, however, their new home did not welcome Mexicans as it would Anglos since Mexicans were not thought to be worthy of being considered part of the American metropole.

Even though Mexicans were told all along that since they were legally white it was possible that they might be able to move into the Ripley Arnold housing project, but this was not a true statement. Dr. Porterfield, his students, and the FWHA all had enough information to know that no Mexicans in Little Mexico would be able to move into the new housing project. For those residing in Little Mexico, where the average Mexican household's income was about \$37.50 per month (\$450 per year), rent was often below \$9 per month, but the initial rent at Ripley Arnold was between \$17.25 and \$18.50 per month.³⁸ Moreover, rents went up by 15 to 20 percent in accordance with the considerable increase in average household income after the first year.

According to FWHA records, the average household income rose from \$874 per year in 1941 to \$1278 in 1942, almost three times higher than what Mexicans made in Little Mexico just a couple of years earlier, although Mexicans may have had higher incomes due to defense industry spending by this time as well.³⁹ Census figures also show that Ripley Arnold's incomes were comparable to average people in the U.S. at that time. The median annual wage or salary for a male in a southern urban area was \$868 in 1939. The median income for a female was \$443, but a female was less than half as likely as a man to work and married women only made up about 24 percent of the female workforce in Texas in 1939, so it is likely that many of Ripley Arnold's households, at least prior to World War II, were single-income families.⁴⁰ Conversely, many of Little Mexico's households had multiple wage-earners combining to bring in their minuscule income since several dwellings included multiple families.

In comparison to Texas' median rent in 1940, Ripley Arnold's fees do not seem all that low. According to the Census Bureau, Texas' median rent in 1940 was about \$17 per month,

which was close to what Fort Worth's white residents had to pay when they moved into Ripley Arnold.⁴¹ Of course, Ripley Arnold's fees included utilities so the monthly cost may have still been lower than the median rent in Texas, but not appreciably if one considers that one of the purposes set forth for public housing was to provide adequate housing for *low-income* families. The FWHA acknowledged that Ripley Arnold was not designed to help the "very lowest income families" and in fact, the Housing Authority declared in 1939, "The projects now under construction will provide dwellings for only about 15 percent of the white (families)... who now live in unsafe and unsanitary dwellings, and whose earnings make them eligible as tenants."⁴² This report also states, "Of the families who were moved from the sites 37 percent will be eligible as tenants in the new projects, 35 percent do not earn enough money to be eligible,"⁴³ leaving approximately 28 percent who may not have been eligible due to other restrictions which will be addressed later in this study. If rental fees were close to the median state rental fee, then the suggestion that Little Mexico's residents could be moved into Ripley Arnold seems to be a bit of a stretch.

One of the main reasons people lived in such deplorable conditions was because they could not afford the price of the average home. Arguments can be made that the \$18 per month rate was reasonable since the monthly charge included utilities, but many who lived in Little Mexico did not have to pay for utilities either since many did not have electricity or indoor plumbing. Although finances were an obstacle that could have prevented Little Mexico's residents from moving into Ripley Arnold, money was not the only issue that kept prospective Mexican tenants out.

In addition to financial constraints, families who wanted to live at Ripley Arnold could have no more than two adults residing in the dwelling. Moreover, the FWHA defined an adult as a person who was sixteen years of age or older, therefore, if a sixteen-year-old child in the household worked in order to contribute toward the family's living expenses, that particular household would not have been eligible for residency in Ripley Arnold. This rule directly affected several of Little Mexico's households since out of the fifty-two dwellings in which someone with a Spanish surname was found in the 1937/1938 *City Directory*, at least eleven of those dwellings housed more than two adults. Multiple or extended families often lived together in one dwelling in Little Mexico. The *City Directory* does not always list all parties residing at a particular location either so it is possible that there were many more dwellings with more than two adults in the household.

Prior to settling on the land that would eventually be used for the Ripley Arnold housing project, several plots of land were voluntarily offered to the FWHA. In May of 1938, local land owners approached the FWHA offering properties on which the housing authority could construct the proposed public housing. A man named Dan Dupre offered to sell his a 98-acre site south of Berry Street and east of Pecan Street, just outside the city limits. Moreover, Gertrude Martin offered a 25-acre parcel of land a little further south near what is now the intersection of Seminary Drive and Interstate 35-W and while Mrs. S.A Prestridge "offered a site, situated between Camp Bowie Boulevard and Vickery Boulevard, which is laid in lots of 50 x 120 ft." ⁴⁴ Had the FWHA accepted any of these tendered sites, it would not have had to use eminent domain to seize land, yet none of these tracts held the alleged filth and demoralized characteristics that Hammond and the People's Progressive Party wanted cleared from Fort

Worth. Moreover, the United States Housing Authority also wanted to remove slum housing areas and since white laborers often worked in the city and did not necessarily have the means to travel long distances, Little Mexico's location served as an ideal setting for the construction of white public housing.

Ultimately, Mexican residents in the Little Mexico community would have to be relocated. The rent at the Ripley Arnold housing project was considerably higher than what Little Mexico's Mexican population could afford, nearly half of the residents (who were almost all renters) were not citizens, and many of these households had too many adults and/or people residing in the quarters to be eligible for residency in the white housing project. The FWHA, using TCU faculty and students, utilized a school census and selected criteria that provided empirical data that led to the displacement of Mexicans for the benefit of Fort Worth's white population. Moreover, the requirements for moving into the Ripley Arnold Housing Project kept Mexicans out of the new development, thus ridding Fort Worth of the Little Mexico colony forever, but this was not the end of Mexican struggles in Fort Worth. While Mexicans accounted for less than four percent of Fort Worth's population in the 1930s, by the end of the century Mexicans would constitute nearly a third of the city.

¹ See Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation*, San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972, along with several later editions for an explanation of traditional internal colonial contentions. See Gilbert G. González and Raúl A. Fernández, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

² Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

³ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987, pp. 82-83.

⁴ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

⁵ See Carlos Eliseo Cuéllar, *Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth*, Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2003 for broad history on the roots of Mexican immigration to Fort Worth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Robert Eugene Baker, "Areas of Social Disorganization and Personal Demoralization in Fort Worth, Texas," (Master's Thesis, Texas Christian University, 1938), pp. 13.

⁶ United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>, (Accessed February 20, 2019).

⁷ Special to The News, "Strong Demand for Mexican Labor Is Felt at Fort Worth," *The Dallas Morning News*, July 23, 1919.

⁸ Special to The News, "Provision of Work for Mexicans Urged," *The Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1920.

⁹ Special to the News, "Employment for Idle Mexican Laborers Sought," *The Dallas Morning News*, January 8, 1921; I use quotations around the term unskilled for two reasons. First, unskilled is the term used in the article. Second, many Mexican laborers were skilled in Mexico but because tools were different in the United States and/or because Mexicans were simply thought of as inferior, the term unskilled is a term that may or may not be true (See Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976).

¹⁰ Unknown author, "Derelict Imported Laborers," *The Dallas Morning News*, February 8, 1921.

¹¹ Unknown author, "All Destitute Mexicans Believed Sent Home," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 10, 1921.

¹² United States Census Bureau, Special report on foreign-born white families by country of birth of head with an appendix giving statistics for Mexican, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese families. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1933, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1930.html> (Accessed April 22, 2012).

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¹⁵ Fort Worth Independent School District, *Report of the Public Schools of the Fort Worth Independent School District – 1930*, Fort Worth: FWISD, 1930, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Values are for Buildings and equipment and do not include land value.

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²⁰ Monroe, 135.

²¹ Macel D. Ezell, "Progressivism in Fort Worth Politics, 1935-1938," (Master's thesis, Texas Christian University, 1963), 3.

²² Floyd Armand Leggett, "Social Antecedents and Consequences of Slum Clearance in Fort Worth, Texas," (Master's thesis, Texas Christian University, 1940), 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁴ Baker, 5.

²⁵ Leggett, 101.

²⁶ Baker, 59.

²⁷ Baker, 29.

²⁸ Leggett, 51.

²⁹ See Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997 for a discussion of how poor white people in Texas were compared to Mexicans and African Americans during the early twentieth century. See Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*. New York: Basic Books, 2003 to see how white people were kept separate from darker skinned indigenous people in Australia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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³⁷ John Elmer Cox, "Juvenile Delinquency in the Elementary Schools of Fort Worth Texas," (Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1937), pp. 28.

³⁸ Two articles from 1940 reference the monthly income and rent paid by Hispanics in Little Mexico. The previously referenced "Good Neighbor Policy..." article from July 22, 1940 and an article entitled "New Project Ousts Families" *Star-Telegram* from August 8, 1940. The latter article's author is unnamed and this article can also be found in the FWHA archive.

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⁴¹ United States Bureau of the Census. "Historical Census of Housing Tables: Gross Rents." <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/grossrents.html> (Accessed October 15, 2018)

⁴² Fort Worth Housing Authority. *Report on the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Worth, Texas: 1938-1939*. (Fort Worth: Fort Worth Housing Authority, 1939), pp. 27.

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Appendix

Table I

Index of Disorganization								
Dist.	Arrests	Delinquency	Forcible Detainer	Prostitution	Relief	Total Cases	School Population	Index of Disorganization
2	95	44	54	42	178	413	903	45.7
5	51	57	126	7	134	375	1864	20.1
6	87	38	62	29	150	366	1906	19.2
7	2	4	11		8	25	534	4.7
8	23	26	36	2	30	117	1362	8.6
9	175	96	106	137	300	814	2286	35.6
10	7	19	24	2	15	67	1170	5.7
11	35	33	62	5	88	223	1769	12.6
12	17	37	33	3	42	132	1496	8.8
13	1	39	46	32	51	169	1900	8.9
14	12	17	1		57	87	763	11.4
15	28	16	26	9	38	117	1233	9.5
16	24	32	60	3	72	191	942	20.3
17	20	20	10	2	57	109	2300	4.7
18	11	2	19		8	40	1096	3.6
19	9	6	21		3	39	837	4.7
20	13	13	53		15	94	1680	5.6
21	11	9	23		16	59	1092	5.4
22		4	19		3	26	710	3.7
23	2	1	9		17	29	852	3.4

24	16	20	50	1	46	133	1347	9.9
25	4	15	1	6	23	49	803	6.1
26	30	12	14	8	38	102	721	14.1
27	7	13	12	3	22	57	553	10.3
28	20	12	42		39	113	1369	8.3
29	9	4	30		8	51	715	7.1
30	7	5	10		60	82	401	20.4
31	1	1	4		5	11	352	3.1
32	1	4	20		24	49	250	19.6
33		4	8		5	17	608	2.8
34	6	9	22		26	63	811	7.8
35	1	2	6		2	11	352	3.1
37	2	2	9		5	18	687	2.6
38		1	5		10	16	619	2.6

Table 2

Active Cases of Prostitution				
Age	White	Black	Mexican	Total
Under 17	4	3	0	7
18	19	4	0	23
19	21	5	1	27
20-24	118	21	2	141
25-29	68	16	3	87
30-34	50	15	0	65
35-39	34	7	0	41
40-44	10	3	0	13
Over 44	8	0	0	8
Total Cases	332	74	6	412
Total Population	141,617	27,378	6,005	175,000

Table 3

Racial Distribution of Juvenile Delinquency Cases				
Year	White	Black	Mexican	Total
1933	946	167	27	1140
1934	763	221	55	1039
1935	770	183	27	980
1936	505	217	18	740
1937	986	270	36	1292
TOTAL	3,970	1,058	163	5,191
<u>% of Total Cases</u>	<u>76.5%</u>	<u>20.4%</u>	<u>3.1%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

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