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"The Border Crossed Us!": Mexican Americans, Colonization, and Race

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“The Border Crossed Us!”:

Mexican Americans, Colonization, and Race

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in Sociology

by

Casandra Danielle Salgado

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"The Border Crossed Us!":

Mexican Americans, Colonization, and Race

by

Casandra Danielle Salgado

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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Professor Vilma Ortiz, Chair

Among historians and social scientists, it is clear that Nuevomexicanos are a sub-population within the broader ethnoracial category of Mexican in the United States. Yet Nuevomexicanos continue to dis-identify with the "Mexican" category based on the colonial Spanish narrative in New Mexico. Why is this the case? Nuevomexicanos are the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Yet unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to Spanish settlers of New Mexico and do not have recent immigrant connections to Mexico. This distinction is important because it shapes how Nuevomexicanos view themselves ethnically and nationally in relation to other Mexican-origin people. Moreover, Spanish identification has waned in popularity over time, particularly for its false claim to being white; minimization of Mexican and *mestizo* roots; and valorization of colonization, that is, Indigenous subjugation. Nevertheless, Spanish identification can remain

salient within a context where Nuevomexicanos are declining in demographic dominance to Anglo and Mexican newcomers. Given contentious debates regarding Spanish identification, why and how does Spanishness continue to be of relevance to Nuevomexicanos? To address this question, I analyze distinct aspects of Nuevomexicano group membership to offer critical insight into the maintenance and evolution of Spanish identification; Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of unity and distance with other Mexican-origin people; and how race and racism operate for Mexican Americans, as a group. Overall, the Nuevomexicano case extends our understanding of how colonization and its persistence in the southwestern United States continues to be central to Mexican Americans' racialized status. This means that both a colonization and racialization lens is critical to theorizing Mexican Americans' and other Latinos' positioning within the American racial and political landscape.

The dissertation of Casandra Danielle Salgado is approved.

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2019

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and their unconditional support, and to the research participants that generously shared their stories.

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2016 "Mexican Americans and Wealth: Economic, Family, and Residential Characteristics" American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA

2014 "Racialized Schooling Experiences among Second- and Third-generation Mexican Americans" American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA

2013 "Immigrant Optimism and Racial Socialization among Mexican American Young Adults" University of California Immigration Conference, Los Angeles, CA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Among historians and social scientists, it is clear that Nuevomexicanos are a sub-population within the broader ethnoracial category of Mexican in the United States (Saenz and Morales 2015; Vargas 2011). Yet Nuevomexicanos continue to dis-identify with the "Mexican" category based on the colonial Spanish narrative in New Mexico. Why is this the case? Nuevomexicanos are the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Yet unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to Spanish settlers of New Mexico and do not have recent immigrant connections to Mexico. This distinction is important because it shapes how Nuevomexicanos view themselves as members of an ethnic and national community in relation to other Mexican-origin people. Nuevomexicanos' persistent claims to Spanishness also prompt sharp disagreement over the validity of their Spanish over their Mexican and *mestizo* roots. As the silent argument goes, "If Nuevomexicanos would only recognize their true Mexican culture and *mestizo* roots, they could resist their white oppressors rather than conspire with them; they could rally to the defense of Native Americans rather than commemorate their subjugation" (Nieto-Phillips 2004, p. 8). Given within and between group contentions of Spanish identification, why and how does Spanishness continue to be of relevance to Nuevomexicanos? To address this question, I analyze distinct aspects of Nuevomexicano group membership to offer critical insight into the maintenance and evolution of Spanish identification; Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of unity and distance with other Mexican-origin people; and how race and racism operate for Mexican Americans, as a group.

During New Mexico statehood, Spanish identification initially constituted a particular political and publicly expressed identity in response to Anglo American marginalization and American expansion (Gonzales 2000; Nieto-Phillips 2004). Yet Spanish identification has waned in popularity over time, particularly for its false claim to being white and minimization of Mexican and *mestizo* roots. In recent news, festivals and monuments that celebrate Spanish conquistadors have prompted contested debates around Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish "blood purity" (Chacon 2018; Gonzales 2007; Trujillo 2010). Yet Spanish identification can remain salient within a context where Nuevomexicanos are declining in demographic dominance to Anglo and Mexican newcomers. In response to Anglo gentrification in Northern New Mexico, Nuevomexicanos have revitalized public commemorations of Spanish settlement in the region (Horton 2010). These festivals enable Nuevomexicanos to stake claims to New Mexico as a birthright identity in response to their displacement. Moreover, Nuevomexicanos have a long history of downplaying or negating their Mexicanness to distance themselves from the negative attributes associated with Mexican immigrants and to combat anti-Mexican racism (Chávez 2012; Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2001; Nieto-Phillips 2004). While Anglo and Mexican newcomers are key reference groups for Nuevomexicano identity construction, we know less about Nuevomexicanos' ethnic-labeling preferences and the meaning behind their identity labels. This dissertation therefore assesses whether and how the legacy of Spanish as a public and political expression of identity shapes present-day Nuevomexicanos racial, ethnic, and national claims.

A number of studies have documented the factors that divide and unify Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Ironically, both internal (e.g., language and cultural practices) and external factors (e.g., racial and class position) are sources of conflict and cooperation between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants (Garcia Bedolla 2005;

Gutierrez 1995; Jiménez 2010; Ochoa 2004). Notably, continuing Mexican immigration heightens the social and cultural boundaries between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. While Mexican Americans can confront questions of ethnic authenticity like Spanish fluency from Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans can express resentment when Mexican immigrants do not speak English (Jiménez 2010). Yet shared cultural expectations, and experiences of differential treatment can result in Mexican American identification with Mexican immigrants. In fact, the solidarity exhibited during the 2006 immigration marches emerged from a heightened sense of racialization that cut across existing cleavages among Mexican Americans and other Latinos (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013). This research assumes that Mexican Americans internalize the negative stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants, which mobilizes Mexican Americans to the defense of Mexican immigrants. Yet unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos can contest their Mexicanness due to their history of claiming Spanish as a political expression of identification. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos may not experience intra-group boundaries like other Mexican Americans because they may not see themselves as sharing the same ethnic background. This dissertation further specifies whether and how Nuevomexicanos identify with Mexican immigrants to better understand the dynamics of membership within the category of "Mexican."

The Nuevomexicano case also differs from prior research on Mexican Americans in important ways. Since the territorial period, Nuevomexicanos continue to compose a majority of the population in New Mexico and have a higher proportion of native-born Latinos compared to other southwestern states (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 1993a). This is in part because New Mexico continues to have lower levels of Mexican immigration. Moreover, unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of Latinos in visible positions of political and

economic power, and a thriving middle class (Prindeville, Gonzales and Sierra 1992). This has critical implications for Nuevomexicanos' perceived levels of racial discrimination and nativism with Mexican immigrants. It may be the case that Nuevomexicanos do not perceive shared group positioning with Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants because of their substantial demographic, political, and economic representation in the region. Yet while Nuevomexicanos, as a group, compose the majority of the population in New Mexico, they have not achieved political and economic parity with whites. Thus, whether Nuevomexicanos perceive shared positioning within the racial and political landscape with other Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants remains in question. This dissertation explores how external factors such as perceptions of discrimination shape Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of group membership with other Mexican-origin people.

Lastly, the Nuevomexicano case contributes to our understanding of how race and racism operate for Mexican Americans. Telles and Ortiz's (2008) seminal study on Mexican Americans argues that the concept of racialization adequately represents the racial, economic, and political positioning of Mexican Americans. They argue that the status of Mexican Americans as a racialized group is rooted in their history of labor migrants destined for jobs at bottom of the economic hierarchy. Even without immigration, Telles and Ortiz state that "an entrenched racialized way of thinking that places Mexicans in the lower rungs of society seems to be at least partly responsible for their persistently low status, though the stigmatized nature of Mexican immigration has maintained or lowered their status (2008, p. 290)." Accordingly, immigrant incorporation theories should consider the historical and structural conditions of Mexican Americans and other ethnoracial groups. While Telles and Ortiz focus on racialization, the Nuevomexicano case contributes to our understanding of how colonization and its persistence in

the southwest has been central to the historical and contemporary racialized status of Mexican Americans. This dissertation therefore pays close attention to colonization's persistence to unpack how race and racism operate for Mexican Americans and other Latinos (Go 2017; 2018).

Overall, the aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the historical legacy of colonialism and contemporary racialization shape Nuevomexicanos' understandings of ethnoracial membership within the category of "Mexican" compared to other Mexican-origin people, particularly Mexican immigrants. I specify (1) how conceptions of ancestry and nationality shape Nuevomexicanos' identity construction; (2) how regional context shapes Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of their racial status; and (3) how their relationship to the category of "Mexican" shapes their immigration attitudes. This approach provides key insight into how Nuevomexicanos, as well as other Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, understand their membership within the "Mexican" category and how that understanding varies by historical conditions, regional context, and positioning within the political and racial landscape.

In this dissertation, "Nuevomexicano" refers to study participants who are the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. While "Hispanic" is the most common identifier among participants, I use the term "Nuevomexicano" because "Hispanic" is one of the many and variable referents used by participants to describe in-group members. While "Hispanic" is commonly understood as a panethnic term, Nuevomexicanos use "Hispanic" as an ethnic category to refer to themselves. Throughout the text, I specify when usage of "Hispanic" is an ethnic or panethnic category. "Mexican American" refers to people who were born in the United States with Mexican ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos. Mexican immigrant refers to people who were born in Mexico and

now reside in the United States. Lastly, "Latino" is a panethnic term that describes people of Latin American ancestry, whether immigrant or native born, living in the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants

Understanding the relationship between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants is critical to understanding how Nuevomexicanos perceive themselves in relation to other Mexican origin people. Scholars have shown that both internal (e.g., language, cultural practices) and external factors (e.g., racial and class position) are sources of conflict and cooperation between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants (Garcia Bedolla 2005; Gutierrez 1995; Jiménez 2010; Ochoa 2004). Notably, Mexican Americans express a range of identities and perceptions that include and exclude Mexican immigrants as members of their ethnoracial group. Ochoa (2004) argues that a conflict-solidarity continuum–from intra-ethnic conflict to a shared connection to ethnoracial mobilization– captures both the fluidity and diversity among Mexican American's perceptions toward Mexican immigrants. The dynamic character suggests the possibilities of change in perceptions of self and society that may occur over a person's lifetime.

Moreover, continuing Mexican immigration heightens the boundaries between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. While Mexican Americans can confront questions of ethnic authenticity like Spanish fluency from Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans can express resentment when Mexican immigrants do not speak English (Jiménez 2010; Ochoa 2004; Vasquez 2011). Continuing Mexican immigration also heightens the boundaries between Mexican-origin and non-Mexican-origin people. Mexican Americans are often mistaken for Mexican immigrants with whom they share ethnoracial markers. Mexican Americans therefore

may engage in dissociation strategies, such as prioritizing their American identities, to manage expressions of nativism (Dowling 2014; Vega 2014). Garcia Bedolla (2005) argues that Mexican Americans can selectively dissociate from the negative attributes associated with the their immigrant coethnics. Selective dissociation has an important negative effect on community cohesion, and can help explain Latino support for anti-immigrant policy proposals.

Alternatively, shared cultural expectations, and experiences of differential treatment based on race, class, or immigration status may result in Mexican American identification with Mexican immigrants. Ochoa (2004) finds that maintaining the Spanish language or support for bilingual education can be a source of connection between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, experiences of differential treatment based on race, class, or immigration status may result in Mexican American identification with Mexican immigrants. When Mexican Americans are exposed to negative comments or observe mistreatment against Mexican-origin people, many Mexican Americans can align themselves with Mexican immigrants (Jiménez 2004; Ochoa 2004). In fact, the solidarity exhibited during the 2006 immigration marches emerged from a heightened sense of racialization that cut across existing cleavages among Mexican Americans and Latinos (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013). These studies stress that Mexican Americans internalize the negative stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants, which can mobilize Mexican Americans to the defense of Mexican immigrants.

Other research has focused on how racial ideology shape Mexican American-Mexican immigrant relations. In their efforts to become accepted as "American," Dowling (2014) argues that Mexican Americans adopt the racial identification and ideology of whites. Mexican Americans' internalization of American colorblind ideology enables them to downplay their experiences with discrimination that may differentiate them from the racial positioning of whites.

Similarly, Vega (2014) finds that Mexican-origin Latinos who are "anti-illegal" immigration deploy a multicultural ideology that allows them to reconcile their political views, experiences with discrimination, and ethnic background. A multicultural ideology allows restrictionist Mexican Americans to downplay the role of racism in their lives and as a result, prioritize their American national identity over their Mexican cultural background. Thus, Mexican Americans' adoption of colorblind or multicultural ideology may hinder them from viewing a shared group position with Mexican immigrants and therefore continue to divide the community. Yet these studies dismiss how regional context can shape Mexican American's attitudes toward immigrant coethnics. Nuevomexicanos' racial ideology is, in part, shaped by the legacy of American colonialism that invented and propagated the narrative of tricultural harmony among Anglos, Hispanics, and Pueblo Indians to downplay racial conflict and increase Anglo migration to the region (Rodríguez 1996; Wilson 2003). This dissertation therefore further sheds light on the relationship between racial ideology and perceptions of group membership among Mexican Americans.

In general, these studies grapple with how racism, nativism, and national identity shape Mexican American-Mexican immigrant relations, as well as how perceptions and experiences with differential treatment on the part of whites shape Mexican Americans' group membership. Yet this line of research inadequately addresses how regional context and race relations outside the group shape Mexican American-Mexican immigrant relations. In particular, during New Mexico statehood, Gomez (2007) has shown that Mexican Americans distanced themselves from Mexican immigrants, American Indians and African Americans to gain political rights upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity. In Texas, Dowling (2014) argues that Mexican American's internalization of American colorblind ideology and distancing from both Mexican

immigrants and African American enables Mexican Americans to claim full membership in the American polity in the same way as whites. These studies highlight the significance of how multiple reference groups shape Mexican American-Mexican immigrant relations outside of intra-group dynamics. This dissertation further specifies how Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanishness and Mexicanness are shaped by New Mexico's broader racial and political context.

Mexican Americans and New Mexico

At the time of New Mexico's struggle for statehood (1880–1912), Spanish and Hispano terms rose to prominence as publicly expressed identities to combat Anglo American racism and marginalization from expanding American institutions, as well as to gain power when New Mexico became a state (Gonzales 2001; Montgomery 2002; Nieto-Phillips 2004). This tendency grew as Mexican immigration to the Southwest became more visible, decreasing Nuevomexicanos' social status because they were misidentified as immigrants (Gómez 2007). To secure political rights in the United States, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their Spanish ancestry that originated in the Spanish colonization of New Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over their *mestizo* roots and ties to Mexico. This enabled Nuevomexicanos to stake claims to New Mexico territory and enact dissociation from Mexican immigrants and Indigenous people. Thus, Nuevomexicanos redefined their public expressions of ancestry as a strategy to confront Anglo-American racism; to facilitate a claim to whiteness by emphasizing similarity in European ancestry to Anglo-Americans; and to gain acceptance upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity (Gonzales 2001; 2016; Nieto-Phillips 2004).

While Spanish identification initially constituted a specific political and public identity among Nuevomexicanos, the increase in nativism and pressure for assimilation during the eras of World War I and World War II furthered the meaning of "Spanish" by emphasizing the

commonalities between Spanish and American cultures (Deutsch 1989; Gonzales and Massmann 2006; Meléndez 1997; Meyer 1996). Primarily, Nuevomexicanos adjusted the image of their Spanish heritage to coordinate with American symbols of wartime patriotism and made essential home-front contributions to each war (Gonzales and Massmann 2006). The increase in stable employment during World War II also assisted in the consolidation of a small, activist middle class that was committed to warding off the stigma that Nuevomexicanos were "Mexican" (Gómez 2007). While an American-oriented philosophy in meaning and practice was central to Spanish identity, the term remained a public identity to protect Nuevomexicanos' political rights.

During the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, a newly politicized ethnic consciousness emerged among Mexican Americans. The term "Chicano" became popular and projected a collective representation of Mexican-origin people across the southwest that shared a history of oppression by American colonialism and imperialism (Acuña 1972; Gómez-Quinones 1990). In New Mexico, "Chicano" challenged Spanish heritage, questioning any dissociation from Mexico and Indigenous ancestry. Some Nuevomexicanos, for example, legitimized claims to their Mexican heritage by arguing that Spanish heritage was a false claim to "being white" (Gonzales 1993b; Nieto-Phillips 2004). Other Nuevomexicanos, however, asserted that although New Mexico was part of Mexico for a short period of time, it largely existed in isolation from Mexican rule and its promotion of mestizaje (i.e., the celebration of Indigenous alongside Spanish ancestry), and therefore, Nuevomexicanos were always a distinct people and culture. Together, the Spanish heritage narrative obscures Nuevomexicanos' and Mexican Americans' history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous peoples and association with Mexico.

By the 1980s, the Hispanic term had become prevalent across the United States as census officials, Spanish-language media, and ethnic organizations worked together to popularize and

legitimize the category across distinct Latino groups (Mora 2014; Oboler 1995; Rodriguez 2000). These practices enabled state officials, market managers, and ethnic leaders to embark on projects that targeted the broader Latino community. Similarly, "Hispanic" gained traction among ethnic organizations in New Mexico, as they were no longer restricted by the labels "Spanish," "Mexican," and "Chicano" (Gonzales 1993b). Yet grassroots activist organizations often rejected "Hispanic" because it was perceived as an imposed category by the government. While "Hispanic" became prevalent among ethnic organizations, its meaning and usage among Nuevomexicanos remains unclear. The popularity of "Hispanic" may be appealing to Nuevomexicanos for three reasons: (1) "Hispanic" is a catch-all term that is inclusive of their contested Spanish and Mexican heritages; (2) "Hispanic" may be synonymous with "Spanish," despite the fact that the terms originated in different contexts with distinct meanings; and (3) and (3) it is useful for avoiding the often vexed question of their historical heritage, i.e., whether "Spanish" or "Mexican"(Gonzales 1997a). Therefore, "Hispanic" may provide Nuevomexicanos the flexibility to identify with either Spanish or Mexican heritage or avoid specifying their heritage altogether.

Today, "Spanish," "Chicano," and "Hispanic" continue to compete and contest one another in the public arena, as these terms evoke conflicting definitions of peoplehood (Gonzales 2007; Horton 2010; Trujillo 2010). Yet the extent to which these terms represent identification with Mexican and/or Spanish heritage remains in question. This is partially because public expressions of Spanishness have come under attack, particularly for its false claim to being white; minimization of Mexican and *mestizo* roots; and glorification of American Indian subjugation. During New Mexico's celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of Spanish

settlement in 1998, public discussions of how to commemorate Spanish conquistadores prompted contested debates around Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish "blood purity" (Gonzales 2007). Moreover, in response to Pueblo Indian protests in 2018, the annual Santa Fe Fiesta dropped the *La Entrada*, the event that depicted the re-entry of conquistador Don Diego de Vargas into the region after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Pueblo Indians criticized the fiesta as revisionist history that downplayed the bloodshed and brutality aimed at Pueblo Indians on the part of Spanish conquistadors (Chacon 2018). Given the increasing negative connotation associated with Spanish and Nuevomexicanos established history of combatting anti-Mexican racism, whether and how Nuevomexicanos' continue to negate or downplay their Mexicanness is in question.

Mexican Americans and Colonization

Given that Mexican Americans have experienced upward mobility and middle class status but not proportional to whites, scholars argue that Mexican Americans experience both racialization and assimilation. Tanya Golash-Boza (2006) argues that the identification patterns of Latinos represent a pattern of racialized assimilation. She finds that US-born Latinos who experience discrimination are less likely to identify as American due to implicit whiteness in the label American. Thus experiences of discrimination discourage Latinos from fully embracing American labels. Similarly, Jessica Vasquez (2011) argues that Mexican American incorporation represents "racialization despite assimilation." In particular, Mexican Americans' racialized positioning is rooted in both continuing Mexican immigration to the United States and the value of whiteness within the American racial and political landscape. This scholarship suggests that Mexican Americans and other Latinos do not fit neatly into either the racial or ethnic paradigms because of the historical, economic, and political factors that racialize Mexican Americans.

Telles and Ortiz (2008) argue that the status of Mexican Americans as a racialized group is rooted mostly in their history of labor migrants destined for jobs at bottom of the economic hierarchy. Even without immigration Telles and Ortiz argue that "an entrenched racialized way of thinking that places Mexicans in the lower rungs of society seems to be at least partly responsible for their persistently low status, though the stigmatized nature of Mexican immigration has maintained or lowered their status (2008; 290)." Consequently, they contend that immigrant incorporation theories should consider the historical and structural conditions of Mexican Americans and other ethnoracial groups. While Telles and Ortiz focus on racialization, the Nuevomexicano case contributes to our understanding of how colonization and its persistence in the southwest has been central to the historical and contemporary racialized status of Mexican Americans. This dissertation therefore pays close attention to colonization's persistence into the present to unpack how race and racism operate for Mexican Americans (Go 2017; 2018).

Similar to other historical and contemporary research on Nuevomexicanos, I recognize and argue that empire and colonialism matter (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2016; Montgomery 2002; Nieto-Phillips 2004; Rodríguez 1996). Empire is a "sociopolitical formation wherein a central political authority exercises unequal influence and power over the political processes of a subordinate society, peoples or space" (Go 2011). Colonialism is a formal manifestation of empire that involves direct political control over territory and the subjugation of its inhabitants into a status that is inferior or dependent (Chatterjee 1993; Go 2011). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, two racial orders—Spanish and American—operated in New Mexico. The Spanish colonial regime imposed a system of status inequality that favored Spanish over Indigenous ancestry (Gómez 2007). The American colonial regime imposed the one-drop rule

where black status signified a host of legal and social disabilities relative to whites (Davis 1991). According to Gomez (2007), "double colonization" meant that various ethnoracial groups navigated two racial regimes and "jockeyed for position and defined themselves and others in a undeniable multi-racial terrain" (p. 48). Since a central aspect of the two racial orders was white supremacy, this meant that there were competing claims to whiteness. In this study, I unpack how the legacy of double colonization shapes Mexican Americans' racialization.

New Mexico belonged to the Spanish empire from 1598 to 1912, the Mexican Republic from 1821 to 1848 and the American empire from 1848 to 1912. The Spanish colonial regime imposed a system of status inequality that identified Indigenous people as savage others and used this claim to legitimize Spanish conquest. Yet over time there was extensive social-sexual mixture between colonizers and Indigenous people across the Spanish empire (Gutiérrez 1991; Mitchell 2008). The result was inequality built around racial mixture among Spaniards, Indians and African slaves. The general hierarchy consisted of Spaniards at the top, Indian/Spanish mestizos in the middle, and Indians, blacks, and Indian/Black mestizos at the bottom (Gómez 2007). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Spanish-Indigenous racial order was weakening so that some *mestizos* were able to claim the privileges of whiteness. This is partially because of there were so few "pure" Spanish people and *mestizo* demands for greater civil and economic rights (Alonso 1995). Thus, Spanish categories became fluid over time so that white skin, wealth and land ownership were perceived as being able to "whiten" (Mitchell 2008). Within this context, "Mexicans" could claim entitlements to whiteness, despite the fact that the othering of Indigenous people justified the Spanish racial order (Gómez 2007).

During the American colonial period, New Mexico's petition for statehood was rejected more than five times because the territory was perceived as overly composed of racially inferior

people to become part of the American polity (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2016). Despite Nuevomexicanos colonized status, their rights and privileges in legal and social contexts unsettle the categories colonizer and colonized. This is because Mexican Americans were granted citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Thus, Mexican Americans had the some of the same political rights as whites. While Mexican Americans were viewed as "white" in legal contexts, they were viewed and treated as racially inferior in daily life (Gómez 2007; Haney-Lopez 1997; Martinez 1997). For Blacks, the American racial order also imposed the one-drop rule: one drop of African ancestry was sufficient to confer black status, and black status signified a host of legal and social disabilities (Davis 1991). For Mexican Americans, Gomez (2007) argues "a reverse one-drop rule was in play: one drop of European ancestry was sufficient to confer some modicum of white status and thus a host of corresponding legal rights." The contrast in citizenship for Blacks and Mexican Americans shows that Mexican Americans' honorary white status reinforced Blacks' subordination (Gómez 2007). In addition, Mexican Americans distanced themselves from American Indians and the racial mixture of Spanish and Indigenous to pass as "white." Thus Mexican Americans were white enough to naturalize, especially in comparison to American Indians.

Knowledge of where Mexicans fit within the racial order in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is important to understanding how Mexican Americans' navigate contemporary race relations. The Nuevomexicano case suggests that they continue to navigate both the Spanish-Indigenous and Black-White racial orders. Within the historical legacy of the Spanish hierarchy, Nuevomexicanos can construct their identity in opposition to American Indians and Mexican immigrants. This is because Spanishness was constructed relative to Indigenous ancestry and Mexicanness, despite the fact that territories of the United States and

Mexico were in flux during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In relation to the American hierarchy, Nuevomexicanos can prioritize their Spanishness to defend their Americanness to whites, and, depending on demographic context, distance themselves from Blacks. Since Nuevomexicanos continue to navigate both racial orders, this dissertation suggests that regional constructions of race matter. To this end, I further specify how racial stratification for present-day Mexican Americans is both a product of continuous Mexican immigration and deeper historical structures wrought by Spanish and American empire.

Mexican Americans and Whiteness

A number of studies have documented the ways in which Mexican Americans have historically courted whiteness, using such arguments to combat segregation and discrimination (Foley 1997; Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2001). Among Mexican Americans, the Nuevomexicano case offers a sharp picture into the making of whiteness. The roots of Mexican Americans' relationship to whiteness can be traced, in part, to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The United States government granted citizenship to Mexicans living in former Northern Mexico at a time when citizenship and legal rights were reserved for only whites. While Mexican Americans possessed formal citizenship, they were still treated as racially inferior in their everyday lives (Gómez 2007; see Gonzales 2016; Haney-Lopez 1997; Martinez 1997). While Mexican Americans in New Mexico confronted similar forms of racial segregation as Mexican Americans in other states, New Mexico alongside Arizona did not become a state until 1912. Texas became a state in 1845 and California in 1850. New Mexico as an American settler colony from 1848 to 1912 provides a distinctive set of conditions, and insight into Mexican American's relationship to whiteness.

To secure political rights in the United States, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their Spanish ancestry that originated in the Spanish colonization of New Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over their Mexican and *mestizo* roots (Chávez 2012; Gonzales 2001). This is because Nuevomexicanos were perceived as a racially inferior mongrel race and unfit for self-government (Gómez 2007). Therefore, claims to Spanish ancestry enabled Nuevomexicanos to stake claims to New Mexico territory and enact dissociation from Mexican immigrants and Indigenous people. Thus, Nuevomexicanos redefined their public expressions of ancestry as a strategy to confront Anglo-American racism; to facilitate a claim to whiteness by emphasizing similarity in European ancestry to Anglo-Americans; and to gain acceptance upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity (Campa 1946; Gonzales 2001; Montgomery 2002; Nieto-Phillips 2004). While Nuevomexicanos claims to Europeanness is distinctive from the political incorporation of other Mexican Americans, it is notable that Spanish was a political and public expression of whiteness because Nuevomexicanos viewed themselves as "Mexican" in private domains. In addition, what it signified was not assimilation into Anglo America, but rather a parallel whiteness that was Iberian in nature (Gonzales 2001).

Moreover, the narrative of whiteness was weaved into the narrative of race relations in New Mexico to counter negative perceptions of Mexicans and to increase Anglo migration to the region. A key political advocate for New Mexico statehood, Lebaron Bradford Prince, assisted in popularizing Spanish nomenclature, and pioneering a racial ideology of three cultures—Anglo, Spanish, and Pubelo Indian—living in peaceful harmony (Gómez 2007; Montgomery 2001; Nieto-Phillips 2004). In effect, Prince helped repackage Mexicans' racial ancestry by prioritizing their Spanish over Indigenous roots to facilitate a claim to whiteness, and depicted positive inter-group relations to portray the region as welcoming to American occupation. More specifically, in

his characterization of race relations, Prince erased New Mexico's lengthy history of racial conflict between Anglos, Spanish and Pueblo Indians, as well as the resistance of Spanish and Pueblo Indians to American occupation (Gómez 2007; Rodríguez 1996). While the tricultural narrative downplayed existing group-based and power inequalities in New Mexico, it aided in assuaging Anglo-Americans' claims that Mexicans were unworthy of political rights and assisted in the effort to make New Mexico acceptable to the rest of the United States.

Today, New Mexico's public ideology of triculturalism continues to be sustained by the art and tourism industry (Horton 2010; Rodríguez 1996). It holds that the state consists of three major but historically separate ethnic groups living side by side in racial harmony. According to Wilson, the visual manifestation of triculturalism is typically a set of ethnic personas: "a chronology of conquest and technology justifying the social hierarchy; the consignment of Pueblo Indians to the past; the linking of contemporary Hispanics with Spanish conquistadors; and the association of Americans with military conquest, science and capitalism" (2003, p. 13-14). Thus, Pueblo Indians and Hispanics are portrayed as the ethnic, exotic other relative to their progressive white counterparts. While triculturalism is relevant to the construction of art and tourism in New Mexico, how these images inform perceptions of discrimination among average working Nuevomexicanos remains unclear.

Moreover, research has shown that Nuevomexicanos' ethnic identification is grounded in categorical distinctions, as they often define themselves by describing who they are not, mainly "Mexican" and "foreign" (Gonzales 1997; Metzgar 1974). According to Gonzales (1997), "categorical awareness" is a means to resolve uncertainty about the appropriate way to describe one's own ethnic heritage and history. As Gonzales explains "one may not have full knowledge of actual differences but still be aware that one is 'not Anglo and not Black and not Mexican.'

(1997, p. 134).” This research suggests that Nuevomexicanos’ public and political claims to Spanishness and whiteness have waned over time. Further, prior work has documented usage of “Hispanic” among Mexican Americans in Texas and New Mexico as a regional form of identity to differentiate themselves from Mexican immigrants (Dowling 2014; Trujillo 2010). Mexican Americans in Texas reject the label “Mexican” to distance themselves from the negative attributes associated with Mexican immigrants. While Nuevomexicanos can deploy “Hispanic” to avoid being misidentified as Mexican immigrants, whether and to which degree Spanish has any significance in the meaning behind their identity labels is still in question.

Together, these studies suggest that there are many claims to whiteness in New Mexico that have changed over time. During the American period, identifying as “Spanish” largely meant “not Indian” and “not Mexican” to secure political and legal rights upon New Mexico statehood. In today’s context, “Spanish” still means “not Mexican” and “not Indian” but also denotes rootedness in New Mexico territory (Salgado 2018). While Spanish ancestry signifies a relatively superior position relative to Mexican immigrants and American Indians along a whiteness continuum, their claim to European ancestry loses significance once whites enter the context (Rodriguez 2001). This suggests that when theorizing whiteness it is important to think about context and audience because Spanish claims can vary in meaning by reference group.

In addition, research has conceptualized the claim to whiteness by marginalized Latinos as a way of blunting the full impact of racial discrimination (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007). According to Gomez, this is rooted in the legacy of Mexican American’s history as off-white, “sometimes legally defined as white and almost always socially define as socially non-white” (2007, p. 149). Moreover, in Texas, Dowling (2014) finds that Mexican Americans who mark “white” on the United States Census never used the term “white” as a self-referent outside of the

context of the Census form and do not pass as white in their daily lives. Instead, "white" is an identity that Mexican Americans assert publicly to emphasize their Americanness. This identity is intended to combat discrimination by emphasizing their similarity to the white majority. In general, the Nuevomexicano case further specifies how Mexican Americans utilize whiteness. Beyond the public and private identities, the Nuevomexicano case suggests that whiteness is situational and the contextual character of whiteness is rooted in their history of both Spanish and American colonization. "Spanish" therefore may have different identity meanings depending on reference group and regional location.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper draws upon 96 in-depth interviews taken with Nuevomexicanos in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I conducted research in Albuquerque because it has the largest concentration of Nuevomexicanos. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, New Mexico's population is majority Latino followed by whites, American Indians, and other ethnoracial groups (48, 39, 9, and 4 percent respectively). Among Latinos, the majority have Mexican ancestry followed by Spanish and other Latin American ancestry (65, 15, and 20 percent respectively). Furthermore, most Latinos were born in the United States versus abroad (85 and 15 percent respectively). Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of native-born Latinos due to the region's lower levels of Mexican immigration (Gómez 2007). Overall, U.S.-born people of Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, have sizeable demographic representation in New Mexico. This context may bolster Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry and dissociation from Mexico because of their long history and substantial representation in New Mexico.

I recruited participants from leading institutions that serve the Albuquerque community (i.e., government, churches and non-profit agencies). At each site, I obtained participants through posting flyers, making announcements at community meetings, and relying on referrals from key informants. Most participants were recruited through announcements and key informants. While I applied snowball sampling to seek referrals from initial participants and key informants, I only obtained one or two names from each recommender in order to minimize sample selection bias. Recruitment content asked whether middle-aged people with U.S.-born parents were interested in participating in a study on Hispanics in New Mexico. I used "Hispanic" in recruitment materials because it is a widely accepted form of ethnic identification among Nuevomexicanos. Yet, usage of "Hispanic" may not be inclusive of Nuevomexicanos who are multiracial or who choose to dis-identify with the "Hispanic" category. Therefore, this study may undercount people who have a nonexistent association with the Hispanic term.

Each participant reported having at least one Nuevomexicano parent. Of the 96 participants, 78 participants had two Nuevomexicano parents and 18 participants had one Nuevomexicano parent. Of these 18 participants, the second parent varied in whether they were second- or third-generation Mexican American (9 participants), white (5 participants), Mexican immigrant (2 participants), and American Indian (2 participants). Additionally, approximately one-fourth of participants traced their ancestry to Spanish settlers of New Mexico. These participants reported that their families originated from old village communities that were present before Mexican and American occupation of New Mexico. However, most participants reported having grandparents or great grandparents born in New Mexico, or were only familiar with relatives born in New Mexico. Thus, participants' claims to Spanish ancestry may be tenuous since most could not trace their ancestral ties to Spanish settlers. While specifying

ancestry can be challenging for other later-generation people, participants' narratives obscure Nuevomexicanos' and Mexican Americans' history of claiming Spanish ancestry as a publicly expressed identity to assert whiteness and secure political rights upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity (Gonzales 2000).

Fortunately, I interviewed 47 men and 49 women. I interviewed participants between 40 and 60 years of age, with approximately two-thirds of participants between 45 and 55 years of age. I selected people that varied in educational background. The interview sample included 25 participants (12 women and 13 men) with less than a high school diploma or general equivalency credential, 41 participants (24 women and 17 men) with a high school diploma or some college, and 30 participants (13 women and 17 men) with a four-year college degree or higher. Moreover, each participant was born and raised, and attended high school in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area, with the exception of five participants. Of these five participants, each originated from smaller towns across New Mexico; two participants moved to Albuquerque to attend high school; and three participants moved to Albuquerque to seek better work opportunities as young adults.

I created a skin color measure and coded participants skin color according to a five-point scale (1=racially white; 2=light brown, 3=medium brown, 4=dark brown and 5=racially black). I adapted the scale from the skin color card used in the Mexican American Study Project (Telles and Ortiz 2008). While participants clustered into light brown (27 people), medium brown (29 people), and dark brown categories (27 people), few participants appeared racially white (9 people) or black (4 people). Thus, similar to other Mexican Americans, most Nuevomexicanos varied in brown skin tone and did not pass as racially Anglo or white (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Linguistically, participants reported that their parents were fluent in English and Spanish.

However, among study participants, 33 people reported English and Spanish bilingual fluency, and 63 people reported English monolingual fluency. While participants varied in Spanish fluency, each participant explained that they primarily spoke English at home and at work.

In addition, for the 2010 U.S. Census Race and Ethnicity question, Nuevomexicanos' responses indicate regional variation in Mexican Americans' racial and ethnic claims. For the race question, participants' responses were divided between "White" and "Some Other Race" followed by "American Indian or Alaska Native" and no response (49, 45, 4 and 2 percent respectively).[1] In comparison to Dowling (2014), a higher proportion of Mexican Americans living in Texas marked "Some Other Race" over "White" (43 and 57 percent respectively). For the ethnicity question, most participants' marked "Another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin" over "Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano," or provided no response (64, 35 and 1 percent respectively). These descriptive statistics indicate that Nuevomexicanos' ethnic labeling preferences are more variable than other U.S.-born Mexican Americans.

I conducted 96 interviews between December 2014 and November 2015. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Existing theories that inform scholarly thinking about intra-group solidarity and conflict; racial ideology and group position; and relational formations of race shaped the interview guide. Yet throughout data collection, I adjusted the interview questions to address emerging themes that appeared in

[1] Nation-wide, the responses of most Latinos' on the 2010 U.S. Census were divided between "White" and "Some Other Race" (53 and 36.7 percent respectively). Much smaller proportions of Latinos marked "Black or African American," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (2.5, 1.4, 0.4, and 0.1 percent respectively).

prior interviews. The interview guide addressed four themes: (1) family narratives of ancestry and nationality; (2) racial and ethnic identification on the United States 2010 Census and in everyday life; (3) group status and racial dynamics in New Mexico; and (4) attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies. I analyzed the interviews using HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis tool. The data were coded thematically to reflect recurrent themes.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 2, the first empirical chapter, explores the meaning behind Nuevomexicanos' ethnic labeling preferences. I find that Nuevomexicanos' prioritize their Spanish heritage to explain their established connection to New Mexico, and to enact dissociation from the stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants. Yet despite their claims to Spanish ancestry, Nuevomexicanos did not identify as racially white. These findings challenge scholarly research and rank-and-file assumptions that Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry are a simply a claim to whiteness. Alternately, I argue that prioritizing Spanish heritage allows Nuevomexicanos to emphasize that their established presence in the region is tied to New Mexico's history of Spanish colonization, and a defensive strategy to enact dissociation from the stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants.

Chapter 3 shows that Nuevomexicanos downplayed or negated their experiences with racial discrimination because they do not see themselves as belonging to a stigmatized group. Generally, they perceive that their long history and demographic representation in New Mexico merits their group a privileged status within the racial landscape, especially relative to Mexican immigrants and whites. I argue that Nuevomexicanos' racial frames are rooted in a colonial ideology operating in New Mexico and a color-blind ideology in the larger United States. These findings indicate that racial frames among members of ethnoracial groups can be attributable to

the historical or regional ideological context around race and racism, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination, or position within the racial landscape

Chapter 4 shows that Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes can closely mirror that of whites because they do not view that their economic and socio-political realities are linked to the stigmatization of Mexican immigrants. This is because Nuevomexicanos vary in the extent to which they identify with the category of "Mexican" and view Mexican immigrants as their co-ethnics. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos do not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory toward their group. I argue that ethnoracial solidarity, as a group formation response to immigrants' racialization, is a contingent outcome shaped by Mexican Americans and Latinos perceived structural position in U.S. society. These findings prioritize structural positioning and ideological context explanations over exclusive group consciousness rationales in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, provides a summary of the key findings of the dissertation. I address how my findings expand on the sociological theorizing about Mexican Americans' racial positioning and American racial relations. I also discuss how the theoretical implications of this study extend beyond the Mexican American case to other Latinos. I conclude my study with brief recommendations for the future direction of race and immigration studies.

CHAPTER 2

MEXICAN AMERICAN IDENTIFICATION:

REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION AND MEXICAN DISSOCIATION IN NEW MEXICO

ABSTRACT

Existing research inadequately addresses the variation in Mexican Americans' patterns of ethnic identification. Drawing upon 78 interviews, I address this question by exploring how conceptions of ancestry and nationality shape ethnic identification among New Mexico's long-standing Mexican American population, Nuevomexicanos. I find that Nuevomexicanos emphasized their ties to Spanish heritage within the history of New Mexico to explain their ethnicity, and to construct their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants. While Nuevomexicanos varied in their claims to Mexican ancestry, they generally prioritized their roots in the original Spanish settlement of New Mexico to emphasize distinctions in ancestry, nationality and regionality from Mexican immigrants. Moreover, despite Nuevomexicanos' persistent claims to Spanish ancestry, they did not perceive themselves as racially white. Instead, Spanish ancestry was integral to Nuevomexicano identity because it enabled them to highlight their regional ties to New Mexico, and long-time American identities. Thus, I argue that Nuevomexicanos' enduring claims to Spanish ancestry represent a defensive strategy to enact dissociation from stigmatized Mexican immigrants. Overall, these findings show that Mexican Americans' dissociation strategies are contingent on how they define themselves as members of an ethnic and national community. These findings also indicate that "Mexican American" as an identity term is a loosely maintained membership category among "Mexican Americans" due to their intra-group heterogeneity.

MEXICAN AMERICAN IDENTIFICATION:

REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION AND MEXICAN DISSOCIATION IN NEW MEXICO

Mexican Americans are the largest segment of the Latino population in American society and second only in size to African Americans (Stepler and Brown 2016). Among sociologists, Mexican Americans constitute a distinct ethnoracial group (Gómez 2007; Telles and Ortiz 2008). But sociological accounts of Mexican Americans' ethnic identification have demonstrated inconsistency in explaining how they define themselves ethnically (Dowling 2014; Gonzales 1993b; Telles and Ortiz 2008). The substantial heterogeneity among Mexican Americans, as a group, in particular, has shaped the wide variation in their racial and ethnic identities. Notably, Mexican Americans' history of conquest and immigration as distinct forms of incorporation into American society, and categorization as white and non-white over time and place has contributed to their diverse racial and ethnic claims (Foley 1998; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000). Further, both conquest and immigration have not been monolithic experiences; each has involved variations in experience and adjustment into American society for Mexican Americans (McWilliams 1949). Taking this pattern into analytical consideration is necessary for a clear comprehension of the complexity of Mexican Americans' ethnic identification.

Among the various ethnic labels within the Mexican American population, "Spanish" or "Spanish American" are the most controversial, particularly in New Mexico where they are most often used (Gonzales 1997b; Horton 2010; Nieto-Phillips 2004). During New Mexico statehood between 1880 to 1912, Mexicans native to the territory, so-called Nuevomexicanos, adopted "Spanish" as a publicly expressed identity to prove that they merited statehood (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000). This tendency grew as Mexican immigration to the southwest became more visible, decreasing Nuevomexicanos' social status because they were mistaken for immigrants.

Consequently, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their Spanish ancestry that originated in the Spanish colonization of the territory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over their Indigenous roots, and ties to Mexico (Gonzales 2000). This enabled them to stake claims to New Mexico territory, and enact dissociation from immigrant coethnics. Therefore, unlike other Mexican Americans, the strong legacy of Spanish heritage among Nuevomexicanos, permits usage of "Spanish" as a form of identification along with other subsequent terms such as "Mexican American," "Chicano," and "Hispanic" (Gonzales 1993b).

While Spanish identification initially constituted a particular political and publicly expressed identity, the term's popular usage among present-day Nuevomexicanos prompts sharp disagreement over the validity of their claim to Spanish over Mexican ancestry (Gonzales 1993b). The pervasive idea that Nuevomexicanos prioritize their Spanish heritage, and fail to claim their "true" Mexican heritage relies on the belief that ethnicity is essentially rooted in genealogy (Nieto-Phillips 2004). Yet, ethnicity is a relational and situational construct, as members of ethnic groups distinguish themselves from each other based on claims of "us" versus "them" (Nagel 1994; Wimmer 2008). Thus, Nuevomexicanos' conceptions of ethnicity are about how they view themselves with regard to their long and complex history in the United States, and how they think others perceive them. Quite significantly, and as this paper aims to show, it is also about how Nuevomexicanos see themselves in relation to other Mexican-origin people.

Mexican Americans, including Nuevomexicanos, often define themselves in opposition to Mexican immigrants, especially when they are misidentified as immigrants with whom they share ethnoracial markers. Consequently, they may engage in dissociation strategies, such as prioritizing their American identities, to manage expressions of nativism (Dowling 2014; Garcia Bedolla 2005; Jiménez 2008; Vega 2014). However, it remains unclear whether and how the

presence of Mexican immigrants shapes Nuevomexicanos' identity construction because they may not perceive themselves as ethnically Mexican. Specifically, Nuevomexicanos may contest their Mexican ancestry due to the historical legacy of Spanish heritage as a publicly expressed identity in New Mexico. Nuevomexicanos may also resist identifying as "Mexican" because it eclipses the significance of their ties to New Mexico. Thus, the Nuevomexicano case specifies how Mexican Americans' intra-group heterogeneity shapes variation in how they view and define themselves as members of an ethnic and national community, which, in turn, shapes how distinct subgroups among Mexican Americans see themselves in relation to one another.

This article examines how conceptions of ancestry and nationality shape ethnic identification among Nuevomexicanos living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Among historians and social scientists, Nuevomexicanos belong to the greater Mexican American category (Saenz and Morales 2015; Vargas 2011). From this perspective, I explore how historical and regional differences among Mexican Americans can shape their conceptions of ethnicity and nationality. I demonstrate how Nuevomexicanos construct their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants by highlighting differences in ancestry, nationality and regionality. All three distinctions show that Nuevomexicanos' roots in the original Spanish settlement of New Mexico were central to their explanations of ethnicity. Furthermore, despite their persistent claims to Spanish ancestry, Nuevomexicanos did not view themselves as racially white. Instead, Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry enabled them to highlight their regional differentiation from other Mexican-origin people, and to avoid being stigmatized as "Mexican." Overall, these findings point to the significance of Mexican Americans' intra-group heterogeneity in forming their ethnic identities.

In this article, "Nuevomexicano" refers to study participants who are the descendants of the first Mexican Americans living in New Mexico who joined American society as a conquered

people in the U.S.-Mexico War, 1846 to 1848. While "Hispanic" is the most common identifier among participants, I use the term "Nuevomexicano" because "Hispanic" is one of the many referents used by participants to describe in-group members. While "Hispanic" is commonly understood as a panethnic term, Nuevomexicanos use "Hispanic" as an ethnic category to refer to themselves. Throughout the text, I specify when usage of "Hispanic" is an ethnic or panethnic category. "Mexican American" refers to people who were born in the United States with Mexican ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, and Mexican immigrant refers to people who were born in Mexico and now reside in the United States. Lastly, "Latino" is a panethnic term that describes people of Latin American ancestry living in the United States.

Negotiating Ethnic and National Identification among Mexican Americans

Mexican Americans deploy a range of ethnic labels that vary by context and audience (Dowling 2014; Gonzales 1993b; Ochoa 2004). Nevertheless, ethnic-label choice coexists with racial constraints, as Mexican Americans often deal with externally imposed labels (Dowling 2014; Jiménez 2008; Vasquez 2010). Specifically, the legacy of racialization rooted in American colonization of Northern Mexico, and continuous Mexican immigration to the United States constrain Mexican Americans' ethnic-labeling options. Similarly, Nuevomexicano identity is shaped by out-group members' assumptions that they are immigrants, and undocumented. Yet, unlike most Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos do not exclusively claim Mexican ancestry or have recent immigrant backgrounds (Gonzales 1997b). This is because their ancestors have been present in the territory before the creation of Mexico as a nation-state, and American conquest of the Southwest. Therefore, the Nuevomexicano case extends our understanding of how Mexican Americans' ethnic and national identification is shaped by historical and regional differences.

Research on Mexican Americans' national identification focuses on the relationship between claiming the label "American," and perceptions of racial inclusion and exclusion. Notably, Mexican Americans may be less likely to identify as American due to their historical and contemporary experiences of racial exclusion, as well as the implicit meaning of whiteness in the American label (Golash-Boza 2006; Oboler 1995; Rodriguez 2000). However, Mexican Americans who experience racial discrimination can also choose to identify as American by minimizing their experiences of exclusion in order to emphasize their similarity in racial status with whites (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007; Vega 2014). Nevertheless, unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos have historically conflated their ethnic and national identities, that is, being Spanish meant being American or from the American southwest (Chávez 2012; Gonzales 1997b; 2000). These national and regional claims indicate that present-day Nuevomexicanos may simply identify as American because their ethnicity is connected to their multi-generational status in New Mexico. Therefore, the Nuevomexicano case may demonstrate variation in the meanings behind Mexican Americans' ethnic and national identification.

Continuous Mexican immigration to the United States exacerbates and complicates the constraints on Mexican Americans' ethnic-labeling choices. Mexican Americans often encounter expressions of nativism when they are mistaken for Mexican immigrants with whom they share ethnoracial markers (Gutierrez 1995; Jiménez 2008). Mexican Americans may begrudge having a large population of unauthorized labor migrants as co-ethnics, seeing them as a source of status degradation (Garcia Bedolla 2003; 2005). Therefore, they may engage in boundary-making strategies to avoid nativist hostility, and to maintain a positive association with their ethnic group (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Wimmer 2008). Mexican Americans, for example, may emphasize their American nationality or speak English to manage expressions of nativism (Jiménez 2008;

Vasquez 2010). Yet, prior research inadequately accounts for Mexican American's intra-group heterogeneity. Unlike most Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos do not exclusively claim Mexican heritage due to the historical legacy of Spanish heritage as a publicly expressed identity in New Mexico. Thus, Nuevomexicanos' can contest their Mexican heritage, reinforcing the pervasive narrative that they never were of Mexican national or cultural descent.

Among Nuevomexicanos, ethnic identification is grounded in categorical distinctions as they often define themselves by describing whom they are not, mainly "Mexican" and "foreign" (Gonzales 1997b; Metzgar 1974). According to Gonzales (1997b), "categorical awareness" is a means to resolve uncertainty about the appropriate way to describe one's own ethnic heritage and history. While "Spanish," "Chicano" and "Hispanic" remain important identifiers among Nuevomexicanos (Trujillo 2010), we know less about the relationship between categorical awareness and usage of each term. Nonetheless, research on Hispanic identification suggests that the term strategically distinguishes Nuevomexicanos from Mexican immigrants (Dowling 2014; Nieto-Phillips 2004). The low percentage of other Latino groups in New Mexico, including Mexican immigrants, contributes to an exclusive definition of Hispanic as native-born. However, it remains unclear why Nuevomexicanos continue to differentiate themselves from the Mexican category. It may be the case that Nuevomexicanos do not have recent immigration histories, and/or they experience "Mexican" as a stigmatized identity in New Mexico.

History of Ethnic and National identification among Nuevomexicanos

The Nuevomexicano case demonstrates that Mexican Americans' ethnic identification depends on context and historical period, as particular identities have appeared with varying degrees of distinction without completely supplanting the others (Gonzales 1993b; Metzgar 1974). During New Mexico statehood (1880-1912), Spanish and *Hispano* terms rose to

prominence as publicly expressed identities in order to combat Anglo-American racism, and marginalization from expanding American institutions (Gonzales 2000; 2016). This tendency grew as Mexican immigration to the southwest became more visible, decreasing Nuevomexicanos' social status because they were misidentified as immigrants (Gómez 2007). To secure political rights in the United States, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their Spanish ancestry that originated in the Spanish colonization of New Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over their Indigenous roots, and ties to Mexico. This enabled Nuevomexicanos to stake claims to New Mexico territory, and enact dissociation from immigrants. Thus, Nuevomexicanos redefined their public expressions of ancestry as a strategy to confront Anglo-American racism; to facilitate a claim to whiteness by emphasizing similarity in European ancestry to Anglo-Americans; and to gain acceptance upon New Mexico's entry into the U.S. polity (Gonzales 2000; 2016).

While Spanish identification constituted a specific political and publically expressed identity among Nuevomexicanos, the increase in nativism and pressure for assimilation during the eras of World War I and II furthered the meaning of "Spanish" by emphasizing the commonalities between Spanish and American cultures (Deutsch 1989; Gonzales and Massmann 2006). Primarily, Nuevomexicanos adjusted the image of their Spanish heritage to coordinate with American symbols of wartime patriotism, and made essential home front contributions to each war (Gonzales and Massmann 2006). The increase in stable employment during World War II also assisted in the consolidation of a small, activist middle-class that was committed to warding off the stigma that Nuevomexicanos were "Mexican" (Gómez 1992). While an American-oriented philosophy in meaning and practice was central to Spanish identification, the term remained a publicly expressed identity to protect Nuevomexicanos' political rights.

During the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, a newly politicized ethnic consciousness emerged among Mexican Americans. The Chicano term became popular and projected a collective representation of Mexican-origin people across the southwest that shared a history of oppression by American colonialism and imperialism (Acuña 1972; Gómez-Quinones 1990). In New Mexico, "Chicano" challenged Spanish heritage, questioning any dissociation from Mexico, and Indigenous ancestry. Some Nuevomexicanos, for example, legitimized claims to their Mexican heritage by arguing that Spanish heritage was an anachronistic carryover from New Mexico statehood and a false claim to "being white" (Gonzales 1993b; Nieto-Phillips 2004). Other Nuevomexicanos, however, asserted that while New Mexico was part of Mexico for a short period of time, it largely existed in isolation from Mexican rule and their promotion of *mestizaje* (i.e., the celebration of Indigenous alongside Spanish ancestry), and therefore, Nuevomexicanos were always a distinct people and culture. Together, the Spanish heritage narrative obscures Nuevomexicanos' and Mexican Americans' history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous peoples, and association with Mexico.

By the 1980s, the Hispanic term became prevalent across the United States as census officials, Spanish-language media, and ethnic organizations worked together to popularize and legitimize the category across distinct Latino groups (Mora 2014; Oboler 1995; Rodriguez 2000). These practices enabled state officials, market managers, and ethnic leaders to embark on projects that targeted the broader Latino community. Similarly, "Hispanic" gained traction among ethnic organizations in New Mexico, as they were no longer restricted by Spanish, Mexican or Chicano labels (Gonzales 1993b). Yet, grassroots organizations tended to reject the term because it was perceived as an imposed category by the government. While "Hispanic" became prevalent among ethnic organizations, its meaning and usage among Nuevomexicanos

remains unclear. The popularity of "Hispanic" may be appealing to Nuevomexicanos for two reasons: 1) "Hispanic" is a catch-all term that is inclusive of their contested Spanish and Mexican heritages, and 2) "Hispanic" may be synonymous with "Spanish" despite the fact that the terms originated in different contexts with distinct meanings. Therefore, "Hispanic" may provide Nuevomexicanos the flexibility to identify with either Spanish or Mexican heritage or avoid specifying their heritage altogether.

Today, "Spanish," "Chicano" and "Hispanic" continue to compete and contest one another in the public arena, as these terms evoke conflicting definitions of peoplehood (Gonzales 1993b; Horton 2010; Trujillo 2010). Yet, the extent to which these terms represent identification with Mexican and/or Spanish heritage remains in question. Additionally, Nuevomexicanos are relatively unique to other Mexican Americans due to their historical claims to Spanish/European heritage to gain equal treatment from Anglo-Americans (Gonzales 2000). Still, complicating matters, the Nuevomexicano case is similar to other Mexican Americans, as their desire for acceptance from whites continues to shape their identity claims (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007). Thus, the Nuevomexicano case provides a sharper portrait of how Mexican Americans see and define themselves as members of an ethnic and national community, and how time and context matter for the emergence and maintenance of distinct identities among Mexican Americans.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper draws upon 78 in-depth interviews taken with Nuevomexicanos in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I conducted research in Albuquerque because it has the largest concentration of Nuevomexicanos. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, New Mexico's population is majority Latino followed by whites, American Indians, and other ethnoracial groups (48, 39, 9 and 4 percent respectively). Among Latinos, the majority have

Mexican ancestry followed by Spanish and other Latin American ancestry (65, 15 and 20 percent respectively). Furthermore, most Latinos reported native-born versus foreign-born status (85 and 15 percent respectively). Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of native-born Mexicans due to the region's lower levels of Mexican immigration (Gómez 2007). Overall, U.S.-born people of Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, have sizeable demographic representation in New Mexico. This context may bolster participants' Spanish ancestry claims due their long history and substantial representation in New Mexico.

I recruited participants from leading institutions that serve the Albuquerque community (i.e., government, churches and non-profit agencies). At each site, I obtained participants through posting flyers, making announcements at community meetings, and relying on referrals from key informants. Most participants were recruited through announcements and key informants. While I applied snowball sampling to seek referrals from initial participants and key informants, I only obtained one or two names from each recommender in order to minimize sample selection bias. Recruitment content asked whether middle-aged people with U.S.-born parents were interested in participating in a study on Hispanics in New Mexico. I used "Hispanic" in recruitment materials because it is a widely accepted form of ethnic identification among Nuevomexicanos.

Each participant had two Nuevomexicano parents. Moreover, approximately one fourth of participants traced their ancestry to Spanish settlers of New Mexico. These participants reported that their families originated from old village communities that were present before Mexican and American occupation of New Mexico. However, most participants reported having grandparents or great grandparents who were born in New Mexico, or were only familiar with relatives who were born in New Mexico. Thus, participants' claims to Spanish ancestry may be tenuous since most could not trace their ancestral ties to Spanish settlers. While specifying

ancestry can be challenging for other later-generation people, participants' narratives obscure Nuevomexicanos' and Mexican Americans' history of claiming Spanish ancestry as a publicly expressed identity in order to assert whiteness and secure political rights upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity (Gonzales 2000).

I interviewed 38 men and 40 women between 40 and 60 years old, with roughly two-thirds of participants between 45 and 55 years old. I selected middle-aged participants to explore the maturation of ethnic identification over time compared to young adults (Phinney 2008). I selected people who varied in educational background to assess whether self-identification differed by educational status. The interview sample included 22 participants (12 women and 10 men) with less than a high school diploma or general equivalency credential, 30 participants (17 women and 13 men) with a high school diploma or some college education, and 26 participants (10 women and 16 men) with a four-year college degree or higher. Additionally, each participant attended high school, and resided in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area.

I created a skin color measure and coded participants skin color according to a five-point scale (1=racially white; 2=light brown, 3=medium brown, 4=dark brown and 5=racially black). I adapted the scale from the skin color card used in the Mexican American Study Project (Telles and Ortiz 2008). I collapsed the original scale into five categories to obtain broader variation in skin color. While participants clustered into light brown (22 people), medium brown (25 people), and dark brown categories (21 people), few participants appeared racially white (6 people) or black (4 people). Therefore, similar to other Mexican Americans, most Nuevomexicanos varied in brown skin tone and did not pass as racially white (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Linguistically, participants reported that their parents were fluent in English and Spanish. However, among study participants, 28 people reported English and Spanish bilingual fluency, and 50 people

reported English monolingual fluency. While participants varied in Spanish fluency, each participant explained that they primarily spoke English at home and at work.

I conducted 78 interviews between December 2014 and November 2015. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview information on self-identification addressed four themes: family narratives of ancestry, ethnic-labeling preferences, recognition of Mexican heritage, and racial and ethnic identification on the 2010 U.S. Census.[2] I analyzed the interviews in two phases using HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis software. First, I created codes that described recurring themes in participants' explanations of ancestry. During the first phase, I noticed that participants prioritized their nationality and regionality in explaining their ancestry. Therefore, in the second phase, I examined how participants described the relationship between their ancestry, nationality and regionality. Overall, I uncover the degree to which participants identified with Spanish and/or Mexican heritage, whether participants have a positive or negative association with Spanish and/or Mexican heritage, and the extent to which participants' nationality and regionality was important in expressing their self-identification.

[2] While I do not analyze participants' identification on the 2010 Census, their responses indicate substantial regional variation in Mexican Americans' racial and ethnic claims (Dowling 2014). For the race question, participants' responses were divided between "White" and "Some Other Race" followed by "American Indian" and no response (50, 45, 3 and 3 percent respectively). For the ethnicity question, most participants' marked "Another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin" over "Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano" (67 and 33 percent respectively).

FINDINGS

To understand the variation in participants' explanations of ethnicity it is necessary to note the classic meaning of Spanish heritage in the early twentieth century. Constructed by the likes of Eusebio Chacón (Gonzales 2000), Aurelio Espinosa (1914) and Angélico Chávez (2012), Spanish identity among Nuevomexicanos consisted of several claims, that: they descended from Spanish colonizers that "founded" New Mexico; they did not miscegenate with Indigenous tribes; they practiced traditional, Spanish village culture; they were not culturally or nationally Mexican; and, they were committed to New Mexico statehood and adopting American identities. Conversely, participants reported partial conceptions of this classic interpretation, and explained that their ancestors were living in New Mexico before Mexican and American occupation of the region. Therefore, participants often do not pay any significance to New Mexico's history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous peoples, and association with Mexico. Moreover, while Nuevomexicanos' history of ethnic identification demonstrates that participants can use "Spanish," "Chicano," "Hispanic" and "Mexican American" to define themselves ethnically, they generally avoided Mexican-origin labels because the word "Mexican" discounts their regional distinctiveness, and is a stigmatized identity in New Mexico.

Overall, participants' explanations of ethnicity clustered into two major themes: ancestry and nationality. The ancestry section details the extent to which participants identified with Mexican heritage. The nationality section describes how participants conveyed their American nationality to out-group members. These themes were subsumed under the Hispanic term, which was the most common and preferred identifier among participants (see Table 1). Participants used "Hispanic" to differentiate themselves from other Latina/o groups in New Mexico, particularly Mexican immigrants. Other popular referents were Chicana/o and Spanish, which

were often used interchangeably with “Hispanic” to refer to in-group members in conversation. Few participants identified as Latina/o, Mexican American or New Mexican. However, each participant understood that “Hispanic” was the most common identifier among in-group members, and particular to New Mexico. Prior research has also documented the usage of “Hispanic” among Mexican Americans in Texas as a similar regional form of identity to differentiate Mexican Americans from Mexican immigrants (Dowling 2014). Mexican Americans in Texas reject the label “Mexican” to distance themselves from the negative attributes associated with immigrants who are stereotyped as unauthorized. Accordingly, Mexican Americans can deploy “Hispanic” to avoid being misidentified as Mexican immigrants.

Table 1 about here

Education, gender and phenotype differences regarding participants’ ethnic identification were limited. Generally, participants spent a considerable amount of time detailing how they differed from Mexican immigrants. This is because out-group members often questioned participants’ Mexican heritage, country of origin, and immigration status. While participants primarily constructed their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants, they also distanced themselves from other Mexican Americans because identifying as “Mexican” eclipses the significance of their long history in New Mexico. Therefore, while participants varied in their claims to Mexican heritage, they typically emphasized that their ties to the original Spanish settlers of New Mexico, and long history in the region distinguished them from Mexican-origin people. Additionally, participants’ claims to Spanish heritage do not indicate membership in the white racial category. Participants are keenly aware that they are not viewed and treated as white, especially since they are often mistaken for Mexican immigrants. Instead, participants’ claims to Spanish heritage enable them to enact dissociation from stigmatized Mexican immigrants.

Conceptions of Ancestry: Spanish, Mixed and Vague

The extent to which participants identified with Mexican heritage shaped whether they reported Spanish, mixed or vague conceptions of ancestry. Despite this variation, all participants used "Hispanic" as their preferred identifier. According to Table 2, most participants claimed Spanish over mixed or vague conceptions of ancestry (40, 27 and 33 percent respectively). Participants who asserted Spanish ancestry clarified that their ancestors migrated to New Mexico directly from Spain. Conversely, participants who reported mixed ancestry emphasized New Mexico's history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous peoples. Moreover, a substantial number of participants provided vague explanations of ethnicity. These participants questioned the legitimacy of their claims to Spanish over Mexican heritage because identifying as Mexican is a stigmatized identity in New Mexico. Generally, other Mexican Americans do not question their ethnicity because it is associated with Mexico. However, unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos recognize that their multi-generational status in the southwest is tied to the original Spanish settlement of New Mexico.

Table 2 about here

Spanish Ancestry

Participants who reported that their ancestors originated from Spain explained that the Spanish presence in New Mexico stemmed from the conquest and settlement of the Americas (see Table 2). While participants claimed Spanish ancestry, they did not claim they were white. Instead, they used Spanish ancestry to enact dissociation from the stigmatized Mexican category. For example, 52-year-old Roy with a master's degree emphasized that his Spanish ancestors were in the region before Mexican and American occupation of New Mexico. When asked about the meaning behind his usage of "Hispanic," Roy responded:

> Mainly coming from Spanish heritage… A lot of people would argue that some of my ancestry was Mexican, but my ancestors have lived in the Albuquerque region for almost two hundred years. At one time, it was Mexico, but they [my ancestors] were part of the territory, part of New Spain way back when the Spanish explorers first got here.

Roy often provides historical explanations of his Spanish heritage when out-group members question whether he possesses Mexican ancestry. Notably, he emphasizes that his ancestry dates back to New Spain, which refers to the colonial territories of the Spanish empire during the 1500s and 1800s. Given this historical fact, Roy specifies that he does not have Mexican ancestry, as his ancestors were in the southwest before the creation of Mexico as a nation-state. Similarly, other participants emphasized that they were the direct descendants of Spanish settlers in New Mexico. Yet, these participants assumed no mixture with Indigenous populations in the region, or had no knowledge of Indigenous ancestry. Consequently, people who identified as Spanish generally do not recognize their Indigenous ancestry, the history of racial mixture in New Mexico, or give it any significance in the stories of their own ethnic heritage.

While many participants provided historical narratives that justified their Spanish heritage, other participants emphasized that their Spanish roots were intimately connected to their long-standing presence in the region. Therefore, while participants' claims to Spanish heritage were not necessarily grounded in the details of their family history, their accounts highlighted that their family's multi-generational presence in the territory indicated Spanish over Mexican ancestry. For example, 50-year-old Jeremy with a high school degree explained:

> Jeremy: I'm Spanish, my background is Spanish, but I'm not Mexican, I'm not from Mexico. As far as I know, my mom and dad and their grandparents were born and raised in Santa Fe, [New Mexico].

Interviewer: Have you ever identified as Spanish?

Jeremy: I identify as Spanish, but basically Hispanic is Spanish to me, so I say I'm Hispanic.

Jeremy contrasted his Spanish ancestry with Mexican ancestry to foreground his family's multi-generational presence in New Mexico. While the region of New Mexico was part of Mexico from 1821 to 1848, Jeremy dissociated himself from any affiliation with Mexico or Mexican-origin people to highlight his Spanish heritage and generational ties to New Mexico. Other participants also explained that they were "not Mexican" or that they were "born in the United States" in describing their ancestry to thwart any assumption that they were "Mexican" or "foreign." Moreover, Jeremy clarified that the terms Spanish and Hispanic are interchangeable, as "Hispanic" in New Mexico often signifies Spanish heritage. In particular, the relatively low percentage of other Latina/o groups in New Mexico contributes to an exclusive definition of "Hispanic" as having Spanish ancestry, and distinguishing immigrants from U.S.-born people (Nieto-Phillips 2004). Overall, participants who emphasized Spanish ancestry conveyed that they did not have Indigenous or Mexican heritage, and/or affiliation with Mexico, even though it is clear that their Mexican heritage is rooted in their colonial history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous ancestry, and association with Mexico (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000).

Mixed Ancestry

A smaller percentage of participants conveyed mixed Indigenous, Mexican and Spanish ancestry (27 percent). The term *mestizo* refers to people of combined European, Indigenous and African ancestry, particularly across Latin America. While participants did not deploy the *mestizo* term to describe their mixed ancestry, they explained that their "Latin background" was

similar to that of Mexican-origin people. When asked about the degree to which she identifies with Spanish or Mexican terms, 55-year-old Marlene with a four-year college degree explained:

> It doesn't matter if someone calls me Mexican, Mexican American or Chicana. I don't mind any of those terms… My belief is that I probably have Native American and Mexican American blood. We don't have direct relatives from Mexico… I can't point to any place in Mexico because we've been here [in New Mexico] for so long… What we have in common [with Mexican-origin people] is our Latin and Native background.

Despite the negative connotation associated with the word "Mexican" in New Mexico, Marlene embraced Mexican and Mexican American labels because she recognized that Nuevomexicanos and Mexican-origin people share similar ancestry. Moreover, while Marlene cannot directly trace her ancestry to Mexico, her account suggests that her family's generational ties to the region is a defining factor that distinguishes her from Mexican-origin people with more recent immigration histories. Other participants also acknowledged that Nuevomexicanos possessed similar ancestry to Mexican-origin people, and were more likely to perceive Mexican-origin people as co-ethnics. While other Mexican Americans do not question their shared ancestry with Mexican immigrants, they do make distinctions among in-group members to highlight variations in the Mexican American experience (e.g., generational status) (Jiménez 2008). Therefore, Nuevomexicanos generally avoided "Mexican" or "Mexican American" as primary identifiers because identifying as "Mexican" discounts their established presence in the region.

Additionally, other participants specified that they possessed mostly Spanish ancestry relative to their Indigenous and Mexican ancestry. For example when asked about the meaning behind his usage of "Hispanic," 47-year-old Peter with a general equivalency degree explained:

Peter: Spanish, Hispanic origin… We're pretty much mixed because there's Indian blood in our family. My grandma has Indian blood.

Interviewer: Have you ever identified as Mexican or Mexican American?

Peter: Mexican is fine. I'm sure down the line my grandpa or someone came from there, but a lot of our relatives are from Spain.

Despite foregrounding his Spanish ancestry, Peter conceded that he possesses mixed ancestry due to the possibility of Indigenous, and Mexican lineage. Consequently, the Hispanic term encompasses his mixed ancestry, mostly Spanish with some Indigenous or Mexican heritage. While other Mexican-origin people generally understand that their heritage is composed of the racial mixture between Indigenous and Spaniard, participants like Peter made distinctions between Mexican ancestry, and the mixture of Spanish and Indigenous ancestry. The absence of *mestizo* terminology among participants points to the classic interpretation of Spanish heritage that emphasized Nuevomexicanos' isolation from Mexico and its promotion of *mestizaje*, as well as isolation from Indigenous groups (Gonzales 2000). This interpretation was part of Nuevomexicanos' broader agenda of dissociation from Mexico in order to maintain political rights upon New Mexico's entry into the American polity. Therefore, participants often do not make the connection that their mixed ancestry is similar to that of other Mexican-origin people. Overall, similar to participants who exclusively identified with Spanish ancestry, participants who emphasized their mixed ancestry preferred Hispanic to Mexican-origin labels. This is because the label "Mexican" discounts their complex history of racial mixture in New Mexico.

Vague Ancestry

Lastly, a substantial number of participants questioned whether they could only claim Spanish over Mexican ancestry because the New Mexico region neighbors Mexico, and

identifying as Mexican is a stigmatized identity in New Mexico (33 percent). For example, when asked about the meaning behind her usage of "Hispanic," 56-year-old Regina with a trade degree described that her ancestry is similar to other Latin American groups, but debated whether she had genealogical ties to Spain or Mexico.

> Latin descent. I have no real idea… I used to say "Spanish," but I can't say that my descendants are directly from Spain, [but] that's what everyone used to say. It was a big deal because either you were Spanish or Mexican. People seemed to feel that being called Mexican was a slur. To me, it was just trying to describe where your family came from. Most people have an easy time because their last names are common…[in] Mexico or Spain. [But] mine is unique. I've looked it up online… it's all over the Latin countries.

Regina was accustomed to using the Spanish label because people in her community often claimed Spanish heritage. However, she suggested that people often identified as "Spanish" because identifying as "Mexican" was perceived as a racial slur. Consequently, Regina called into question the legitimacy of her claim to Spanish over Mexican heritage. Instead, Regina asserted her Latin American background because her last name is popular across Latino American countries. For Regina, usage of "Hispanic" captures her ambiguous, yet Latin American ancestry. In general, participants' hesitancy or indecisiveness in conceptualizing their ancestry mirrors priors research showing that rhetorical incoherence increases when people discuss sensitive subjects (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Gonzales 1997b). Since identification with "Spanish" or "Mexican" is generally a controversial debate in New Mexico, participants' responses are often unclear because discussing identity issues may make them feel uneasy.

Other participants struggled with defining their ancestry altogether. These participants stressed nativity in the United States, and familiarity with both English and Spanish languages to

differentiate themselves from other racial or ethnic groups. For example, when asked about the meaning behind her usage of "Hispanic," 49-year-old Sonia with less than a high school degree initially responded, "I don't know. I never really thought about it." As she continued:

> Sonia: I've always used Hispanic or like at work, because I work with a lot of Mexican women, they're like, "What is Hispanic or Chicana?" [I respond,] "It's just somebody that understands Spanish and English."
>
> Interviewer: How do you know that you're Hispanic or Chicana and not something else?
>
> Sonia*:* It's just the way I was raised. My mom and grandma and everybody…we've always lived here in the neighborhood and never lived anywhere else. I figured, okay, everybody around here is Hispanic or Chicano.

Similar to Regina, Sonia initially expressed uncertainty in explaining her ancestry, especially since both Mexican-origin people and Nuevomexicanos can speak both Spanish and English. Thus, Sonia differentiates herself from Mexican-origin people by explaining her neighborhood's demographic history. Notably, she is from a neighborhood that dates back to one of the original Spanish settlements in Albuquerque. Prior work has also shown that Nuevomexicanos emphasize categorical differences (e.g., phenotype, language) between in- and out-group members as an alternative to a well-defined conception of heritage (Gonzales 1993b). While these categorical distinctions did not signify key differences between Nuevomexicanos and other Mexican-origin people, participants perceived that these distinctions were important to their conceptions of ancestry. Moreover, while "Chicano" commonly refers to Mexican-origin people, participants deployed the term because it signals their U.S.-born status. In New Mexico, "Chicano" can refer to those of Spanish heritage, and does not have an exclusive association with Mexican heritage.

Overall, participants' fragmented conceptions of ancestry indicate that they remain hesitant about their Mexican ancestry (see Table 2). Specifically, while participants who exclusively claimed Spanish ancestry assumed no racial mixture with Indigenous people, participants who reported mixed ancestry avoided Mexican-origin identifiers because they eclipse the significance of their established presence in the region. Moreover, participants who provided vague conceptions of ancestry typically identified as "Hispanic" to avoid specifying their ethnicity altogether. These findings demonstrate that participants preferred Hispanic to Mexican labels because identifying as "Mexican" discounts their long history in the region, and is a stigmatized identity in New Mexico. And, while participants continue to claim Spanish ancestry, they did not perceive themselves as racially white. Alternatively, claims to Spanish ancestry enabled participants to highlight their regional differentiation from other Mexican-origin people, especially Mexican immigrants.

Conceptions of Nationality: Dissociation from Mexico and Regional Association with New Mexico

Participants could have used their multi-generational status in the region to identify as Mexican because New Mexico was once occupied by Mexico, and in the Spanish colonial period, New Spain was known as Mexico. Instead, participants prioritized their American nationalities because the question of ethnicity implicated controversial debates about their Mexican heritage, country of origin and immigration status. Therefore, participants defined the content of their ethnicity by highlighting their American identities in two significant ways: dissociation from Mexico, and regional association with New Mexico (see Table 3). While participants reported more than one theme to emphasize their American identities, they were slightly more likely to convey regional association with New Mexico than dissociation from

Mexico (62 and 55 percent respectively). Participants' perceptions that their Spanish heritage is connected to the territory of New Mexico likely explain the slightly higher number of messages regarding regional association with New Mexico. Additionally, while participants recognized that their established presence in the United States differentiated them from other ethnoracial groups, they prioritized explanations regarding differences between Mexican immigrants and themselves. Thus, participants typically do not pay any significance to New Mexico's history of Mexican occupation because they never developed a sense of belonging to the Nation of Mexico.

Table 3 about here

Dissociation from Mexico

Participants prioritized their American nationality by stating that their ancestors were living in the southwest before the formation of Mexico as a nation-state. Namely, participants detailed the ways in which they were "not Mexican," "not from Mexico," or had "no Mexican relatives" to emphasize their long-time American identities. For instance, when out-group members inquired about his hometown, 56-year-old Gus with a professional degree stated:

> I tell them, "I'm from New Mexico." "Oh, you're Mexican?" "No, I'm not Mexican, I'm *New* Mexican [respondent's emphasis]. I'm from *New* Mexico." It doesn't insult me that somebody thinks I'm from Mexico, just like it wouldn't insult me if they said I was from Canada. It just isn't true. I'm not from there. My family moved [to the southwest] before Mexico even existed. I don't identify at all as being Mexican, the nationality of Mexican.

Gus' account highlights that out-group members confuse the Nation of Mexico with the State of New Mexico. Nevertheless, the Mexico-New Mexico confusion did not bother Gus because he considered it a simple error of perception, not a major violation of his American identity. As a result, he elaborated that his ancestors were in the southwest territory before Mexico's

government was established, particularly in the early 1800s. Other participants also reported that they provided routine scripts to address out-group members' assumptions of having ties to Mexico. These participants emphasized that they only had U.S.-born relatives, they did not know anyone in Mexico, or they could only trace their ancestry to Spanish relatives.

Participants also asserted that being Hispanic is synonymous to being American because their family has lived in the United States for many generations. In this way, participants stressed that they did not want to be identified as Mexicans, but as long-time Americans. For instance, 55-year-old Camila with an associate's degree and 44-year-old Louis with a high school degree explained that being American is key to their Hispanic identity.

> Camila: As far as I'm concerned, we [my ancestors] have always been in North America… Mexico is right there. I realize that. I'm not from Mexico and my people are not from Mexico. I don't identify with Mexicans either. I'm an American.
>
> Louis: My ancestors and everybody we're Americans… that's where we get a lot of confusion between the Mexicans and the Hispanics. Being labeled as "from Mexico." I'm not from Mexico. I've never been there. No disrespect to them, but I'm an American.

Camila and Louis underscored their family's established presence in the region, and relinquished any association with Mexico or Mexican ancestry in order to highlight the centrality of their American nationality to their ethnic identification. While some participants recognized that some of their ancestors might have been born under Mexican occupation of the southwest, they generally emphasized that having only U.S.-born relatives or being "born and raised in the United States" was fundamental to their ethnic identification. Consequently, participants prioritized their American identity to foreground their long-standing presence in the region, and to distance themselves from any affiliation with Mexico and Mexican-origin people.

Regional Association with New Mexico

Participants who foregrounded their established connection to the southwest were also quick to assert that being New Mexican meant being American, and that these terms were synonymous. These participants explained that the "border crossed them" or that they inherited their American citizenship. Notably, these participants emphasized that their regionality was a key aspect of their identity because their ancestry is intimately tied to the historical and political circumstances of New Mexico. For example, when asked why generational status was significant to his self-identification, 60-year-old Samuel with a four-year degree explained:

> As long as the United States has been here, okay. The standard thing in New Mexico has always been, "We never cross the border. The border crossed us." And that has to do with the history of New Mexico and how it is significantly different than other immigrants who came through Ellis Island. I'm New Mexican and by the way, that also means I'm American, that's us completely, as it always was. Again, back to the history… We were never Mexican. We were New Mexico, before Mexico ever existed.

For Samuel, identifying as "New Mexican" is an alternate form of signaling his American nationality because his ancestry is linked the region's geopolitical context. Moreover, while Samuel explained that Nuevomexicanos and European immigrants acquired their citizenship differently, he belabored the point that Nuevomexicanos have no affiliation with Mexico. Therefore, Samuel deployed the "border crossed us" slogan to highlight Nuevomexicanos' regional differentiation, and to further distance the group from Mexican-origin people. Ironically, while immigrant and "Chicano" civil rights activists use the slogan to contest the "foreign" membership of Mexicans in the United States, study participants deployed the slogan to contest their membership within the Mexican category. Overall, participants stressed their regionality to

convey that they did not have recent immigration histories to the United States, or that they did not have any other family history with any other territory except for New Mexico.

Participants also emphasized regionality to highlight their long-time presence in the southwest before Anglo-American migration to the region. While participants mostly constructed their identities in opposition to Mexican immigrants, very few participants emphasized that their regionality differentiated them from whites. Notably, when asked about his usage of "Spanish," 50-year-old Roger with less than a high school degree stated that the misconception of Nuevomexicanos as immigrants, especially on the part of whites, reinforces his Spanish identity.

> It means we're from the north [or north of the Mexico-United States border], from New Mexico. Before Mexico, before the United States, we were here. For hundreds of years this [region] was part of Spain, then Mexico for a few decades and then the United States… For whites, there's no north or south [of the Mexico-United States border]. A white person just thinks Mexico… They think that we're immigrants, but they came later.

For Roger, the Spanish term indicates that the Mexico-United States border is simply a regional marker separating Nuevomexicanos and Mexicans, and that Nuevomexicanos were in the southwest before Mexico and the United States as nation-states. Roger also highlights that whites often ignore these distinctions, and assume that Nuevomexicanos are Mexican immigrants. Thus, Roger's usage of "Spanish" is defensive, as he challenges claims that Nuevomexicanos are exclusively of Mexican ancestry, foreign-born, and possibly unauthorized. While very few participants made territorial claims to the southwest to explicitly address discrimination on the part of whites, active dissociation from Mexican immigrants was the salient narrative in shaping participants' ethnic identities. Accordingly, participants' generally asserted their regionality to further distance themselves from the foreign-ness associated with Mexican-origin people.

Overall, participants legitimized their American identities by establishing that: 1) they were never Mexican because their Spanish ancestors were living in the southwest before the formation of Mexico as a country, and 2) they have regional claims to their American nationality because their long-time citizenship is linked to New Mexico's history of statehood. Given the pervasive assumption that Nuevomexicanos have ties to Mexico, participants constructed their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants to directly challenge such claims. In fact, many participants simplified or reduced the explanations of their ethnicity to other factors such as regional association with New Mexico in order to enact dissociation from Mexican immigrants. And while few participants recognized that their long history in the southwest also differentiated them from whites, dissociation from Mexico and Mexican immigrants was the most salient narrative in shaping participants' ethnic identities. Therefore, participants generally did not pay any significance to the history of Mexico as a colonial power of New Mexico because they were focused on combatting the misconception that they were Mexican immigrants.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, I showed that regional distinctions are prominent to Mexican Americans' conceptions of ethnicity. Among Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their ties to Spanish heritage within the history of New Mexico to explain their ethnicity. While Spanish identification initially constituted a particular political and publicly expressed identity that enabled Nuevomexicanos to enact dissociation from Mexico and Mexican immigrants, I found that present-day Nuevomexicanos varied in their recognition of Mexican ancestry. Nonetheless, they largely remained hesitant about their claims to Mexican ancestry because identifying as "Mexican" eclipses the significance of their regional differentiation from Mexican immigrants, and carries a negative connotation in New Mexico. Nuevomexicanos' fragmented conceptions of

ancestry, and the absence of family narratives of immigration from Mexico further bolstered their reluctant claims to Mexican ancestry. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos continue to dissociate themselves from Mexican immigrants regardless of their shared membership within the broader category of "Mexican American."

Furthermore, despite Nuevomexicanos' persistent claims to Spanish ancestry, they did not view themselves as racially white. Instead, Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry enabled them to highlight their regional differentiation from other Mexican-origin people, and to avoid the hostility aimed at Mexican immigrants. Consequently, I argue that Nuevomexicanos' enduring claims to Spanish ancestry represent a defensive strategy to enact dissociation from the stigmatized Mexican category (Garcia Bedolla 2005; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Wimmer 2008). This strategy is rooted in Mexican Americans' history of dissociation from Mexico and Mexican immigrants in order to combat anti-Mexican racism (Foley 1998; Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000). However, unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos' dissociation strategies are extreme and plausible because they do not have family narratives of immigration from Mexico.

Research has shown that Nuevomexicanos often define themselves by describing who they are not, mainly "Mexican" and "foreign" (Gonzales 1997b; Metzgar 1974). The emphasis on making categorical distinctions (Gonzales 1997b) is a way to resolve uncertainty regarding one's own ethnic heritage and history. While Nuevomexicanos remain indecisive about how to explain their ethnicity, I found that they varied in their recognition of Mexican ancestry, indicating variation in perceptions of Mexican immigrants as coethnics. The increase in Nuevomexicanos' association with Mexican heritage suggests that the dominance of exclusively claiming Spanish heritage has diminished over time. Yet, because there exists no uniform narrative of who they are ethnically, Nuevomexicanos rely heavily on their regional history to

explain their ethnicity. They also remain hesitant to embrace Mexican ancestry because it discounts their regional differences from other Mexican-origin people. These reluctant claims to Mexican ancestry persisted, despite differences in education, gender, and phenotype among Nuevomexicanos. Since identifying as "Mexican" is a stigmatized identity, Nuevomexicanos' emphasis on dissociation from Mexican immigrants can obscure education, gender, and phenotype differences in conceptions of ancestry.

In addition, Mexican Americans often define themselves in opposition to Mexican immigrants, especially when they encounter nativist hostility. Within this context, Mexican Americans typically prioritize their American nationality to enact dissociation from Mexican immigrants (Garcia Bedolla 2003; 2005; Jiménez 2008; Vega 2014). While Nuevomexicanos' assertions of American nationality mirrored the dissociation strategies of other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos further explained that their ancestry and nationality were tied to New Mexico's history of American statehood. Furthermore, while very few Nuevomexicanos emphasized that their regionality and inherited citizenship distinguished them from whites and other Mexican Americans, dissociation from Mexican immigrants was integral to their identity construction. Other Mexican Americans were not a salient reference group for Nuevomexicano identity because they are more socially and residentially integrated into the Nuevomexicano population than Mexican immigrants in Albuquerque. Overall, the Nuevomexicanos case shows regional variation in Mexican Americans' nationality claims.

The Hispanic term in New Mexico and Texas often differentiates Mexican Americans from Mexican immigrants (Dowling 2014; Nieto-Phillips 2004). In New Mexico, the relatively low percentage of other Latino groups, including Mexican immigrants, advances an exclusive definition of "Hispanic" as native-born. Unlike prior research, I found that the term was integral

to representing Nuevomexicanos' conceptions of ancestry and nationality. While participants often simplified their explanations of ethnicity to stress their regional differentiation from other Mexican-origin people, they generally viewed their ethnicity in bland terms, and as another form of being American. Nonetheless, their identity claims were situated within an anti-immigrant context, clarifying to participants that they were seen as foreign and non-white. Thus, among Nuevomexicanos, "Hispanic" represents an American-oriented identity that facilitates a favorable re-definition of their group in order to enact dissociation from Mexican immigrants. Additionally, Nuevomexicanos' were bold in their nationality claims in their usage of "Hispanic" due to their long history and demographic dominance in New Mexico. This is distinct from Mexican Americans who are two or three generations removed from the immigrant generation because they cannot claim regionality in the same way as Nuevomexicanos.

The Nuevomexicano case demonstrates that other Mexican Americans can contest their ethnic and national membership with Mexican immigrants, resulting in a weak form of identification with the Mexican American term. Namely, Mexican Americans may enact dissociation in ethnic membership by emphasizing their distinct cultural, linguistic, and social experiences in the United States. Therefore, Mexican Americans may perceive their association with Mexican heritage on a spectrum, ranging between strong and weak, which enables them to claim or contest the ethnic category of Mexican. Furthermore, Mexican Americans may enact dissociation in national membership by emphasizing their country of origin, immigration status and regionality. Altogether, these findings challenge scholarly assumptions that "Mexican American" is a widely, accepted form of identification among in-group members. Notably, the Nuevomexicano case indicates that "Mexican American" is a weak form of identification due to the historical and regional differences among Mexican Americans. Since there is no consistent

understanding in how Mexican Americans label themselves ethnically, these findings suggest that "Mexican American" is a loosely maintained identity category among in-group members.

Given Mexican Americans' intra-group heterogeneity, whether and under which contexts they deploy the term Mexican American remains in question. A systematic investigation of Mexican Americans' ethnic-labeling preferences will enable researchers to further explain how Mexican Americans define themselves in relation to in- and out-group members. Since Nuevomexicanos varied in their recognition of Mexican ancestry, my findings indicate that the dominance of Spanish ancestry has diminished over time. Researchers should further specify how Nuevomexicano identity differs by temporal and contextual factors to examine the prevalence and situational nature of Spanish identification. Lastly, since the U.S. government, Spanish-language media and ethnic organizations worked together to legitimize the Hispanic category (Mora 2014), researchers should examine the extent to which other Latino groups embrace "Hispanic," and whether they assert a distinctive set of claims in their usage of the term.

In closing, regional location and distinctions are prominent to Mexican Americans' ethnic identification. The Nuevomexicano case shows that they continue to prioritize their regional roots to explain their ethnicity and to differentiate themselves from other Mexican-origin people. While they were persistent in their claims to Spanish ancestry, Nuevomexicanos did not view themselves as racially white. Instead, I argued that Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry represent a defensive strategy to combat the stigmatization of Mexican immigrants. Overall, these findings caution against scholars' assertions that structurally assimilated Latinos are more likely to identify as racially white (Dowling 2014; Vargas 2015). Despite their notable levels of incorporation into American society, Nuevomexicanos deployed Hispanic over white identities to assert their American-ness. The Hispanic category represents an American-oriented identity

that facilitated a re-favorable definition of their group because they were viewed as foreign and non-white. Future researchers should document the variation in how other Latinos conceptualize their race, ethnicity and nationality to deepen our understanding of their self-identification.

CHAPTER 3

MEXICAN AMERICANS AND RACIAL FRAMES:

INTERSECTING COLONIAL AND COLOR-BLIND IDEOLOGIES IN NEW MEXICO

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses how regional context shapes Mexican Americans' perceptions of racial difference and inequality. I analyze the racial ideology of Nuevomexicanos, the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to the original Spanish settlers of New Mexico. The Nuevomexicano case, therefore, specifies whether and how colonization shapes the racial positioning and discourse of other Mexican Americans and Latinos. I find that most Nuevomexicanos reported experiences of racial discrimination and/or nativism. Yet Nuevomexicanos downplayed their experiences of discrimination by deploying three race-minimizing frames: cultural diversity, class over racial inequality and spatial comparisons of discrimination. All three race-minimizing frames indicate that Nuevomexicanos do not view themselves as a low-status group within the racial landscape because of their established history and demographic dominance in New Mexico. I argue that Nuevomexicanos' racial frames are rooted in a tricultural colonial ideology operating in New Mexico, and a color-blind ideology within the larger United States. These findings demonstrate that regional conceptions of racial stratification are important to Mexican Americans' conceptions of group stigmatization. Thus, these findings indicate that racial frames among ethnoracial groups can be attributable to regional ideological discourse around race and racism, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination. Given that Nuevomexicanos' frames are rooted in colonization, these findings also indicate that there are multiple racial orders operating in the United States.

MEXICAN AMERICANS AND RACIAL FRAMES: INTERSECTING COLONIAL AND COLOR-BLIND IDEOLOGIES IN NEW MEXICO

Nuevomexicanos are the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to Spanish settlers of New Mexico. While prior research details how the historical legacy of Spanish and American colonization shapes Nuevomexicanos identity claims (Salgado 2018), this paper addresses how both colonial regimes shape Nuevomexicanos' and other Mexican Americans' discourse about race and racism. Specifically, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, two racial orders operated in New Mexico. On the one hand, the Spanish colonial regime imposed a system of status inequality that favored Spanish over Indigenous ancestry (Gómez 2007). On the other hand, the American colonial regime imposed the one-drop rule where black status signified a host of legal and social disabilities relative to whites (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). A central aspect of both the Spanish and American racial orders was an ideology of white supremacy. In this paper, I demonstrate that the Spanish and American model of race relations remain important to understanding how Nuevomexicanos' interpret their experiences with discrimination, as well as the significance of regional constructions of race on other Mexican Americans and Latinos' understandings of racial difference and inequality.

The Nuevomexicano case provides further insight into the discourse of race and racism within a majority-minority context. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, New Mexico's population is mostly Latino followed by Whites, American Indians and other groups (48, 39, 9 and 4 percent respectively). Among Latinos, the majority are people of Mexican and/or Spanish descent who were born in the United States. Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of native-born Mexican-origin people due to the region's

persistently lower levels of Mexican immigration (Gómez 2007). Furthermore, Nuevomexicanos hold visible positions of economic and political power, have sizeable representation in white-collar occupations, and often live alongside whites in middle-class neighborhoods (Maciel and Gonzales-Berry 2000; Prindeville, Gonzales and Sierra 1992). New Mexico's demographic context suggests that the region provides an inclusive atmosphere, where Nuevomexicanos interact with whites across different areas of social life. Broadly, the New Mexico context may redefine our understanding of how Mexican Americans talk about race and racism, as they may perceive more equal opportunities and resources with whites than other Mexican Americans.

In addition, research has shown that Mexican Americans adopt the color-blind discourse of whites because many Mexican Americans have internalized an understanding that talking about racism is "un-American" (Dowling 2014; O'brien 2008). Therefore, Mexican Americans may downplay their experiences with discrimination because their American identities are firmly rooted in an American understanding of race relations that is influenced by color-blind ideology. Yet prior research inadequately accounts for how Mexican Americans' racial ideology operates within distinct racial contexts. Nuevomexicanos, for example, have a long history in the region, and notable levels of incorporation with whites, especially compared to Mexican Americans living in other southwestern states. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos may not view themselves as belonging to a stigmatized group, and/or holding a lower-status position within the racial hierarchy relative to whites. Therefore, beyond an internalized understanding that talking about racism is "un-American" (Dowling 2014), this article shows how historical legacies and racial context shapes variation in how Mexican Americans understand and discuss racism.

This article examines how regional context shapes the content and manner in which Nuevomexicanos discuss race and racism in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I find that most

Nuevomexicanos reported experiences of racial discrimination and/or nativism. Yet Nuevomexicanos downplayed their experiences of discrimination by deploying three race-minimizing frames: cultural diversity, class over racial inequality and spatial comparisons of discrimination. All three race-minimizing frames indicate that Nuevomexicanos do not view themselves as a low-status group within the racial landscape because of their established history and demographic dominance in New Mexico. I argue that Nuevomexicanos' racial frames are rooted in a tricultural colonial ideology operating in New Mexico, and a color-blind ideology within the larger United States. These findings demonstrate that regional conceptions of racial stratification are important to Mexican Americans' conceptions of group stigmatization. Thus, these findings indicate that racial frames among ethnoracial groups can be attributable to regional ideological discourse around race and racism, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination. Given that Nuevomexicanos' frames are rooted in colonization, these findings also indicate that there are multiple racial orders operating in the United States.

In this article, "Nuevomexicano" refers to study participants who are the descendants are of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. While "Hispanic" is the most common and preferred identifier among participants, I use the term "Nuevomexicano" because "Hispanic" is one of the many and variable referents used by participants to describe in-group members. While "Hispanic" is often understood as a panethnic term, Nuevomexicanos use "Hispanic" as an ethnic category to refer to themselves. Throughout the text, I specify when usage of "Hispanic" is an ethnic or panethnic category. "Mexican American" refers to people who were born in the United States with Mexican ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, and Mexican immigrant refers to people who were born in Mexico and now

reside in the United States. Lastly, "Latino" is a panethnic term that describes people of Latin American ancestry, whether foreign-born or native-born, living in the United States.

Discursive Frames: White Supremacy and Color-blind Ideology

Research suggests that whites develop and articulate attitudes that support the current racial hierarchy because it is in their best interest to maintain the racial status quo (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Kluegel 1993). Conversely, non-whites may create and display attitudes that highlight and challenge racism to contest their marginalized position. Yet research has shown that ethnoracial minorities can engage in frameworks that reproduce the white-dominated hierarchy. Accordingly, they can possess views that act against their own group interests, reinforcing their lower-status position in the racial hierarchy (Dowling 2014; O'brien 2008; Sue 2013). The extent to which and why ethnoracial minorities engage in contradictory frameworks remains in question.

Prior work has also shown that ethnoracial minorities often justify the white-dominated hierarchy in their efforts to gain acceptance from whites. According to Feagin (2010), ethnoracial minorities can consent to the white racial frame, that is, a racial ideology that encompasses racialized stereotypes, narratives, images, emotions, and discriminatory practices that continue to shape American culture. Among middle-class Latinos, Feagin and Cobas (2008) have found that they actively engage in the white racial frame through policing in-group members, internalizing self-oppression, and devaluing other racialized minorities. By buying into the white racial frame to be accepted on the part of whites, Latinos' denial of race masks underlying racist beliefs that continue to underpin and promote discrimination.

Researchers contend that the legacy of Jim Crow racism can exist through color-blind discursive frameworks that maintain and reinforce whites positioning within the American racial

landscape (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2013; Frankenberg 1993; Gallagher 2003). Specifically, color-blind ideology and practices discount racism by prioritizing a deliberate non-recognition of race (Bonilla-Silva 2001; 2010). Furthermore, color-blind racism is a subtle form of racism and can be viewed as non-racial. Americans, for example, can denounce race as a primary factor in explaining inequality, but still emphasize the individual and cultural flaws of ethnic and racial groups. Thus, instead of blatant verbal attacks or racist rants, color-blind discursive frames address the racial superiority or inferiority of groups without engaging in overt forms of racism.

Research on ethnoracial minorities demonstrates that they engage in race-minimizing frameworks to cope with their experiences of discrimination (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007; O'brien 2008; Rodriguez 2001). Dowling (2014) finds that many Mexican Americans have internalized an understanding that talking about racism is "un-American." In their efforts to become accepted as "American," Mexican Americans often downplay their experiences with racism. Yet their efforts to fit in with whites have not been successful, as most Mexican Americans report instances of discrimination. According to Dowling (2014), it is racial discrimination and not racial privilege that motivates Mexican Americans' adoption of the dominant groups' racial frame—making their use of color-blind ideology fundamentally different from that of whites. This is rooted in Mexican Americans' historical legacy of claiming whiteness to combat anti-Mexican racism (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2001).

Unlike Dowling's (2014) "investment in whiteness" thesis, the New Mexico context suggests that Nuevomexicanos may not perceive or express racial treatment because of their substantial demographic representation and long-standing presence in the region. New Mexico, in particular, is a majority-minority state where Hispanics are in visible positions of economic and political power (Prindeville, Gonzales and Sierra 1992). Thus, New Mexico's context may

redefine the extent to which Mexican Americans view themselves as a stigmatized group, which, in turn, shapes the extent to which they perceive and interpret racial inequality in the region. Thus, the historical and regional differences among Nuevomexicanos expand our understanding of the variation in Mexican Americans' racial ideologies.

Discursive Frames in New Mexico: Spanish Heritage and Tri-cultural Ideology

At the time of New Mexico's petition for statehood between 1880 and 1912, Mexican Americas were seen as unfit for self-government because they were racially inferior compared to Anglo-Americans, and resistant to American assimilation (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000). Thus, Mexicans were viewed as unworthy of political rights upon entry into the American polity, despite the fact that they were granted federal citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. To counter the dominant narrative of Mexicans, a key political advocate for New Mexico statehood, Lebaron Bradford Prince, assisted in popularizing Spanish nomenclature, and pioneering a racial ideology of three cultures—Anglo, Spanish, and Pueblo Indian—living in peaceful harmony (Gómez 2007; Montgomery 2001; Nieto-Phillips 2004). In effect, Prince repackaged Mexicans' racial ancestry by prioritizing their Spanish over Indigenous roots to facilitate a claim to whiteness, and depicted positive inter-group relations to portray the region as welcoming, rather than resisting, American occupation. These counter narratives aided in assuaging claims on the part of Anglo-Americans that Mexicans were unworthy of political rights.

More specifically, Prince misrepresented Mexicans' racial ancestry to justify that their Spanish or European colonial roots were similar to that of Anglo-American settlers. He suggested that Mexicans and Euro-Americans were both colonial powers, which, in turn, demonstrated that both populations were capable of self-government (Gómez 2007; Gonzales

2001; Montgomery 2002). Prince also strategically left out Indigenous mixture because they were perceived as racially inferior on the part of Anglo-Americans. Prince also portrayed Pueblo Indians and Mexicans as people trapped in their cultural past compared to the progressive culture of Anglo-Americans (Rodriguez 2003; 2001). In this myth, Prince erased New Mexico's lengthy history of racial conflict between Anglos, Spanish and Pueblo Indians. This is also problematic because the inter-group relations narrative downplays or negates existing group-based inequalities (Gómez 2007).

By the 1920s, the tricultural myth of three groups—Anglo, Spanish, and Pueblo Indian—living in racial harmony became a key trope in public relations efforts to draw whites to New Mexico, whether as tourists or permanent migrants (Nieto-Phillips 2004; Wilson 2003). Wilson (2003) explains that cultural entrepreneurs, museums and media promoted the development of public personas that portrayed static cultural images of American Indians and Mexican Americans, alongside the progressive culture of Anglo-Americans. These images reinforced an Anglo-dominated hierarchy, followed by Nuevomexicanos and American Indians. Yet, as Nieto-Phillips (2004) explains, the celebration of native cultures belied the sobering reality of declining political and economic power among Nuevomexicanos. In the context of Nuevomexicanos' political displacement and marginalization, Nuevomexicano elites preserved, embellished and popularized their Spanish roots to assert racial and civic equality with Anglo-Americans.

It was not until the Chicano Movement of the 1970s that the tricultural narrative of New Mexico's race relations become unacceptably racist (Acuña 1972; Gómez-Quinones 1990). In contrast to the earlier emphasis on Spanish identity claims, politicized Nuevomexicanos argued for recognition of Indigenous and Spanish cultural mixing and ancestral ties to Mexico (Gonzales 1993b; Wilson 2003). The Chicano Movement also challenged the trope that Anglos,

Pueblo Indians, and Spanish lived separately but equally. The Chicano Movement's emphasis on racial conflict and its demand for racial equality countered the tricultural narrative of race relations.

New Mexico's public ideology of triculturalism continues to be sustained by civic leaders and the art and tourism industry (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2007; Rodriguez 2001; Wilson 2003). This is problematic because it displaces the long, complex history of inter-group conflict among American Indians, Nuevomexicanos and whites (Gómez 2007; Rodriguez 2001). Therefore, triculturalism reinforces the image of American Indians and Nuevomexicanos stunted in their cultural past. Moreover, tricultural ideology implicitly promotes the ideation of a multi-racial state that has overcome racial prejudice (Prindeville, Gonzales and Sierra 1992). Thus, the notion of group-based inequality is rooted in cultural difference and not racial inequality. Overall, while triculturalism remains relevant to construction of art and tourism in the region, how and whether these images inform present-day Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of discrimination is unclear.

DATA AND METHODS

This article draws upon 96 in-depth interviews taken with Nuevomexicanos in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I conducted research in Albuquerque because it has the largest concentration of Nuevomexicanos in New Mexico. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, New Mexico's population is majority Latino followed by whites, American Indians, and other ethnoracial groups (48, 39, 9 and 4 percent respectively). Among Latinos, the majority reported Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry compared to other Latin American ancestries (75 and 20 percent respectively), and native-born versus foreign-born status (85 and 15 percent respectively). Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of native-born Mexicans due to the region's lower levels of historical and contemporary Mexican

immigration (Gómez 2007). Overall, U.S.-born people of Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, have sizeable demographic representation in New Mexico. This context may bolster participants' race-minimizing claims due their long history and substantial demographic presence in New Mexico.

In New Mexico, Nuevomexicanos have sizeable representation at all levels of government. Among New Mexico senators, for example, the majority is white followed by Latino, and American Indian (57, 38 and 5 percent respectively). While most New Mexico governors have been white males, the previous governor, Susana Martinez, is the first elected Latina governor of New Mexico, and her term was followed by another Latina, Michelle Lujan Grisham. Latinos also have sizeable representation in the business sector. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Survey of Business Owners, 31 percent of business owners are Latino in New Mexico, which is almost three times above the national average (Moskowitz 2016). Therefore, unlike other southwestern states, Latinos, including Nuevomexicanos, have a higher degree of visibility in positions of political and economic power.

I recruited participants from leading institutions that serve the Albuquerque community (i.e., government, churches and non-profit agencies). At each site, I obtained participants through posting flyers, making announcements at community meetings, and relying on referrals from key informants. Most participants were recruited through announcements and key informants. While I applied snowball sampling to seek referrals from initial participants and key informants, I only obtained one or two names from each recommender in order to minimize sample selection bias. Recruitment content asked whether middle-aged people with U.S.-born parents were interested in participating in a study on Hispanics in New Mexico. I used "Hispanic" in recruitment materials because it is a widely accepted form of ethnic identification among Nuevomexicanos.

I selected middle-aged participants to explore the maturation of racial ideology compared to that of young adults (Phinney 2008). I interviewed 47 men and 49 women between 40 and 60 years old, with roughly two-thirds between 45 and 55 years old. I also selected participants who varied in educational background to assess whether racial ideology differed by educational status. I interviewed 25 people (12 women and 13 men) with less than a high school diploma or general equivalency credential, 41 people (24 women and 17 men) with a high school diploma or some college background, and 30 people (13 women and 17 men) with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Additionally, I created a skin color measure and coded participants skin color according to a five-point scale (1=racially White; 2=light brown, 3=medium brown, 4=dark brown and 5=racially black). I adapted the scale from the skin color card used in the Mexican American Study Project (Telles and Ortiz 2008). I collapsed the original scale into five categories to obtain broader variation in skin color. While participants clustered into light brown (22 people), medium brown (25 people), and dark brown categories (21 people), few participants appeared racially white (6 people) or black (4 people). Therefore, similar to other Mexican Americans, most Nuevomexicanos varied in brown skin tone and did not pass as racially Anglo or white (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Overall, educational and phenotype differences regarding Hispanics' race-minimizing frames were limited. Participants' investment in the perception that they do not belong to a stigmatized group may explain these limited differences in educational background.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were conducted between December 2014 and November 2015. Interview information on perceptions of intergroup relations derived from three sections: 1) the degree to which respondents' perceived interpersonal discrimination, 2) the degree to which respondents' perceived group-level discrimination, and 3) the degree to which respondents' perceived that other ethnoracial groups experienced discrimination in New

Mexico. I analyzed the interview transcripts in two phases using HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis software. First, I created codes to describe the recurrent themes in how participants discussed racial inequality. During this phase, I noticed that participants often discussed New Mexico's demographic composition in their explanations of intergroup relations in the region. Therefore, in the second phase, I examined how perceptions of New Mexico as a Hispanic-majority state shape participant's conceptions of racial inequality. This approach enabled me to uncover how participants are able to discuss racial difference without addressing racial inequality.

FINDINGS

Unlike other southwestern states, Mexicans native to New Mexico territory outnumbered Anglo-Americans during New Mexico's petition for statehood between 1880 and 1912, and remained demographically dominant well into American occupation (Gómez 2007). Moreover, many Mexican elites were able to maintain their land rights at the time of Mexican Cession in 1848. Therefore, Mexican elites continued to hold considerable political power, wealth and status in New Mexico, despite marginalization from expanding American institutions and Anglo-American racism (Gonzales 2016; Mitchell 2008). Thus, within New Mexico's racial order, Mexican elites were afforded a higher social status than non-Mexican elites, but held a lower social status than that of Anglo-Americans, from a national, as opposed to a territorial, perspective. Similarly, present-day Nuevomexicanos largely perceive that they are not a marginalized group in New Mexico because of their long-standing demographic dominance, and political and economic representation in the region. This is tied to the legacy of "double colonization" (Gómez 2007) on the part of the Spanish and American empires. Nevertheless, and as the findings demonstrate, Nuevomexicanos downplay the ways in which they have a lower social status than whites within New Mexico's racial landscape.

Specifically, most participants explained-away the prevalence of racial discrimination and inequality in Albuquerque by deploying three race-minimizing frameworks: triculturalism, class over inequality, and spatial comparisons of discrimination (Table 4). While participants celebrated New Mexico's long-standing cultural diversity to dismiss racial inequality, they also prioritized class over racial inequality, and compared their experiences of discrimination in Albuquerque to places where discrimination is putatively worse in order to downplay racial inequality. Conversely, fewer participants provided discursive frames that challenged race-minimizing ideology. These participants emphasized the prevalence of institutional and subtle forms of discrimination in New Mexico, and explained that the white-dominated racial hierarchy within the larger United States was similarly reproduced in New Mexico. Overall, participants had a difficult time articulating whether discrimination towards their ethnoracial group and/or racial inequality existed in Albuquerque. This is because they perceived that their demographic dominance in the region buffered them from possible experiences with discrimination.

Table 4 here

Additionally, participants defined racism as race-based segregation or blatant acts of violence, a definition that excludes experiences with subtle or covert acts of discrimination. Generally, participants described extreme examples of overt racism to minimize or negate racial inequality in Albuquerque. These narrow definitions of racism enabled participants to embrace Albuquerque's multicultural narrative, and minimize racial inequality by relying on the power of comparison—through emphasizing another form of inequality based on class status, or juxtaposing their experiences of discrimination to a place where racism is putatively worse. Thus, these race-minimizing frames enabled participants to discuss racial difference without explicitly addressing the relationship between racial status and patterns of inequality in New Mexico.

Explaining Away Racial Discrimination with Non-racism Frames

Cultural diversity

Most Hispanics emphasized that Albuquerque's ethnoracial diversity buffered them experiences with discrimination. Thus, they largely perceived that discrimination towards Hispanics was not an endemic issue in Albuquerque (Table 4). For example, when asked whether and which ethnoracial groups experienced prejudice in New Mexico, participants generally emphasized that Albuquerque's "mix of cultures" fostered ethnoracial tolerance. Notably, 50-year-old Jeremy with a bachelor's degree explained: "We've had to learn how to live together for over 400 years. The Spanish were here before the whites and we had Native Americans [already present in New Mexico] so we've had to learn how to blend and live with one another." Jeremy's account draws upon New Mexico's tricultural narrative that emphasizes racial harmony among the region's three largest groups—American Indians, Hispanics and Anglos. However, this account erases the history of intense racial conflict among these three groups in New Mexico. Still, participants viewed that Albuquerque's long-standing ethnoracial diversity fostered ethnoracial integration. Other participants emphasized that people living in Albuquerque had a common-sense understanding of racial "acceptance" or "tolerance" and therefore, discrimination towards Nuevomexicanos and other ethnoracial groups was minimal to non-existent.

Moreover, participants' cultural-diversity narratives were often coupled with narratives of how their demographic dominance sheltered them from experiences of discrimination. Thus, New Mexico's ethnoracial inclusiveness, and the large Latino population in New Mexico signaled to participants that Nuevomexicanos, as a group, experienced minimal, if any, discrimination. For example, 40-year-old Serena with a master's degree clarified:

> [In Albuquerque schools today,] forty percent of the kids are Hispanic and forty percent are Anglo. [While growing up,] half my friends were Hispanic and half were Anglo. If you live in New Mexico, you say Spanish words. No one knows what a ditch is. It's an *arroyo*. The culture is very integrated. I think that's why I never felt that [discrimination].

While Serena emphasizes the ways in which Hispanic culture is prevalent in Albuquerque's mainstream culture, she also explains that the demographic composition of Albuquerque has relatively equal proportions of Hispanic and whites. Therefore, many New Mexico residents have racially and ethnically heterogeneous friendship circles. Together, Serena's account emphasizes the ways in which Nuevomexicanos may feel integrated into mainstream culture, and therefore, may experience less discrimination given their visible representation in Albuquerque. Generally, participants often conflated cultural diversity with positive intergroup relations. Taken together, participants perceived that Albuquerque's long-standing racial and ethnic diversity, and celebration of Nuevomexicano cultural traditions facilitated ethnoracial inclusion.

Class over racial inequality

Approximately one-fourth of participants prioritized accounts of class over racial inequality in Albuquerque (Table 4). Generally, participants' emphasized that class inequality was more extreme and plausible than racial inequality because the region's cultural diversity moderated the potential for discrimination toward Nuevomexicanos. For example, participants emphasized that class inequality was the most prevalent form of inequality in Albuquerque because poverty could be of any race or ethnicity. When asked if there was any discrimination of prejudice in Albuquerque, 49-year-old Judas with a trade degree explained:

> It's not an issue of race… Its based on how much money you have. If you're in poverty, you'll be more marginalized versus if you were wealthy. Go down Central [a major east-

> west street in Albuquerque]… to see poverty. You'll see whites, Natives, Hispanics, blacks. They're all drinking, smoking, doing drug deals. It's not just race. It's everybody doing it. But at the same time, you go into a different neighborhood and you see the same nationalities doing good for themselves. So, it's not the nationality.

Judas' account emphasizes the visibility of poverty, as well as drug and alcohol addiction in Albuquerque. Nonetheless, he underscores that poverty can be of any race or ethnicity to highlight that racial discrimination is not a systemic problem in Albuquerque. Additionally, Albuquerque's cultural or racial diversity suggests that racial discrimination is not a salient form of inequality. Thus, the multicultural narrative substantiates the perception that class inequality prevails racial inequality in the region. Similarly, other participants' class-based frameworks reinforced the multicultural narrative, as poverty affects all racial and ethnic groups.

Moreover, participants' class-based frameworks emphasized that the large presence of Hispanics in middle-class neighborhoods and occupations suggests that racial inequality is minimal in Albuquerque. Thus, participants often cited class inequality as a default explanation for inequality in the region. For example, Madonna, a 40-year-old with a bachelor's degree, explained that patterns of inequality in Albuquerque are based on "economic divisions than cultural differences." When asked about her rationale for prioritizing class over racial inequality, Madonna elaborated:

> We're a majority-minority in this state, so I think it's much more complicated than just race… Because we are so diverse here and the Hispanics are so prevalent. They're in all types of employment… I think people who are disenfranchised and poor, and have less education and access to economic opportunity probably receive the most discrimination. In terms of racial discrimination, I don't know. I think it's more about class.

Outside of Albuquerque, Nuevomexicanos are often viewed as a minority group compared to whites. Accordingly, for Madonna, the integration of Hispanics into various employment sectors in Albuquerque implies that racial background is not a key barrier for Hispanics. Consequently, she emphasizes that inequality based on poverty and unequal access to educational opportunities are more plausible than racial inequality. Similarly, other participants' class-based accounts were often coupled with narratives regarding how the prevalence of both Nuevomexicanos and whites in business and government sections suggested that racial inequality was less important than class inequality. Overall, participants repeatedly emphasized that "it's not really about race," or "I don't see it" to explain that racial discrimination or inequality was generally absent in Albuquerque. Therefore, participants' emphasized that poverty and limited educational opportunities were the plausible and prevalent forms of inequality in the region.

Spatial comparisons of discrimination

Lastly, one-third of participants compared their perceptions or experiences with racism in Albuquerque to a place where discrimination was worse in order to downplay racial inequality (Table 4). Given these comparative accounts of racial treatment, participants reported that intergroup relations in Albuquerque were "friendly," "positive," or "integrated." Generally, participants explained that ethnoracial integration in Albuquerque lessened their potential experiences with discrimination. Interestingly, participants' deployed examples of Black-White segregation to justify the minimal role of racial discrimination on intergroup relations in Albuquerque. For example, 56-year-old Julian with a professional degree explained:

> I don't think there's any kind of institutional racism [in Albuquerque] like there is in the [American] south because there are so many Hispanics in positions of power…we have a

> Hispanic governor. The cops are probably forty percent and teachers are forty or fifty percent Hispanic. So it's an integrated population.

In comparison to racial dynamics in the American south, Julian's account indicates that Nuevomexicanos may not experience systematic discrimination in Albuquerque because they are "integrated" into the population. While Julian's example may seem extreme, other participants deployed similar narratives to demonstrate the minimal role of racial prejudice or discrimination in the region. Overall, participants reported that the representation and visibility of Nuevomexicanos across multiple employment sectors suggests that Albuquerque provides a tolerant atmosphere for Nuevomexicanos, as well as other non-white groups.

Moreover, participants emphasized that the degree of discrimination a person may experience depends on neighborhood context. While participants recognized that racial neighborhood segregation existed in Albuquerque, they did not associate such segregation as a form of racial inequality. For example, when asked whether there was any discrimination in Albuquerque, 45-year-old Brandy with a professional degree, responded:

> When I'm in the South Valley or the Westside, I don't feel like I'm treated unfairly. But I used to live…in the [Far Northeast] Heights, and I definitely felt like I was not the norm in that area… One time when I was at the grocery store [parking lot], an Anglo man was backing out and almost hit me. I was like, "You need to look back when you're backing out." That's when he said, "you Hispanics just need to go back to where you came from." I can't imagine that happening in the South Valley.

In Albuquerque, the South Valley and Westside are mainly Hispanic communities whereas the Far Northeast Heights has a higher proportion of white relative to Hispanic residents. Rather than addressing racial segregation as a form of discrimination, Brandy reports that discrimination

varies on the ethnoracial composition of the local neighborhood. While Albuquerque is a majority-minority metropolitan area, Brandy's account indicates that Hispanics are vulnerable to overt forms of discrimination in "whiter" parts of town. Other participants also emphasized that "it depends on the part of town" to dismiss the possibility of racial inequality in Albuquerque. This suggests that narratives of multiculturalism or Nuevomexicano integration bolster claims of downplaying racial inequality, despite evidence to the contrary like racial segregation. In all, Hispanic participants explained away the role of racial inequality in Albuquerque by comparing their perceptions of intergroup relations in the region to other metropolitan areas or emphasized that racial discrimination depends on neighborhood context.

Counter-Discourses: Challenges to Non-racism Frames

While most participants described that there was minimal discrimination in Albuquerque because of the region's ethnoracial diversity, slightly over one-third of participants provided narratives that challenged race-minimizing frameworks (Table 4). From the counter-discourse perspective, participants reported that whites held many, if not the most, elite positions of economic and political power in Albuquerque. These participants were critical of the tricultural narrative, and asserted that the white-dominated hierarchy operated similarly in Albuquerque compared to other locales. Specifically, participants emphasized that while Nuevomexicanos have sizeable representation in government and middle-class occupations, whites are more likely to hold elite positions in private industry. For example, 54-year-old Janine with a bachelor's degree explained: "I figure that Hispanics are the majority in that they're fifty percent of the population. But I just see that a lot of the industry, business, is not necessarily Hispanic-owned, a lot of the high-end jobs are secured by white folks. So, in that instance, you see the disparity of Hispanic workers versus the white folks on top." Other participants similarly emphasized that

while Hispanics appear to have a large presence in various employment sectors, Hispanics are not the majority in terms of leadership. Accordingly, assumptions that majority-minority representation in Albuquerque fosters racial inequality skew perceptions of how racial inequality operates in the region. Consequently, while participants who provided non-racism frames viewed that Albuquerque is a Hispanic-controlled town given Hispanic representation in government, Janet's accounts suggest that the focus on government is deceptive as whites are predominant in leadership positions. Overall, participants who provided counter-discourses were critical of the majority-minority narrative, and explained that whites dominated the city's power structure.

Other participants addressed racial inequality in schools. These participants emphasized institutional forms of racial inequality that reinforced the white-dominated hierarchy in Albuquerque. This is in contrast to participant's non-racism frames that often minimized the role of racial discrimination in Albuquerque because they did not "see it." For example, 49-year-old Martine with less than a high school degree explained:

> If you go to more affluent parts of the city, they have better schools, better teachers, better facilities… It's all based on property taxes. The more expensive houses, pay more taxes, they have more money available for those schools. Like the South Valley, [a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood], property values aren't that high so there's not a lot of money to go around.

Martine conveys that Hispanics tend to live in neighborhoods with lower-quality schools than whites. His account suggests that racialized patterning of opportunities in Albuquerque is mediated, in part, by access to schooling and residential segregation. Additionally, participants who were critical of the majority-minority narrative often explained that the institutional forms of racism that operate within the nation at large also operate in Albuquerque. Thus, participants

who recognized the reproduction of the white-dominated hierarchy in the region emphasized that Albuquerque was not exceptional because of its majority-minority demographic composition.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article examined how regional context shapes Mexican Americans' perceptions of racial difference and inequality. I found that most Nuevomexicanos reported experiences of racial discrimination and/or nativism, especially on the part of whites. Yet Nuevomexicanos downplayed their experiences of discrimination by deploying three race-minimizing frames: cultural diversity, class over racial inequality and spatial comparisons of discrimination. All three frames indicate that Nuevomexicanos do not view themselves as a low-status group within New Mexico's racial and political landscape. This is particularly because of their long history and demographic dominance in New Mexico. Nevertheless, I argue that Nuevomexicanos' racial frames are rooted in a tricultural colonial ideology operating in New Mexico, and a color-blind ideology within the larger United States. These two ideologies enabled Nuevomexicanos to downplay or negate their experiences with discrimination. These findings show that regional conceptions of racial stratification are important to Mexican Americans' conceptions of individual discrimination and group stigmatization. These findings therefore indicate that people's racial outlook can be attributable to regional ideological discourse around race and racism, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination.

Dowling (2014) contends that Mexican Americans' minimize their experiences with discrimination, and adopt the color-blind ideology of the dominant racial group to "fit in" with whites. While whites are an important reference group for Nuevomexicanos, my findings indicate that other Mexican-origin people are a key reference group for how Nuevomexicanos talk about race and racism. Nuevomexicanos were able to downplay their experiences with

discrimination because they compared their racial positioning with Mexican immigrants living in Albuquerque and Mexican Americans living in other states. While Nuevomexicanos reported that Mexican immigrants were contemporary targets of discrimination, they also indicated that Albuquerque was exceptional because Nuevomexicanos do not confront the same degree of discrimination as other Mexican Americans. Thus, Nuevomexicanos rely on the power of intra-group comparison to minimize the prevalence of discrimination toward their group.

Dowling (2014) argues that Mexican American's colorblind ideology is rooted in combatting anti-Mexican racism, which, in turn, is tied to the historical legacy of colonization and contemporary Mexican immigration. Yet how the legacy of colonization helps us understand Mexican Americans' color-blind ideology remains in question. Building on Dowling's (2014) research, I show that Nuevomexicanos racial frames are embedded in the construction of race relations at the time of American colonization (Gómez 2007; Montgomery 2002; Rodriguez 2001). In particular, the tricultural narrative enables Nuevomexicanos to minimize the prevalence of racism in New Mexico because they accept the state's racial mythology at face value. That is, Nuevomexicanos understood New Mexico's long history of cultural diversity as a sign of limited racial inequality. Therefore, the legacy of the Lebaron Bradford Prince's progressive view continues to enable Nuevomexicanos to talk about race without talking about group-based inequality. These findings demonstrate that regional racial dynamics are critical to how Mexican Americans and other ethnoracial groups talk about race and racism.

Bonilla-Silva (2004) predicts that the American racial landscape is becoming more similar to the color line in Latin American countries, which emphasizes national unity and organizes social hierarchies more in terms of class and phenotype than racial ancestry. These relations stem from the historical legacy of European colonization in the region. Building on this

research, I show that Nuevomexicanos draw on multiple narratives rooted in their history of colonization and racialization to downplay or negate their experiences with discrimination. This evidence demonstrates that Nuevomexicanos navigate two distinct racial hierarchies that inform their understanding of race relations. Broadly, this means that people can navigate multiple racial orders depending on regional context in the United States. Yet it is important to note that a central aspect of these racial orders is an ideology of white supremacy. In addition, whether Nuevomexicanos racial ideologies are a product of the broader racial discourse in the United States remains in question. It may be the case that people downplay racial discrimination because we have a Black president, and Obama's Presidency has been associated with notions of a "post racial" America. Future research should assess whether and how a Trump Presidency shapes the ways in which rank-and-file people talk about race and racism.

It is also possible that Nuevomexicanos rely on comparisons as a tool to protect and manage their psychological and emotional integrity (Gonzales 1997b). Thus, Nuevomexicanos are able to avoid confronting their experiences with discrimination. It may also be the case that it was easier for participants to talk about other forms of discrimination, that is, class inequality and spatial comparisons of discrimination over racial discrimination. Gonzales (1997b) and Bonilla-Silva (2010), for example, have found that people hesitate when discussing race and racism because they are controversial issues. Moreover, there are some elements of racial inclusiveness in Albuquerque that verify the tricultural myth, namely the visible and sizeable presence of Nuevomexicanos in positions of political and economic power compared to other southwestern locales. While it is likely that these alternative explanations all play a role in how color-blind rhetoric operates in New Mexico, it is critical to recognize that Nuevomexicanos reproduce color-blind ideology to manage their lower-status position within the racial landscape.

In closing, I found that Nuevomexicanos engage in the reproduction of race-minimizing frames to protect their perceived privileged status within the racial and political landscape. While Nuevomexicanos did not view themselves as a marginalized group in Albuquerque, I argue that Nuevomexicanos' reproduction of race-minimizing frames is rooted in strategies for dealing with discrimination. Overall, these findings are connected to the larger conversation regarding racial ideology among non-whites. Future research should compare how perceptions of group position within the local and national racial landscape inform how racial ideology operates among whites and non-whites to better understand the conditions that shape variation in racial ideology. And, by extension, the extent to which and how the white-dominated racial hierarchy is reproduced among various contexts.

CHAPTER 4

"MY PEOPLE ARE NOT FROM MEXICO": MEXICAN AMERICANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION IN NEW MEXICO

ABSTRACT

This article addresses how regional differentiation among Mexican Americans can shape their attitudes toward immigrants. I analyze the attitudes of Nuevomexicanos, the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to the original Spanish settlers of New Mexico. The Nuevomexicano case, therefore, further specifies how the heterogeneity within the ethnoracial category of Mexican shapes their attitudes towards Mexican immigrants and immigration. I find that Nuevomexicanos do not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory against their group. This is because Nuevomexicanos vary in whether they view Mexican immigrants as co-ethnics and experiences of being mistaken for Mexican immigrants affects the overall social standing of Nuevomexicanos, as a group. Moreover, I find that Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes are largely split between restrictionist and non-restrictionist. These findings suggest that Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes are vulnerable to how they perceive their social and political positioning relative to Mexican immigrants and the regional ideological character of the immigration debate. Together, these findings prioritize structural positioning and ideological context over exclusive group consciousness explanations in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

"MY PEOPLE ARE NOT FROM MEXICO": MEXICAN AMERICANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION IN NEW MEXICO

Nuevomexicanos are the descendants of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. Unlike other Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos often claim ancestral ties to Spanish settlers of New Mexico. Research suggests that Mexican Americans who have higher levels of group attachment have more liberal immigration attitudes. Thus, Mexican Americans with higher levels of group attachment can interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory against their group, which, in turn, creates a shared sense of exclusion from whites and solidarity with immigrant coethnics (Garcia Bedolla 2005; Jiménez 2010; Ochoa 2004). Yet Nuevomexicanos may not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory towards their group because they can contest their membership in the ethnoracial category of Mexican (Salgado 2018). Nevertheless, Nuevomexicanos may interpret the immigration debate as both anti-immigrant *and* anti-Latino (Manzano and Sanchez 2010; Sanchez 2006b; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010). Accordingly, Nuevomexicanos may possess more liberal immigration attitudes because they recognize that their life chances are tied to out-group members' perceptions and treatment of Mexican immigrants. This suggests that perceptions of linked fate, that is, shared positioning with Mexican immigrants within the political and racial landscape (Dawson 1994; Masuoka and Junn 2013), exist and are central to Nuevomexicanos immigration attitudes. This paper addresses whether and how perceptions of group attachment and discrimination shape Nuevomexicanos attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

The historical and regional context of New Mexico provides further insight into the relationship between group attachment and Latinos' immigration attitudes. Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico continues to possess lower levels of immigration, particularly

from Mexico, and a higher proportion of native-born versus foreign-born Latinos. The historical and demographic dominance of Nuevomexicanos may strengthen their anti-Mexican claims, thus enabling Nuevomexicanos to dissociate themselves from anti-immigrant sentiment. While the local context enables Nuevomexicanos to distance themselves from the "Mexican" category and possibly Mexican immigrants, New Mexico provides a relatively welcoming state environment for immigrants (Schildkraut et al. 2018). In 2003, New Mexico was the first state to allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses. Since 2005, New Mexico allows any student who graduated from and attended high school in New Mexico for at least three years to pay in-state tuition at post-secondary institutions. Yet former Governor Susana Martinez, known for her aggressive approach on immigration policy, successfully modified the law that allows undocumented immigrants to have a driver's license in the state in 2018 (Garcia 2016). Essentially, New Mexico has a two-tiered drivers license system where unauthorized immigrants possess licenses that are not compatible with the REAL ID Act. Thus, New Mexico's historical and regional context may have both liberalizing and restrictive effects on Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes.

Social identity theory suggests that our social and political context informs us about the aspects of our identity that will become salient (Tajfel 1982). From this perspective, a group identity can be an important force in shaping opinions. Perceptions of threat further lead members of socially salient groups to prefer policies and actions aimed at preserving the groups' interests (Branscombe et al. 1999; Schmitt and Branscombe 2002). This psychological perspective is similar to the sociological argument that perceived threats to group position generate group-interested attitudes and behaviors (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). According to these theories, Latinos with a greater sense of linked fate think

explicitly about whether proposed policies and political candidates will affect Latinos as a group and will form their preferences based on their assessments of group interests. Yet whether anti-immigrant sentiment in American society motivates Nuevomexicanos' sense of linked fate with Mexican immigrants is contested because Nuevomexicanos may not view a sense of shared history, and positioning within the racial and political landscape with Mexican immigrants. The Nuevomexicano case, therefore, sheds light on how the heterogeneity within the ethnoracial category of Mexican can shape their attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policies.

In addition, research consistently shows that greater levels of perceived discrimination facilitates higher levels of group consciousness among all ethnoracial groups (Schildkraut 2017). Yet racial ideology may disrupt the positive relationship between perceived discrimination and group consciousness (Gómez 2007; Sue 2013). For example, Mexican Americans can downplay their experiences with discrimination to assert their American nationalities and sameness with whites (Dowling 2014). Vega (2014) has also shown that immigration-restrictionist Mexican Americans employ a multicultural ideology, that minimizes racial differences in American society and their experiences with racial discrimination, to justify Mexican Americans' anti-unauthorized immigration views. Therefore, how people filter their perceptions of discrimination is critical to understanding levels of group consciousness, as well as policy preferences based on group interests. The Nuevomexicano case will expand our understanding of how racial ideology can mitigate the relationship between perceived levels of discrimination and group consciousness.

This article addresses how regional differentiation among Mexican Americans can shape their attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration. I find that Nuevomexicanos do not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory against their group. This is because Nuevomexicanos vary in whether they perceive Mexican immigrants as co-ethnics and whether

their experiences of being mistaken for Mexican immigrants affect the overall social standing of Nuevomexicanos as a group. Moreover, I find that Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes are largely split between restrictionist and non-restrictionist. These findings suggest that Nuevomexicanos' attitudes are vulnerable to how they view their social and political positioning relative to Mexican immigrants and the regional ideological character of the immigration debate. Thus, these findings prioritize structural positioning and ideological context over exclusive group consciousness explanations in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration. Overall, this paper will help us understand how perceptions of group attachment, shared social and racial positioning (linked fate), and ideological context shape Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

In this article, "Nuevomexicano" refers to study participants who are the descendants are of Mexican Americans who resided in New Mexico following the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. While "Hispanic" is the most common and preferred identifier among participants, I use the term "Nuevomexicano" because "Hispanic" is one of the many and variable referents used by participants to describe in-group members. While "Hispanic" is often understood as a panethnic term, Nuevomexicanos use "Hispanic" as an ethnic category to refer to themselves. Throughout the text, I specify when usage of "Hispanic" is an ethnic or panethnic category. "Mexican American" refers to people who were born in the United States with Mexican ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, and Mexican immigrant refers to people who were born in Mexico and now reside in the United States. Lastly, "Latino" is a panethnic term that describes people of Latin American ancestry, whether foreign-born or native-born, living in the United States.

Group Consciousness and Immigration Attitudes among Mexican Americans

Group consciousness, which is the ideological foundation for the expression of solidarity with fellow members of a disparaged social category, predicts that Latinos' ethnic attachments vary based on group members' perceptions and experiences of racialized exclusion. Latinos with high levels of group consciousness are expected to have more positive immigration attitudes than those with lower levels of group consciousness. Yet unlike most Mexican Americans, Nuevomexicanos do not exclusively claim Mexican ancestry or have recent immigrant backgrounds (Gonzales 1997b; Salgado 2018). This is because their ancestors have been present in the territory before the creation of Mexico as a nation-state, and American conquest of the Southwest. Thus, while Nuevomexicanos can perceive or experience high levels of racialized exclusion, they may not necessarily possess high levels of group consciousness because they can contest membership in the category of "Mexican." Thus, Nuevomexicanos perceptions of racial positioning in relation to Mexican immigrants may not affect their attitudes toward immigration.

However, Nuevomexicanos often encounter expressions of nativism because they share ethnoracial markers with Mexican immigrants. In fact, Nuevomexicanos construct their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants in order to counter out-group members' assumptions of Mexicanness (Salgado 2018). Thus, Nuevomexicanos with more experiences of being viewed as "Mexican" may hold more restrictionist immigration attitudes than those with fewer experiences of being viewed as "Mexican." Alternatively, Nuevomexicanos' experiences with nativism may increase perceptions of linked fate with Mexican immigrants (Sanchez 2006a; Sanchez 2006b). In particular, U.S.-born Latinos' general perceptions of discrimination can result in liberal immigration attitudes. Nuevomexicanos who interpret their experiences of nativism as a general

form of discrimination may see that their racial and political status is similar to that of Mexican immigrants, which, in turn, can reduce restrictionist attitudes toward immigration.

Moreover, broad ideological changes in the United States may shape the relationship between group consciousness and Mexican Americans' immigration attitudes (Vega and Ortiz 2017). For example, Mexican Americans who grew up during the World War II era held more restrictionist attitudes because the national context stressed assimilation and devalued ethnoracial attachments. Therefore, Mexican Americans' levels of group consciousness during the World War II era are less significant because being American meant shedding their ethnic attachments. Still, this argument assumes that degree of ethnoracial attachment is important for Mexican Americans' attitudes toward immigration. It may also be the case that Mexican Americans may have a loose affiliation with their ethnicity in general, which, in turn, makes their attitudes even more susceptible to the influence of the overall character of the immigration debate (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996; Salgado 2018). Therefore, the case of Nuevomexicanos specifies our understanding of whether and how levels of group attachment matter for immigration attitudes.

Additionally, research has shown that Nuevomexicanos may have more positive attitudes toward immigrants because New Mexico has relatively welcoming policies toward immigrants (Schildkraut et al. 2018). Within a particularly hostile anti-immigration context at the national-level, these findings suggest that Nuevomexicanos may experience lower levels of alienation or discrimination at the state-level. Thus, the New Mexico context may shelter Nuevomexicanos from the negative effects of anti-immigration in the nation at large, which, in turn, explains their more liberal immigration attitudes. However, whether and how the local climate shapes Nuevomexicanos attitudes towards immigration remains in question. Accordingly, this paper addresses how the presence of Mexican immigrants shapes Nuevomexicanos attitudes towards

immigration. Overall, this paper will help us understand the relationship between perceptions of group attachment, perceptions or experiences of discrimination (linked fate), and ideological context shape Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

History of Group Consciousness and Immigrant Attitudes among Nuevomexicanos

At the time of New Mexico statehood between 1880 and 1912, Nuevomexicanos were perceived as unfit for self-government because they were racially inferior compared to Anglo-Americans, and were resistant to American assimilation (Gómez 2007; Gonzales 2000; Montgomery 2002). Thus, Nuevomexicanos were viewed as unworthy of political rights upon entry into the polity, despite the fact that they were granted federal citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Furthermore, Mexican immigration to the southwest became more visible, decreasing Nuevomexicanos social status because they were misidentified as Mexican immigrants. In order to secure political rights in the United States, Nuevomexicanos prioritized their Spanish heritage that originated in the Spanish colonization of New Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over their Indigenous roots, and ties to Mexico (Chávez 2012; Espinosa 1914; Gonzales 2001). For Nuevomexicanos, Spanish identity enabled them to stake claims to New Mexico territory, and enact dissociation from immigrants. Thus, while Nuevomexicanos redefined their public expressions of ancestry as a strategy to confront Anglo-American racism, they also enacted dissociation from their immigrant coethnics.

It was not until the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s that usage of "Spanish" as a publicly expressed identity became socially unacceptable. Among politicized Mexican Americans, the Chicano term became popular and projected a collective representation of Mexican-origin people across the southwest that shared a history of oppression by American colonialism and imperialism (Acuña 1972; Gómez-Quinones 1990). In New Mexico, "Chicano"

challenged Spanish heritage, questioning any dissociation from Mexico, and Indigenous ancestry. Some Nuevomexicanos, for example, legitimized claims to their Mexican heritage by arguing that Spanish heritage was an anachronistic carryover from New Mexico statehood and a false claim to "being white" (Gonzales 1993b; Nieto-Phillips 2004). Other Nuevomexicanos, however, asserted that while New Mexico was part of Mexico for a short period of time, it largely existed in isolation from Mexican rule and their promotion of *mestizaje* (i.e., mixture of Indigenous and Spanish ancestry). Therefore, Nuevomexicanos were always a distinct people and culture. Taken together, the Spanish heritage narrative obscures Nuevomexicanos' and Mexican Americans' history of racial mixture between Spanish and Indigenous peoples, and association with Mexico.

Today, the cleavages between Nuevomexicanos and Mexican-origin people continue to reproduce social hierarchies grounded in debates of ethnic-origin status. Notably, identification with Mexican heritage remains a stigmatized identity in New Mexico compared to identification with Spanish heritage. However Spanish heritage has been under attack as public figures and commemorations of Spanish colonization and settlement have been discontinued and scrutinized for exacerbating racial tensions between American Indians and Nuevomexicanos. Yet whether and how identity differences shape Nuevomexicanos' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and general attitudes toward immigration is unclear. Moreover, Spanish and American colonization have played a central role in constituting Nuevomexicanos as a marginalized group in New Mexico. Thus, Nuevomexicanos may view similarities in racial and political status with Mexican immigrants due to their shared experiences of discrimination, which, in turn, may increased their sense of linked fate with Mexican immigrants and liberalize their immigration attitudes. Overall, Nuevomexicanos' attitudes toward immigrants reflect the interplay of questions regarding group consciousness, the racial hierarchy, and the political interests among Latinos.

New Mexico Context: Demographic Change and Immigration Policies

New Mexico is a majority-minority state, with the total Latino population representing over half of the states general population. However, New Mexico is not considered a traditional gateway destination for immigrants, particularly from Mexico. For example, 9.8 percent of New Mexicans were foreign-born in 2010 (78% of the foreign-born report being of Hispanic origin), up from only 5 percent in 1990. This is significantly lower than the foreign-born populations of other southwestern states such as California (where 27.5% of the population was foreign-born in 2007) and Texas (where 16% of the population was foreign-born), but close to the national average of 12.6 percent during this period. Yet, the character of the Mexican immigrant presence in Albuquerque has become increasingly visible over time. While Mexican immigrants of prior eras either blended into the local community or returned to Mexico, they have presently settled in the long-time neighborhoods of Nuevomexicanos (Gonzales 1993a; Prindeville, Gonzales and Sierra 1992). In fact, a "Mexicanization" of Albuquerque is detectable; thus, for example, the Albuquerque's South Valley neighborhood has numerous Mexican-owned and culturally oriented businesses, including a Spanish-language radio station.

New Mexico also possesses a relatively welcoming state context for immigrants (Schildkraut et al. 2018). For example, in 2003, New Mexico was the first state to allow unauthorized immigrants to obtain a drivers license (Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram 2014). Since 2005, it also allows any student who graduated from and attended high school in New Mexico for at least three years to pay in-state tuition at colleges and universities. Yet, the divers license law for unauthorized immigrants has experienced some political backlash. In 2016, New Mexico implemented a two-tiered drivers license system that creates a REAL ID Act-compliant driver's license for people with more protective immigration statuses and a non-compliant

Driving Authorization Card for undocumented immigrants (Garcia 2016). While undocumented immigrants can still legally drive with a Driving Authorization Card, conservatives consider the two-tiered driver licensing system a political victory against identification fraud. Thus, while New Mexico may possess a relatively welcoming context for immigrants, regional and nation-wide anti-immigrant climates may toughen Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes.

DATA AND METHODS

This article draws upon 78 in-depth interviews taken with Nuevomexicanos living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I conducted research in Albuquerque because it has the largest concentration of Nuevomexicanos in New Mexico. According to the 2016 American Community Survey, New Mexico's population is majority Latino followed by whites, American Indians, and other ethnoracial groups (48, 39, 9 and 4 percent respectively). Among Latinos, the majority reported Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry compared to other Latin American ancestries (75 and 20 percent respectively), and native-born versus foreign-born status (85 and 15 percent respectively). Unlike other southwestern states, New Mexico has a higher proportion of native-born Mexicans due to the region's lower levels of historical and contemporary Mexican immigration (Gómez 2007). Overall, U.S.-born people of Mexican and/or Spanish ancestry, including Nuevomexicanos, have sizeable demographic representation in New Mexico.

I recruited participants from leading institutions that serve the Albuquerque community (i.e., government, churches and non-profit agencies). At each site, I obtained participants through posting flyers, making announcements at community meetings, and relying on referrals from key informants. Most participants were recruited through announcements and key informants. While I applied snowball sampling to seek referrals from initial participants and key informants, I only obtained one or two names from each recommender in order to minimize sample selection bias.

Recruitment content asked whether middle-aged people with U.S.-born parents were interested in participating in a study on Hispanics in New Mexico. I used "Hispanic" in recruitment materials because it is a widely accepted form of ethnic identification among Nuevomexicanos.

I interviewed 38 men and 40 women. I interviewed participants between 40 and 60 years of age, with approximately two-thirds of participants between 45 and 55 years of age. I selected people that varied in educational background. The interview sample included 22 participants (12 women and 10 men) with less than a high school diploma or general equivalency credential, 30 participants (17 women and 13 men) with a high school diploma or some college, and 26 participants (10 women and 16 men) with a four-year college degree or higher. Moreover, each participant attended high school and resided in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area.

I created a skin color measure and coded participants skin color according to a five-point scale (1=racially white; 2=light brown, 3=medium brown, 4=dark brown and 5=racially black). I adapted the scale from the skin color card used in the Mexican American Study Project (Telles and Ortiz 2008). While participants clustered into light brown (22 people), medium brown (25 people), and dark brown categories (21 people), few participants appeared racially white (6 people) or black (4 people). Similar to other Mexican Americans, most Nuevomexicanos varied in brown skin tone and did not pass as racially white (Ortiz and Telles 2012). Linguistically, participants reported that their parents were fluent in English and Spanish. However, among study participants, most reported English monolingual fluency over English and Spanish bilingual fluency (50 and 28 people, respectively). While participants varied in Spanish fluency, each participant explained that they primarily spoke English at home and at work.

For political affiliation, most reported Democrat (46 people) followed by Republican (15 people), Independent (7 people), and non-partisan (10 people). Non-partisan participants did not

choose a specific political party to describe their political views and typically did not vote. Popular reasons for not voting were they did not have a history of voting in any government elections and lackluster faith in the political system. Most non-partisan participants had less than a high school degree or GED (8 people) and a few had a high school diploma (2 people).

Interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were conducted between December 2014 and November 2015. Interview information on attitudes toward immigrants derived from four sections: 1) respondents' general opinions about immigration, 2) respondents' interactions with immigrants, 3) the degree to which respondents supported Governor Susana Martinez's campaign to revoke licenses from undocumented immigrants, and 4) the degree to which respondents' perceived that the presence of Mexican immigrants affected out-group member's attitudes toward their group.

FINDINGS

Prior research has shown that Nuevomexicanos vary in whether they perceive Mexican immigrants as in-group or out-group members (Salgado 2018). This research demonstrates that Nuevomexicanos describe their ethnicity in three main ways: Spanish ancestry; Mixed Spanish, Mexican and Indigenous ancestry (or mixed); and vague/uncertain ancestry. Nuevomexicanos who prioritize the Spanish over mixed ancestry are less likely to perceive Mexican immigrants as coethnics. Nuevomexicanos with vague notions of ancestry are undecided about whether to emphasize their Spanish or Mexican ancestry, and are uncertain about Mexican immigrants as in- or out-group members. This is because emphasizing Mexicanness has a negative connotation and eclipses the significance of Nuevomexicanos' rootedness in New Mexico. It is important to note that Nuevomexicanos who prioritize their Spanish ancestry are the least likely to view Mexican immigrants as coethnics compared to those who emphasized mixed or vague notions of ancestry.

Building on this research, I unpack how the three variations in ethnic background shape Nuevomexicanos perceptions toward Mexican immigrants and immigration attitudes. In the first section, I show that when Nuevomexicanos are asked about their general immigration attitudes, this question prompts their attitudes toward Mexican immigration. I find that most participants with Spanish or vague identity claims held restrictionist attitudes compared to those with mixed identity claims (Table 1). These findings suggest that participants who prioritize their Mexican ancestry can have higher levels of group attachment and shared perceptions of linked fate with Mexican immigrants. In the second section, I analyze the relationship between Nuevomexicanos identity claims and experiences with nativism. While a substantial number of participants reported that out-group members' perceptions of Mexican immigrants gave Nuevomexicanos a "bad reputation," most participants highlighted that being mistaken for an immigrant was situational (Table 2). These findings suggest that Nuevomexicanos rootedness in the region buffered them from that the negative stereotypes associated with Mexican immigrants.

Attitudes toward Immigration

All participants favored authorized immigration, but varied in their views toward unauthorized immigration, particularly from Mexico. Participants' attitudes clustered into three categories: liberal, restrictionist and ambiguous (Table 5). While most participants expressed restrictionist attitudes (46 percent), equal proportions of participants expressed liberal and ambiguous attitudes (27 percent). Generally, participants with restrictionist attitudes reported that unauthorized immigrants are not entitled to the same privileges as citizens because they do not contribute equally to American society as citizens. Conversely, participants with liberal attitudes recognized the economic and social contributions of immigrants to New Mexico society. Lastly,

participants with ambiguous attitudes weighed the costs and benefits of unauthorized immigration, and explained that they only wanted immigrants with good over criminal intentions.

Table 5 here

Table 5 also demonstrates the relationship between ethnoracial identity claims and immigration attitudes. Most participants who reported Spanish or vague ancestry held restrictionist attitudes toward immigration whereas those who reported mixed Spanish, Mexican and Indigenous ancestry held more liberal immigration attitudes. These findings suggest that participants who prioritize their Mexican ancestry can have higher levels of group attachment and shared perceptions of liked fate with Mexican immigrants. Yet participants' immigration attitudes are relatively split between restrictionist (46 percent) and non-restrictionist (54 percent). Thus, Nuevomexicanos immigration attitudes can easily oscillate between restrictionist and non-restrictionist and therefore are vulnerable to the regional and broader ideological character of the immigration debate. Given the general ambiguity of Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes, we can better understand the contradiction between New Mexico as the first state to allow unauthorized immigrants to have driver's licenses and the re-election of Governor Susana Martinez who campaigned on revoking driver's licenses to unauthorized immigrants.

Restrictionist Immigration Attitudes

Participants that held restrictionist attitudes emphasized that immigrants were a strain on government welfare, drove down wages in the labor market and were a threat to national security. They also explained that contemporary Mexican immigrants did not have the integrity or work ethic of Mexican immigrants of the past. Fifty-five-year-old Julian with a bachelor's degree and mixed identity claims argues that the character of immigrants have changed over time:

> When I was growing up, my grandfather had Mexican immigrants working for him. I worked with them, as a plasterer in his construction company. The Mexicans that I encountered just wanted money. Most were illegal immigrants. Because of Obama and his liberal non-throw-out policy on immigration has allowed for populations to come into this country and take advantage of the resources that we have without going to the process of citizenship and that bothers me.

Julian provides structural and individual explanations for why the character of immigrants has changed over time. Specifically, he perceives that President Obama's liberal immigration policies and Mexican immigrant's desire to take advantage of the liberal immigration context have increased the presence of unauthorized immigration and degraded the quality of immigrants. From this perspective, immigrants no longer migrate to work for economic benefits but abuse government resources. Notably, while President Obama deployed executive action to provide protective immigration statuses for unauthorized immigrants in 2014, the Supreme Court shut down his policy in 2016. At the same time, immigrant detention and deportation expanded under the Obama administration. Other participants criticized President Obama's liberal immigration policies and argued that they were enabling immigrants to exploit government resources.

Participants also emphasized that allowing unauthorized immigrants to have rights in the United States was a "double standard" because participants perceived that they do not have rights as visitors in other countries. When asked about Governor Martinez's campaign to revoke driver's licenses from Mexican immigrants, fifty-eight-year-old Lloyd with a professional degree and Spanish identity claims, responded:

> If you go to Mexico and over stay your visa, you get kicked out. Does the Mexican government support you over there? No. That's a double standard. If we go over there,

> they kick us out or put us in prison. If [Mexican immigrants] come over here, they get welfare, they get money, they get jobs, they get whatever they want. I don't think that's right. I don't believe that they should licenses because they are not US citizens. If you want to be an American citizen, then follow the procedure. Take the test and become an American citizen. The United States is the only country with a melting pot and we open our arms, but you still have to follow the law.

Lloyd argues that it is not fair that the American government is expected to provide government services for unauthorized immigrants that are typically reserved for citizens. Other participants also perceived that they experienced unequal treatment when services and rights were extended to unauthorized immigrants because they broke the law by "illegally" living in the United States. Further, Lloyd uses "melting pot" ideology to acknowledge that the United States is welcoming to immigrants but stresses that immigrants "still have to follow the law." Ironically, participants with more liberal immigration attitudes used the same "melting pot" ideology to argue that the United States should be welcoming to immigrants, whether authorized or unauthorized.

Participants with restrictionist attitudes acknowledged, to some extent that unauthorized immigrants are moving to the United States to escape substandard and dangerous homeland conditions. Yet participants' highlighted the fact that using government benefits is a citizen privilege that needs to be protected over the rights of unauthorized immigrants. When asked about whether curbing unauthorized immigration was an issue that discriminated against immigrants, forty-nine-year-old August with a trade degree and vague identity claims explained:

> It's an issue of right and wrong. The word is in it. Illegal immigrant. So if you're illegal, you have no business here. If you want to be here in the states to provide a better life for you and your family, then you have to go through the procedures and the process in order

> to become an American. If you want to come to the U.S. to provide a better way for your family, then you need to go through the procedure in order to become an American so you can do that. You can't just come in illegally and say okay, I'm here, now you owe me. And start demanding rights when you ain't even an American to demand rights to.

August argues that unauthorized immigration is an issue about citizenship and not race. While he recognizes that providing a better future for your family is a legitimate reason to migrate, he emphasizes that immigrants should use that family motivation to migrate legally not illegally. In general, participants with restrictionist attitudes recognized the larger structural issues pushing people to migrate but emphasized the importance of proper procedures to live "legally" in the United States. From this premise, participants argued that the American government is treating citizens, and authorized immigrants unfairly by extending rights to unauthorized immigrants.

Liberal Immigration Attitudes

Participants that held liberal immigration attitudes perceived the United States as a welcoming nation to immigrants; prioritized the economic contributions of immigrants over the negative stereotypes directed toward immigrants; and recognized the larger structural factors forcing immigrants to leave their homeland countries. Similar to participants with restrictionist attitudes, participants with liberal attitudes made past and present comparisons of immigrants' work ethic, and deployed "nation of immigrants" ideology to show support for unauthorized immigrants. Yet unlike participants with restrictionist attitudes, participants with liberal attitudes were more likely to recognize the racialized character of the immigration debate. Fifty-three-year-old Janelle with a bachelor's degree and mixed identity claims explained that Mexicans are the contemporary targets of nativism. When asked whether immigration was good or bad for the United States, she said:

> You see the farms in California are not surviving because they're not allowing immigrants to come on board. [Immigrants are] doing jobs that a lot of American-born folks don't want to do. They're here to survive just like immigrants of the past have done. It's just Mexicans are the immigrant of the day. We had the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Blacks. I mean, if you think about it, plantations used to be worked by Black folks, now it's immigrants. I think [immigration] is good for our country. I really do.

Janelle's narrative prioritizes the positive economic contributions of Mexican immigrants, as well as the nation's history of employing immigrants for low-wage and exploitative work. She therefore emphasizes that unauthorized immigration has always been a critical workforce in the United States. Moreover, she highlights the racialized character of the immigration debate by drawing attention to the various historical waves of non-white ethnoracial groups that have been targeted. Accordingly, Janelle recognizes the contradiction between Americans being anti-immigrant and immigrants' economic contributions to American society. Other participants recognized this contradiction and emphasized that immigrants were hard workers who are willing to do the work that American citizens do not want to do.

Participants with liberal attitudes also recognized the larger structural forces pushing immigrants to leave their homelands and often advocated for open borders. Fifty-six-year-old Jacob with a professional degree and Spanish identity claims explained, "national boundaries are really a fiction" as he continued:

> It's silly to think people aren't going to move where they're going to get a better way of life. I'm more inclined to allow people to move wherever they want to move as long as they don't break the law… If you don't want Salvadorans to come from El Salvador because they're trying to get away from the fact that girls are being murdered on the

> street for no particular reason, you go fix that problem…Very few people want to move, right? But you have social and economic issues that drive people away, so fix those [issues]… And those people who want to move, let them move. We're a nation of immigrants. Some of our most brilliant people were immigrants like Einstein.

Similar to Janelle's example, Jacob emphasizes that the United States is a "nation of immigrants" and therefore should be welcoming to all immigrants. Unlike the Janelle's example, Jacob points to the structural conditions pushing migrants to leave their homelands and argues that unauthorized immigrants are logical in their reasoning to seek a better life in a different country. Moreover, this narrative is in contrast to participants with restrictionist attitudes because they were less sympathetic to the plight of immigrants. Instead, restrictionist participants felt competition with immigrants regarding government resources. Generally, participants with liberal attitudes recognized the larger structural forces pushing immigrants to leave their homelands and prioritized the talents that immigrants bring with them to the United States.

Other participants provided regional explanations to justify their liberal immigration attitudes. Forty-eight-year-older Alexander with a general equivalency diploma and vague identity claims explains that New Mexico has a long history of Mexican immigration and therefore immigrants should have the same opportunities as citizens. When asked about whether driver's licenses should be revoked from immigrants, Alexander replied:

> This is a Hispanic state. Hispanic and Mexican. We've been interacting since before I've known. And I think it's not right to take licenses away from immigrants without papers. My wife's brother who was born here is a US citizen and her other brother is only a year older than him but wasn't born here and is having problems getting all his things done because he doesn't have a license and [at work] they tend to want to keep him at the

lowest pay rate when he can do the job of anybody else making four or five dollars an hour more. And I find that to be very unfair. Mexicans come and work their butt off.

Alexander perceives New Mexico as a state with a long history of relations between Hispanics and Mexicans. Consequently, Alexander argues that New Mexico is a welcoming state to Mexican immigrants and should allow immigrants to have driver's licenses. He also highlights that the exploitation of immigrants is unequal treatment, suggesting that immigrants should have more protective statuses because of their contributions to the American economy. In contrast, participants with restrictionist attitudes used an "unequal treatment" narrative to emphasize that providing unauthorized immigrants rights and resources was unfair to American citizens and immigrants who came to the United States through formal channels. Overall, a key distinction between participants with liberal over restrictionist attitudes is the prioritization of the positive over negative stereotypes associated with Mexican immigrants.

Ambiguous Immigration Attitudes

Participants with ambiguous immigration attitudes weighed the costs and benefits of unauthorized immigration. Unlike participants with hardline liberal or restrictionist attitudes, these participants perceived immigration as a morality issue and were indecisive about whether unauthorized immigrants were "worthy" or "deserving" of living in the United States. Fifty-seven-year-old Justine with some college education and mixed identity claims considered whether allowing unauthorized immigrants to live in the United States was fair to its citizens.

> The letter of the law should handle anyone that does anything illegal. But you have to understand why there is illegal immigration. You have conditions in other countries that are creating environments where people just can't even live anymore. They have to move, and sometimes in their running, they break the law. If we had open borders, if we had

> ways to screen and identify people, [and] allow them to work here [in the United States] as a useful legal citizen then that would be great. You commit a crime, even people from here that commit a crime; you have to do the time. [Citizens] have to answer to the law.

While Justine argues that unauthorized immigrants should face the consequences of breaking the law, she further emphasizes that the structural forces that are pushing immigrants to leave their homeland countries. Ideally, Justine proposes an open borders immigration policy with heavy surveillance of unauthorized immigrants but ultimately does not perceive that the policy is feasible. Lastly, she considers whether allowing unauthorized immigrants to live in the United States without facing the consequences of breaking the law is fair to citizens who are penalized for breaking American laws. Generally, participants were indecisive about whether unauthorized immigrants "deserved" to live in the United States and used their homeland conditions, authorized immigrants and citizens as reference groups when considering the immigration debate.

Other participants drawed more heavily on the "deserving immigrant" narrative—only immigrants who were hard workers not criminals deserved to live in the United States. When asked about her thoughts on immigration, fifty-six-year-old Janice with less than a high school diploma and Spanish identity claims reported:

> Uh, I don't know. I feel that immigrants are here. People that are here and they're probably legal. Even the illegals that are here, at least they're working hard. When my dad had his business he had a couple of men that were illegal and they were the best workers he had. I don't have anything against immigration, as long as they don't get in trouble. To me, they're trying to make a life, who are we to say no? But if they're going to be here they should just get their papers and do it right. If they're going to he here, let them work which is why they're here in the United States any way.

Based on Janice's opinion of the unauthorized immigrants that worked for her father's business, she explains that she's open to unauthorized immigration because immigrants are hard workers. Nonetheless, this statement is undermined when she only desires immigrants that "don't get in trouble" or engage in criminal activity. Many participants also revealed that they only wanted immigrants that have positive over criminal intentions. These participants therefore had higher moral standards for immigrants than their citizen counterparts. Moreover, Janice further undermines her pro-unauthorized immigration attitudes by conveying that immigrants should come to the United States through formal procedures. Yet she quickly expresses liberal immigration attitudes in recognizing the fact that unauthorized immigration is unavoidable and therefore the US should allow unauthorized immigrants to work in the United States. This is back and forth debate is typical of participants with ambiguous immigration attitudes, and demonstrates that participants are struggling with issues of fairness and morality.

Lastly, participants with ambiguous attitudes evaluated the character of immigrants and emphasized the positive and negative stereotypes of immigrants. When asked about New Mexico's debate to revoke licenses from immigrants, forty-four-year-old Cisco with a high school diploma and vague identity claims struggled with answering the question while comparing close Mexican family friends to his own family.

> There's good and bad in everybody. There's Mexicans that do dirty stuff. Mexicans are labeled as drug dealers. There are ten, twenty people living in one home is what they are saying. However they live, they're close family. I have Mexican friends that I grew up with that were the same way… Beautiful people. Busting their butts. They didn't speak a lick of English and they still don't. Great people. But seeing that growing up and then us growing up. It's just hard to say. That's a hard question.

It is difficult for Cisco to comment on unauthorized immigration because the close Mexican family friends of his childhood defy negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. Therefore, while he is concerned with immigrants engaging in criminal activity and not learning English, he values that Mexicans have close family ties similar to his own family dynamic. Therefore, Cisco emphasizes that it is hard for commenting on unauthorized immigration because he does not know whether his experience with immigrant families is representative of all immigrants. Other participants with ambiguous attitudes also emphasized that they wanted the good over the bad immigrants but were uncertain about what that meant for current immigration issues and policies.

Attitudes toward Mexican Immigrants

The interviews make clear that Nuevomexicanos perceived that New Mexico had an "immigrant problem" and were concerned with the increased visibility of Mexican immigrants in the region. In fact, many Nuevomexicanos expressed concern that Mexican immigrants were "taking over" long-standing Nuevomexicano communities. In this section, I analyze the relationship between Nuevomexicanos identity claims and experiences with nativism. While a sizeable number of participants reported that out-group members' perceptions of Mexican immigrants gave Nuevomexicanos a "bad reputation," most participants provided "case by case" explanations to highlight that being mistaken for an immigrant is situational.[3] Moreover, while Nuevomexicanos provided sharp examples of being mistaken for Mexican immigrants, they hesitated to concede that the negative stereotypes of immigrants affected Nuevomexicanos' social standing. These findings suggest that Nuevomexicanos' long history and demographic dominance in the region, in part, buffered them from perceiving that the negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants affected out-group members' perceptions of Nuevomexicanos, as a group.

[3] In this section, I deploy most, some, few language to address the counts in my interview data.

Negative Attitudes toward Mexican immigrants

As expected, I find that Nuevomexicanos who emphasize their Spanish ancestry hold more hostile attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and perceive that Mexican immigrants have a negative impact on Nuevomexicanos' social standing. This is because participants with Spanish identity claims do not perceive Mexican immigrants as coethnics and avoid being associated with the negative stereotypes aimed at Mexican immigrants. When asked about her general opinion of Governor Martinez's campaign to revoke licenses from unauthorized immigrants, forty-six-year-old Aurora with less than a high school diploma and Spanish identity claims said:

> We [Nuevomexicanos] are already viewed as like doing illegal things and taking short cuts and all of that and I think that she's trying to put us at a higher standard. A lot of those [drivers license] things are done illegally. A lot of those people miss that point. I look at that way, its illegal. It's not even done right. I think she's trying to make people honest. If you're going to get something, get something like everyone else has to get it.

Aurora holds restrictionist immigration attitudes and emphasizes that immigrants should prioritize moving to the United States through legal channels. She also conveys that allowing immigrants to have driver's licenses enables the black market on fake driver's licenses. As a result, she perceives that allowing unauthorized immigrants to have licenses further facilitates their engagement in illegal activity because unauthorized immigrants have already broken the law by moving to the United States. Notably, she emphasizes that Governor Martinez is "trying to make people honest." Other participants emphasized that Mexican immigrants were worsening the perception of Nuevomexicanos, as a group, and therefore, emphasized restrictionist attitudes.

Some participants questioned the character of immigrants, and referenced extreme examples that enabled them to criticize immigrants' moral compass. When asked whether the

discrimination that Mexican immigrants face affects how others perceive Nuevomexicanos, fifty-five-year-old Sonia with a trade degree and vague identity claims cited the Boston Marathon Bombing as a prime example of why the U.S. government should be more restrictive with its immigration policies.

> Other people look at us the same. They all see Spanish-speaking people the same as far as Mexican and New Mexican. So, when a Mexican causes havoc, they say, "Oh, there goes a Spanish guy." That's giving the honest Hispanics person a bad name and they didn't even deserve that because an immigrant caused havoc on their land… Are you coming to the United States to become an American citizen or are you coming here like those two guys from the Boston marathon to cause trouble? You come in this country like your law-abiding and then you come and do that? C'mon, you know.

Sonia's account explicitly contrasts the honest character of Nuevomexicanos to the dishonest character of Mexican immigrants. Moreover, she equates the dishonest character of Mexican immigrants to the Tsarnaev brothers of the Boston Marathon Bombing. This extreme example enables Sonia to 1) justify her restrictionist attitudes and 2) contrast popular positive narratives concerning unauthorized immigrants. Similarly, other participants used other threat narratives like terrorism and national security to substantiate their restrictionist attitudes.

Very few participants with mixed ancestry perceived that the presence of Mexican immigrants affects how people perceive Nuevomexicanos. Yet they did express resentment when they perceived that they were being treated unfairly. For example, forty-year-old Rudolph with less than a high school diploma explained his frustration: "They come here illegally, they get welfare for them and their kids. I mean, just like that. You got a veteran that served in, that lost his leg, and they can't get no benefits. But you got Mexicans that come over here, they get

welfare, they get housing, they send their money back to Mexico. Our tax dollars are going to Mexico. You know what I mean?" Rudolph believes in and is perpetuating negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. His account resembles conservative fears of Mexican immigrants taking over government resources by emphasizing that vulnerable people (e.g., veterans) cannot take advantage of the same resources as unauthorized immigrants. While very few participants with mixed ancestry perceived that the presence of Mexican immigrants affects perceptions of Nuevomexicanos on the part of out-group members, some participants expressed fears and frustration that Mexican immigrants were taking away government resources from citizens. In general, this section demonstrates that participant's further distanced themselves from Mexican immigrants by legitimizing the negative and discriminatory stereotypes of Mexican immigrants.

Positive Attitudes toward Mexican immigrants

These participants prioritized the positive over the negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants, and emphasized that whites often create and reinforce discrimination toward Nuevomexicanos. When asked about whether discrimination aimed at Mexican immigrants affects Nuevomexicanos, forty-year-old Claudia with a professional degree and Spanish identity claims explained:

> Yes, if that's the stereotype, you know, you came here illegally; you're taking our stuff, our jobs. I don't see anyone else taking those jobs at McDonald's. Instead of people embracing Mexican immigrants like wow these people are hard-working, they want to work, they want a better life at all costs they'll sacrifice for their family. To me, it's a positive not a negative. If I was being identified with that, then I wouldn't mind it.

Unlike participants with negative attitudes toward Mexican immigrants, Claudia prioritizes the positive stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. She perceives that immigrants are hard working,

family-oriented, and possess high aspirations. While most people with Spanish identity claims reported negative attitudes toward Mexican immigrants, Claudia's account differs in that she does not perceive "Mexican" as a form of stigmatization. Other people who emphasized their Spanish identity claims often perceived nativism as unfair treatment, and as a result, resented Mexican immigrants and often conveyed discriminatory attitudes toward immigrants.

Participants also emphasized that whites can create and reinforce discrimination toward Nuevomexicanos because whites perpetuate nativism. Nuevomexicanos explained that their experiences with nativism were racial discrimination. These participants, therefore, recognize that the immigration debate intersects with out-group member's racial attitudes. When asked about whether the presence of Mexican immigrants affects Nuevomexicanos, fifty-eight-year-old Abel with a trade degree and mixed identity claims reported:

> From an Anglo perspective, they group people and say that, "They're all Mexicans." They [Anglos] would say, "Look at those guys, they need to be sent back." If you look at it from an intelligent perspective, we need those people from an economic standpoint. We need those people because they'll do the work and they're very good workers. From an ignorance standpoint and from an Anglo perspective, it does have a negative impact on us.

Similar to Claudia in the previous example, Abel highlights the economic contributions and hard-work ethic of Mexican immigrants. Unlike Claudia's example, Abel criticizes Anglos for not recognizing that the American economy relies on immigrant labor. Moreover, Abel explains that Anglos do not differentiate between Mexican immigrants and Nuevomexicanos. According to Abel, Anglos are ignorant and do not recognize the heterogeneity within the ethnoracial category of Mexican. Other participants similarly emphasized that whites not Nuevomexicanos had an issue with immigration and that Mexican immigrant threatened whites.

While I collected most of the interviews before Donald Trump announced his presidential candidacy, a few of the interviews I conducted after the announcement explicitly addressed white discrimination toward Mexican immigrants. When asked about whether the presence of Mexican immigrants affects Nuevomexicanos, fifty-two-year old Daisy with less than a high school degree and vague ancestry described: "They're here and they work and I think Governor Martinez needs to just stop. Just like Donald Trump. You heard what Donald Trump wants to do too. And again, he's white. So no, I think it's sad. And why them? Why just them? Why not the Chinese, why not the blacks? Why do they just focus on them? It's discrimination I think." While Daisy highlights that immigrants are treated as scapegoats, she further emphasizes that immigrants are targets of racial discrimination. Specifically, she points to Governor Martinez's 2015 campaign to revoke driver's licenses from immigrants and Donald Trump's 2015 comments regarding Mexican immigrants as drug dealers, criminals and rapists. Daisy also draw's attention to Donald Trump's white racial background to substantiate her claims that Mexican immigrants experience discrimination based on race and immigration status. Overall, participants with positive attitudes toward Mexican immigrants, as a people, recognized that unauthorized immigrants' unfair treatment intersected with people's discriminatory attitudes.

Ambiguous Attitudes toward Mexican immigrants

These participants were uncertain about whether the presence of Mexican immigrants had any effect on how out-group members' perceive Nuevomexicanos because of Nuevomexicanos' long history and demographic dominance in the region. These participants provided "case by case" explanations to highlight that out-group members' perceptions of Nuevomexicanos as Mexican immigrants is situational. Fifty-six-year-old Jeremy with a professional degree and Spanish identity claims said:

> [I think] on a case by case basis. There are people who treat Hispanics differently because they don't like Mexicans or because they're stupid. I don't think there's any kind of institutional racism like there is in the south because there are so many Hispanics in positions of power. We have a Hispanic governor. The cops are probably forty percent Hispanic and teachers, forty or fifty percent. So it's an integrated population. It would be difficult to systematically discriminate against Hispanics. That's not true with Mexicans.

Jeremy emphasizes that Nuevomexicanos can experience nativism and racism because people assume that Nuevomexicanos are Mexican immigrants. Yet because Nuevomexicanos are demographically dominant and hold positions of power in Albuquerque, Nuevomexicanos may not necessarily experience systematic discrimination based on nativism. Accordingly, Jeremy's account highlights that Nuevomexicanos' experiences with nativism are situational. This is because Nuevomexicanos do not share the same social and political positioning of Mexican immigrants. This quote highlights that regional constructions of the racial and political landscape are important to whether and how other Mexican Americans and Latinos perceive perceptions of linked fate with unauthorized immigrants.

Some participants argued that because of Nuevomexicanos' demographic dominance in New Mexico, out-group members could differentiate between Nuevomexicanos and Mexican immigrants. Participants typically emphasized the class, lifestyle and physical characteristics that differentiated Mexican immigrants from Nuevomexicanos. When asked about whether the presence of Mexican immigrants affects Nuevomexicanos, forty-five-year-old Garrett with a high school diploma and vague ancestry reported:

> Sometimes they do because of profiling. Most illegal immigrants who are Mexican come over here with several families and they all try to stay in one house whereas Hispanics

don't really do that. I guess they give the perception that Hispanics all live in one house but not really. But my girlfriend for example has a large family that lives in one house and other people probably perceive them as Mexican because of our complexion.

Garrett tries to explain the visible differences between Mexican immigrants and Nuevomexicanos but ultimately fails because Nuevomexicanos fit the same stereotypes as Mexican immigrants. For example, Mexican immigrants, as well as Nuevomexicanos, are perceived as having large families that typically live in one house. This example is important because participants often made superficial distinctions to argue that Nuevomexicanos did not experience "Mexican" a stigmatized identity. I argue that this disconnect is tied to the fact that participants did not perceive that their racial and political position was similar to that of Mexican immigrants because of Nuevomexicanos long history and demographic dominance in the region.

Lastly, when asked whether the presence of Mexican immigrants living in Albuquerque affects Nuevomexicanos, some participants emphasized that Nuevomexicanos deal with their own negative stereotypes apart from that of Mexican immigrants. Again, this rational is tied to Nuevomexicanos' own positioning within the racial and political landscape, which participants perceived is distinct from that of Mexican immigrants. For example, Roy with less than a high school diploma and mixed identity claims reported: "I don't know. I don't know about that one. I think we tear ourselves up pretty good. If the jails are full, they're not all Mexicans, they're Hispanics from here. That's what the jail is, mostly Hispanics not immigrants." Roy initially expresses hesitancy about whether the negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants affect Nuevomexicanos because Nuevomexicanos deal with their own negative stereotypes in New Mexico. Other participants emphasized that Nuevomexicanos are often perceived as having issues with poverty, alcohol and drugs. These stereotypes are often in contrast to that of Mexican

immigrants who are often perceived as a strain on government resources, and as hard workers. In all, participants struggled with whether Mexican immigrants affected the social and political positioning of Nuevomexicanos because Nuevomexicanos have an established history and demographic dominance in the region. Thus, participants provided "case by case" explanations to highlight that perceptions of Nuevomexicanos as Mexican immigrants is situational.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As expected, I find that Nuevomexicanos' who identify as Spanish hold largely restrictionist attitudes. This suggests that Nuevomexicanos who identify as Spanish have lower levels of group attachment and do not share perceptions of linked fate with Mexican immigrants. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos who prioritize their Mexican ancestry may have more liberal immigration attitudes because they perceive that their life chances are tied to out-group members' perceptions of Mexican immigrants. Still, I show that Nuevomexicanos vary in their identity claims, and that their attitudes are largely split between restrictionist and non-restrictionist. The general ambiguity of Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes suggests that their attitudes are vulnerable to 1) regional constructions of their positioning within the racial and political landscape and 2) the broader ideological character of the immigration debate. This means that Nuevomexicanos and other Mexican Americans may have a loose affiliation with their ethnicity in general, which, in turn, makes their attitudes even more susceptible to regional constructions of group attachment and linked fate, and broader ideological conversations around immigration.

Furthermore, while Nuevomexicanos provided sharp examples of experiences with nativism, I found that Nuevomexicanos do not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory against their group. I demonstrate that Nuevomexicanos struggled with whether their experiences with nativism meant that they experienced "Mexican" as a stigmatized identity. This is because

Nuevomexicanos varied in whether they viewed Mexican immigrants as coethnics and whether they shared positioning within the racial and political landscape with Mexican immigrants. Therefore, they emphasized that being mistaken for Mexican immigrants varied by reference group and situation. I argue that Nuevomexicanos' regional constructions of their structural conditions buffered them from perceiving that the larger negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants affected Nuevomexicanos social standing. Taken together, these findings prioritize structural positioning and ideological context over exclusive group consciousness explanations in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

Research suggests that Mexican Americans who have higher levels of group attachment have more liberal immigration attitudes. Thus, Mexican Americans with higher levels of group attachment can interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory against their group, which, in turn, creates a shared sense of exclusion from whites and solidarity with immigrant coethnics (Garcia Bedolla 2005; Jiménez 2010; Ochoa 2004). Similarly, I find that Nuevomexicanos who emphasize Spanish over Mexican ancestry are more likely to hold restrictionist immigration attitudes. In fact, I show that Nuevomexicanos' who prioritize their Spanish ancestry are more likely to view that the negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants degrade Nuevomexicanos' social standing. Thus, Nuevomexicanos who identify as Spanish may interpret their experiences with nativism as general form of discrimination and not necessarily as a form of linked fate. These findings demonstrate that Nuevomexicanos' vary in their perceptions of group attachment with Mexican immigrants, which in turn, shapes their immigration attitudes.

Moreover, research suggests that Mexican Americans' position on the immigration debate is shaped by the national ideological context around immigration in the United States. From this perspective, the national context has a socializing effect on the relationship between

Mexican Americans' ethnic group attachment and immigration attitudes (Vega and Ortiz 2017). Consistent with this research, I argue that Nuevomexicanos immigration attitudes are susceptible to the broader immigration debate. I find that participants' immigration attitudes are split between restrictionist and non-restrictionist. The general ambiguity of Nuevomexicanos attitudes toward immigration and variation in ethnic group attachment suggests that their attitudes are vulnerable to the broader character of the immigration debate. Given Nuevomexicanos general ambiguity toward immigration, we can better understand the contradiction between people of New Mexico as the first to allow undocumented immigrants to have a driver's licenses and later re-electing a Governor who campaigned on revoking licenses to undocumented immigrants.

According to assimilation theory, Latino's immigration attitudes should get more restrictionist with each generation as American attachments replace their ethnic connections (Knoll 2012). Thus restrictionism increases with each generation so that Latino's attitudes will eventually become indistinguishable from other Americans. Yet my research shows that the racial realities of Nuevomexicanos are not the same as whites. Specifically, Nuevomexicanos provided sharp examples of their negative experiences with nativism. However Nuevomexicanos' experiences with nativism did not necessarily prompt solidarity with Mexican immigrants due to their shared experiences of exclusion. Instead, Nuevomexicanos created a wedge between themselves and Mexican immigrants. These findings are contradictory because Nuevomexicanos experience "Mexican" as a stigmatized identity. This is partially because Nuevomexicanos struggled with whether their experiences of discrimination placed them at a similar racial and political position as Mexican immigrants and varied in whether they viewed Mexican immigrants as coethnics. Still, my research suggests that Nuevomexicanos downplayed their stigmatization

to resist discrimination (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007). Thus, Nuevomexicanos further distanced themselves from Mexican immigrants to avoid the negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants.

While this research furthers our understanding of how perceptions of group attachment shape immigration attitudes, this study's limitations warrant attention and provide future avenues for research. Given that the findings focus on middle-aged Nuevomexicanos in Albuquerque, researchers should examine how these findings vary by birth cohort and region. Younger Nuevomexicanos may have higher levels of group consciousness with Mexican immigrants and may interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory towards their group. Moreover, the prevailing assumption is that Nuevomexicanos living in Northern New Mexico are more likely to identify as Spanish and therefore have more restrictionist attitudes than Nuevomexicanos living in Southern New Mexico. Yet the effect of region on immigration attitudes is unclear because living close to the US-Mexico border has both liberalizing and restrictionist effects on Latino's immigration attitudes. Lastly, I argue that Nuevomexicanos' perceived structural conditions is key to understanding how Nuevomexicanos see themselves in relation to Mexican immigrants, perceptions of linked fate, and immigration policy preferences. Future research should specify how other structural conditions (i.e., legal reforms, changing economic conditions) expand our understanding of Mexican Americans' and other Latinos' immigration politics.

In closing, these findings show that Nuevomexicanos immigration attitudes are vulnerable to demographic changes within the region and the broader ideological character of the immigration debate. These findings prioritize regional and ideological context explanations over simplistic ethnic consciousness rationales in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration. These findings have implications for research on race, ethnicity, and politics. Notably, researchers should not presume that perceptions or experiences

of discrimination provides a liberalizing effect on Mexican Americans' and other Latinos' immigration attitudes. The Nuevomexicano case demonstrates that the effect of discrimination has both a liberalizing and restrictionist effects on immigration attitudes. This is the case because Mexican Americans have a loose affiliation with their ethnicity in general, which, in turn, makes their attitudes susceptible to their structural conditions. Thus, the effect of ethnic consciousness on immigration attitudes must be situated within the broader regional, racial and political context

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I demonstrated how the historical legacy of Spanish and American colonialism and contemporary racialization shape Nuevomexicanos' understandings of membership within the ethnoracial category Mexican compared to other Mexican-origin people, particularly Mexican immigrants. I specified how (1) conceptions of ancestry and nationality shape Nuevomexicanos' identity construction; (2) how regional context shapes Nuevomexicanos' perceptions of their racial status; and (3) how their relationship to the ethnoracial category of Mexican shapes their immigration attitudes. These findings provide key insight into (1) Nuevomexicanos' ambiguous relationship with the ethnoracial category of Mexican; (2) the effect of double colonization on American race relations; (3) bridging theories of racialization and colonization to address Mexican Americans and other Latinos social positioning; (4) intra-group heterogeneity and Mexican Americans' perceptions of group membership. In this section, I address the conclusions of each empirical chapter, the theoretical and conceptual contributions of the Nuevomexicano case, and the broader social and political implications of the dissertation.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 2, the first empirical chapter, explores the meaning behind Nuevomexicanos' ethnic-labeling preferences. I find that Nuevomexicanos' prioritize their Spanish heritage to explain their established connection to New Mexico, and to enact dissociation from the stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants. Yet despite their claims to Spanish ancestry, Nuevomexicanos did not identify as racially white. These findings challenge scholarly research and rank-and-file assumptions that Nuevomexicanos' claims to Spanish ancestry are a simply a claim to whiteness. Alternately, I argue that prioritizing Spanish heritage allows Nuevomexicanos to emphasize that

their established presence in the region is tied to New Mexico's history of Spanish colonization, and a defensive strategy to enact dissociation from the stigma aimed at Mexican immigrants.

Chapter 3 shows that Nuevomexicanos downplayed or negated their experiences with racial discrimination because they do not see themselves as belonging to a stigmatized group. Generally, they perceive that their long history and demographic representation in New Mexico merits their group a privileged status within the racial landscape, especially relative to Mexican immigrants and whites. I argue that Nuevomexicanos' racial frames are rooted in a colonial ideology operating in New Mexico and a color-blind ideology in the larger United States. These findings indicate that people's racial frames can be attributable to the regional ideological discourse around race and racism, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination. Given that Nuevomexicanos' frames are partially rooted in colonization, these findings also indicate that there are multiple racial orders operating in the United States.

Chapter 4 shows that Nuevomexicanos' immigration attitudes can closely mirror that of whites because they do not view that their economic and socio-political realities are linked to the stigmatization of Mexican immigrants. This is because Nuevomexicanos vary in the extent to which they identify with the category of "Mexican" and view Mexican immigrants as their co-ethnics. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos do not interpret the immigration debate as discriminatory toward their group. I argue that ethnoracial solidarity, as a group formation response to immigrants' racialization, is a contingent outcome shaped by Mexican Americans and Latinos perceived structural position in U.S. society. These findings prioritize structural positioning and ideological context explanations over exclusive group consciousness rationales in understanding Mexican Americans' attitudes toward Mexican immigrants and immigration.

Theoretical and Conceptual Contributions

Usage of "Hispanic" and Ambiguous Ethnicity Claims

The term "Hispanic" in New Mexico and Texas often differentiates Mexican Americans from Mexican immigrants (Dowling 2014; Nieto- Phillips 2004). In New Mexico, the relatively low percentage of other Latino groups, including Mexican immigrants, advances an exclusive definition of "Hispanic" as native born. Unlike prior research, I found that the term was integral to representing Nuevomexicanos' conceptions of ancestry and nationality. While "Hispanic" enabled Nuevomexicanos to differentiate themselves from Mexican immigrants and highlight their Americanness similar to other Mexican Americans, the term also enabled Nuevomexicanos to emphasize their rootedness in New Mexico. Therefore, "Hispanic" represents a regional identity that addresses their colonized incorporation into the American polity, as well as their long history and demographic dominance in New Mexico. Moreover, while Nuevomexicanos usage of "Hispanic" enabled them to highlight their ethnic distinctiveness from other Mexican-origin people, Hispanic also represents a racialized identity. Given that Nuevomexicanos are often mistaken for Mexican immigrants more than they are for whites, Nuevomexicanos are aware that they are perceived as foreign and non-white. Thus, the Hispanic term also represents how they perceive their positioning within the racial landscape—they do not enjoy the same privileges as whites despite their long-standing presence in the Southwestern United States.

From an organizational theory perspective, ambiguous categories provide flexibility, allowing organizations to frame classifications in ways that meet their goals (Negro, Koçak and Hsu 2010). In the creation of a new Hispanic category in the 1980s, Mora (2014) argues that ambiguity played a central cognitive tool that allowed the American government, Spanish media and ethnic organizations to forge Hispanic category. Similar to prior research, I argue that there

is power in the ambiguity behind Nuevomexicanos' usage of "Hispanic" because it provides Nuevomexicanos the flexibility to define their ethnicity depending on audience. Specifically, I find that while usage of "Hispanic" enabled Nuevomexicanos to generally convey their ethnicity to out-group members, Nuevomexicanos provided inconsistent conceptions of their ethnic background. These fragmented conceptions of ancestry are tied to the historical legacy of claiming Spanish as a public expression of identification (Gonzales 1997b). In the early twentieth century, Nuevomexicanos deployed "Spanish" in public settings as political and accommodative identity, particularly in reference to Anglo-Americans. My research suggests that the distinction between private and public expressions of identity has blurred over time. This is because of Nuevomexicanos' experiences with nativism and racism. Thus, I argue that the ambiguity behind Nuevomexicanos' usage of "Hispanic" arose partly from their resistance to discrimination, which is rooted in their history of Spanish and American colonization, and continuous Mexican immigration.

Vasquez's (2010) notion of flexible ethnicity refers to the "ability of people to deftly and effectively navigate different racial terrains to be considered an 'insider' in more than one racial or ethnic group" (p. 46). Flexible ethnicity highlights the degree to which racial discrimination shapes people's identity choices. Moreover, situational ethnicity (Nagel 1994; Okamura 1981) details that people have a host of identity classifications available to them, and can amplify or downplay aspects of their ethnicity. My research contributes to notions of flexible and situational ethnicity. In particular, I emphasize the power of ambiguity as a key mechanism in enabling Nuevomexicanos to define the label *and* content of their ethnicity. Therefore, Nuevomexicanos use the ethnic ambiguity behind the Hispanic term to highlight different identity meanings. Generally, this ambiguity enables Nuevomexicanos to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness; to

combat discrimination; to maintain a sense of groupness with one another; and the flexibility to define in- and out-group members. For example, I show that Nuevomexicanos include and exclude Mexican immigrants and American Indians in their conceptions of ancestry. I argue that these contradictory frames hang together because Nuevomexicanos subscribe to the fuzzy notion that they share a common culture, and strategically differentiate themselves from the negative attributes associated with Mexican immigrants and American Indians. Altogether, I highlight how ambiguity as a key identity mechanism helps Nuevomexicanos navigate different contexts.

Double Colonization and the American racial landscape

Gomez (2007) argues that the southwest developed in a "double colonization" context where various ethnoracial groups navigated two distinct racial regimes—Spanish and American. While the Spanish colonial regime imposed a system of status inequality that viewed and treated Indigenous people as savage others, the American colonial regime imposed the one-drop rule where blacks had very few legal and social rights compared to whites. A central aspect of both the Spanish and American racial orders was an ideology of white supremacy. Building on Gomez's (2007) research, I argue that Mexican Americans, at large, continue to navigate both racial orders. Within the Spanish hierarchy, I show that Nuevomexicanos construct their identity in opposition to American Indians and Mexican immigrants. This is because Spanishness was constructed relative to Indianness and Mexicanness, despite the fact that territories of the United States and Mexico were in flux during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Vargas 2011). Within the American hierarchy, Nuevomexicanos can prioritize their Spanishness to defend their American identities and rootedness in the southwestern United States, and, depending on demographic context, distance themselves from Blacks and American Indians. Within the American racial hierarchy, Spanishness also enables Nuevomexicanos to claim whiteness.

Nuevomexicanos' claims to whiteness do not necessarily mean that they perceive themselves as Anglo or white but can be a discursive tool to buffer themselves from discrimination (Dowling 2014; Gómez 2007; O'brien 2008).

Research on racial perceptions of Mexicans (Sue 2013), Brazilians (Twine 1998), Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Roth 2012) demonstrates that they draw on multiple nonracism frames to downplay the existence of racism in their own region. These nonracism frames are partially tied to *mestizo* ideology at the time of state formation. This research also details that ties to the United States increases the probability of people recognizing colorism in their region of origin (Roth 2012; Sue 2013). While these studies explain how the Black-White racial order shapes people's racial ideologies in their region of origin, the Nuevomexicano case further demonstrates that Latin America and the United States have overlapping systems of race relations. Specifically, the legacy of the Spanish-Indigenous racial order is part of the United States' national fabric and varies in degree by region. This is key to understanding variation in people's racial perceptions in the United States. In fact, the Nuevomexicano case suggests that people's racial perceptions can be attributable to regional discourse around race and racism, as well as demographic factors such as neighboring American Indians, and are not necessarily a product of their experiences with discrimination or their positioning within the racial landscape. This is similar to how racial attitudes are expressed in Latin America (Sue 2013; Twine 1998). In all, by viewing Latin America and the United States as having distinct systems of race, scholars overlook how people in both regions similarly manage their experiences with race and racism.

Bonilla-Silva (2004) and other scholars (Alba 2009; Daniel 2006; Roth 2012) predict that the American racial landscape is becoming more similar to the color line in Latin American countries, which emphasize national unity and organize social hierarchies more in terms of class

and phenotype than racial ancestry. This is rooted in the premise that despite *mestizo* ideology, the Spanish-Indigenous colonial order continues to shape social inequality in Latin America. In making the Latin Americanization of race relations' claim, these scholars inadequately address the legacy of the Spanish and American colonial orders in the southwestern United States. In fact, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, racial categories in New Mexico were fluid so that white skin, wealth and land ownership, and other attributes of social mobility were viewed as being able to "whiten" (Gómez 2007; Mitchell 2008). Moreover, political elites popularized a public ideology of triculturalism that downplayed existing group-based inequalities in New Mexico. Unlike the Latin American thesis, the Nuevomexicano case shows that the legacies of double colonization continue to operate simultaneously in the United States, and therefore, regional constructions of race relations matter. This means that the Spanish-Indigenous and Black-White hierarchies vary in degree of importance across the United States. In New Mexico, I have shown that the Spanish racial order takes precedent as Nuevomexicanos' identity construction in opposition to Mexican immigrants is rooted in the historical legacy of distancing from American Indians and anti-Mexican racism. In Texas, Dowling (2014) has shown that Mexican Americans do not view themselves as sharing the racial and political positioning of Mexican immigrants or African Americans. Overall, this research suggests that both the "Latin American," that is, Spanish-Indigenous binary, and "American," that is, Black-White binary, color lines operate in the United States.

Theorizing Mexican Americans and other Latinos

Telles and Ortiz (2008) argue that the status of Mexican Americans as a racialized group is rooted in their history of labor migrants destined for jobs at bottom of the economic hierarchy. Telles and Ortiz state that "an entrenched racialized way of thinking that places Mexicans in the

lower rungs of society seems to be at least partly responsible for their persistently low status, though the stigmatized nature of Mexican immigration has maintained or lowered their status (2008; 290)." Accordingly, incorporation theories should consider the historical and structural conditions of Mexican Americans and other ethnoracial groups. While Telles and Ortiz (2008) focus on racialization, the Nuevomexicano case extends our understanding of how colonization and its persistence in the southwestern United States has been central to Mexican Americans' historical and contemporary racialized status. Unlike the immigrant racialization perspective, a colonization lens centers the importance of imperialism and colonial domination. Therefore, the theoretical premise is that imperial encounters and systems of colonial power invented "race" (Go 2017; 2018). The colonial lens enables us to foreground the relationship between the colonized and colonizer, and examine the colonial effect on present-day conceptions of the racial landscape.

My research demonstrates that racialized constructions of difference that were first forged under colonialism persist for the broader Mexican-origin population. Studies have shown that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans selectively dissociate from the negative attributes associated with unauthorized Mexican immigrants (Garcia Bedolla 2003; Ochoa 2004; Vega 2014). Selective dissociation helps explain Mexican Americans' identity construction and restrictionist immigration attitudes. The Nuevomexicano case suggests that selective dissociation is a colonial strategy rooted in Mexican Americans' historical legacy of combatting anti-Mexican racism (Gómez 2007; Salgado 2018). Moreover, research shows that Latino immigrants' draw on country-of-origin schemas of race, that is, skin color does not matter and racism does not exist (Roth 2012; Zamora 2016), to help understand their new racial reality in the United States. The Nuevomexicano case indicates that a racial ideology grounded in Latin American style denial of

colorism and American racial categories operate simultaneously for Latinos. From this starting point, we can better understand the historical foundation of comments that valorize European cultural markers among U.S.-born Latino families. Lastly, the Nuevomexicano case suggests that wealth inequality for Mexican Americans is partially tied to the historical legacy of colonization. From the colonial perspective, Mexican Americans' limited socioeconomic progress (Salgado and Ortiz 2019) stems from the cumulative consequences of land dispossession and racialized policies and practices over time (Garcia 2010). Generally, analyzing the Mexican American experience through a colonial lens helps us better understand the historical and structural conditions that underpin Mexican Americans' social positioning.

In addition, researchers have come to contradictory conclusions regarding the effect of continuing Mexican immigration on how race and racism operates for Mexican Americans. Some scholars (Alba, Jiménez and Marrow 2013; Jiménez 2010) argue that the social boundaries between Mexicans and non-Mexicans would become more porous without continuous Mexican immigration, and therefore the white racial category would eventually expand to include Mexican Americans. Other scholars (Ochoa 2004; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Vasquez 2011) argue that Mexican Americans' racialized status is rooted in continuous Mexican immigration *and* a racial ideology of white supremacy in the United States. While my findings substantiate the latter argument, I draw further attention to the historical legacy of double colonization, state formation, American citizenship. While Nuevomexicanos distanced themselves from their Indigenous roots as a form of "whitening" to claim political and legal rights at the time of New Mexico statehood, Nuevomexicanos also distanced themselves from Mexican immigrants and Mexico despite the fact that the territorial boundaries of the US-Mexico border were in flux. This means that distancing from the Nation of Mexico has been central to the construction of American

citizenship. By only emphasizing continuous Mexican immigration as a key mechanism of Mexican Americans' racialization and the racialization of the immigration debate, we overlook how American citizenship was essentially constructed in contrast to Mexican citizenship. Thus, I argue that Mexican Americans' racialized status is rooted in both continuous Mexican immigration and the historical legacy of colonization.

Intra-group Heterogeneity and Perceptions of Group Membership

The Nuevomexicano case shows that other Mexican Americans can contest their ethnic and national membership with Mexican immigrants, resulting in a weak form of identification with the Mexican American term. Namely, Mexican Americans may enact dissociation in ethnic membership by emphasizing their distinct cultural, linguistic, and social experiences in the United States. Therefore, Mexican Americans may perceive their association with Mexican heritage on a spectrum, ranging between strong and weak, which, in turn, enables them to claim or contest the ethnoracial category of Mexican. Furthermore, Mexican Americans may enact dissociation in national membership by emphasizing their country of origin, immigration status, and regionality. Prior research has shown that geography, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, amplifies the importance of American nationality in defining "Mexican American" (Dowling 2014; Vila 2000). In all, these findings challenge scholarly assumptions that "Mexican American" is a widely, accepted form of identification among in-group members. Notably, the Nuevomexicano case indicates that "Mexican American" is a weak form of identification because of the historical and regional differences among Mexican Americans. Because there is no consistent understanding in how Mexican Americans label themselves ethnically, these findings suggest that "Mexican American" is a loosely maintained ethnoracial category.

What does it mean that people with shared ancestry do not necessarily view themselves as part of the same ethnoracial group? How do we theorize about loosely maintained identities? The Nuevomexicano case shows that Mexican Americans at large are constantly dealing with an assigned identity that has negative connotations. Moreover, Mexican Americans may have a thin or loose attachment to the Mexican category because the assignment pays little attention to the diversity within the Mexican category (Cornell and Hartmann 1998). The Nuevomexicano case also suggests that there is power in maintaining an ambiguous relationship with the Mexican category because of the negative stereotypes associated with unauthorized Mexican immigrants. Thus, ambiguity is a key mechanism that helps Nuevomexicanos navigate different ethnoracial contexts because they are able to define the content behind their labeling preferences. Yet this flexibility is distinct from symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979; Waters 1990) since Nuevomexicanos are still viewed as foreign and non-white regardless of their multiple identity expressions.

Given my proposition that Mexican Americans have an ambiguous relationship to the "Mexican" category, my research substantiates the notion that membership with Mexicanness is contingent (Brubaker 2002). From this perspective, we can better understand why Mexican Americans respond to their racialization in distinct and often in opposing ways. For example, while the 2006 immigrant marches exhibited ethnoracial solidarity that emerged from a heighted sense of racialization among Mexican Americans (Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013), the racialization of the immigration debate also created ethnoracial cleavages among restrictionist Mexican Americans (Vega 2014). While some Mexican Americans downplay their experiences with racial discrimination to "fit in" with whites, other Mexican Americans recognize their experiences with racism and rally against their marginalization (Dowling 2014). Thus, given the

heterogeneity among the Mexican-origin population and the negative connotation associated with the Mexican label, membership within the Mexican category is contingent (Brubaker 2002).

Broad Implications and Future Research

These findings caution against scholarly assertions that structurally assimilated Latinos are more likely to identify as racially white. Despite their notable levels of incorporation into American society, Nuevomexicanos deployed Hispanic over white identities to assert their American-ness. For Nuevomexicanos*,* the Hispanic category represents an American-oriented identity that facilitated a favorable redefinition of their group because they were viewed as foreign and non-white (Lacayo 2017). Moreover, there have been recent efforts to change the U.S. Census race and ethnicity categories to more accurately reflect people's ethnoracial identification (Strmic-Pawl, Jackson and Garner 2018). For Latinos, this means a combined race and ethnicity question that allows them to simply fill in their preferred label. Despite these promising proposed changes, I show that there are multiple meanings behind identity labels. For Nuevomexicanos, "Hispanic" may mean not Mexican in one context or may prioritize Spanish in another context or both. The general ambiguity behind "Hispanic" allows Nuevomexicanos to navigate two different racial hierarchies. Therefore, it is important for scholars to understand regional constructions of race in making theoretical claims regarding Latinos' identity claims.

The Nuevomexicano case also demonstrates that other Mexican Americans and Latinos respond to race and racism in distinct and often opposing ways. This is because they are heterogeneous group with different histories and relationships in navigating the American racial and political landscape. Therefore, when thinking about Latino voting patterns in the United States, it is important to consider how Latinos perceive their structural position relative to other ethnoracial groups, as well as the relationship of these structural perceptions to the regional and

national character of debates concerning race and immigration (Vega and Ortiz 2017). This will help us better understand whether and how ideologies of race relations and immigration intersect. Furthermore, researchers have argued that people can deploy various racial frames as a buffer to downplay their experiences with racism. This is a form of colorblind discourse that negates race as an explanation for inequality. Yet it is also the case that people downplay racial discrimination because Barack Obama's Presidency has been associated with notions of a "post racial" America. Future studies should assess how political context shapes racial ideologies and in particular, how the Trump Presidency shapes the ways in which rank-and-file people talk about race and racism.

The growth of genetic ancestry testing has brought concerns that these tests will transform consumers' racial and ethnic identities, producing "geneticized identities" that are determined by genetic knowledge (Roth and Ivemark 2018). However, the Nuevomexicano case demonstrates that, despite their persistent claims to Spanish ancestry, they have not successfully distanced themselves from the ethnoracial category of Mexican on the part of out-group members. In response to genetic determinism theory, these findings indicate that people cannot simply pick and choose their identities if outsiders will not accept their identity claims. Moreover, news outlets speculate that increasing diversity in the United States will naturally usher in racial equality, especially as the white population declines (Tavernise 2018). Yet my works shows that Nuevomexicanos construct their identities in opposition to Mexican immigrants, in part, because they are often viewed as foreign and non-white. These experiences with nativism and racism continue despite the fact that New Mexico has and continues to be a majority-minority state.

APPENDIX: TABLES

Table 1. Percentage distribution of ethnic-labeling preferences among Nuevomexicanos (*N=78*)

Ethnic labels	
Chicana/o	9 (7)
Hispanic	72 (56)
Latina/o	3 (2)
Mexican American	1 (1)
New Mexican	3 (2)
Spanish	13 (10)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are frequencies. Sample size (*N*) represents the number of participants.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of ancestry claims among Nuevomexicanos (*N=78*)

Ancestry	
Spanish	40 (31)
Mixed	27 (21)
Vague	33 (26)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are frequencies. Sample size (*N*) represents the number of participants.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of conceptions of nationality among Nuevomexicanos (N=78)

Conceptions of Nationality	
Dissociation from Mexico	55 (43)
Association with New Mexico	62 (48)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are frequencies. Sample size (*N*) represents the number of participants. Frequencies do not equal total number of participants, as many reported more than one theme for nationality.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of race-minimizing and counter frameworks among Nuevomexicanos (N=96)

	Hispanic (N=96)
Race-Minimizing Frameworks	
Multiculturalism	43% (41)
Class Inequality	26% (25)
Spatial Comparisons	33% (32)
Counter-Discourses	
Racial Inequality	35% (34)

Note: The sample size (N) represents the number of participants. Numbers in parentheses are frequencies. Frequencies do not equal the number of participants in the Hispanic category because participants reported more than one theme.

Table 5. Percentage distribution of immigration attitudes by ancestry claims among Nuevomexicanos (N=78)

	Ancestry Claims			
	Mixed (N=22)	Spanish (N=30)	Vague (N=26)	Total (N=78)
Immigration Attitudes				
Liberal	55% (12)	13% (4)	19% (5)	27% (21)
Restrictionist	18% (4)	63% (19)	50% (13)	46% (36)
Ambiguous	27% (6)	23% (7)	31% (8)	27% (21)

Note: The sample size (N) represents the number of participants. Numbers in parentheses are frequencies.

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