Between Sovereignty and Coordination:

Reevaluating the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance

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Abstract

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Written and signed in 1967 by Black and Chicano Power movement leaders in Albuquerque, NM during the fifth annual convention of La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Land Grant Alliance), the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance documents one of many instances of coordination between economically disadvantaged and culturally marginalized groups in the 1960s and 70s seeking civil rights. In this project, I examine this Treaty for its affordances and limitations, affirming its radical reframing of Mexican American and African American relationships, communication, and interaction and critiquing it for its unproductive ambiguity that didn't allow them to mobilize in the way the Treaty envisioned to unpack lessons for activists and groups seeking to organize and create interorganizational communication.

Introduction

"Article I Section C – Both peoples, do promise not to permit the members of either said peoples, to make false propaganda of any kind whatsoever against each other, either by Speech or by Writing."

"Article III Section A – Both peoples (races) to promise, that each side will study, without fail, the needs of the other, in order to gain each others Mutual understanding."

Written and signed in 1967 by Black and Chicano Power[i] movement leaders in Albuquerque, NM during the fifth annual convention of La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Land Grant Alliance), the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance documents one of many instances of coordination between economically disadvantaged and culturally marginalized groups in the 1960s and 70s seeking civil rights. The above quotations exemplify the two main goals of the Treaty: 1) to minimize conflict between groups and 2) to establish mutual understanding with one another. Though it wasn't the only cross-racial attempt at working together among activist groups during the Civil Rights era, it is one of the only documented instances of alliance designed as a treaty. In this project, I examine this Treaty for its affordances and limitations, affirming its radical reframing of Mexican American and African American relationships, communication, and interaction and critiquing it for its unproductive ambiguity that didn't allow them to mobilize in the way the Treaty envisioned in order to unpack lessons for activists and groups seeking to organize and create interorganizational communication.

Interorganizational communication can be envisioned as a tool to form a coalition. Coalitions are alliances in which groups interdependently develop equitable interorganizational structures through sustained dialogue, interaction, education, constructive conflict, and leveraging of differences to establish new understandings of one another and their missions based on trust and respect.[ii] Management scholar Barbara Gray defines what she calls collaboration and what, for the purposes of this project, I am conceptualizing as coalition as a process where groups can use their differences to "go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible."[iii] This process includes joint decision making, interdependence of stakeholders, "collective responsibility," and dialogue to handle differences.[iv] Additionally, according to sociologists Melvin Oliver and David Grant, to design a long-term coalition, there must be "spaces and places in which diverse groups can come together to forge new understandings that recognize distinct group interests . . . through sustained interaction, communication, and the development of trust."[v] Many complex elements make up a coalitional structure, especially when it comes to bridging multiple, often conflicting, disparate interests and methods into one. The joining or "oneness" is key to coalition because, while it does still allow respective groups to maintain their own identities, the union becomes the priority. Coalition scholar Robert Hess III articulates the significance of a group consciousness for generating advocacy: "individuals respectfully interact with one another, they learn of each other's experiences and needs and enter into a group consciousness in which they begin to intercede, or advocate, on each other's behalf."[vi] In this way, ideally, all interests are magnified within the coalition because all interests are represented through education and interaction, creating opportunities for members to advocate for one another and themselves.

Based on these conceptualizations of coalition, the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance can be misidentified as an attempt at long-term coalition because of its

language to educate groups about one another to foster understanding (as in Art. III Sec. A above) while diminishing conflict such as violence or propaganda that could keep them apart. At first glance, these goals and language seem as though they represent a coalitional attempt because they offer opportunities for interaction and communication, and the groups involved perceive themselves as equal. However, upon deeper reading, aspects of the Treaty reveal that a coalitional understanding of the document is inappropriate because it is not what the signatories were trying to do; instead of coalition, they were forming a coordination.

While the Treaty hasn't received much attention within the scholarly community, what attention it has received has characterized it as a failure of unification and categorized it as an unsuccessful attempt at coalition. For instance, historian Brian D. Behnken writes that the Treaty "signified the willingness of each side to discuss unity, but ultimately produced no long-term unification of the black and Chicano civil rights movements."[vii] Behnken thus judged the text a failed attempt at unification, calling this Treaty an "inchoate attempt at bridging differences between browns and blacks" in the history of race relations.[viii] In a similar vein, historian Gordon Mantler considers it a failed attempt at unification when he describes the Treaty as "highly symbolic" with its "vague promises" serving as the "largest tangible accomplishment in *coalition* building" during the "superficial spectacle" of the convention.[ix] These assessments of the Treaty identify why the document can be perceived as a failed attempt at coalition (i.e. its indeterminate language makes it symbolic rather than realistic and rudimentary rather than developed).

While I agree that there are several limitations within the document, I argue it should not be critiqued for doing something it was not designed to do—that is, unify or create a coalition. Calling the Treaty a negligible "accomplishment of coalition building" that was feeble because it was merely symbolic, or a failure of "long-term unification" that was marred by its imperfect rhetoric, is misjudging this artifact and its context. Neither the Treaty nor its signatories were

ready for coalition and reading it as an attempt at coalition ignores the priorities of its authors and situation, creating a misunderstanding of the document.

Coordination is conceptualized by interorganizational communication scholars Renne Guarriello Heath and Matthew G. Isbell's as a stage in which organizations "take on needed roles but function relatively independently of each other... There is some shared risk, but most of the authority and accountability falls to the individual organization... Resources are acknowledged and can be made available to others for a specific project."[x] The degrees of separation between coalition and coordination lie in the extent to which the organizations involved establish a shared structure for leadership, resources, and successes. For the coalitional, or as they call it, collaborative effort, Heath and Isbell explain that coalitions contain more shared decision-making processes and responsibilities because the organizations are interdependent.[xi] A coordinated effort has a formalized agreement for the relationship, but no interdependence between groups; the organizations maintain their independence and coordinate only when necessary to further their related, but still separate, visions and goals. Coordinated groups perceive their missions as compatible while coalitional groups create new missions that suit, represent, and unify every group's needs. The Treaty had no intention of establishing unification through coalition and instead prioritized their separate actions and methods. Independence is exemplified in the epigraph, where the signatories repeatedly emphasize their separation as separate peoples with separate needs in Art. III Sec. A: "Both peoples (races) to promise, that each side will study, without fail, the needs of the other, in order to gain each others Mutual understanding." Because of this accentuation of their identity as distinct peoples, races, or sides, and desire to remain separate but still develop a framework for mutual understanding, the Treaty is more of an effort at coordination than an effort at coalition.

Read as an attempt at coordination, a new understanding of what it takes to become a coalition (especially during the 1960s and 70s) emerges from the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance. Especially for groups who prioritize their sovereignty above all else, scaffolding is required before entering a coalition. Collaboration isn't a process that can be rushed or sprinted toward, and a step-ladder toward coalition materializes from re-reading this Treaty as an attempt at coordination only.

Ultimately, I argue that contrary to its characterization by historians as an attempt at coalition, the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance was designed merely to establish coordination between Black and Chicano Power movements, responding to its kairotic moment which prioritized sovereignty for race-based activist groups during this period. Rather than dismiss the text as a failed attempt at coalition, I urge a new appreciation for the complexity of the document by analyzing the impact of the signatories' rhetorical decisions along with the external conditions that contributed to those decisions and how they played a part in creating coordination between the groups. In the remainder of this article, I will contextualize the Treaty's creation and enumerate the obstacles and conflicts surrounding the groups involved. I will then conduct a three-part analysis of the Treaty's genre, topos of mutual aid, and strategic and unproductive ambiguity. In my conclusion, I will discuss the Treaty's implications for contemporary discourse on coordination and collaboration in activism and how this case study shapes our understanding of coordination.

Treaty Creation and Context

Inspiration for the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance began with a previous failed attempt at coalition. From August 30th -September 4th, 1967, nearly 200 political organizations gathered in Chicago, Illinois for the first and last National Conference for New

Politics (NCNP).[xii] Their goal was to create a unified strategy to remove President Lyndon B. Johnson from office in the upcoming 1968 election by mobilizing their respective groups into a collaborative effort.[xiii] Although the Conference invited a diverse number of organizations across cultures and races, it was predominantly dominated by Black Power groups and White allies, and the tensions between those groups were palpable. Such tensions at the NCNP destabilized the conference and resulted in its eventual dissolution and disappearance from scholarly civil rights history.[xiv] Although the NCNP itself didn't produce the unified approach or sustainable coalition they visualized, they allowed for key actors among the Chicano and Black Power movements to introduce themselves and see the potential for cross-racial coalition among their groups.

The events of the NCNP left lasting impressions on Chicano activists Reies Lopez Tijerina and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, who noticed the "invisibility" of Chicano needs and experiences during the Conference and decided to begin emulating Black Power movement strategies to garner the attention and support they needed.[xv] Tijerina especially saw the potential for cross-racial coalition because he recognized the overlaps between Black Power ideology and his own nationalist efforts through his organization – La Alianza Federal de Mercedes, dedicated to returning land to Mexican Americans promised and then stolen from them after the 1864-1868 U.S.-Mexico War and Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Tijerina saw Black nationalism as similar to his own goals for self-determination and autonomy.[xvi] Black Power ideology aligned with Tijerina's views on battling white supremacy and their shared victimization and oppression was a building block to their eventual Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance.

In his book detailing and tracing this history, Mantler found that although Black Power ideology and nationalism "may have made coalition building with whites untenable in many cases, black power organization in principle had fewer qualms organizing alongside and at times partnering with other racial minorities also viewed as victims of white supremacy."[xvii] Mantler's

analysis is supported by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's own writing when they described how coalitions with Black Power groups will be meaningful if "both or all parties are not only willing but believe it absolutely necessary to challenge Anglo-conformity and other prevailing norms and institutions," which Tijerina was more than willing to do.[xviii]

During the NCNP, Tijerina made every effort to network and establish connections with African American movement members and leaders and invite them to the La Alianza convention in the upcoming months. Tijerina identified shared goals with the Black Power movement but not shared racial/ethnic identity. Mantler argued that Tijerina deliberately identified as "*indiohispano"* to represent his Spanish and Indigenous heritage and thus distinctiveness from whiteness but explicitly excluding any real or potential African heritage.[xix] This strategy allowed Tijerina to align and parallel his movement with Black Power organizations without co-opting the latter or creating complicated identity overlaps. Such narrow identification would impact the success of the Treaty and its potency because the emphasis remained on self-determination of separate groups rather than overlapping identity experiences. Furthermore, such limited identification not only maintained a divided or segregated mentality of the groups and their potential for organizing but also did not allow any room for identity overlaps with Afro-Latino, mixed race, Afro-indigenous, or more broadly, people of color.

When the time came for the Convention, there were nearly 400 attendees, about 50 of them were members of different Black Power movements such as the Black Panthers, Black Youth Congress, Congress of Racial Equality, Black Students Union, Black Anti-Draft Unit, US Organization, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.[xx] Although Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King Jr. did not attend, there were several other Black leaders and movement powerhouses present – Maulana Ron Karenga, Ralph Featherstone, Walter Bremond, Angela Davis, and Ethel Minor. Most of the other attendees were Alianza members such as

Corky Gonzales, Bert Corona, and José Angel Gutiérrez.[xxi] Also present was one of Tijerina's biggest allies for land grant protection – Thomas Banyacya, a Hopi spiritual leader. It is unclear the extent of the influence or presence that Banyacya had on the Convention and Treaty. Although he is one of the signatories, the Treaty's focus on only Black and Chicano groups suggests that the Indigenous identity was either absorbed into the Chicano identity or, because the Indigenous groups had no conflict with the Black and Chicano power groups, they were present as a neutral member to hold the other members accountable or offer a neutral perspective. The Convention created an environment for radical interaction/education between groups and established a sense of mutual aid and solidarity. At the same time Both Black Power and Chicano Power leaders addressed the convention and even led chants for "*poder negro"* (Black power) and Chicano Power in English and Spanish.[xxii]

Before the Convention concluded, the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance was created and signed by "Tijerina, Karenga, Banyacya, Featherstone, Bremond, Eliezer Risco of *La Raza* newspaper, Anthony Babu of the Black Panther Party and Black Student Union, and James Dennis of CORE."[xxiii] The Treaty itself is reported to have been written behind closed doors during the Convention with no women present, a stipulation and request made by Karenga.[xxiv] With this Treaty, the La Alianza convention was able to accomplish something that the NCNP couldn't, thus demonstrating to Black and Chicano Power groups that alliance was possible and shift the ways in which African Americans and Mexican Americans perceived their relationship.

According to former activist Ernesto B. Vigil, the Treaty "was printed and distributed by the Third World Committee of [M. Ron] Karenga's [US] organization."[xxv] A copy of the Treaty was printed in *La Raza* and *Inferno,* two alternative newspapers that reported on Chicano

movement efforts, and it is also mentioned in the *LA Times* along with an interview with Tijerina in which he discusses his motivations for the Convention and Treaty.[xxvi]

Despite this general knowledge of the Treaty's context, it is still somewhat shrouded in mystery. One of the only full copies of the Treaty I found was in a government document entitled "Extent of Subversion in the New Left." It was a transcript of a testimony given by Robert J. Thomas (an LA police officer in the intelligence division) to a hearing of the Subcommittee on Internal Security for the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. Senate. This hearing was conducted in 1970 to investigate the activities of "subversive and violent organizations" (US, the Black Congress, the Black Panther Party, the Friends of the Panthers, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Brown Berets, etc.), their "ties" to one another, and how/where they receive funding.[xxvii] The treaty was submitted to the hearing as part of a report on the events of the Convention that detailed who was present, who spoke, what occurred during the event, and different documents produced during the event. The author of the report is unknown, but likely an FBI agent or law enforcement individual who was present to monitor the activities. The Treaty's presence in this government document is indicative of how Black and Chicano Power groups were seen as threats by U.S. government entities and required vigilant surveillance. Therefore, its disappearance can be considered evidence of the violent historiography exerted by U.S. government surveillance on social movements during the 60s and 70s. While there is no evidence of undermining or interference on behalf of the U.S. government of the alliance itself, the constant monitoring and surveilling by the U.S. on social movements such as these suggests that the obscurity of the document may at least partially have been the result of such external forces. However, such a conclusion would be premature because the rhetorical dynamics of the Treaty suggest that the Judiciary Committee surveilling the groups had nothing to worry about.

The effort was never meant to achieve coalition, and the limited attempt at coordination it imagined would end up collapsing on its own.

Backdrop of conflict between African American and Mexican American groups

For African American and Mexican American communities, there is a history of collaboration, cooperation, and unity dating all the way back to colonialization and the inception of the U.S. There is also a history of racial discrimination, tension, exclusion, and competition between these cultural groups. These tensions are addressed indirectly in the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance and warrant discussion/contextualization. Conflict between Black and Chicano power groups is rooted in segregation, competition over "limited" resources, racism, and perceptions of the black/white binary in the U.S. Civil Rights movement.

With the implementation of segregation and Jim Crow in the U.S. came increased division between minority cultural groups. Behnken argues that "segregation itself assisted in the development of two distinct civil rights movements. Jim Crow separated African Americans and Mexican Americans from whites but also each other."[xxviii] Whiteness and white supremacy actively work against coalition building and mutual understanding because the simplified taxonomy of identities serves whiteness. For example, in San Antonio, Texas the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) produced segregated schools for different neighborhoods - separate schools for white, Mexican, and Black communities. The same segregation occurred in Los Angeles, California where according to historian Robert Bauman "the segregated realities of their existence and the separatist economic and cultural ideology of the Chicano movement... led groups such as the Brown Berets away from working across racial lines with African Americans."[xxix] In other words, physical separation through segregation implied that the groups were incompatible or were meant to be separated based on the same racist principles that

founded Jim Crow and segregation between white and Black people. This distance meant that there was not only minimal interaction between groups but also minimal understanding because their conceptions of one another were filtered and restricted.

With segregation came the perception that minority groups such as Mexican Americans and African Americans were in competition over limited resources. According to political scientist Gabriel R. Sanchez, "Despite shared interests, competition over occupational, educational, and political resources often served as an obstacle for positive attitudes and coalition formation between these two groups."[xxx] The idea that resources were limited stems mainly from President Lyndon B. Johnson's 1965 legislation (the Civil Rights and Economic Opportunity Acts of 1964) that became unofficially known as the "War on Poverty."[xxxi] Although this "war" was meant to unify across class lines, it did so in a colorblind manner and perpetuated the competition between racial groups. In his description of the impact of the two programs developed by the War on Poverty in LA, historian William S. Clayson argues that "neither of these initiatives was designed to give special consideration to one race or groups at the expense of another...The [Economic Opportunity Act] EOA targeted an economically identified group – the poor. Yet, the story of black-brown conflict within OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] programs suggests that Mexican Americans and African Americans prioritized the interests of their group and defined their own poverty along racial and economic lines.[xxxii] The colorblind approach to the War on Poverty was not attuned to the specific and respective needs of communities of color, especially extremely segregated communities, and instead flattened needs across race, class, and gender to address economic inequality generally. Each group tended to demand resources and create programs to address their respective, specific community needs.

Perceptions of competition over limited resources are apparent in San Antonio activist Harry V. Burns' words when he remembered that "blacks did not want to join forces with

Mexican Americans because 'it would cause some of the benefits to be split... they would be competing with us.'"[xxxiii] Conversely, Chicano activist Manuel Avila explained that "to go to bat for the Negro as a Mexican-American is suicide."[xxxiv] In Los Angeles especially, the War on Poverty meant different things to different groups, which further cultivated tensions. According to Bauman,

> African Americans tended to view the War on Poverty, especially its community-action aspect, as a logical extension of the democratization of American society initiated by the black civil rights movement. In addition, as the ideology of Black Power became more influential in the second half of the 1960s, African Americans demonstrated an unwillingness to align themselves with any other racial or ethnic group. At the same time, Mexican-origin people comprised a larger percentage of the population in Los Angeles, and many believed they should have an increased share of the War on Poverty programs. Their growing population and burgeoning cultural and political activism led some Chicanos to demand more programs and services from the War on Poverty.[xxxv]

Because African Americans saw the War on Poverty as an extension of the Civil Rights act, Mexican Americans felt neglected and overlooked. On the other hand, as "the Mexican American population poised to surpass African Americas as the nation's largest minority, many Black leaders came to view Mexican Americans as a threat to their political agenda and the economic betterment of their communities."[xxxvi] Mexican American and African American groups saw one another as potential threats to the gaining of resources.

Another tension between Black and Chicano groups at the time was the Black/white binary of the Civil Rights movement. In his piece on coalitions among minority groups, Kevin R. Johnson argues that civil rights have been traditionally negotiated primarily between Black and white groups in the U.S. and have ignored/excluded other groups such as Mexican Americans,

Asian Americans, or Native Americans.[xxxvii] This binary mentality is apparent in Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's 1967 book on Black Power and the politics of liberation. Carmichael and Hamilton discuss coalitions and coalitional attempts only between white and Black groups, rejecting them based on a history of exploitive and manipulative alliances. American Studies Scholar Jeb Middlebrook makes this observation in his own analysis when he writes, "Carmichael and Hamilton were cautious to adopt the theory and practice of integrated organizations whole-heartedly…. They identified tokenistic relationships of Black people in integrated coalitions with whites in the past and cautioned against alliances that did not translate into material changes in the lives of Black people," which they worried would happen during the NCNP.[xxxviii] Such caution toward coalition and cross-racial alliance was rooted in Black Power emphasis on self-determination of Black people as preceding collectivity and coalition. Prioritizing self-determination was an effort in response to the scarcity of resources or perception of scarcity. Ensuring that their respective communities were secure first was a necessity that preceded any coalitional attempts.

Carmichael's characterization of Black and white coalitions is also evidence of racism and differences in experiences with racial discrimination between Mexican American and African American groups. Historically, to achieve assimilation into U.S. society, Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans displaced by the U.S.-Mexico war, had to identify as white.[xxxix] Such identification not only amplified competition between the groups but also erased the perception that Mexican Americans could experience racial discrimination because they were considered white and absorbed into whiteness. When Mexican Americans began to identify as Chicanos and as a distinct racial group that experienced oppression, they faced challenges because discrimination against them wasn't systematized or explicitly engrained in the law like Jim Crow and segregation were.[xl] The Chicano movement began modeling their protests and

organizations after Black Power movements.[xli] However, due to their historic identification or classification as white, the Chicano demands and grievances were often considered illegitimate by a U.S. legal system that didn't have any laws that technically discriminated against Mexican Americans in the same way it did African Americans through segregation and Jim Crow. [xlii]

Additionally, in assimilating to whiteness and American culture, some Mexican immigrants or foreign-born Mexican Americans also perpetuated racism and colorism against African Americans in the U.S. Anti-Black sentiments among foreign-born Latinos are likely rooted in the colorism that prevails in Mexico, a system that the Mexican people inherited from their Spanish colonizers. Conversely, "some African Americans have embraced xenophobic views toward Latina/os and Asians."[xliii] Despite facing several overlapping experiences with oppression, these groups did not or could not collaborate because systems of white supremacy obscured their overlaps and made working together nearly impossible. Overcoming these conflicts and historic differences is a crucial first step to the development of coordination, as evidenced by the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance.

Analyzing the Treaty

In the following three sections, I analyze the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance using three interrelated levels of analysis: treaty metaphor, mutual aid topos, and strategic ambiguity. Understanding these rhetorical decisions and their impact will allow a more comprehensive understanding of the Treaty as a coordination and its implications for future study.

Treaty Metaphor

Framed by these tensions and the failures of the NCNP, the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance is an impressive and unique artifact that responds to its moment and demonstrates an attempt to transition activist groups from solely sovereign bodies to entities working in coordination. The rhetorical decisions exhibited within the Treaty demonstrate both their goals and their capacities to handle an alliance.

The first question a scholar of rhetoric might have about the text is how and why the signatories decided to write this document in the form of a treaty rather than other unifying legal documents such as an agreement, memorandum, or settlement. Invoking a genre means that rhetors are calling on recognizable characteristics that their text shares with others in the same index and using those similarities to leverage their legitimacy by participating in a history while also responding to a specific rhetorical situation. [xliv]

The treaty is a genre that the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), defines as "an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law."[xlv] Internationality and sovereignty are components for subjects to enter into treaty signing, which assumes independent states entering into an agreement that is binding on both parties. The Treaty Handbook (2012) prepared by the UN Office of Legal Affairs described that those signing the document are acting with "full powers," meaning that heads of states "may sign a treaty on behalf of the State."[xlvi] These characteristics are exhibited in several historic and modern treaties that have been enacted between nations to end conflict, draw new borders, establish trade relationships, etc.[xlvii] For the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance, these norming definitions that assume internationality, permanence, and sovereignty imply that the Black and Chicano groups that signed the treaty were *acting* as independent nations, and their signatories were essentially acting with the "full powers" of their respective "nations" or cultural groups.

However, Black and Chicano activist groups are not technically sovereign or international nations as the Vienna Convention or Treaty Handbook would define those terms. In the case of the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance, this use of the treaty genre is thus a metaphor. Rather than a literal treaty, the signatories use the treaty genre as a vehicle of argument, implicitly comparing their agreement to a treaty and thus selecting "some aspects of a subject to emphasize, while deflecting our attention from other aspects of that subject."[xlviii] By using the treaty genre as a metaphor, Black and Chicano signatories emphasize their sovereignty to establish their self-determination and their desire to remain independent while deflecting the fact that they are not nation states with authority established by international law. Metaphors, as described by rhetorician Michael Osborn, allow rhetors to control perception.[xlix] The treaty metaphor, established both in the name of the document and its participation in the formal generic structure of such an international agreement, allows the signatories to control how they are *perceived* as legitimate, separate entities entering into a negotiated settlement.

The Treaty language exemplifies the groups' sovereignty by consistently making it explicit that they are separate "peoples (races)." They start most of their sections naming themselves as "Both peoples" instead of starting their sections with "We" or "Our" or "Together." This insistence on sovereignty is indicative of the rhetorical situation surrounding the Treaty in which groups sought self-determination first and alliance second; they had to be independent before they could be interdependent. Sovereignty is further established within the Treaty in Article IV Section A: "Let it be known that there will be a Reciprocal right to send an Emissary or Delegate to the conventions, Congresses, and National reunions of each said peoples."[l] The language of "emissary" and "delegate" evokes international politics; it is repeated in Section B: "The Emissaries, Delegates, and invitees from one said people to another, shall be identified by proper Official Credentials from his respective said people."[li] Both sections

organize certain communication practices between the two groups, which emphasizes that not only will they remain separate from each other but also that their interactions will be like those of diplomats visiting different nations while representing the interests of their own.

The treaty genre allowed the signatories to establish sovereignty for one another, which laid the groundwork for respect between the groups. Ensuring that each group could maintain their self-determination was key to building respect because it meant they could preserve their own cultures and values without risking any compromises that might silence or exclude, as experienced in past attempts at alliance (i.e. the NCNP). Their caution was rooted in the fear that unifying would mean that their needs might be diminished or ignored for the sake of collectivity, which members of Black Power movements had witnessed and experienced when forming coalitions and becoming tokens within movements that swallowed them. A treaty allowed the signatories to show that they had learned from the attempts that came before them, balancing their recognition of each other's sovereignty while also attempting to enter an alliance.

It is here that the scaffolding of coordination becomes especially salient. Because sovereignty was such a priority for these groups in this period, any potential of working together that required groups to compromise their sovereignty for the sake of a whole was not something they could conceive of at the moment. The kairotic appeal was to coordination. Coalition requires that groups establish collective missions and needs to generate collective investment and consciousness. Based on their emphasis on remaining self-determined and maintaining their independent needs and missions, the signatories weren't interested in any form of collectivity at this early stage. Furthermore, the conflict that framed the Treaty provided another reason to only go as far as coordination. It created an obstacle that needed to be addressed because there was no foundation of trust; they had to take working together one step at a time.

The treaty genre allowed the groups to recognize and address the conflict that existed between them. According to Behnken, the implication of writing a treaty reflects the "territorial nationalism of these groups while simultaneously acknowledging that blacks and Chicanos had deeply felt disagreements and were perhaps at war with each other."[lii] During an interview, Tijerina himself explains, "The reason I met with all the leaders – I don't care about their cause and their ideas but I wanted an alliance for moral support and a mutual push for the pursuit of justice... The primary thing is to avoid future frictions between the Negro and the Spanish American."[liii] Mantler also identifies Karenga's motivations for attending the Convention and eventually signing the Treaty as similarly trying to "[reduce] tensions between blacks and Mexican Americans."[liv] The Treaty, therefore, is used to create peace between two conflicting sovereign groups.

The promises made by the two parties in the Treaty contribute to our understanding of how the context of conflict influenced its rhetorical design. For example, consider Article I Section C: "Both peoples, do promise not to permit the members of either of said peoples, to make false propaganda of any kind whatsoever against each other, either by speech or writing."[lv] This statement indicates that there has been historically dividing behavior in the past through the creation and distribution of false propaganda, and that they were hoping to establish a framework to avoid this dividing behavior in the future. Art. III Sec. C is framed similarly: "Both peoples, make a Solemn promise to cure and remedy the historical errors and differences that exist between said peoples."[lvi] This statement communicates that there has been a history of tension between the two groups, but they attribute these tensions as "remedy"-able and as "errors," which might show that they characterized their history of conflict as a misunderstanding or deliberate separation due to white supremacy. Another example is Art. IV Sec. C: "Both peoples do hereby promise, to put an end to any and all controversies concerning the youth."[lvii] Here they

broadly reference conflict and competition that often manifested in integrated schools where Black and Brown students often fought and bullied one another, bringing the interracial conflict they saw outside of school into it because that was where they shared space and interacted most when schools began to integrate.

Each of these examples indicate the ways in which the signatories wanted to put an end to what they perceived as harmful actions that contributed to the conflict between the groups. Based on their inclusion in the Treaty, it seems as though they are a form of "ceasefire," outlining what they needed to stop doing to build trust and respect. Addressing the propaganda and youth conflict and historic differences between the groups laid a foundation for them to build on their mutual interests by doing away with division that obscures their overlaps. It is also important to note in the context of a treaty between warring entities that they are sharing responsibility for the conflict; they do not single out or name any one group's actions, which embeds some fairness and avoids animosity.

Mutual Aid Topos

The commitment to ending violent and hateful conflict reflects their transition into coordination because it allowed the signatories to employ a *topos* of mutual aid and draw on the familiar conceptual framework of mutual aid to form their coordination. The signatories developed mutual aid as a topos for seeing and understanding their overlaps. This emphasis on mutual aid invoked the practices and ideologies of the *sociedaded mutualistas* or mutual aid societies that predated this Treaty. According to Chicano studies scholar, Alan Eladio Gómez, "mutual-aid societies were a form of self-defense and survival for nonwhite communities during a time of racial apartheid."[lviii] Mutual aid societies were founded in "the practice of mutual dependence for economic and sociocultural security"[lix] along with self-determination, insofar as

societies cared, supported, and uplifted their own.[lx] The first mutual aid society in the U.S. was the Free African Society in 1787, with other mutual aid societies formed for Irish, Catholic, Jewish, Immigrant, etc. After the Mexican-American War, "mutual aid societies in the Chicana/o community were one of many forms of resistance demonstrated by those of Mexican ancestry."[lxi] The mutualistas were formed to protect the language, culture, and economic welfare of Chicanas/os, especially as they faced discrimination and exclusion from workforce and labor/trade unions.[lxii] The mutualistas served to pool resources for community members in need (i.e. to help pay medical bills, support a family when their main breadwinner died, pay for funeral costs, offer insurance or banking options because most unions and banks refused to serve Mexican clients). It was a way of offering an internal network of communication and assistance, especially when faced with racist treatment and exclusion. The mutual aid movement gave way as Civil Right Movements rose alongside the implementation of more federal welfare programs such as the War on Poverty and New Society Programs that sought to provide more support for these communities rather than them supporting themselves. [lxiii]

Finding a shared foundation to root their assumptions of what mutual aid could look like between groups, and how it could allow groups to retain their sovereignty and independence, was key to this invocation of the mutual aid movement and demonstrates their use of a topos of reciprocal action to establish their common ground to build coordination between groups. The influence of the mutualista movement is apparent in the Treaty because of how the signatories perceive the ways in which their groups can support each other and offer aid to one another. While the Treaty didn't create the same kind of assistance that mutual aid societies did (i.e. collecting money or providing legal support), it still sought to create a network of support and help one another when the government failed. For instance, in Art. VI Sec. A, the Treaty states that "In case a Nuclear War should erupt upon the earth, the two people Solemnly promise to

assist each other."[lxiv] This section indicates both the concerns of the signatories (that should nuclear war occur they would be left to their own devices and nonwhite groups would need to support one another) and their imaginative construction of spaces in which they could assist one another.

Mutual aid is also apparent in their acknowledgement of their common broad goals for their movements. In Art. V Sec. A the signatories write that "there will be a Mutual understanding over events, Elections, and Political activities, that will better the National status of the said two peoples."[lxv] In Sec. C of the same Article, they add "Both people (races) promise to consult and inform one another in each and every National case of importance, that affects each of the two said peoples."[lxvi] Both statements indicate that they recognize how federal and state decisions impact both groups and that there are often overlaps. While they don't explicitly name any National cases or Political activities that affect or better their status, the inclusion of this language suggests that they are both aware of and open to consulting one another regarding these overlaps. Section A goes so far as to signal a shared understanding of experiences with lower class or minority "National status" which makes them identified with one another, yet by using "two peoples" they retain their autonomy and individuality. Additionally, in the same Article Sec. B, they include "Let it be known that both people will have a political delegate to represent his interests and relations with the other."[lxvii] The inclusion of this language suggests that the signatories imagined that mutual aid could be sustained by remaining aware of the other and keeping the other's interests present/in line with their own through representation. However, there is no record of either group sending delegates through formal channels that they establish here, let alone any consultation regarding cases of national importance. This lack of follow through is why scholars such as Mantler write that the Treaty was mostly symbolic. [lxviii]

Art. II Sec. C states that they will "strive, without limitations whatsoever, to materialize and make real, the truth of Justice on earth."[lxix] Here, they have determined that their missions are compatible in the sense that they share an end goal of Justice, although they never identify what "Justice" looks like on earth and how it might manifest differently for each respective group. Later in the Treaty they follow up the idea of Justice in Art. VII Sec. A, where they establish that they will both "take the same position as to the Crimes and Sins of the Government of the United States of America."[lxx] This likely refers to the mutual desire to overthrow white supremacy, alluding to white supremacy and its consequences as the "Crimes and Sins" of the U.S. government (meaning that their main adversaries are both systemic and social). Reies Tijerina recognized that this Treaty offered an opportunity to end existent tensions between Black and Chicano Power groups because fighting each other took away from fighting their common enemy: white supremacy. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Tijerina conveyed this desire to use the Treaty to identify shared interests by shifting efforts toward a common enemy when he says, "Not all, but some white power oppresses the Negro, the Indian and the Spanish-American... They have kept us split and divided. We want to stop quarreling and direct our demands to the man in power."[lxxi] These goals play out in the Treaty in Art. III Sec. C. which seems to evidence a recognition of division manufactured by white supremacy and their commitment to "remedy" it as a way to heal the division between Black and Chicano groups. The same goals appear again in Art. III Sec. A, where they commit to learning and creating mutual understanding by studying one another.

One of the best examples establishing mutual aid while balancing their self-determination is in Art. III Sec. A: "Both peoples (races) do promise, that each side will study, without fail, the needs of the other, in order to gain each others Mutual understanding."[lxxii] In this statement, the signatories further solidify their self-determination in their activities of coordination because

they maintain their separate needs and do not seem to indicate anywhere in the Treaty that their needs are the same. Their promise of mutual aid lies in their efforts to support each other's separate needs, which will help to resolve conflict by creating greater understanding between the groups. While they were both geared toward fighting white supremacy as their ultimate goal, the needs of the respective groups remained different. For instance, Tijerina's La Alianza Federal de Mercedes' needs were to regain the land stolen from Mexican Americans after the Treaty of Guadalupe while Karenga's US Organization's needs were to "construct a new black culture based upon selected African traditions, for the purpose of launching a cultural revolution among African Americans at large."[lxxiii] Their more specific needs, respective goals for their groups, and ways of accomplishing them were still self-determined. On a broad level, they perceived their enemy as the same, but their methods, approaches, and ways of winning the war were all different because white supremacy impacted them in different ways. They were not creating alliances using the same colorblind approach as the War on Poverty; instead, they maintained their respective plans of action and only loosely fit under the same banner.

By maintaining this degree of separation, the signatories seemed to recognize that the discrimination and racism they experienced occurred on a pan-minority level but also on respective, specific pan-Chicano, pan-Black levels as well. Being able to speak to that specificity through mutual aid allowed the signatories to establish ways in which alliance could benefit both groups and move beyond the obstacles generated by conflict and division. Mutual aid allows the groups to operate parallel to one another rather than intersecting because they can go in the same direction but maintain their sovereignty.

Strategic and unproductive ambiguity

Uses of Strategic Ambiguity

Using a treaty metaphor and a mutual aid topos, the signatories established their relationship to one another by carefully balancing their sovereignty against their potential to work together. The cultural and material context surrounding the Treaty heavily influenced how the signatories conceived of their coordination given how they prioritized self-determination and included efforts to overcome conflict. Recognizing the contextual constraints and challenge of catering to multiple interests and perspectives that have historically been at odds, the signatories employ strategic ambiguity within the language of the document to open the Treaty to multiple interpretations and focus on their promise of mutual understanding while postponing any actual discussion of nuanced differences. Ambiguity in certain sections of the Treaty allowed the signatories to respond to their kairotic moment by papering over certain differences that would have distracted or hurt their attempt at coordination. Strategic ambiguity gave room for flexible interpretations that were necessary given how challenging coordination was going to be in this context. At the same time, there are sections in the Treaty where their ambiguity was unproductive, where the lack of clarity doesn't allow a foundation for an understanding of where or how the groups could realistically carry out these agreements in the future, which undercuts the potential for making coordination. Furthermore, their ambiguity allowed for the signatories to paper over deliberate exclusions regarding who was included or involved in the Treaty's creation.

When considering how organizations employ strategic ambiguity, organizational communication theorist Eric Eisenberg writes that "Strategic ambiguity is essential to organizing because it allows for multiple interpretations to exist among people who contend that they are attending to the same message."[lxxiv] Ambiguity allows organizations or, more specifically, organizational leaders, many affordances in the way they design their "missions, goals, and plans" which is strategically marshaled by using equivocal language and postponement.[lxxv] This

affords the organization and its leaders a broader reach across their participants' multiple, disparate interests and interpretations to allow for greater acceptance and coordinated action.[lxxvi] While strategic ambiguity is a common strategy that occurs in the organizational realms for people in power to garner support for their organizations or party, when employed by minoritized individuals it takes on an added significance as a subversive tactic. Critical race scholar Ralina Joseph describes strategic ambiguity as "how individuals who are disempowered by their minoritized identity status, and yet often privileged by class, garner strength by individual action."[lxxvii] In other words, disempowered individuals use strategic ambiguity to resist hegemony by critiquing and combating the powerful in a way that won't run the risk of the powerful silencing them. Joseph identifies that strategic ambiguity is often used by those minoritized individuals who also have a form of privilege such as class (or, in the case of the Treaty, gender) in order to leverage that privilege to access spaces and use that access and the "greyness" of their ambiguity to resist and speak truth to power while in those spaces.[lxxviii] For the signatories of the Treaty, their strategic ambiguity served their internal conflict and assuaged multiple perspectives. Additionally, as minoritized individuals seeking to combat oppression, they recognized external factors such as government surveillance that could jeopardize their coordination if they weren't ambiguous about their methods and goals.

Strategic ambiguity is a useful concept to understand the workings of this Treaty because vagueness and inexactness are deployed frequently in it to cater to multiple interpretations. Some scholars might assume when reading this Treaty that strategic essentialism is at play, because strategic essentialism is a practice employed by minority groups seeking to work together across differences that have historically created barriers between them.[lxxix] Joseph differentiates strategic essentialism and strategic ambiguity when she explains that strategic ambiguity is enacted for "*individual* success" while strategic essentialism occurs for "the purposes of *group*

betterment."[lxxx] As we've established, the signatories were interested in their sovereignty rather than joining or becoming any form of a group. Strategic essentialism would've required that the signatories pin down and define their identities in relation to one another in order to find commonalities that would've allowed them to become a group. Strategic ambiguity embraces more undefined and grey identification in order to create looser connections but maintain individuality. Strategic essentialism is an unsuitable concept to employ for this Treaty because the language of the document reflects that the signatories were not essentializing one another because they do not put away their differences and rely on temporary essentialization that would allow them to unite for a specific issue or moment. The whole Treaty is designed explicitly so that they do not unite or reduce their differences for the purpose of coming together under a single banner. Ambiguity is a better way to understand the ways in which the signatories toe the line between sovereignty and coordination because it allows for more flexibility in the ways they can perceive and interact with one another. They are explicitly avoiding essentialization.

An example of strategic ambiguity practiced through equivocal language occurs in Article II Section B, in which the signatories state that "Both people declare Solemnly, that before God, they have under this Treaty, the same rights and same obligations."[lxxxi] The first question that unfolds is what are the "rights" and "obligations" that the signatories are referring to? How are they identifying these equivalencies and why do they specify that "under this Treaty" is where those equivalencies occur? These groups had similar experiences with oppression and discrimination that may have foregrounded their understanding of their rights and obligations. For example, their shared experiences with police brutality, poverty, and/or labor exclusion fall under the same rights and obligations because they are motivating reasons for these groups to mobilize and make demands to the U.S. government. However, the absence of explicit naming of rights and obligations leaves them up to interpretation for both parties who

might not have the same perception of rights, especially considering the Black/white binary that existed during the Civil Rights Era in which Mexican American were often classified as white, which technically meant they received white privileges in the eyes of Black Americans. Conversely, the perception among Mexican Americans that Black American rights/needs were prioritized during the War on Poverty while Mexican American rights/needs were overlooked also contributes to the necessity for strategic ambiguity. Both groups held preconceived notions of one another rooted in racist perceptions created by white supremacy that stratifies who is more or less deserving of rights in the U.S. Is this statement, therefore, an acknowledgment that Mexican Americans historically haven't received rights and are now more identified with Black Americans? Does it reflect a parallel in contested citizenship status experienced by Mexican immigrants and Black Americans? Or is it more indicative of these groups coming up with a new conception of rights that are more inclusive? Strategic ambiguity in this section demonstrates that regardless of how the readers interpret which specific rights they share, the key in this section is that they are the *same*. Using similarity without naming those similarities further builds the foundation of mutual aid because the signatories employ a strategically ambiguous rhetoric of identification to further build the foundation of coordination. The signatories do not want to be a single unified group, but their ambiguity leaves room to interpret them as engaging in collective action because they have the same rights and obligations.

For example, recall that in Art. III Sec. A, they say "Both peoples (races) do promise, that each side will study, without fail, the needs of the other, in order to gain each others Mutual understanding."[lxxxii] There is no description or explicit naming of their respective needs and how they might be different from one another. In this section, it is clear that they are not joined in their needs. Nevertheless, their respective needs are still equally worthy of study and respect, without ever specifying what their different needs might be. Sharing needs would likely trigger

the competition between the two groups that occurred during the War on Poverty. Keeping their needs separate allowed there to be enough resources to go around, because they did not lay claim to needing the same resources. Ambiguous identification created this variability of interpretation and maintained the necessary separation between groups. Strategic ambiguity is also present in Art. V Sec. A, where they state that there will be a "Mutual understanding" over events and political activities that will "better the National status of the said two peoples."[lxxxiii] "National status" is not defined, and they do not specify whether that status is shared or separate. Context is significant to understanding this language once more. Their shared experiences with oppression could characterize their conceptualization of status, and how they both want better for their groups in the eyes of the country and federal government. However, the conflict rooted in the Black/white binary once again could indicate that, because their national status has been historically different and competitive, the signatories employ strategic ambiguity to avoid parsing out nuances of status that could distract from their coordination. Rather than highlighting the differences in which the groups experience citizenship, privilege, and economic support, the signatories make a sweeping general statement about their status and how they hope to better said status.

Additionally, their strategic ambiguity to overcome conflict is apparent in the three Sections C discussed earlier, from Art.I, III, and IV, having to do with promises to not make false propaganda, to cure and remedy historical errors and differences between the two peoples, and to put an end to any and all controversies concerning the youth. They identify three points of division between them in these sections, yet they never identify who perpetuated them nor do they place the responsibility on one another. Instead, they make sweeping generalizations such as "any and all" and "of any kind" so as to encompass all possible incidents and interpretations. Strategic ambiguity is at play here because the signatories are not interested in pointing fingers;

rather, they make these statements to address the issues broadly and demonstrate they are aware of them in order to then move on from them.

Article VI Section B engages in strategic ambiguity through postponement: "The Mutual assistance and the support of one toward the other, in general terms, will be left to the discretion of the Directors of the said two peoples."[lxxxiv] Here, the signatories leave the more concrete decisions or specifications to occur outside of the Treaty. This section illustrates that the signatories perceived one another as resources and allies from which to seek support, the details regarding what such support would look like were ambiguous and ideally decided outside of the document, likely on an as needed basis. Especially because it immediately follows Art. VI Sec. A, where they state that they will assist one another in the event of a Nuclear War, this section opens the possibility that they could assist one another even if there was no such a catastrophe and that assistance could take on many forms. Yet, such deferment of what such assistance means also allows for wiggle room with this commitment, so that the groups can change their methods and forms of assistance as the need arises. The ambiguity displayed in this section via the generalization of assistance represents the complexity of the document in that it initiated a conversation about the possibility of alliance yet there is no documentation that this section of the Treaty was carried out by the groups.

After the La Alianza convention, Tijerina became an even bigger proponent of cross-racial alliance between African Americans and Mexican Americans. He individually followed through on the Treaty's imagined ways of offering assistance by being present and participating in Black Power events and efforts. For example, he participated in "Free Huey" rallies in support of Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton, responded in support of Martin Luther King Jr's Poor People's Campaign, and met with "black state senator Mervyn Dymally of Los Angeles and the Mexican American Political Association's (MAPA) Bert Corona to discuss a new

mutliracial coalition."[lxxxv] Karenga also responded to support Tijerina when Tijerina was imprisoned for "assault and destruction of federal property."[lxxxvi] Additionally, Karenga himself describes how his organization established "working relationships" with Mexican Americans *and* Puerto Ricans in his area prior to the Treaty which "laid a theoretical and practical basis for such cooperation."[lxxxvii] Both of these signatories carried the *ideals* of the Treaty (i.e. learn about one another, show up for one another's needs, offer assistance when necessary) by their own right but did not use the channels established by the Treaty, such as displaying official credentials for emissaries or having delegates to one another's conventions or reunions to do so. Only the individual actions taken by a couple of signatories display an attempt at fulfilling this agreement, but on a larger scale of collective action there is nothing that follows the framework that this Treaty lays out. They employ strategic ambiguity so that they can balance the significance of this coordination against the realities of the context - an equivocal commitment to assistance allowed them to maintain their priority of self-determination and put their respective groups first, operating independently before collectively.

Strategic ambiguity also appears in Article VII Sec A: "The two people agree, to take the same position as to the Crimes and Sins of the Government of the United States of America."[lxxxviii] Equivocating the exact Crimes and Sins of the U.S. demonstrates that not only were they aware that these Crimes and Sins are different for each group and may be interpreted differently but also that the signatories were aware they were being surveilled. According to Mantler, there were "not-so-undercover FBI agents" present at the convention, observing the groups interact and using informants to report on the events.[lxxxix] Using indeterminate language in this section allowed the signatories to call out the government without actually naming anything explicit that the government might be able to respond to or to arrest them for. The same ambiguity appears in Article II Sec C: "Both peoples will strive, without limitations whatsoever,

to materialize and make real, the truth of Justice on earth."[xc] Again, they don't explicitly name their methods for achieving Justice as a way to garner support using multiple interpretations but also so that their surveillers wouldn't be able to prevent or inhibit their efforts. They had the attention of law enforcement, something that the signatories as minoritized individuals living in the U.S. were intimately familiar with and employed strategic ambiguity to circumvent. Another example is in Art. IV Sec. B the signatories state that they will require "Official Credentials" to identify themselves to one another after this convention. In this section, they implicitly acknowledge that there might be undercover agents or government spies sent to infiltrate their coordination (if they weren't there already) and having credentials would help to prevent that. By postponing naming those credentials, they don't let their surveillers have access to their credential system. The signatories use strategic ambiguity to not only resist surveillance but also strengthen and support their individual actions through multiple interpretations.

Uses of Unproductive Ambiguity

The signatories employ strategic ambiguity really well throughout the Treaty to navigate the cultural and material effects of the period. Notwithstanding, there are a couple of sections in the Treaty that potentially undermine their efforts and instead demonstrate unproductive ambiguity. When used unproductively, ambiguity can "obscure action" because mobilization can be stalled, tangled, or impeded when participants don't have the same vision for methods or results.[xci] According to business scholars Christina Scandelius and Geraldine Cohen, some of the pitfalls of ambiguity include consequent lack of trust, a perception of deferred responsibility/incompetence on behalf of leadership, "passivity," "unconstructive interpretations," or "false consensus."[xcii] When used strategically or productively, ambiguity can create more "buy in" across multiple interests and such generality can help to assuage perceptions of harmful differences. When used unproductively, ambiguity creates confusion

about next steps for those involved and the multiple interpretations become more of a distraction than a boon. Within the Treaty, the signatories are ambiguous in sections where they should have been clear, which contributes to limitations with their attempt at coordination. Their unproductive ambiguity led to the dissipation of the Treaty because they didn't have a strong enough framework for coordination outside of the convention.

Furthermore, ambiguity is unproductive when used to exclude or paper over perpetuations of hegemony. When used by the powerful, ambiguity can be used to placate the marginal by engaging discourses that are indeterminate enough to keep them from "rebelling."[xciii] The signatories enacted their male privilege to exclude the women at the convention from participating in creating the Treaty. Yet, the Treaty language is ambiguous in an attempt to placate women of the movement from critiquing or calling out their absence. The complexity of this artifact lies in how its ambiguity operates both productively and unproductively as the signatories negotiate their racial minoritized status against their male privilege.

In Art. V Sec. C, the signatories promise to "consult and inform one another in each and every National case of importance" without detailing what those overlapping cases could be and postponing their discussions of how to handle those cases. Additionally, in the previously mentioned Art. IV Sec. B regarding the credentials demonstrates the double-edged sword of ambiguity because, without established credentials there would be some obscurity with the follow through of this section but they also didn't want to let any uninvited government agents into their spaces. This section in particular represents the complexity of the context impacting the way in which this Treaty written and then "fizzled out." In their attempt to subvert and prevent unwanted surveillance, they didn't create a framework for carrying out the sections of this Treaty in the immediate future. While both of these sections could be interpreted as laying the

groundwork for future "cases" that they cannot predict and protecting against surveillance, without an understanding of what cases they have to deal with in the present, they have no framework for how to deal with cases in the future. These details demonstrate unproductive ambiguity where clarity and more explicit description would be necessary to move from promise to action. Clarifying the significance of these credentials and cases would create procedures and communication that could be immediately applied outside of the convention. This ambiguity is unproductive because it does not serve to alleviate the context of conflict in any way that would make ambiguity necessary for these sections. Instead, clarity in these sections could begin the process of addressing that conflict by creating mechanisms outside of the document by which those conversations could take place. These sections were the ones in which the signatories could have looked more tangibly at the future, yet fell short.

Additionally, the context in which the Treaty was created adds to its unproductive ambiguity because it papers over exclusions. Karenga explicitly insisted that there were no women involved in the writing of the Treaty, a stipulation that the other signatories agreed to. They employed ambiguity to paper over this exclusion by writing the "two peoples" or the "two races" or the "said peoples" or "members of either said peoples" throughout the document. Yet, in Art IV Sec C, where the signatories write that they will have delegates use Official Credentials, they explicitly name those delegates as men: "from *his* respective said people."[xciv] In this way, they anticipated and expected delegates and representatives of their groups to be only men. The same appears in Art V Sec B where they write that these delegates will "represent *his* interests and relations with the other."[xcv] They didn't perceive women as being involved in these procedures or in the enactment of this Treaty. This not only demonstrates the sexism that existed within and permeated the Civil Rights movements but also how the signatories perpetuated power dynamics using their male privilege. This patriarchal approach to the Treaty limits the

possibility for coordination because not everyone is involved in enacting the coordinated effort let alone represented.

The sections in which they use he/him pronouns make it very clear that they are really only referring to men to carry out this Treaty. This ambiguity is not only unproductive but it is also a very thin veil masking the misogyny of the period and its embeddedness in this document. A contemporary lens allows for a different understanding of the impact of specific pronoun usage within the document and the performativity of the ambiguity to dance around pronouns in certain sections of the Treaty. The signatories don't include they/them pronouns to refer to themselves ever (likely as another way to maintain their separation because they/them would be used to refer to them as joined in a sense); instead, they make sweeping generalizations regarding their respective "peoples" and "races" as a whole, which performs inclusivity and demonstrates the kind of patriarchal authority that the signatories bestowed upon themselves to speak for and make decisions on behalf of their entire communities. Their male authority is reflected in those sections in which they use he/him pronouns to identify who can serve as representative or speak as a delegate for their communities. If we swapped out those sweeping generalized phrases for phrases like "the men will consider" or "man shall promise," this document would read very differently, but the sentiment of male superiority and privilege remains, peeking through the mask of ambiguity. It would be one thing if they didn't use any pronouns at all because that would be more inclusive. Yet, they explicitly use he/him in certain sections and never once use she/her or they/them, indicating their performance of inclusivity in the other sections where they make sweeping generalizations. The signatories demonstrate another form of control through their patriarchal approach and, in doing so, undermine their own efforts to create change by perpetuating a cycle of exclusion that works hand-in-hand with white supremacy to oppress. They attack one head of the beast but feed the other. Unproductive ambiguity used to placate and

subtly further marginalize members within their own communities weakens the scaffolding of the coordination because they enact the same yet nuanced dominance and oppression they are trying to resist.

Conclusion

The Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance is a complex and compelling document that demonstrates the intricacies and entanglements of the material and cultural contextual forces that influenced its design. While scholars have identified this artifact as an example of a coalition building or unification effort, this analysis has sought to demonstrate that interpreting and critiquing the Treaty as a coalition is inappropriate. A coalition creates interdependence and a group consciousness between separate peoples by joining their needs and mission. While, at first glance, the Treaty looks like an effort to create a coalition, it is actually more indicative of an attempt at coordination because the signatories weren't interested in interdependence or a joining of their separate groups. In prioritizing the respective group's sovereignty and self-determination, the Treaty is a case of coordination, not coalition.

There were a myriad of external factors that contributed to their decision to seek coordination. The signatories were acutely aware of the challenges they faced when attempting to work together and change the ways in which they perceived one another. Their existing relationship impeded them from creating a coalition and instead encouraged them to focus on the lesser challenge of intergroup coordination. Mexican Americans and African Americans share a history fraught with discrimination and exclusion in the United States as a result of white supremacy. While there are many ways in which these two groups can relate, white supremacy obscures that relationship through segregation, binarism, and the creation of competition over limited resources. Furthermore, racial activist groups during the 1960s and 70s prioritized

sovereignty and self determination in order to strengthen internal organization and emphasize their own needs and goals before seeking coordination with other groups. These external factors and priorities contributed to how the signatories developed the language within the Treaty and made three key rhetorical decisions to develop coordination between their: 1) use a treaty metaphor, 2) employ a mutual aid topos, and 3) apply strategic ambiguity.

In order to address the conditions that sought to keep them apart by sowing seeds of conflict, the signatories used a treaty metaphor invoke a genre used to deescalate tensions between sovereign nations. This metaphor allowed them to recognize and respect one another as sovereign and allowed them to address and attempt to minimize historic conflict that impacted their relationship and potential to work together. The signatories also employed a mutual aid topos by including sections within the Treaty to identify ways and opportunities for the groups to see each other as resources. Thus, they moved away from seeing their relationship as one rife with competition and conflict toward one of assistance and mutual understanding. Finally, they employ strategic ambiguity. The Treaty's language is deliberately vague and indeterminate in order to allow flexible interpretations for multiple perspectives. While a common political strategy, strategic ambiguity employed by minoritized groups such as the ones involved in this Treaty is a subversive tactic to enact resistance.

At the same time that we come to appreciate the rhetorical strategies used in this document to promote intergroup coordination, it is important to recognize the limitations of the Treaty and its use of unproductive ambiguity. First, their equivocations in certain sections gave their coordination a weak foundation and scaffolding. They used ambiguity in sections where they should have used clarity and, thus, did not provide a way to immediately apply and practice the Treaty outside of the convention in which it was created. Second, the ambiguity reveals who was excluded from the Treaty and its creation, which also contributed to its limitations for

coordination. Because the signatories deliberately barred women from being present or contributing to the Treaty's creation, they enacted a misogynistic coordination that prioritized partial coordination because they excluded conversations about gender. These are the major pitfalls of the Treaty which ultimately led to its short-lived moment and eventual disappearance from Civil Rights history.

Given the constraints of the moment, the signatories should be recognized for their effort to coordinate with this Treaty. At the same time, it is important to recognize the factors that contributed to the eventual dissolution of the Treaty. In both cases the key to the appropriate assessment is to ensure that this critique is focused on what the Treaty was actually trying to achieve: coordination, not coalition.

While this analysis has been primarily focused on a past attempt at cross-racial coordination, it is not detached from the future and understanding the implications of this historic attempt on future activist groups and scholars. The Treaty represents a legacy for current movements attempting to find common ground and form cross-racial coordination. Being able to unpack a specific case and understand all of the components that played a part in its creation and limitations is vital to understanding what lessons future coordination attempts can draw from these forebears. Two major lessons emerge from the Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance surrounding our understanding of cross-racial coordinated attempts: 1) coordination is especially useful for groups with a tense or conflict-laden history to re-perceive one another and begin to develop a framework for understanding and communicating without imposing, compromising, or co-opting one another's needs/missions and 2) coordination requires a careful use of strategic ambiguity because, while some ambiguity allows for flexible interpretations, unproductive ambiguity leads to exclusions and a weak foundation for creating realistic coordinated action or mobilization. Drawing these lessons from the Treaty are a way for current

and future activists and scholars to stand on the shoulders of giants and recognize how a framework for cross-racial coordination not only exists but also offers a scaffolding on which to develop their own relationships built on a history of past support. Additionally, drawing from the past helps ensure that the same mistakes will not be repeated in the present. Especially nowadays as more women stand at the helm of social movements spearheading inclusive change. This project is a way to honor and validate the legacy of change that previous activists created while also drawing on those experiences to influence and build a better future.

The Treaty signatories were clearly looking for this document to be sustainable or at least long term considering their language where they state that the Treaty will be valid and in place for as long as the "Sun and Moon shall shine." Although they were not able to mobilize within their specific moment in some of the ways this coordination intended or designed, their imagined possibilities live on and are still relevant to this day. It is still important to capture these moments of possibility even if they did not lead to change because the potential for change never disappears and current movements can continue this leg of the race, taking the baton passed from these forbears.

Coordination can be as far as some groups can see their relationship and capacity to work together. A coordinated effort is a useful method of organizing groups who need to create a network of support without developing entirely new organizations or missions. It allows for self-determination to be prioritized while also opening opportunities for connection and resource exchange. However, there are also times when coordination is better conceived as a first step along a pathway to coalition formation. Future iterations of this project will investigate historic attempts at coalition formation and how groups can move from coordination into coalition. Coalitions consist of different, more interdependent ways of communicating and interacting between groups as they become joined together and form new relationships and understandings

of one another. A coalition is not necessarily a better form than coordination because coalition is not always appropriate, as this Treaty reveals. Understanding the differences between coalition and coordination allows for groups to better decide what path is more appropriate for them based on their contextual capacities and priorities. The Treaty of Peace, Harmony, and Mutual Assistance is a unique and intricate case study for coordination; future study will explore an equally compelling and noteworthy case of coalition for edification of future scholars and activists.

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[i] Although there are coalitions and relationships between multiple racial and ethnic groups, this project primarily focuses on the interactions and collaborations between African American and Mexican American because they not only consisted of the two largest minority social movements in the 60s and 70s (meaning they have significant existent literature describing their relationships) but also because the artifact I engage only references those two groups. While my focus is on both groups, I will leave room to discuss and acknowledge the absence of other groups in the context of the artifact along with the implications of these absences.

[ii] Renne G. Heath and Matthew G. Isbell, *Interorganizational Collaboration: Complexity, Ethics, and Communication* (Long Grove: Waveland Press Inc, 2017), 21-22; Melvin Oliver and David Grant, "Making Space for Multiethnic Coalitions: The Prospects for Coalition Politics in Los Angeles," in *Multiethnic Coalition Building in Los Angeles: A Two-Day Symposium, Nov. 19–20, 1993*, ed. Eui-Young Yu and Edward Chang (Claremont: Regina Books, 1995), 30; Robert Hess III, "Coalition Building with Intersectional Identities," in *Gender and Sexual Identity*: *Transcending Feminist and Queer Theory*, ed. Julie L. Nagoshi, Craig T. Nagoshi, and Stephanie Brzuzy (New York: Springer, 2014), 150; Karma R. Chavez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 58; Pei-Te Lien, *Making of Asian America: Through Political Participation* (Temple University Press, 2001), 124.

[iii] Barbara Gray, *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989), 5.

[iv] Gray, *Collaborating*, 5.

[v] Oliver and Grant, "Making Space for Multiethnic Coalitions," in *Multiethnic Coalition Building in Los Angeles*, 30.

[vi] Hess, "Coalition Building with Intersectional Identities," in *Gender and Sexual Identity*, 150.

[vii] Brian D. Behnken "Introduction," in *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations during the Civil Rights Era*, ed. Brian D. Behnken (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 3.

[viii] Behnken, ”Introduction,” in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 3.
[ix] Gordon Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 77, emphasis added.

[x] Heath and Isbell, *Interorganizational Communication*, 21-22.
[xi] Heath and Isbell, *Interorganizational Communication*, 21.
[xii] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 65.
[xiii] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 65.
[xiv] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 66.
[xv] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 66-67.
[xvi] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 69.
[xvii] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 68.
[xviii] Stokely Carmicahel and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), 6.
[xix] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 73.
[xx] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 76.
[xxi] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 76.
[xxii] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 77.
[xxiii] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 78.
[xxiv] Mantler, *Power to the Poor*, 78.
[xxv] Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 42.
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[xxvii] *Extent of Subversion in the "New Left": U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary*. (1970).
[xxviii] Brian D. Behnken, "The Movement in the Mirror: Civil Rights and the Causes of Black-Brown Disunity in Texas" in *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations during the Civil Rights Era* ed. Brian D. Behnken (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 52.
[xxix] Robert Bauman, "The Neighborhood Adult Participation Project: Black-Brown Strife in the War on Poverty in Los Angeles." in *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations during the Civil Rights Era* ed. Brian D. Behnken (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 111.

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[xxxii] Clayson, "Mexican versus Negro Approaches to the War on Poverty," in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 127.
[xxxiii] qtd in Behnken, ”The Movement in the Mirror” in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 52-53.
[xxxiv] qtd in Behnken, ”The Movement in the Mirror” in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 49.
[xxxv] Bauman, "The Neighborhood Adult Participation Project" in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 119.
[xxxvi] Clayson, "Mexican versus Negro Approaches to the War on Poverty," in *The Struggle in Black and Brown,* 127.
[xxxvii] Kevin R. Johnson, "The Struggle for Civil Rights: The Need for, and Impediments to, Political CoalitionsAmong and Within Minority Groups" *Louisiana Law Review* 63, (2003): 759-84.

[xxxviii] Jeb Aram Middlebrook, "Organizing a Rainbow Coalition of Revolutionary Solidarity" *Journal of African American Studies*, 23 (2019): 405-434.

[xxxix] Johnson, "The Struggle for Civil Rights," 777.
[xl] Lisa Y. Ramos, "Not Similar Enough: Mexican American and African American Civil Rights Struggles in the 1940s," in *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations during the Civil Rights Era* ed. Brian D. Behnken (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 19-48.

[xli] José G. Izaquirre, "A Social Movement in Fact": *La Raza* and *El Plan de Delano*." *Rhetoric Society*

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[xliii] Johnson, "The Struggle for Civil Rights," 777.
[xliv] James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand oaks: SAGE, 2001), 268.
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[liii] *Albuquerque Journal,* September 11, 1967, quoted in FBI memo, n.d. box 2, folder 20, RL

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[lv] *Extent of Subversion,* 52.
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[lvii] *Extent of Subversion,* 52.
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[lxvii] *Extent of Subversion,* 52.
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[lxxxix] Mantler, *the Power of the Poor,* 79.
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