Creative Kin-Making Practices Among Queer Youth and Womxn of Color, 1950-2020

Michelle K. Morado

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Reading Committee:

Dr. Shirley J. Yee, Chair

Dr. Michelle Habell-Pallán, Co-Chair

Dr. Ileana Rodríguez-Silva

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Abstract

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Michelle Kritz Morado

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Shirley J. Yee
Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies

My study examines the creative kin-making practices of three community sites to demonstrate the ways kinships and kin-making practices traverse space and time. I locate pachucas, young women of the zoot suit era as demonstrating creative kin-making through their cultivation of a distinctly Mexican American, urban, working-class identity. In the development of the subculture of pachuquismo, pachuca identity represented rebellious expressions of femininity and sexuality. A parallel subculture of the mid-twentieth century, the butch/femme lesbian communities, also demonstrate the development of political identities of sexuality. The butch/femme communities of the mid-twentieth also emerged in the underground spaces of urban settings, occupied primarily by working-class women. I argue that, as these women claimed their right to occupy public space, and as they negotiated with the meaning-making of identity, both as racialized and gendered subjects through the development of these subcultures they created future possibilities of identity exploration, particularly for youth of color in the contemporary

moment. Rock camps for gender marginalized youth operate as a final site of kin-making through creative practices. These music camps facilitate the exploration of gender, sexual, and racial identity formation. The setting of camp nurtures relational identity formation in the kinship formations of bands and within the camp community. I analyze digital and printed archives, oral histories, ethnographic research, and autoethnography in this project to demonstrate, not only the kinship formations that developed within these sites of community, but also how the kinship formations remain active in the feminist organizing of the contemporary moment.

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DEDICATION

For all of us making kin.

INTRODUCTION

As I prepared each day for the writing of my candidacy exams, I woke each morning to participate in a ritual. I began by parting my hair into two equal parts, weaving it into braids that begin at my temple, tracing an open arch, ending at the nape of my neck. I held this ritual with great intention, taking a moment to pause and gather myself. Weaving strands of hair, over and under, I prepared for the tasks ahead, braiding to steady myself. The movements are held in muscle memory, where one should gather hair, how much, and how hard to tug. I learned how to braid my hair like this from my grandmother – a white woman, and my primary caregiver – who, when I was a small child, would lock my hair into these braids whenever it was certain I'd take up the task of serious work or serious play. I have often wondered who taught her and when she learned. I have wondered this with an awareness of its functionality – that as a small child she milked cows before sunrise and picked cotton until sunset. However, I am also aware that when I wear my hair in this way, I gesture toward something different. On me, it gestures toward a history – already marked on my body and made more legible by the braids – that calls into question place and belonging.

Midway through my exams each day, I took a break from writing to walk to the grocery store. I walked toward Trader Joe's on Madison Avenue, in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle. A 2021 Business Insider report notes that the demographic of shoppers at Trader Joe's is either white, or Asian, and young adult, with a bachelor's degree or higher, earning an annual income of over $80k, which is in keeping with the Trader Joe's in this particular neighborhood.[1] *Due to Trader Joe's pricing system which maintains price stability nationwide, Trader Joe's is one of the less expensive*

[1] Dominick Reuter and Heather Schiltz, "Meet the Typical Trader Joe's Shopper: A Younger, Married, College-Educated Person Earning over $80,000.," *Business Insider*, September 21, 2021, sec. Retail, https://www.businessinsider.com/typical-trader-joes-shopper-demographic-younger-married-earning-80k-income-2021-9.

markets in Seattle. While this offers some reprieve in the urban centers of major cities, its promised affordability does not necessarily carry over for lower cost regions. In my experience, prior to living in Seattle, Trader Joe's occupied the same tier as Whole Foods, or other specialty markets, not to mention the crossover I observed, between the shoppers of Trader Joe's and the shoppers of Whole Foods. Incidentally, construction for a Whole Foods was underway about a mile down Madison Avenue, scheduled to open October of 2018.

On this evening, as I am hustling through the compact aisles of Trader Joe's, I notice a woman shopping for produce. As we pass each other, she stops me to admire the handiwork of my hair. "What beautiful braids! Did you braid your hair yourself? ... Let me see." As she motions for me to turn around. I offer, "My grandmother taught me." Without skipping a beat, she asks, "Are you Mexican?" I have not yet recognized her as kin, although she recognizes me*. Her inquiry extends an invitation. I answer, but with a barely perceptible trace of hesitation, "Yes… but that's not who--." She registers my trepidation, and to set me at ease, she interjects that she is from Chihuahua, offering an acknowledgement, "I am güera." I think of Chicana writer, poet and queer of color feminist theorist, Cherríe Moraga. Moraga, as a light skinned Chicana articulated her feminist politic as "a white girl gone brown."*[2] *I reconsider my guardedness and welcome the connection. I am also thinking through the recognition and misrecognition that seem to occur all at once. I am wondering how it is the case that we had already noticed one another before either one of us spoke. We had already mapped one another at first glance, and that at some level we picked up on something familiar for long enough to hold attention and welcome a conversation. She tells me, "I knew there was something special about your braids." She tells me about how seeing me makes her wish she were with her grandchildren.*

[2] Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (SUNY Press, 2015), 10.

I smile as she speaks of her family, and I tell her of my family roots in Texas, Del Rio. As I observe the details of her presence, I notice her eyes: green, speckled with gold. As I look upon her curls, I begin to see them as familiar. Salt-and-pepper spirals tumbling down the span of her back. As I notice the coloring, I think to myself how much her hair reminds me of my tia's. As if tapping into my thoughts, she tells me, "You remind me of my cousins … I always wanted dark eyes, dark hair, brown skin." Her words conjure up an image of time and place, as though I can picture her youth. As if I can see her in the time she spent with her cousins – in the time she spent longing. How, in a split second, did she instill this imaginary, this memory? I think of the complexity of the longing –of mestizaje and the romanticized appropriation of la India– and I consider the multiple planes of erasure that exist among and between us. In me, she evokes a lifetime longing of my own. The painful memory of how I longed for ivory skin, light hair, eyes of green, before eventually making my way toward acceptance (and love) of my brown hues. I consider the irony of our juxtaposed longings. I do not need to speak of my longing; the childhood yearning, to have "passed" like her (which, I also recognize in my initial misrecognition of her is an erasure). I consider what she knows of a longing that manifests on either side of a divide. I imagine that she knows something of it, and I imagine she knows I know something of it as well.

As I continued toward my exams, I kept thinking about the encuentro in the grocery store. How in the space of two minutes, we held moments of recognition, misrecognition, and recognition all over again. I kept thinking about our gestures, and the words that filled up the space between us, contained a moment in which we could each feel seen, and yet it obscured us from each other as well. The contours of the space, shaped by nation, shaped by race-making, shaped by erasure. The outer edges of the space we shared are the razor wire histories of colonialism, nationalism, belonging, unbelonging.

She asked me, "Are you Mexican?" and my defenses went up because I had not yet recognized her as kin. And because I had come to understand that white Americans don't ask white Americans if they are American. However, perhaps güeras seeking familiarity will ask a similarly worded question, but as a question that operates with an entirely different intention – as an invitation rather than as exclusion. When an expression flashed across my face, even if briefly, one of self-protection, she recognized it, and immediately rendered us visible to one another. She positioned herself as the "other" we both understood, on the outside with me, naming the güera privilege of passing, in an acknowledgement of missed recognition. All of this because of braids!

These are those intangible things that hold so much meaning. Gestures of legibility and recognition – even misrecognition. I ask how this leads us to ask ourselves, how do we find those to whom we belong? Is belonging what we seek?

This project explores the meanings of family and, in particular, practices of kinship beyond the conventional meanings of family among Queer youth and womxn of color between the post WWII period and 2020. I argue that D-I-Y (Do-It-Yourself and D-I-T, Do-It-Together) kin formation among these historically marginalized groups in the Pacific Northwest can trace its roots to an earlier generation of youth in Texas and Los Angeles during the 1940s and 1950s. I open with the narrative of my encounter at the grocery store, for it reveals traces of the meanings of family, kinship, identity, and belonging. This encounter harkened back to questions pertaining to my racial and/or ethnic identity from childhood; my hesitancy to answer drew from memory that such questions often sought to establish distance, or an "othering," rather than "invitation"; yet the invitation offered by giving the name of a place she called home, and her position, cultivated a moment of recognition and an encounter of belonging. Growing up the daughter of a Mexican American father, and a white mother,

and raised among non-biological kin, I had regularly encountered questions and assumptions about my racial and ethnic identity. I had been familiar with inquiries into how to make sense of the ways in which my body presented as a racialized other, even within my family structure. I also navigated social expectations of family through social and institutional interactions. Inquiries such as "Are you…?" or "What are you…?" can be understood under the rubric of a colonial logic which has sought to establish and maintain racial and ethnic classification categorization. As part of this colonial project, the family becomes a site in which systems of oppression and subjugation are reproduced through the body, premised on the myth of white supremacy and meritocracy, that demand conformity to gender and sexual norms. With the family operating as machinery of the state, the normative family structure, that which is a heteronormative nuclear family formation, both an adherence to this formation as well as deviation from it functions to reinforce systems of oppression, as well as contributes to the constructed myth of a nation.

The complexity of tracing my social family and biological family had been something I pondered throughout childhood; yet one moment, relatively recent, stands out to me most clearly. During a conversation with my late grandmother (a non-biological parent to me and others with whom I am connected as kin through her role as matriarch and foster mother), she said to me, "sometimes you treat me more like kin than my own blood." A decade or so earlier, my late grandfather pulled me aside to remind me, even though we may not be "related," "our blood is as good as the same." I understood the sentiment behind these statements, and these are moments that I cherish in memory. Yet, even so, these are curious statements to me. They operate by both undoing and reaffirming notions of family and kinship, in a peculiar doubling down of the primacy of biological kinship and the expectations of care, coupled with the recognition that kinship exists in relationships beyond biological ties, enacted through practices of care cultivated between people.

This project situates communities that facilitate and nurture kinship formations, including but not limited to normative family structures. I situate myself and my relationship to family as comprising both normative, and, therefore, "naturalized" biological relationships as well as kin created through practices of caregiving. I also engage with the complicated processes of tracing shifting relational dynamics between both creative kin and biological kin, particularly in the search for recognition of oneself in relation to ancestors, when those links have been severed. I offer this as an insight into my interest and approach to this field of study. The language of family is itself complicated and nuanced. My line of thinking regarding the language of family and the ways in which I have thought through the term, emerges from several memorable encounters with the term. For me, this inquiry begins with my own situatedness with regard to social kin and biological family; my introduction (and induction) into queer family, and the meanings of family further nuanced by engagement with queer Chicana feminist theorists, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga and their interrogations with *la familia de la raza*. Family, as a language of connectivity, and a practice of kinship, operates here beyond the taken-for-granted nuclear family formations which presume mother/father/child/sibling relationships. Although my exploration begins with this foundation, the unraveling of nuclear family formations as a given, evolved out of my own experience and relationship with family.

This project is about kinship formations among Queer youth between 1950-2020, alongside creativity and joy beginning with pachucas of the 1940s. This project situates creative practices in both creative expression and in the making of kin. I trace different aspects of creative expression, identity formation, and practices in legibility through Chicana creative expression in Texas and California, queer legibility and recognition through creative family practices. This project concludes in Seattle, Washington, by focusing on rock camps for gender marginalized youth. As multi-racial, queer, youth-focused, and youth-guided, intergenerational, collaborative creative space cultivated by Rain

City Rock Camp, rock camps cultivate alternative kinships. While this project encompasses creativity and creative expression broadly, Rain City Rock Camp centers music as the conduit for organizing and community building. This project offers recognition of the ways in which creative practices give way to kinship formation that spans across generation and region. Community lead practices built upon an ethos D-I-Y and D-I-T which often develop out of necessity in the face of disenfranchisement and the denial material resources, offer insight into the ways in which both pachucas and queer youth of color today, resist repression and silencing, carving out spaces recognizable across generations. These are the makings of kinship across time. The throughline of this project underscores the relationship between creativity, self-expression, and politicized identity contribute to meaning making. I recognize these meanings as conveyed through artistic work and creative expression.

Literature Review

Chicana feminist theorists, Queer of Color theorists, feminist historians, and scholars on family and kinship are crucial to my work, and it is from the rich body of work in Chicana feminist and Queer of Color theory as well as feminist historiography that my project develops. Chicana feminist theorists and feminist historians alike, not only engage in the processes of recuperation, but their work across disciplines, interrogates the forces that invisibilize the narratives and contributions of women, women of color, and queer histories, those forces that delegitimize the methods through which these histories are rerecorded, shared and held.

Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa offer *autohistorias* situating their lived experience in their work. This affirms the connection to the corporeal as they demonstrate the ways in which theorizing is an exercise in embodiment. They write from the body, paying attention to the sensations of the body,

interpreting meaning from pleasure as much as pain. Their writings lay bare the affective experience of queer of the body as a site of contestation. In the groundbreaking anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back*, Moraga and Anzaldúa explain,

> Theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience… we do this bridging by naming our selves and by telling our stories in our own words.[3]

From this telling of selves, Moraga and Anzaldúa underscore the importance and relevance of personal narrative and cultural history, not only in the development of Chicana feminist and Queer of Color theorizing, but also as an intervention to dominant historical narratives, as narratives from the margins destabilize dominant historical narratives by refusing erasure. Additionally, as artists of the written word, through poetry and creative narrative writing, Moraga and Anzaldúa intervene in methodological approaches to scholarly writing. In the careful craft of emotive writing, Moraga and Anzaldúa lay a foundation of theoretical and scholarly writing that engages the senses, refuting the split between the mind, the body, heart, and spirit.

As this project explores aspects of identity, Anzaldúa and Moraga both explore the meanings of multiple and contested identities. Leading Chicana feminist theorist, and founder and publisher of Third Woman Press, Norma Alarcón contextualizes Anzaldúa's writing, tracing Chicana feminism through a genealogy of indigeneity in a response to Anzaldúa's 1987 publication, Borderlands/La Frontera.

> … it is the consideration of the excluded evoked by the name Chicana that provides the position for multiple cultural critiques – between within, inside and outside centers and margins

[3] Moraga and Anzaldúa, 19.

> … as a result when many a writer of such racialized cultural history explores her identity, a reflectory and refractory position is depicted … The quest for a true self and identity which was the initial desire of many writers involved in the Chicano movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s has given way to the realization that there is no fixed identity. 'I' or 'She' as observed by Anzaldúa is composed of multiple layers without necessarily yielding an uncontested 'origin' … Thus, the name Chicana, in the represent, is the name of resistance that enables cultural and political points of departure and thinking in the multiple migrations and dislocations of women of 'Mexican' descent. The name Chicana, is not a name that women (or men) are born with, as is often the case with 'Mexican', but rather it is consciously and critically assumed and serves as point of pre departure for dismantling historical conjunctures of crisis, confusion, political and ideological conflict and contradictions… the idea of plural historicized bodies is proposed with respect to the multiple racial constructions of the body since 'the discovery' … The contemporary assumption of *mestizaje* (hybridism) in the Mexican nation-making process was intended to racially colligate a heterogeneous population that was not European. On the American side of the hyphen, *mestizas* are non-white, thus further reducing the cultural and historical experience of Chicanas. [4]

Alarcón acknowledges here that the making of identity is neither static nor fixed. The goal of invoking 'the' native woman within Chicana feminism is not to establish a singular or essential identity, nor is it to recover lost origins, though some may hold a profound spiritual connection to the "lost." The political implications of this spiritual kinship, when focused toward feminist change, should not be underestimated. Chicana/o identity, rather than operating as a definitive signifier of identity, becomes the site of "political, ideological and discursive struggle" in which notions of

[4] Norma Alarcón, "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of 'The' Native Woman," *Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (1990): 249–50.

definitiveness may be interrogated.[5] Alarcón posits that, as Chicana feminist interventions have initiated a resurgence in a stalled Chicano movement that had been predicated on a masculinist formation of Chicano nationalism. The "strategic invocation and recodification of 'the' native woman as a pluralized figure in the present," refuses to comply with the assimilationist narratives of European cultural domination, and the masculinist perspectives of Chicano nationalism. Importantly, this invocation demands attention to the "ideological constructions of the 'non-civilized' dark woman," bringing into the frame of view, that the majority of (Chicana) women working in the oppressive conditions of a segmented labor force, are Indigenous, or of Indigenous descent.

A feminist historiographic approach reveals the ways in which gender, race, class, as well as cultural and national identity, surface in the normative construction of family in the United States. The ideal family, articulated through a mix of explicit definitions and implicit understandings, proves critical to the formation of national identity by modeling and normalizing accepted attributes of citizenship. Emphasis on family as regulated through marriage stands as one arena in which citizenship may be determined. The generative work of the late historian, Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America,* reveals practices of racial gatekeeping in the late nineteenth century through an analysis of various state laws prohibiting interracial marriage. Recognition that these laws, not only prohibited interracial marriage, but privileged marriage between white men and women, contribute to understanding one of the ways in which the normative family within the United States developed as well as the function it served. The authority vested in government officials at the state and federal level to determine marriageability cultivated the creation of the family as an institution, rendering it a site from which individuals may obtain, or be denied first class citizenship.

[5] Alarcón, 247–48.

Miscegenation law operated not only as a means protect white property by legislating against interracial marriage in order to control and restrict sexual reproduction. Pascoe's work demonstrates the racialized constructions of gender, contributing to an ideological construction of "appropriate" expressions of sexuality. Under a white supremacist heteropatriarchy, sexual control necessitated that white womanhood was predicated on chastity and restraint. The same standard of sexual restraint was not imposed on white men. Under this construction, men of color, particularly Black and Indigenous men, were depicted as sexually dangerous. As a result, white women warranted protection. Women of color, as well as working class and poor women, were (and continue to be) subjected to hypersexualization. Determined to exist beyond the limits of appropriate sexuality, women of color and poor women were not afforded patriarchal protection. Likewise, men of color were (and also continue to be) subjected to a variation of hypersexualization fabricated as predatory. These constructions of gender and sexuality persisted beyond the repeal of miscegenation laws. The violence of miscegenation law, and these racialized constructions of gender and sexuality draw from the legacies of colonialism. Racialized notions of gender and sexuality become apparent at specific junctures in this project up to the contemporary moment.

Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* demonstrates the linkages between immigration policy, labor practices, and contemporary understandings of citizenship in the United States. By "charting the historical origins of the 'illegal alien' in American law and society," Ngai argues that the influence of restrictive immigration policy was "so deeply implicated in the development of twentieth-century American ideas and practices about citizenship, race, and the nation-state."[6] Significant to this project, Ngai's study of immigration policy in the United States unveils the fluctuations in legislature policies and attitudes toward Mexican

[6] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Updated edition with a New Foreword edition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3.

laborers in the U.S. As industries to the north relied heavily on the labor of a migrant labor force from the south, "immigration inspectors ignored Mexicans coming into the southwestern United States during the 1900s and 1910s to work in railroad, construction, mining, and agriculture. The immigration bureau did not seriously consider Mexican immigration within its purview, but rather as something that was regulated by labor market demands." Restrictive immigration policy designed to create and perpetuate a subordinate laboring class disenfranchised a myriad of communities of color. The primary targeted racialized group shifts depending upon generation and region. While exclusionary and prohibitive policies sought to disenfranchise communities, pockets of resistance emerged, enacting creative strategies of claiming space and participation in the body politic in ways that resisted being subsumed into the national imaginary.

Trailblazing the field of Mexican American women's history, feminist historians such Vicki Ruiz, offer a vibrant contextual history from which to further engage with Chicanx history. Ruiz writes,

> When I was a child, I learned two types of history – the one at home and the one at school. My mother and grandmother would regale me with tales of their Colorado girlhoods, stories of village life, coal mines, strikes, discrimination and family lore. At school, scattered references were made to Coronado, Ponce de León, the Alamo, and Poncho Villa. That was the extent of Latino history. Bridging the memories told at the table with printed historical narratives fueled my decision to become a historian.[7]

Ruiz's contributions to the field of Chicanx history cannot be understated. Her first monograph, *Cannery Women Cannery Lives,* published in 1987, documented the labor organizing headed by Mexican American women working in agriculture and canning mostly in California, though

[7] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1999), xi.

the organizing work demonstrated throughout the text gesture toward networks of organizing stretching throughout the Southwest. Ruiz, refusing to relegate Mexican American women to the landscape or supporting roles, asserts, "contrary to the stereotype of the Spanish-speaking woman tied to the kitchen with several small children, most Mexican women have been wage earners at some point in their lives."[8] In this succinct statement, Ruiz upends the prevailing perception that Mexican and Mexican American women's contributions to history could only be legible in the domestic sphere, bound by kinship and family ties, an idea which dominated U.S. historical narratives at the time of the monograph's publication. Expanding the limits of Chicano history, Ruiz laid the groundwork for Chicana feminist historical scholarship. In addition to challenging the incorrect assumption that women's contributions were limited to reproductive labor, Ruiz's work challenged singularly focused narratives of feminism, by attending, in her work, to the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and gender simultaneously. This work incorporated frameworks of labor history and feminist theory, while also breaking ground as the first monograph of Chicana history.

Vicki Ruiz demonstrates the necessity of historicizing communities of Mexican American women, developing a field of study located within Chicana history and Chicana feminisms. Ruiz' approach to focusing on the social history of Mexican American women's lives locates labor and organizing as a means for contextualizing the genealogy from which Chicana feminist theory emerges. Chicana feminist theorists, in conversation with one another, and the scholarship of feminist historians of Mexican American women, center the narratives and experiences in the historical records from which they had previously been excluded.

At the intersection of gender, race, class, and sexuality during the WWII era of the United States, historian Elizabeth Escobedo documents the lives of Mexican American working women *From*

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

Covreralls to Zoot Suits. Pinpointing her focus on Mexican American women in Los Angeles California during the Second World War, Escobedo brings together narratives of labor, family, race-making as they impacted Mexican American communities in the decade of the 1940s; Escobedo's text concludes with the 1948 California Supreme Court decision *Pérez v. Sharp* that struck down California's anti-miscegenation law. This focus on the WWII period contextualizes the social and economic period in which zoot suit culture, the historical jumping off point of this project, erupts onto the national scene. Escobedo centers Mexican American women in this period by demonstrating the ways in which they challenged the limits of racial norms in dominant U.S. society. Escobedo reminds readers to recognize her subjects as "women of color," as she draws from her narrators' stories of having faced discrimination as a result of their Mexican ancestry or parentage. This speaks to the slippages in racial categories, revealing the mechanisms through which racial categories are constructed and assigned meaning. However, in the negotiations with state bureaucracies, communities, and even within family structures, the racialization of Mexican and Mexican Americans operated inconsistently. Both the 1930 and 1940 U.S. census reflect this inconsistency, as during the data collection of the 1930 census, the category of Mexican represented a distinct race. By 1940, this classification had been removed. Racial identification was negotiated, at times, at the level of individuals. This change enabled the claim to racial classification as white, with *Mexican* functioning as a marker of ethnicity; but such claims relied upon a denial of African ancestry, and aside from a romanticized narrative conquest to obscure Indigenous genocide, claims to whiteness demanded the denial of Indigenous ancestry. As a result, claims to whiteness were precarious, and mediated through the transmutation of colonial logics from Mexico as they assumed meaning within the colonial logics of the United States.

Catherine Ramírez's text, *Woman in the Zoot Suit*, focuses specifically on the figure of the pachuca, as she offers an entry point for understanding a "collective process of identification."[9] Ramírez's work does, indeed, contextualize pachucas in their historical context, but does so through an interdisciplinary approach. Ramírez traces the memory of the emergence of La Pachuca, as she figures in historical and contemporary creative works including autobiography, film, plays, fiction, poetry, and visual art. In this way, Ramírez's work offers readers an understanding of the how the figure of La Pachuca as a cultural icon, transcends time and place. In addition, Ramírez draws upon scholarly work from various disciplines, not limited to history. While Ramírez and Escobedo both acknowledge the ways in which pachucas/ la pachuca stood in opposition to normative society, Ramírez sets the stage to situate the figure of pachucas within a narrative of queer sexualities.

Formative texts in lesbian history and queer kinships feature Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, which traces a genealogy of language by describing same sex female love and romance in the United States beginning with the Victorian era concept of romantic friendships. Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis's *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* documents lesbian communities in the urban setting of Buffalo, New York developed from oral histories of women recounting their memories from the 1930s to the 1980s. Marie Cartier's *Baby, You Are My Religion* locates lesbian bars as a central space of communion in the pre-Stonewall era. Nan Boyd and Horacio Roque Ramírez's *Bodies of Evidence* and Kath Weston's *Families We Choose* offer oral histories and methodological approaches to engaging with queer histories and queer kinship. As these texts center the lives and loves of lesbians in the twentieth century, they bring forward recognition of kinship between pachucas and previous decades of lesbians and queer women. These kinships reach into the

[9] Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009), 58.

contemporary urban, and multi-racial spaces of community formation, relational identity formation, and creative expression.

In this work, I bring to the foreground the ways in which communities of creative expression, such as music and fashion, contribute to the formation of identity as relational through D-I-Y (do-it-yourself) projects and cultural production. Born out of necessity, D-I-Y develops, in part, "as a response to the crushing privatization of neoliberal economic policies."[10] With caution not to romanticize restricted access to material resources, D-I-Y practices have the capacity to nurture the formation of alternative kinship patterns, as they have been critical to survival. To develop this further, D-I-Y cultural production and community formation necessitate an examination beyond the material to consider the social and political contexts that shape popular culture and cultural politics. Michelle Habell-Pallán locates the creative and critical energies fueling D-I-Y. as a "direct response to the neoconservative queer bashing and anti-immigrant hostility … faced in … everyday lives," where "popular culture constitutes a terrain where not only are ethnic racialized as well as gender, identity, contested, reproduced, and transformed, but also the struggle for and against social equality is engaged."[11] This framework locates the practices and cultural production from pachucas, butch/fem lesbian community formations, and the D.I.Y. "critical making" spaces of the contemporary moment in relation to each other, as a kinship across time and space.

This project engages with identity in relation to kinship formation, as well as kinship and family structures that operate both in accordance with, and in resistance to, normative expectations and understandings of family/kinship. The seedling of this project has been nurtured by Chicana feminist theory. "[M]uch of what the culture condemns focuses on kinship relationships. The welfare of the

[10] Michelle Habell-Pallán, *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture* (New York: New York University, 2005), 2.
[11] Habell-Pallán, 5.

family, the community… is more important than the welfare of the individual. The individual exists first as kin … and last as self."[12] As I consider alternative kinship formations, those which may exist beyond the purview social recognition or legibility to the state – I look toward the ways in which community formations, develop as extended kin networks to cultivate space for individual selves to name and inhabit identity, to illuminate the relational aspect of identity formation. Kinship and community are made up of a collective of individuals in a praxis of care; thus, some engagement with how individuals see themselves, and themselves in relation to others must be factored in. Identities are neither fixed nor essential by birth, though the meanings ascribed to certain attributes we exhibit/inhabit may press us to believe otherwise. Rather, the process of identification and the recognition of oneself, unfolds as a complex, fluid, and, at times, contradictory process. The development of identity, and in particular political consciousness is not a neutral process, and often results in contested identifications.

METHODOLOGY

A question with which I regularly grapple pertains to historiographic methodology. What does it mean to recognize, identify, misrecognize or misread the archive and its contents in the research process? How do we, as scholars/historians with our own subjectivities, enter the space of archive? How do we know when we are engaging with the gaps in the archive that we are not projecting ourselves into the archive? How do we know how to perceive gaps, let alone how to

interpret them? If our interpretation stems from our perception, this lens informs what we may recognize as familiar within the archive. In the inverse of perceived familiarity, how does this inform

[12] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 40.

what that which we may perceive of as absence? I am not alone in these wonderings. These questions emerge as a feminist historiographic consideration which calls for reflexivity. Clarity and transparency pertaining to one's own subject position become important here. Rather than seeking objectivity – a straightforward methodological process which allows the archive to "speak for itself" – a better suited methodology calls upon an acknowledgement that the archive will never speak for itself.

Historical narratives are always mediated through processes and operations that begin before historians enter and engage with archival spaces. Decisions are made to determine the stories and artifacts worthy of preservation, as well as the decision to determine what constitutes an artifact or even what "counts" an archive. Within the archive, one must consider how an archivist catalogs data. As noted above, our observation and interpretation of an archive and its contents cannot be separated from the subjective position of the person interpreting. Each point signals a process in which the materiality of lives lived, and moments transpired, are mediated through, not only foregrounded knowledge, but also perspective and experience. Archival engagement calls for an embodied epistemology.

Chronology also factors into archival engagement, for, every time an image circulates, the context and setting in which it circulates offers the potential for new readings. From here the question shifts from "how do we know whether or not we are projecting?" to "how do we acknowledge the mediated processes of archival engagement, and make sense of our interpretation given the limits of our subjective position?" The interventions brought forward by feminist historians have informed my own methodological approach, as I began to ask these questions of how to approach historiographic work. Following in their footsteps, I have developed a feminist methodological approach in the study and presentation of history. At its core, this methodology asks for care in how to read, interpret and present the narratives that emerge in this work.

Gayatri Gopinath offers a reflection on (mis)recognition, reading an image located within a selected archive:

> I know you… to my contemporary gaze immediately recognizable as a gender-queer figure … despite my initial, visceral sense of familiarity upon encountering this image … the longer I gazed at it the further it receded. Given that a photograph can never act as a transparent or unmediated visual record of the past, the image… cannot tell me who [the subject] really was, who or how he desired, or what his gender embodiment definitively meant to him or those around him. Rather as my own initial shock of (mis)recognition suggests…. [this image] activates transtemporal relays of affective relationality between the subjects in the photographs… and other contemporary viewers (such as myself) that produce new meanings for these as images as they circulate in the present … 'caring for' the past … can take the form of carefully attending to the aesthetic practices through which writing … To 'care for' is also to 'care about'; thus, the project of queer curation … is the obligation to impart that 'caring about' to others. Queer scholars have powerfully demonstrated the ways in which queer art, scholarship, and activism have always evinced a sense of obligation to document, analyze, archive, and value the small, the inconsequential, and the ephemeral… valuing that which has been deemed without value, but even more importantly, deliberately staging 'collisions and encounters' between aesthetic practices that may seem discontinuous or unrelated.[13]

This project engages with artifacts and narratives of our creative selves. In honor of the stories we craft and share with one another, I consider that when we engage in the work of story sharing, particularly among marginalized communities, we do so in an attempt to resist the inevitability of ephemerality. I enter this project from the vantage point of many feminist and queer historians who

[13] Gayatri Gopinath, *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*, Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 4.

have struggled against erasure and invisibility within the extant archive. In a series of engagements bridging the public and the University, the Women Who Rock Collective combats the erasure of women of color organizers and changemakers. Centering creativity as knowledge production, the Women Who Rock (un)Conference is built around art, music, and performance. As a regular practice in preparation for Women Who Rock, Dr. Michelle Habell-Pallán teaches courses with a direct tie in to the (un)Conferences held annually each spring. Students create *ofrendas* or *altares* in recognition of ancestors and creative kin. These offerings, built by hand, are decorated with mementos, gifts, and photographs of departed loved ones are created around the theme of the Women Who Rock (un)Conference. Honoring the departed to include those with whom we do not share a bio-genetic connection is an expansive practice of remembering, which cultivates both creativity in practice, and a practice of creative kinship formations. Ofrendas fill the room in each Women Who Rock (Un)conference or related event. Guest speakers as well as performers, ranging from poets, musicians, dancers, and theatrical performances respond to this theme. This event, as well as interviews conducted with guest performance artists are recorded for the Women Who Rock Oral History Archive. The Women Who Rock (un)Conference and Women Who Rock Oral History Archive significantly shaped the direction of this project, by offering tangible proof of the impact of creative spaces and our creative kin. This free, community-centered event takes place in community spaces in Seattle, Washington, wherein guests may participate in skill sharing workshops, hear from collaborators and organizers in justice movements, and enjoy or participate in performance art, poetry, dancing, and music. A prominent feature of the WWR (un)Conference is the display of the built altares, as a communal ofrenda. Participation in this resilience practice engages in community organizing, fostering kinship, and the preservation of history through practices of remembering.

GRIEFWORK

Elizabeth Kübler Ross writes on grief and grieving, that "in loss we are looking and longing for connection."[14] While Kubler-Ross speaks of grief in the conventional sense, i.e. bereavement, I consider the implications of the grief over losses that extend beyond the losses of loved ones through death. With that said, persistent grief, with episodic swells, permeates this project. Grief has defined the contours of my graduate school experience as I have grieved the passing of my father, grandfather, and grandmother.

My father passed suddenly a few weeks prior to the start of my first year. I had not known my father in my childhood, and at the time of his death we were estranged, and I had relatively little contact with my paternal family. Understand, the manifestation of estrangement that is absence, felt familiar. Estrangement required much less of me than facing the vulnerability of admitting how not knowing my family affected me. It felt significant that this absence was one of *my* choosing. I held out in an attempt to evade the grief that came for me anyway. Jolted into a new reality, I learned that "the absence of estrangement" and "the absence of death" are two different animals. The suddenness of his passing left me to tend to the fragments of our complicated relationship in a way that felt both isolated and final. Beyond that, I also carried the weight of guilt in the memory of my last conversation *about* him.

A few months before my father died, my cousin called me. This initiated a foray into reconnecting with my family that had not yet been reached as far as speaking directly with my father. I confessed that while I wasn't quite ready to talk to my father yet, my initial reasons for being upset probably could be addressed with a conversation. I said I'd think about it. When my cousin and I spoke

[14] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (Simon and Schuster, 2005).

again, about a month later, I had already begun packing for my move to Seattle. With everything now set in place, I felt comfortable sharing that I'd gotten into a PhD program and would be moving in mid-September. That conversation lingers bittersweet. I recall my cousin's excitement as he affirmed, "you're going to be a doctor!" We tossed around plans for the following summer. He proposed coming up to visit so we could catch a Mariners' game, and teased me when I asked, "the Mariners?"

"Michelle! Baseball! We'll go see a game when they play the Oakland A's."

As the conversation drew to an end, he said, "Call your dad."

I sighed and repeated what I'd said before. "I'll think about it."

"Come on…"

"Ok. I'll call when I get settled in Seattle."

The next phone call I received was from my sister, just as I was heading out the door to finish up my last few days of work. I remember thinking it was odd that she would call me at that hour – since she knew my schedule. "Hey sis. Dad died last night."

Not long after my father died, my grandfather's health started to decline. In early 2017, my grandfather had a major stroke. Imaging revealed it was not the first, and in the months, turned into years, to follow, it would not be the last. Traumatized by the lack of closure in the suddenness of my father's passing, I felt a tremendous urgency to be with my grandfather. This was also heightened by the closeness of our relationship, as he had raised me, though among my kin, he and I had always been close. This ushered in the flood of grief that demanded my engagement with creative practice. In my struggle to cope with the anticipatory grief endured in the protracted dying process, most days I could muster only enough energy to pass through the day, and felt largely incapable of expressing myself, as tears choked my words whenever I opened my mouth. Frustratingly, words never seemed to fully encapsulate what I hoped to say. In turn, I struggled in academic writing. Yet, I could somehow tap

into sound, and it called to me. It had been so long since I had played guitar – my primary instrument – that I was clumsy at it. I had to relearn the songs I'd once committed to muscle memory, as the soft tips of my fingers burned and bruised under the required pressure of pressing the strings against the fretboard. But it was a lifeline. By late 2018, my grandfather's hospital admissions became frequent enough for the family to take seriously end-of-life care. In February he entered hospice care. I wanted my last memory with my grandfather to be one of the living, so I chose *not* to fly home when hospice informed us it was time. I wavered on this decision for three days, and for three days he held on. I wrapped up the week's teaching. I spoke the words into the universe. *I'm sorry, I can't be there. I can't bear to see it.* He passed away that evening, July 25, 2019.

My dissertation stalled until my grandmother entered hospice. I mean, I wrote, but not much came of it. Most of what I wrote in my fellowship year I did not share with my committee. Most of what I wrote, thinking it was my dissertation, was actually the necessary processing of the previous years of grief in order to write the actual dissertation. Maybe this is the same. Although fragments of it appear in this draft, I could not write effectively as I held my breath, waiting… my grandmother started receiving hospice care right around the time I started the interview process for my job. And maybe that is what shifted. There we both were, at the end of something; the only way to the other side is through (whatever this transitory period may be). As I made it to the final round of interviews, I shared this news with my grandmother. I told her about the job opportunity and what it would entail. She asked, "Do they call you Professor?" She had been asking this question for years. Perhaps it was a gentler way of asking, "When are you going to graduate?" by weaving her faith in my capacity into the inquiry. She left no room for ambiguity about whether or not I would earn my PhD. She would then often remind me, "I had an uncle who was a professor." Even though I'd been teaching for some time throughout graduate school, I'd always answer, "No Gramme, not yet." However, I was this time,

moved toward a different response. This time when she asked, I told her, “Yes, Gramme, they call me Professor.” She didn’t mention her uncle this time.

My sister/cousin called me to tell me it was time. Even though I was in the middle of teaching, and I was terrified to witness dying, this time, I knew that I needed to be present. My partner gifted me airline miles so that I could book the next available flight to go home for the last time. I arrived in San José on a Friday evening. By the time I arrived at my childhood home, my grandmother was barely conscious. I sat beside her bed and slid my hand into hers. After I’d been there a while, talking with my sister/cousin, in the room, we noticed grandma had opened her eyes. In a brief moment of lucidity, she looked at me and squeezed my hand. She went into her final hours of rest after that. I had packed a small Bluetooth speaker and played music for her — all of her gospel favorites where singers crooned about a great homecoming. I painted her nails, brushed her hair, applied lotion to her skin. I talked to her. I shared memories and shed tears. But mostly, I just held her hand.

The next evening, it was just the two of us in the room. Fatigued and anxious, others needed a break, and took time to get out of the house, or just away from the room. Their departures tasked me with the responsibility of care that included administering medicine. Morphine and a sedative. I had been afraid to administer it. I prayed I wouldn’t have to, even as I knew what that would mean. When the time came, I talked us both through the process. As I positioned myself next to her, lifting her head I contemplated that in all of the years she had administered medicine to me, this was the first time our roles reversed. I explained each step, preparing her for every touch. Borrowing the kind of phrasing she’d have used, I told her, “Don’t worry gramme, I’ll be easy, so you won’t choke… I know it doesn’t taste good. I’ll be easy.” I never administered the dose. With her head cradled in my arms, I felt the shift. One breath, a gasp. Then another. It ends on a gasp. I had not known this before, but in this moment, *I knew*. I placed the full syringe down on the bed… I wished, if I had known, that I’d have

been saying *I love you.* But maybe in those kinds of moments, words give way to presence. Perhaps she heard *I love you* in "I'll be easy."

Griefwork runs through this project, situating a grief beyond bereavement, to consider the less conventional understandings of grief that accompany intangible losses. This the grief of loss – both that which can be perceived and measured, and that which I have encountered only as the ghosts of longing that have driven this project. What of the grief of lost histories? Of lives shamed into hiding, or histories buried with the countless unknown, covered over by narratives of conquest? What is the grief felt in the lost sense of belonging? What is the grief that accompanies the loss of spaces of joy? How do we account for this kind of grief, and all of the sadness, anger, disappointment, despair that comes of it, as well as the insurgency, the resistance and resilience practices that refuse these kinds of social death?

If, in loss, we are looking for and longing for connection, would kinship connections that cultivate belonging soothe the pain of loss? I had already gravitated to these ideas of family, kinship, and belonging, prior to the passing of my kin, a result of the preceding disconnection, the feeling of severance in the deprivation of a known biogenetic ancestry and cultural lineage. In these terms, I am speaking of the grief of family ruptures, of homophobia, of misogyny, white supremacy– these more nebulous experiences of grief. I would not have arrived at these questions were it not for the work that grief demanded of me. Griefwork is in the willingness to encounter and engage with the archives – those that are "official," and the archives of our lives and lived experience in all of its beauty and ugliness. This griefwork is in the recognition and acceptance of the inevitability of our own ephemerality, and in the ways we struggle against it. That our story sharing, kinships, and the imprints we leave, are the glimmers of our memory and existence. There is griefwork in the desire to document our existence; in offering tangible proof of our presence via the D-I-Y communities we build and the

creative content we create and archive. From this, I developed an awareness of griefwork, and the ways in which resilience practices, joy and even the research process itself, may bloom from grief.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

As a project that explores creativity and kinship, I first introduce the workings of normative family structures and expectations in Chapter 1. This introduces normative models of patriarchal family (white middle class family) and kinship as they have functioned in the United States. In order to consider alternative and subversive kinship formations, it's necessary to first recognize the ways in which the institutionalization and politicization of the family is not a natural phenomenon, but rather operates as a mechanism of the state. Situating the family as an apparatus of the state reveals the colonial underpinnings in the maintenance of normative family structures, which permeate through biological relationships as well as practices of adoption and foster care. From this jumping-off point, one can recognize alternative kinship formations, and the creative practices moving through stylistic, visual, and auditory circuits of legibility, fostering familiarity and recognitions of kinship.

Chapter 2 moves to look specifically at negotiations with family and community, centering Mexican American youth. While the racialization of Mexican American communities contributes to an experience within families that has not always aligned with the normative structure of a white middle class expectation, this chapter considers the ways in which aspirations in the proximity to whiteness erupt in the tensions within families, and communities. First laying the foundation through policies of immigration and labor practices, this chapter considers the emergence of Mexican American identity. Mexican American organizing (model minority myth) becomes contentious with the realization that some aspirations of upward mobility are foreclosed possibilities due to systemic structural oppression.

I move then to the rise of a zoot suit culture, and pachuquismo, as a formation of Mexican / Chicanx subculture, in a distinctly urban expression and cultural signifier of Mexican American youth identity. The zoot suit and zoot suit culture signify the travels of cultural currency. Borrowed and adapted from Black jazz musicians in 1930s Harlem, and through films like 1943's "Stormy Weather" starring Cab Calloway, the adaptation of the zoot suit, and what came to be known as *pachuquismo*, traveled to Mexico, El Paso, and Los Angeles; it was shared across racially marginalized and working class communities, elicited anxieties often voiced in concerns over conditions of family well-being. Turning attention to Mexican American young adults and women, the wartime climate of the United States, and the heavy restrictions on pachucas gender and sexual expression, demonstrated these racial and sexual anxieties. Meanwhile, the labor of pachucas is that they re-racialized and re-ethnicized themselves as they wanted to be seen. In so doing, they fully inhabited their expressions of gender and subversive sexualities, in an influential rebellion that carries forward into the contemporary moment.

Chapter 3 picks up the pachuca, queering the figure to consider the relationship between the budding underground lesbian subculture (particularly, the urban, working class to middle class expression of butch/femme). Catherine Ramírez situates the pachuca as a queer figure. This chapter considers that while there may not be archival evidence of the overlap between pachucas and the emergent lesbian communities that make up the documented history of lesbians in this decade, this is more so a reflection of gaps in archive than of the absence of pachuca butches and femmes. WWII created a unique set of conditions that fostered the development of a queer political identity, even pre-Stonewall. This chapter considers the forms of kinship that present during this time and how iterations of kinship continue moving forward.

Chapter 4 moves into the contemporary moment to situate intergenerational kinship formations through an engagement with the Seattle-based nonprofit, Rain City Rock Camp. As one of over fifty like-minded camps across the United States and the world, Rain City Rock Camp operates with a mission to foster self-esteem through creativity and self-expression in music. RCRC centers youth in its programming, where, under the direction of an anti-racist, anti-oppression justice framework, adults guide, nurture and support youth leadership in learning an instrument, forming a band, writing a song, and performing. A major component in the success of camp emerges from a community of dedicated volunteers. Many of these volunteers not only believe in its mission, but have continued to support camp, having themselves witnessed its impact on the lives of campers and its community of volunteers – youth and adults alike. Camp ties together the D-I-Y and creative practices through which foster kinship and community. Rain City Rock Camp (and other camps) links back to pachucas, and queer kinships demonstrating that despite the appearance of disparate communities, these are kinships developed across time. It is not just that young people now can trace their roots to groups of another time, but that there exists a kinship among these communities through time.

Chapter 1. MEANINGS MADE OF FAMILY

1.1 FAMILY IN THE MAINTENANCE OF RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

The heteronormative family structure, as a patriarchal hierarchical formation, has been central to U.S. society since the 17th century. Within this structure, the patriarchal order of society, in which males ruled in both church and society extended to the rule of the household. "Patriarchy," as historian Stephanie Coontz argues, "led to a social acceptance of inequality and rank that extended far beyond relations between father and child, or husband and wife."[15] Within earlier colonial families parental, church and political authority ensured the obedience of children. These concerns over the social behavior of youth persisted through generations. By the early twentieth century, social scientists seeking to address the problems of urban cities, and particularly urban youth, turned their attention to the family. In the early twentieth century with the development of urban centers, rural to urban migration, and transnational immigration, social reformers expressed their concerns for society. To social reformers the morality of society was inextricably linked to the morality of young women, and the maintenance of a heteronormative, patriarchal family structure.[16] In the cityscape of Los Angeles California, adolescent girls represented the potential challenge to family relations. Adolescent girls, then, "became a symbol of social disorder – a magnet for Americans' anxieties about immigration, disease, urban and industrial development and disruptions of family and community life."[17] While the thread of delinquency runs throughout the following chapters of this dissertation, this chapter situates

[15] Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (Verso Books, 2016), 79.
[16] Laura S. Abrams, "Guardians of Virtue: The Social Reformers and the 'Girl Problem,' 1890-1920," *Social Service Review* 74, no. 3 (2000): 436–52, https://doi.org/10.1086/516412.
[17] Mary Odem, "City Mothers and Delinquent Daughters," in *California Progressivism Revisited* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994), 175.

normative family structure to examine how anxieties over the stability of the family signals anxieties over social and material wellbeing.

The mechanisms that ascribe meaning to the normative family structure in the United States, reveal hierarchies of race, class, and gender. Overlapping systems of a structural hierarchy contribute to the form, structure, and political meaning of family within U.S. society. In 1943, leading sociologist Talcott Parsons summarized the heteronormative family as a single generation, conjugal family, stating "the importance of the isolated conjugal family is brought out by the fact that it is the normal 'household' unit."[18] Notice that Parson places household in quotes, which I found especially interesting; I would have bracketed *normal*, placing it in quotes instead. Parsons assumes normality. Given that this article stands as a formative text, still in reference in the 2020s, it raises questions about the impact of presumed normality over the decades since its publication. Parsons continues, "[t]his means it is the unit of residence and the unit whose members as a matter of course pool a common basis of economic support… the typical conjugal family lives in a home segregated from those of both pairs of parents and is economically independent of both."[19] Parsons notes deviations from this form on the basis of race and class, underscoring the fact that this household unit deemed normal, is predicated on a white, middle-class, or affluent family system. The structuring of a family in this way performs as a means to concentrate inheritances, as "considerable significance attaches to our patterns of inheritance of property … the American law of intestacy … gives all children, regardless of birth order or sex equal shares. But even more important, the actual practice of wills conforms to this pattern … there are important upper-class elements in this country for which elite status is closely bound up with the status of ancestry; hence the continuity of kinship solidarity in a –mainly patrilineal line of descent,

[18] Talcott Parsons, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States," *American Anthropologist* 45, no. 1 (1943): 28, https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1943.45.1.02a00030.
[19] Parsons, "The Kinship System of the Contemporary United States."

in 'lineages … There is a tendency for this in turn to be bound up with family property, especially an ancestral home and continuity of status in a particular local community."[20] Although little has changed regarding U.S. cultural conceptions of family, feminist scholars in the fields of history and sociology have developed a body of scholarship that critiques the idealized, white patriarchal middle-class heteronormative family structure. Given that the dominant structure of families in the United States in the late 20th and early 21st century follows the model of a single generation household nuclear family formation, families that operate differently introduce dynamics and experience not always legible. Writers who have interrogated the family at the intersections of race, class, and gender reveal the intricate inner workings of interconnected mechanisms of oppression and the different ways in which patriarchy, racism, classism and homophobia manifest within families.

The significance of the family as an institution becomes evident in the reproduction of the social and material conditions based on race, class, and gender. As sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn posits,

> [L]ike class and gender hierarchies, racial stratification is a fundamental axis of American social structure. Racial stratification produces different opportunity structures that shape families in a variety of ways. Marriage patterns, gender relations, kinship networks, and other family characteristics result from the social location of families, that is, where they are situated in relation to societal institutions allocating resources.[21]

The family functions as a means to create and allocate generational wealth through inheritance. The accumulation of wealth in what becomes the United States can be traced to the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples, the trafficking and enslavement of Africans in the Transatlantic Slave

[20] Parsons, 28–29.
[21] Maxine Bacca Zinn, "Family, Feminism, and Race in America," *Gender and Society* 4, no. 1 (1990): 74.

trade, and the over extraction resources from the land. This wealth, ultimately, contributed to the development of industry, to finance the industrial revolution. On the reproduction of racial capitalism under settler colonialism, Alyosha Goldstein writes,

> [W]hat is now the United States, colonialism and the legacies of racial slavery remain actively constitutive for capitalist accumulation. Colonialism in this context is not or not only a process of expansion and incorporation, but is a primary social, economic, and political feature of the United States itself … Native dispossession is not one historical moment in a teleology of capitalist development but continues and changes over time in ways that operate in conjunction with other forms of expropriation and subjection and the differential devaluation of racialized peoples. Chattel slavery and its afterlives similarly shape both the historical conditions and present-day dynamics of racialized dispossession.[22]

The relationship between racial capitalism, dispossession, chattel slavery and the construction of normative family structures reveals itself in the maintenance of these systems. Colonial attempts at genocide introduce rupture in community and kinship relations in the severance of ancestral ties which was a facet of both Indigenous genocide and the human trafficking of the slavery. By the late nineteenth century, with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the United States, social reformers sought to address the "problems" of society, ushering in an era of Progressive reform. In anxieties expressed over social welfare, reform efforts to "save" children, and (some) women from poverty and delinquency. Indian boarding schools, established in the mid-nineteenth century, proliferated in the United States during the Progressive Era. Although not directly linked to Progressive Era reforms, Indian Boarding functioned to address "Indian Problem" infamously remembered as *Kill the Indian, Save the man.* The emphasis of Indian boarding schools to "civilize"

[22] Alyosha Goldstein, "On the Reproduction of Race, Capitalism, and Settler Colonialism," 45, accessed February 13, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/35446492/_On_the_Reproduction_of_Race_Capitalism_and_Settler_Colonialism_.

through forced assimilation demanded the removal of Native children from their families and communities. The severing intergenerational relationships as an act of cultural genocide. These measures ultimately contributed to furthering displacement and ruptures in kinship.

Racial stratification of labor continued in the development of industry, furthering conditions of exploitative labor, while limiting access to economic prosperity. In this continuation of gendered and racialized class oppression, the inheritances of capital accumulated in wealth across generations. This is evident today as we see the wealth that is amassed held by fewer and fewer families. As "new ways of life and new family patterns sprang from industrialization, 'it was the working class and enslaved men and women whose labor created the wealth that allowed the middle class and upper middle class domestic lifestyles to exist.'"[23] The accumulation of generalized wealth of the few, over time, reinforces racialized, gendered, class stratification, and exploitation that barred access to resources and perpetuated poverty across generations for poor and working-class communities.

With the normative family functioning as a way to channel generational wealth, the state had a vested interest in the protection of white-held wealth and property. To ensure these protections, and to maintain and uphold the racial stratification under white supremacy, attention turned toward marriage. Historian Peggy Pasco asserts "marriage may not be the first thing that comes to mind when considering America's entrenched history of racism," however, the fraught history legislating interracial marriage reveals deep anxieties pertaining to race and the maintenance of a racialized social order predicated on white supremacy. As a malleable term, "white supremacy" reveals "the several different layers of racial domination (structure, ideology, and aspiration)" that extend beyond legal segregation, and extend beyond the black/white binary to impact Mexican Americans, Filipinos, Asian Americans, Southern European immigrants, and other white ethnic communities "who lived their lives

[23] Zinn, "Family, Feminism, and Race in America," 38.

at its edges, despite their individual racial formations and specific structures of oppression."[24] The legislation of criminalizing interracial marriage to prevent miscegenation (race mixing) emerged by mid-nineteenth century. Miscegenation appeared as "an independent term … that referred to the 'mixture of two or more races' not only channeled "the belief that interracial marriage was unnatural" enabling it to stand as a "taken for granted basis of American laws and policy."[25] Law against miscegenation represented the legal embodiment of nearly unanimous white opposition to intermarriage. Built premise that race mixing was an unnatural as a matter of fact, rather than by the design of politics, miscegenation laws defined the contours of appropriate marriage determined as a union predicated on a monogamous, heterosexual, reproductive partnership. Miscegenation law also defined the contours of illicit sex.

Pascoe posits, "miscegenation law channeled property, propriety, personal choice, and legitimate procreation into one very particular kind of monogamous marital pair: couples that were made up of one white man and one white woman, whose sameness of race was required by law and whose difference in sex was taken entirely for granted."[26] At its foundation, miscegenation laws operate to serve white supremacy by maintaining concentrated wealth within the concept of "protecting white property" and within a "legal system that took the protection of property rights as one of its central functions."[27] Under a patriarchal system that prohibits women's economic independence, married women's access to property existed through their husbands. To interrupt the transference of property held by white men to women of color, courts may refuse to recognize marriage, "drawing a sharp line between legitimate marriage on the one hand and illicit sex on the

[24] Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America*, 1 edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13.
[25] Pascoe, 1–2.
[26] Pascoe, 3.
[27] Pascoe, 105.

other, then defining all interracial relationships as illicit sex."[28] In miscegenation cases, sexual morality was paramount. "Judges routinely branded long term settled relationships as 'mere' sex rather than marriage. Lawyers played to these assumptions by associating interracial sex with prostitution."[29] The means by which interracial marriage could be defined as illicit, also relied heavily on racialized constructs of gender to predetermine sexuality and sexual morality.

With miscegenation laws remaining on the books well into the mid-twentieth century, their enforcement law came down to the bureaucracy within states. Just as courts could invalidate an existing marriage, civil offices could deny petitions for marriage. Often, the decision to grant or deny a marriage license came down to the marriage licensing clerk, placing civil clerks at the front end of regulating sex. The rigid control of sexual reproduction operates through an unyielding control of sexuality as it becomes entangled with gender. With particular emphasis on the control of women's sexuality, in their capacity to reproduce, miscegenation law and prevailing sentiments of race and gender create a feedback loop in determining what constitutes both appropriate forms of gender and sexuality, as well as gender and sexual deviance.

To justify genocide and the rape of Indigenous and enslaved women, stereotypes associating women of color as inviolable and hypersexual, ascribed morality to racialized constructs of femininity and womanhood. Juxtaposed to the hypersexuality ascribed to women of color, the construction of white womanhood signified an embodiment of sexual purity, and sexuality that warrants protection. This linked white womanhood to a racialized and classed construct of femininity where sexual purity extended to denote respectability. The emphasis of sexuality and respectability becomes important, in particular, due to the capacity for, and anxieties over, reproduction and its potential to disrupt the established order of white supremacy.

[28] Pascoe, 106.
[29] Pascoe, 106.

Echoing this sentiment, Kim Heikkila's work on adoption in the mid-twentieth century, states, "maintaining racial hierarchy and the material benefits it confers on those at the top depends on controlling women's reproduction in race-specific ways. Policies and practices that seek to accomplish these ends do not merely respond to preexisting, naturally occurring, easily identifiable racial groups; instead, they help to create and perpetuate social, political, and economic differences that come to be associated with racial groups."[30] With its rigid control over marriage and procreation and the family as a means through which we see not only the distribution of wealth, but the social reproduction of ideas pertaining to race, class, and gender, the state is deeply entrenched in family affairs. With the emphasis of marriages recognized by the state, and the expressed purpose and responsibility of sexual reproduction within marriage, miscegenation laws demonstrate anxieties over sexual reproduction in conjunction with the maintenance of white supremacy, while also shaping definitions of romance and expectations of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As Pascoe asserts, "when societies decide who can and can't legally marry, they determine who is and isn't really part of the family."[31] The authority to determine who is and is not part of the family ultimately shapes the perception of who belongs and who does not—within communities, and the nation.

Lastly, there is a notable intersection regarding disability. It remains important to note that tactics to control reproduction, such as forced sterilization, were informed by early twentieth century eugenicists. As of 2022, 31 states in the United States permit the sterilization of disabled people, with seventeen states allowing sterilization procedures to be performed on children.[32] Additionally, disabled people are often excluded from marriage, due to a maximum income threshold which restricts access to

[30] Kim Heikkila, *Booth Girls: Pregnancy, Adoption, and the Secrets We Kept* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society press, 2021), 26.
[31] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 2.
[32] Esther Gim, "Disabled People Can Still Be Forcibly Sterilized in Over Half of the US," Rewire News Group, January 25, 2022, https://rewirenewsgroup.com/2022/01/25/disabled-people-can-still-be-forcibly-sterilized-in-over-half-of-the-us/; "Forced Sterilization of Disabled People in the United States," National Women's Law Center, accessed June 9, 2023, https://nwlc.org/resource/forced-sterilization-of-disabled-people-in-the-united-states/.

social security disability benefits. As of 2023 the federal income threshold limits earnings to a maximum of $1470 per month, $2460 if a person is blind. Earning in excess of this amount results in a freeze on benefits.[33] As a result, the family, in functioning as a mechanism of the state, reproduces systems of oppression through the bodies of individuals who make up tidy family units, as well as through those which deviate from it. In these ways it becomes evident that through the mechanism of the state, the function of family operates entirely differently than that of the networks of care formed in households, between individuals and communities.

Despite, or perhaps because of, massive social upheavals during the first half of the twentieth century, such as industrial expansion, economic depressions and two world wars, the normative family ideal as white, middle-class, able-bodied and heterosexual has persisted. In fact, dominant narratives of this version of "family" became more fully entrenched during the Cold War period, which lasted well into the 1980s. As the debates over sexuality and homophobia in the feminist movement and the heightened visibility of gay rights in the U.S. after the Stonewall Rebellion illustrate, social justice movements that focused on gender and sexuality simultaneously challenged and at time reinscribed gender norms.

1.2 Family Scripts

Family scripts underscore an expectation of biological tracing, with the exception of adoption. While the most common form of adoption in the United States is “stepchild” adoption, I turn attention to focus on direct placements, as well as foster-to-adopt. Direct placement adoptions enable the birth parent to play an active role in the selection of adoptive parents, whereas agency adoption involves the

[33] “Working While Disabled: How We Can Help,” *Social Security Administration*, 2023, https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10095.pdf.

assistance of a private or public adoption agency to facilitate placement. Foster-to-adopt requires the relinquishment or termination of birth parent rights. Adoption facilitates the recreation of normative family structures, with recognition that it is the practice of kin-making that creates the family – though it is in conjunction with a lengthy and often costly bureaucratic process. Within the scenarios of adoption, family formation is expected to occur within a heteronormative nuclear family structure. Historically, LGBTQ families have encountered barriers to adoption. While the Supreme Court ruling to legalize same-sex marriage dismantled some of these barriers, same-sex couples may still encounter restrictions when it comes to marital status.[34] These restrictions vary by state.

On a note about language, Kim Heikkila defines and differentiates terms that reflect the actions and realities of parents on both sides of adoption. "Give up" has fallen out of favor, as "placement" is more commonly used. Likewise, "surrender" is utilized to indicate the presence of pressure to place a child up for adoption. In the last forty years, "biological parent" has given way to "birth parents/birth mothers," resulting from the birth parent advocacy groups. In recent decades, the term birth parent has come under scrutiny- "many women who carry and deliver a child who is then raised by others now take umbrage when their status as mothers is qualified by the term 'birth,' believing it to be a dehumanizing term that reduces them to breeders or incubators for wealth couples searching for a baby in the adoption market."[35] It is important to acknowledge language and its shifts, as language has the potential to carry the weight of judgment. And, moreover, while some terms have fallen out of favor, it certainly does not mean such terminology is entirely absent from the discussion of adoption. Implementing new language often lags- it does so due to the weight of the meanings associated with

[34] Bonnie Miller Rubin, "Adoption Ban Targets Gay Couples, Critics Say; Arkansas Law That Bars Unmarried Adults from Adopting or Fostering Puts the Spotlight on Same-Sex Parenting.," *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 2008, sec. Main News; Part A; National Desk; Jane Gross, "Gays, Singles Also Targets of Adoption Rule; Families: Regulation Would Specifically Exclude Unmarried Couples. After Initial Denials, Wilson Administration Acknowledges Plan Is Part of Attempt to Influence Social Agenda.: [Home Edition]," *Los Angeles Times (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, September 8, 1996, sec. PART-A; Metro Desk.
[35] Heikkila, *Booth Girls*, 8–9.

language. In other words, even if certain terms or phrases have fallen out of favor, the ideas and sentiments associated with these terms leave the trace of an afterimage. The moral or judgmental weight of outdated language often persists, and, if not the language itself the value judgments associated with it, even if unconsciously. This is true in discussions of motherhood and family structure, as well as in the framing of adoption narratives.

Until the mid-twentieth century adoptions were classified as closed, resulting in a complete severance of ties between child and birth parents. The practice is less common in the present day due to the advocacy of adoptees. In closed adoption, adoptees could find out very little if anything about their biological families. Closed adoptions, initially designed to offer the protection of confidentiality, morphed into secrecy. "Single parent women were the targets of shame and intervention by public and private social welfare agencies, while their male partners could, and often did, evade similar consequences."[36] This underscores the burden of responsibility women carried in this era of adoption, as fathers could evade consequences, not only upholds a sexual double standard, it glosses over pregnancies that resulted from rape or incest.

The stigma of unplanned pregnancy is made apparent in the processes of adoption. Heikkila writes, that when women were faced with an unplanned pregnancy,

> [They] would often do everything they could to hide it from their friends, family, and community. Some women would even be sent away during the pregnancy, returning to their hometown only after they had given birth to their child, who would be placed for adoption by a doctor or adoption facility — without much (if any) input from the birth mother.[37]

[36] Heikkila, *Booth Girls*.
[37] "What Is a Closed Adoption?," American Adoptions, accessed April 30, 2023, https://www.americanadoptions.com/adopt/closed-adoption.

It is important here to consider the race and gender implications of single parenthood and adoption, as well as the agencies which served (or denied service) in the event of unplanned pregnancy. It becomes clear that the privacy and confidentiality afforded as a practice of closed adoptions also operated to maintain the respectability of white, middle-class womanhood. If to maintain the respectability of white-middle class womanhood, unplanned pregnancies were met with secrecy, and the disempowerment of (unwed) pregnant women, it then becomes evident that the politics of respectability is bound up with trauma and shame.

As a wholesale practice, closed adoptions declined due to adoptee advocacy beginning in the 1970s.[38] The stigma of single motherhood, however, has persisted as evidenced by the lack of social welfare and resources offered to single parents – mothers especially. Whether from birth, or foster-to-adopt, or direct placement, adoption is traumatic at its foundation by initiating a rupture between parent and child, and possible siblings. In spite of this, narratives of adoption agencies frame adoption with uncomplicated positivity. Adoption placements, particularly through private agencies, emphasize a narrative of desire as expressed by adoptive parents. Birth parents, if acknowledged, may garner some recognition for their sacrifice. Adoption agencies extoll a narrative of desire on the part of adoptive parents coupled with the gift of a better life, invoking a rhetoric of selflessness on the part of biological parents. These narratives implicitly assert deservedness and capability to parent. They also do little to acknowledge the social and material stressors of unplanned pregnancy, leading to the consideration of adoption placement under pressure, due to a lack of material, structural and social support. With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and increase in restricted access to abortion, these narratives are likely to proliferate.

[38] "The Adoption Reform Movement," *Bastard Nation* (blog), accessed April 30, 2023, http://bastards.org/bb-the-adoption-reform-movement/.

Though the rise of private, for-profit adoption agencies, and the development of a marketplace for children" is not the expressed focus of this dissertation, this phenomenon is critical to an analysis of family formation and the intersections of gender, motherhood and race under colonial frameworks. A growing body of research investigates the industry of private adoption agencies, including the costs associated with adoption (tens of thousands of dollars to adopt an infant) that are contributing to a "marketplace for children," with high demand, for infants especially. The construction of white womanhood in the United States is deeply entangled with evangelical colonialism. Self-sacrificing motherhood is an expectation of the fulfillment of purpose, and a determinant of femininity. A focus on evangelical motherhood is paramount within Christian colonial projects, compounded by an emphasis on missionary service. In this scenario, motherhood serves as missionary work. Certainly, adoptive families take various forms – not all adoptive parents are Christian. Nor are all adoptive mothers who may identify with Christianity embarking on adoption as a fulfillment of evangelical motherhood. But, to "bring the mission field at home," to save children from conditions of poverty, while also "passing on the gospel to a new population of children, effectively saving them twice" demonstrates the links between motherhood, adoption, and evangelical Christianity.[39] It is not always the case that adoption operates as a project of evangelizing, or that motherhood always operates as an extension of missionary work, however, persistent narratives about motherhood and nation have laid the foundation for this ideology to take shape. This is evident in the exclusion of LGBTQ couples from adopting, and within pro-life / forced birth narratives.

As the daughter of a mother who had placed her first child for adoption, and an adoptive parent herself, Kim Heikkila writes that it is impossible to understand the experiences of her mother's adoption history "solely in terms of gender" for her mother's story "is a white woman's story, not just

[39] Kathryn Joyce, *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption* (PublicAffairs, 2013), 21.

because she happened to be white, but because her experiences were channeled through her whiteness. Single parent white women were viewed, understood, and treated in ways distinct from those in which single pregnant, Black, Brown, and Indigenous women were viewed understood and treated"[40] Maternity homes may not have been an option available to women of color, due to "whites only" policies. Rickie Solinger gestures toward the "complex cultural, historical and economic reasons … [B]lack, single, pregnant women were not, in general, spurned by their families or shunted out of their communities into maternity homes."[41] Upending prevailing narratives of "family and community disorganization," Solinger notes, "it is striking how the [B]lack community organized itself to accommodate mother and child while the white community was totally unwilling and able to do so," whereas the "white community simply organized itself to expel them.[42] [43] These complex cultural, historical, and economic reasons to maintain kinship relationships are evident in the histories of family ruptures.

The practice of foster-to-adopt traces a different pathway of family rupture and family formation. "Foster care is a 'system' in which state authorities intervene in the family life (occasionally at the request of parents themselves) to fulfill the public's duty to protect children."[44] While foster care services existed prior to the 1930s, it did not exist as a "system" until the 1930s with the establishment of welfare programs.

[40] Heikkila, *Booth Girls*, 25.
[41] Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.
[42] Solinger, 7.
[43] Correcting the lowercase reference of "Black" recognizes the Black not as a natural phenomenon but as a racial category, as it also acknowledges the people of the African diaspora in shared experience, community, and culture.
[44] Catherine E. Rymph, *Raising Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2.

1.3 KINSHIP IS IN THE MAKING

Although adoption is a socially accepted practice in the United States particularly in cases of infants, adoption stories do not always reflect an easy acceptance or integration into a family unit. Tensions arise at multiple levels. One point of tension arises in the privileging of biological kinships, which may manifest (even if unconsciously) in a hierarchy of perceived belonging. Foster care, as an agency of the state, often involves state intervention and is often expected to be a temporary measure to ensure childcare when children cannot live with their families. Foster placements almost certainly involve trauma – in ways that cannot be as easily brushed aside as a [birth]parent's loving sacrifice to give their child a better life, or the adoptive parent's desire to parent leading them to *choose* the child they have brought home. While a desire to provide care may certainly be a motivator for foster parents, placement operates differently, and foster placements are determined on the basis of a needs-based match, rather than selective choice on the part of caregivers. Unlike adoption which carries an associated cost, the state pays foster parents for each child in their care, introducing the potential for nefarious motivations. Children in foster care are, most often, beyond infancy, and often experience numerous placements. Since foster care operates as a temporary measure, children maintain a connection with their birth families, though it may also be wrought with fractures. While foster-to-adopt may be an option for *some*, this requires the termination or relinquishment of birth parent rights. Finally, for a child who ages out of the foster system between the ages of 18-21, their experiences of disruption, and the loss of structural state support contribute to unstable conditions. Many who age out of foster care leave without a high school degree, face financial hardships, and housing insecurity.[45] It

[45] Thom Reilly, "Transition from Care: Status and Outcomes of Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care," *Child Welfare* 82, no. 6 (2003): 735–36.

is also important to acknowledge the particular vulnerabilities of foster children when it comes to physical and sexual abuse.[46] The foster system operates within a system of transience and trauma that create a different set of tensions than that of adoption. In a society that largely reinforces normative family structures as a given, this does not leave adequate space for navigating such tensions.

I was raised in a skipped generation grandfamily. I was raised by my mother's foster parents I referred to them as my grandparents. I lived with my mother in early childhood and mid-adolescence, but I spent the majority of my childhood raised by my mother's foster parents. I maintained contact with my mother and half-siblings growing up, but we did not share daily life together as my mother lived in a town a couple hours away from where I grew up. I did not know my father, or anyone on the paternal side of my family, until I asked to meet my paternal grandmother when I was sixteen, or seventeen. For the better part of my childhood, my household unit consisted of my grandparents and myself. When I was twelve years old, my infant sister/cousin came to live with us. Although neither she, nor I, had gone through the process of direct state intervention, our experience introduces an interesting element of intergenerational repetition. Her mother had been my mother's foster sister. She, too, would be raised by her mother's foster parents. We had both spent so much time trying to make things make sense to ourselves, each other, and our friends, explaining, "well, we are cousins, but our moms were foster sisters, so we're not technically related, but we grew up together…" In explaining our relationship to others, we would often get lost in the details of our relatedness, but it has been through this relationship that we have come to deeply understand the creativity in the practice of kin-making. While the closest approximation we could relay to outsiders was that of cousins – as a result of sharing a household, under similar circumstances – the relationship we have cultivated is that of a sisterhood. Our grandparents, our grandmother especially, nurtured this understanding of our kinship.

[46] Nina Biehal, "Maltreatment in Foster Care: A Review of the Evidence," *Child Abuse Review* 23, no. 1 (2014): 48–60, https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2249.

Perhaps this was due to the close relationships our grandmother had with her sisters, and wanted to encourage it between us, as she saw it blooming. Our grandmother referred to us, to one another, as *sis*. *Go in the other room and get sis. Go see what sis thinks*. Having raised so many children as a foster parent, it is also entirely possible that our grandmother grew tired of fumbling through names–cycling through the names of our mother or each other before landing on the appropriate name for either of us–and began to refer to us as sis. We are not *like* sisters, we *are* sisters. To this day, we rarely call one another by name. Instead, we greet one another with *Hey, Sis.*

I am immensely grateful for the kinship my sister/cousin and I cultivated, and I recognize that it required a level of creativity exceeding the capacity of those wedded to the idea of a naturalized family. Sis and I grew up among relatives – my grandparents' biological kin – in a family operating under a system informed by colonial logics that articulate family form and structure. Though we share the relation of our grandparents, these relations do not exist as shared kinship. I understood from a very young age that the nuclear family operates as its own institution, although it took many years, and much study to develop a language to articulate this concept. While I called my guardians my grandparents, in practice they were my parents, and I understood the ways in which definitions of family came with an asterisk.[47] My conception of family of origin emerged by a complex network of kinship and family relationships.

I began to recognize contradictions to normative family structures. My recognition and articulation of family as a social practice of kin-making, developed out of necessity. Due to my own inability to trace my biogenetic family lines, seemingly innocuous questions of genealogy reminded

[47] In a negotiation with this logic of kinship which privileges the presence of biological connection, my grandfather did challenge this belief, asserting that regardless of what anyone might have to say about it, the blood that ran through our veins was as good as shared, and that we were as much kin as his blood relatives. In the curious way that this statement both undoes and reifies notions of blood kinship, in retrospect, it signals a tremendous commitment to social kinship/adoptive parenting.

me not only of family as a site of rupture, but also the possibility for making kin differently. While it is the case that families are composed of a network of social relationships, one's understanding of, and relationship to these social relationships unfold within systems of power. The role and function of family within the United States privileges biological family relationships. These family structures are maintained and continually reinforced by social, political, and economic systems. Notions of biological supremacy surface within these structures, in the institutions that reinforce this notion of family, and in the bureaucratic, and economically burdensome processes of guardianship, or adoption. What I offer here is that the composition of my family, and my ability to claim familial relationships, required that I knowingly construct meaning out of social relationships. As such, I participated in the construction of non-normative family structures and made meaning out of committed kinship. By the time I entered into adulthood, I felt a familiarity with this practice, as I encountered it again in relation to queer communities. Here again, I understood the necessity and desire to cultivate kinship and familial ties against what would otherwise not be recognized as family.

My experience in the meanings of making family, and cultivating kinship through action, led me to an exploration of these meanings. Sarah Ahmed offers an insight into the constructed nature of even the nuclear family, first in an acknowledgement to how the family functions in our lives, "the family becomes what we implicitly know, as well as what surrounds us, a dwelling place."[48] However, in an important shift, Ahmed continues, "the 'nuclear family' only appears … available in sensuous certainty, when we forget [the] history of work that allows the family form to be given … one's arrival is already narrated as another line that extends the line of the family tree. When given this line we are asked to follow this line."[49] As we are given and asked to follow this line, we encounter the "social

[48] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, First Edition edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006), 125.

[49] Ahmed, 125.

'pressure' for reproduction, which 'presses' the surface, of bodies in specific ways." Taking this into consideration enables a sharper view of pressure of motherhood and its ties to the construction of femininity, or the expectation to carry on the family name, demonstrates a pressure of expectations in constructed notions of masculinity. This social pressure, experienced along lines of gender, unfolds differently along the axis of race, class, ability, sexuality with recognition of the family in the colonial project. Under white supremacy, rather than encounter pressures for reproduction, communities of color are subject to the violence of forced sterilization, the criminalization of poverty, and the vilification of parental capacity, while children who encounter the pressures of assimilation furthering cultural gaps across generations. Failure to recognize the family as a function, it becomes easy then, easy is it then, to "forget" the work that goes in the construction of the nuclear family, when the family itself operates as the first inheritance within colonial power. The ease of forgetting this history of the work that goes into family formation may then run parallel to one's own proximity to intact genealogies.

To define a grand family, grandfamilies are family structures in which grandparents reside with grandchildren. Broadly speaking, this may include multi-generational families in which at least one parent shares in the responsibility of caregiving with grandparents. While grandfamilies may involve intergenerational parenting shared between grandparent and parent, skipped generation homes are those in which parents of children are not present. Skipped generation grandfamilies make up about one third of grandfamily homes.[50] In these homes grandparent caregivers may have "informal," or "legally formalized (i.e. legal custody, legal guardianship, foster care, adoptive) child custody agreements …the emergence of this type of family is often linked to the children's parents' inability to raise their children due to substance abuse; death; incarceration; illness; economic distress; or child

[50] Jessica D. Freeman and Jessica Elton, "'What If You Die?': Skipped-Generation Caregivers' Reported Conversations With Their Grandchildren About Death," *Family Relations* 70, no. 2 (2021): 374–89, https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12541.

abuse, neglect, or abandonment."[51] Between the ages of four and fourteen, I lived in a skipped-generation grandfamily. Understandably, children raised in grandfamilies, or extended kin families, may carry with them their own set of questions with regard to family formations, as such family systems still fall outside of the parameters of normative representations of family structures. Moreover, adoption practices may also lead to questions about the self and family relationships. My experiences existed in a liminal space between adoption and biological relations. I also acknowledge that these questions are not unique, but I consider that my approach to them is, as I speak from a perspective that acknowledges the system of foster care from the periphery. My foundational years were lived in a grandfamily that was also a skipped-generation family, and within a family system made up of social kin, shaped by foster care.

Experiences like mine are not entirely unique; in fact, they are becoming more common, as grandfamilies are on the rise.[52] Within my own family/kinship network, I witnessed negotiations with meanings of family and kinship as contextualized by our related experiences. Likewise, I recall the small social network of grandfamilies among my peers as I grew up. It does not surprise me that we all somehow seemed to find one another, or at least knew who we were; and that at two distinct points from childhood to adolescence, the person I called my best friend, also lived in a skipped-generation grandfamily. In my childhood, these friendships were among my closest bonds, as we found reprieve in knowing one another amid the seemingly countless instances which brought an "othering" to our families, or the negative assumptions this attention brought with it (specifically school-related events). Regardless of whether we ever spoke of the precipitating circumstances that led to our unconventional family structure, we recognized one another, and to a certain degree sought each other out.

[51] Freeman and Elton, 375.
[52] Freeman and Elton, ""What If You Die?"

Multigenerational family formations are not uncommon, historically, and both multigenerational and extended-kin households are a familiar feature in narratives of migration, providing a pivotal network of survival and connection to place, thus forging kinships across the boundaries of time and space. Likewise, unique and subversive family formations unfold in queer communities as well. It is not uncommon to encounter adults in LGBTQ households providing shelter to youth and young adults, as LGBTQ people are "more likely to foster and adopt than their non-LGBTQ counterparts," and are "six times more likely to foster children, and at least four times more likely to adopt."[53] I draw from my own experience here; as I recall the frequency with which I have encountered a queer adult or queer couple offering shelter and care for a child – often, but not always – a family relation, such as a sibling, children of siblings, or cousins, Interestingly, while I can recall three instances of this among the LGBTQ folks that I know, I cannot recall this occurring among the heterosexual couples or individuals that I know. I also note a distinction in this family formation that opens up to second- and third-degree relations, if at all. This is distinct from the multigenerational/grandfamily situation. Heteronormative conditioning maintains a closed structure of family, coinciding with ideas of familial responsibility. However multigenerational families today challenge the dominant norms of family structures in the United States. The normative structures of family as tightly contained unit has been emphasized alongside the development of the suburban neighborhoods, generating (and politicizing) an idealized nuclear family.

In a society in which the family operates as an institution to serve the nation state, upholding the superiority of biological and genetic relationships ensures an intentional and traceable inheritance of both material and social capital. Because this capital follows the patriarchal line, and because the greatest shares of social and material capital have passed through the hands of white families, it

[53] "LGBTQ Family Fact Sheet," Family Equity Council LGBTQ Family Fact Sheet, n.d., https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2017-11/LGBTQ-families-factsheet.pdf.

becomes evident how the family as an institution is raced, classed, sexed, and gendered. By recognizing the ways in which the family operates as an apparatus of the state, in alignment with a "white-supremacist, capitalist (hetero)patriarchy," the family signifies decisive power.[54] Yet, power continually seeks to obscure itself, and reassert itself. Given the privileging of normative structures of family, biological/genetic kinship is often assumed, while the constructed nature of these relationships, and the purpose they serve remain, unquestioned.

Along traceable family trees, in which most lines remain unbroken, individuals coalesce to become a family unit. Roles assigned on the basis of genetic closeness (or distance) to a given family member legitimate that even disposition, or traits of personality are heritable. Even among blended families, wherein trees may split, as well as in the case of most grandfamilies (multigenerational and skipped generation), direct family lines remain intact. With direct and traceable biological lineages intact, the institutional power invested in the maintenance of normative families remains hidden, with questions of kinship taken for granted. However, to encounter ruptures in the familial field, reveals the ways in which family relations are not only constructed but also require the reinforcement of social norms and institutions of the state in maintaining their stability. This offers insight into the weaponization of the family, as an institution, in disenfranchisement and subjugation—as well as the power wielded in the threat and practice of family rupture as a mechanism of control. Historical documentation records the intentional breaking of kinship perpetuated by the human trafficking of slavery, deploying the threat of family separation as a mechanism of control. As is also evident in the historical record, the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and into the horrors of

[54] bell hooks coined the term "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" in her book, Feminism is For Everybody. In this text, hooks offers a working definition of the feminist movement as "a movement to end sexist domination," with recognition that these systems of domination remain interconnected.

residential schools indicates a strategic violence in breaking kinship ties to establish and maintain dominance and control in colonial society.

These legacies continue today, evident in the over-representation of Black, Indigenous, and children of color in the foster care system today. Of critical importance, on November 9, 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States heard oral arguments to determine the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), passed in 1978. As an act to "protect Native American children from continued forced removal from their families, tribes and cultures," the ICWA designates the protocol in determining placement of Native American children in foster care and/or eligible for adoption. Whenever possible, the first option for a prioritizes the child's extended family, or within the child's own community. In the event that extended family or community members are unable to provide care, the ICWA ensures as a second choice, that children are placed within Native families. A practice considered best for children by child welfare experts, research shows that "when kids are connected to their identity and culture, it leads to positive outcomes, including higher self-esteem and academic achievement."[55]

Jennifer and Chad Brackeen, an Evangelical Christian couple out of Fort Worth Texas, have brought their challenge to the ICWA after having successfully adopted a child of Navajo and Cherokee descent. They base their challenge to the ICWA, on what they determine to be a devastating law that destroys the hearts (Indigenous) of children across the country.[56] The ICWA counters in its stance that a violent history exists in the forced assimilation enacted through the removal of Native children from their families to be placed in residential schools. The placement of Native children in non-Native households severs ties with their communities and culture, and echoes the tactics deployed in the

[55] "Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (Haaland v. Brackeen)," Native American Rights Fund (blog), accessed June 5, 2023, https://narf.org/cases/brackeen-v-bernhardt/.
[56] "Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (Haaland v. Brackeen)," *Native American Rights Fund* (blog), accessed June 5, 2023, https://narf.org/cases/brackeen-v-bernhardt/.

missionary work of residential schools to enact cultural genocide. The intentional rupture of family lines demonstrates the incredible effort to sustain systems of white supremacist colonial dominance.

Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare association, Sarah Kastelic, addresses the impact of the severance of cultural ties between Indigenous children and their communities, stating,

> When adoption is held up, particularly in religious communities, as a call from God, {Kastelic says} the needs and feelings of adoptive parents often take center stage, sidelining those of the other parts of the 'adoption triad' — the children themselves and the families they come from … For a long time … non-Native people have been trying to 'save' Native children who don't need saving.[57]

The link between evangelism and motherhood dates back to residential schools and the role of women in missionary settings. Contemporary evangelical motherhood develops directly out of the colonial project of the United States. In a comparative history of boarding schools for Indigenous children in Australia and the United States, between 1880-1940, historian Margaret Jacobs argues,

> In the United States, religious motivations, and the desire to build the nation as a Protestant country, were closely tied to the racial politics of Indian Child Removal … Christianization was … central … The non-Christian status of many Indians represented another justification for the removal of American Indian children from their families. Convinced that only individual salvation could solve the 'Indian problem' and reform society, American reformers concentrated on breaking up tribal life and cultivating individuality… to Christianize individual [I]ndigenous people within their tribal communities, where elders still practice their religion… Indian child removal was a necessary means to convert Indian children.[58]

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[57] Roxanna Asgarian, "Texas Case Could Change Adoption Rules for Native American Children, and Undercut Tribal Rights," The Texas Tribune, November 10, 2022, https://www.texastribune.org/2022/11/10/indian-child-adoption-scotus/.
[58] Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 77.

Adoption agencies call upon a familiar rhetoric of saviorism, contributing to a highly gendered formation of evangelism.[59] Again, in the vein of evangelical motherhood the call to save children is deeply imbricated in proselytizing, as the missionization of motherhood situates foster care and adoption as a new site of Christian conversion. These metrics of power operate internationally, via networks of private, often Christian, transnational adoption agencies, as well as domestically within the United States, especially with regard to foster care. As a profit-driven industry, the private transnational private adoption agencies render children as commodities often while calling upon religious and political motives. Within the United States, the leader of a neo-Pentecostal church in Virginia remarked on "explosion of adoption" among the adult population born between 1980-1995. "If you talk to the millennials, they're all thinking: care for the poor, adoption. It's all in their DNA," he continues, stating that if the megachurches of America took up the call to enter into foster care as caretakers, "we would be the answer, and we would get the moral authority of the nation."[60] Despite the lack of gendered language, it becomes evident that the call to foster and/or adopt is a call upon women to participate in this form of evangelism through motherhood, as the patriarchal structure of the church, family, and home, places childcare and caregiving, and thus, Christianizing, on the shoulders of women.

Regarding the gendered and racial dynamics of this rhetoric of motherhood, childcare, and conversion, historical anxieties over miscegenation must be considered. Returning to Jacobs comparative analysis of colonial nation states, Jacobs sheds light on the logics of race-making as informed by eugenics. As comparative colonial states, occurrences in Australia offer insight into the policy directives of the United States. Jacobs posits that while some government officials in Australia

[59] Kimberly D. McKee, "Monetary Flows and the Movements of Children: The Transnational Adoption Industrial Complex," *Journal of Korean Studies (Seattle, Wash. : 1979)* 21, no. 1 (2016): 137–78, https://doi.org/10.1353/jks.2016.0007.
[60] Joyce, *The Child Catchers*, 57.

favored the isolation of Indigenous peoples, so as to prevent further "race mixing," more commonly, "Australian authorities promoted the biological absorption of 'half-castes' into the general population; in its most extreme form officials called this 'breeding out the colour.'"[61] Australian authorities concluded that in order to ensure the successful "breeding out" of Aboriginal peoples, attention must be directed at half-caste children. Jacobs, cites an Australian governmental authority, to conclude that "every endeavor is being made to breed out the colour by elevating female-half castes to the white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population."[62] Jacobs asserts,

> Under this scheme, child removal proved indispensable… in reference to part-Aboriginal children who were taken to the Bungalow institution … they would be 'encouraged to live white, think white, and to marry, if possible, into the white race, or failing that, with each other.' In this way … they might be able to 'outgrow their hereditary … it was unthinkable to most white Australians that white women should help such men 'breed out their color' [63]

Colonialism is an ongoing project, and while the overt calls to population control are rooted in anxieties over racial mixing the legacies of these projects still manifest in the upholding of normative family structures today. These anxieties are expressed through family expectations of marriage and procreation. They are felt as they press against the body, as the body becomes a site of contestation, where the body and relationships facilitate race-making. Cherríe Moraga in *The Last Generation* writes,

> I have never had a race-less relationship. Somehow, I have always attributed this to being mixed-blood… maybe white people are the only ones in this country to enjoy the luxury of being 'colorblind' with one another, white people in all the glory of their centrality … in spite

[61] Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*, 69.
[62] Jacobs, 70.
[63] Jacobs, 70–72.

> of the personal stories to the contrary, the political conditions of miscegenation, to this day, occur with tin the larger framework of a white supremacist society. And miscegenation's children wrestle, in one way or another, with the consequences.[64]

I grew up in relationship with my mother and maternal half-siblings, however, I did not experience daily life with them. My mother and siblings lived in a small town a couple of hours away from where I grew up. When we spent weekends together, people often commented on how much we looked alike. While we do share distinct features, I also had features that I did not share with her. My brown eyes contrasted with hers, a light blue/green; my thick, dark hair, compared to hers, light and wispy; my skin, which shifted several shades darker beginning as early as springtime, contrasted with hers, which never tanned as deeply as mine.

1.4 Encountering Familia

I met my paternal family in my late teens which proved both validating and overwhelming. I recall the moments my late father enthusiastically shared with me, the stories of our family's history – as if to catch me up on the lifetime of stories I'd not had a chance to hear, connect with, and integrate into the narrative of my own history. He spoke with tremendous pride and recognition of a collective *familia* in the network of relationships his parents forged with community members as they sought to establish themselves in California. The sharing of our family's history, the migration of his parents from the Rio Grande Valley to the Bay Area told a larger story of Mexican migration, and the struggles and successes of first-, second- and third-generation United States citizens of Mexican descent. I valued the stories as they were shared with me, and I miss hearing them as he told them, especially as I

[64] Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1993), 115–28.

now consider the questions I wish I could ask. In this absence now I feel the loss – a different kind of loss from the absence I felt as a child – because unlike then, I have a better sense of what I missed.

Meeting my father and paternal family offered context and clarity to who I was. At the most basic level, I felt relief to blend in with the family. As I sought to find myself reflected in the world around me, not only did I understand, acutely, the ways in which identity emerges through a series of relationships and understanding relationality, I began to consider the fluidity of identity in and of itself, and the impossibility of identity containers to hold the complexity of a person and their experience. As Gloria Anzaldua puts it, "my identity is always in flux; it changes as I step into and cross over many worlds each day – university, home community, job, lesbian, activist, and academic communities. It is not enough for me to say I am a Chicana. It is not enough for me to say I am an intellectual. It is not enough for me to say I am a writer. It is not enough for me to say I am from working-class origins. All of these and none of these are my primary identity. I can't say this is the true me or that is the true me. They are all the true me's."[65] The depth and nuance of these questions of identity and belonging grew with me into adulthood, nurtured by my encounters with Chicana feminist and queer of color theory. I developed an understanding that these notions of unbelonging and navigating fields of community and political identity do not begin and end within the life of a single individual, or even within the context of a single family or community. Systemic forces shape these notions of belonging (or unbelonging) playing out in the social and political spheres, as well as within families; as families may perpetuate forces of alienation, given the internalization of systems of white supremacy, including heterosexism and homophobia, misogyny, myths of meritocracy and the punishment of poverty.

Despite acculturation in whiteness, my experience of whiteness differed significantly from that of the relatives around me. They were white, and I was "not quite." With the repetition of questions

[65] Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, Latin America Otherwise (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 203.

like, “what are you?” or “who are your parents?” I knew by early elementary school that they were seeking an explanation of race. “My father is Mexican” satisfied their curiosity. Complicating this further, the categorization of Mexican as a white or non-white race has shifted over time, place, and at times even from one community to the next. Identification with Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano varies. My relationship and response to these terms have also shifted over time. My point here is that I encountered questions and assumptions about my racial identity that my white relatives did not.

Aside from questions, I also overheard comments that were meant only for the adults around me. One evening, as my mother showed off a family portrait to a neighbor, I heard the neighbor speaking in a near whisper, “She’s so *dark*.” Perhaps this neighbor had assumed that I was out of earshot, or that by whispering she thought I wouldn’t hear. Perhaps this neighbor did not realize that I had already learned how to carefully measure meaning in the inflection of certain words, like dark. My mother could not exist in this realm with me. Despite the disconnection to kin my mother experienced, she had existed, nevertheless, as a white child in a white family. Likewise, considering that the children she raised, my two younger siblings, were also white, I imagine that such direct encounters with this type of commentary were few and far in-between. Perhaps she could not feel the gravity of the question as it landed on my ears. Or maybe she did because she also replied in a whisper, “she looks like her dad.” In moments like these I began to understand that my mother and I were differently racialized, contributing to a fundamental difference in our lived experience, despite its many similarities (for instance, growing up within a shared network of foster/social kin). In the process of racialization, my mother remained unmarked, while I did not.

I also understood the way I was racialized in the extraordinary lengths taken to erase any racial or ethnic identity markers, officialized when my grandparents assumed guardianship of me. Although

I have since reclaimed my birth name, in the small bundle of court documents legally documenting the legal transfer of custody from that of my mother to that of my grandparents, a supplemental filing petitioned for my name to be changed. I was already four years old the entirety of my name was changed – to a name far from similarity to my birth name (although with a stretch it could have resembled my middle name). The petition to the court suggested this name change would prove beneficial to school enrollment, in an assertion that it would offer ease of navigating educational systems in which my surname matched the names of my caregivers. However, ultimately it functioned to separate me from ethnic markers, which I always suspected had been an element in the decision-making. I had always wished my name had been left alone, not only because I quite preferred the name I had been given at birth, but also because it was an uncommon experience to grow up knowing I once had a completely different name; that was until I began to meet make friends with immigrants who shared their own experiences with a name used at home and a different name used in school.

Anglicizing my name to erase ethnic markers worked on paper, but it could not alter the racialized features that marked me. I always thought that if my name matched my appearance, it might head off questions about my identity. Yet, I also recognize that my grandparents understood the advantages afforded by raising me in a culture of whiteness. The revision of my name did, in fact, grant access to better opportunities, and fewer assumptions, especially on paper. Cherríe Moraga writes "there's no denying this guëra face has often secured my safe passage through the minefields of Amerikan racism"[66] There's no denying that the whitening of my name and cultural capital of my name helped me to navigate these minefields on paper, and in social settings. In this decision, my caregivers, my grandparents, called upon unspoken understandings of institutionalized privilege in their decision to anglicize my name. Despite the alienation it wrought, I cannot deny that a tested logic

[66] Moraga, *The Last Generation*, 126.

informed their decision making. I grappled with this reality when I hyphenated my name to reintegrate my birth name, and again when I stripped all hyphenations, to reclaim my birth name, exclusively. It is difficult for me to consider which part of this process was the undoing – had it begun with the erasure of my birth name, or the reclamation of it? How would I reconcile these two wildly different representations of my name in relation to my experience, embodied, and lived in? In this process, I consulted with my best friend, asking if it were fair for me to reclaim my name, wondering whether it would make any difference anyway. She, as a mixed-race Black woman, understood the experience of growing up *othered.* My comfort in sharing with her my concerns in reclaiming my name, signified my deep trust and shared understanding in experience. She replied, "It won't make up for all of the birthdays, and the piñatas you missed, but it will mean something. It will connect you to your roots." As we have revisited this conversation over the years, and as we continue to make to make sense of our lived experience, each of "as half," she has continually reasserted that the unfairness in changing a child's name to de-ethnicize, or de-racialize.

Throughout my childhood and well into my adolescence, my father remained a mystery, save his name. Occasionally I had tried to assemble a person in my imagination out of my own features, but I struggled as I tried to build an image out of them. Because it was so difficult for me to ask about my father, I circumvented this by asking my mother to tell me about my aunts and my grandmother. At ten years old, my queries were quite simple. I wondered if they were nice, or funny, and how many cousins I had. I especially wondered what they looked like. Did I look like them? My mother said that I did, but she couldn't really tell me how. I meditated on this answer, wondering what this meant for how I would grow up. Again, I tried to imagine women that I somehow resembled, but could only conjure fleeting apparitions. However, I took comfort in knowing that beyond the limits of the family that I knew in that moment, there was a family in which I would not stand out. Although we did not

meet officially until years after, I *saw* my father for the first time when I was thirteen. Even from a distance, I recognized him immediately. I recognized him precisely because of our shared features. I had been looking for a reflection, and there it was.

As much as my formative experiences have contributed to my scholarly work, I must also acknowledge that within the desire to seek meaning of family and kinship, lies grief. My engagement with grief encompasses not only attending to the literal death of family members, but also a response to the grief stemming from my memories, as well as memories that I never had the chance to create. In many ways this project represents the grief of familial ruptures, lost opportunities, and a fight for histories, quickly fading with age, as the keepers of stories pass to on. It is also the grief that emerges in the recognition of what it means to construct a life that may be unrecognizable to dominant structures, dominant narratives, and dominant histories – and of what it means to create social life and kinship beyond the limits of normativity.

This is not to assert a desire for normativity, nor is it a denial of the privilege afforded where normative relationships, lineages, and expressions may be found. Rather it is to acknowledge that to live in excess of the norm often evokes, at least for a period of time, grief. "The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects," that is, the subject reflected clearly in dominant society, while, "minoritarian subjects," for instance queer folks, skipped-generation grandfamilies, foster children, and adoptees, "need to interface with different subcultural fields to activate their own sense of self."[67] Jose Esteban Muñoz reminds us, that to "to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object or subject that is not culturally coded," to connect with that which is beyond the limits of normativity, in the excess where one finds the disidentifying subject, it is

[67] José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Cultural Studies of the Americas ; v. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 5.

> …not to pick and choose what one takes out of an identification. It is not to willfully evacuate the politically dubious components within an identificatory locus. Rather, it is the reworking of those energies that do not elide the 'harmful' or the contradictory components of any identity. It is an acceptance of the necessary interjection that has occurred in such situations.[68]

In engaging in this griefwork, shame may rest just below the surface, as with my experience. In shame and fear I fell silent, having been afraid of what it meant to acknowledge complicated, fractured, family history; afraid to acknowledge the ways in which this lived experience has contributed an understanding of the world, and has been a driving force of my academic research whether I chose to acknowledge it or not. I am afraid that in sharing aspects of this story, it renders my work irrelevant, meaningless, unimportant, and that in disputing academic distance by incorporating self-referential narrative it becomes, ungrounded at best, navel-gazing, and narcissistic at worst. I combat this fear with the reminder that although stories like mine are, in fact, not particularly unique, they are infrequently told. I remind myself of the significance of encountering theoretical perspectives that have emerged from narratives similar to my own. I remember and remind myself of the impact of these narratives that run parallel to mine, even if just for a moment. These narratives offer glimpses of familiarity and recognition – though perhaps not constitutive of belonging, combatting the feeling of aloneness. In this work, I recognize how writers and theorists called into the conversation of their writing the fear, shame, and grief.

[68] Muñoz, 12.

1.5 WHY LA PACHUCA?

The origins of La Pachuca can be traced to one of the largest migration patterns from Mexico to the U.S. that took place in the early twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, with a porous border between Mexico and the United States, and a heavy reliance on a migrant labor force, migrant workers from Mexico moved back and forth across the border following the flows of work. This movement reveals that the regions undergoing infrastructural development and rapid growth achieved this transformation as a result of migrant laborers. While this pattern of circular migration continued, the early twentieth century also saw a massive wave of migration from Mexico that resulted in permanent resettlement in the United States. Between 1900 and the 1930s, approximately one and a half million people migrated northward from Mexico. This marked a significant wave that made Mexico one of the largest single sources of migration to the United States.[69] This movement across and along the Mexico and United States border occurred within, and contributed to, a rapidly changing structural, economic, and cultural landscape. The development of railroad infrastructure within Mexico and the U.S. facilitated much of this migration. The expansion of U.S. railways throughout the Southwest and Midwestern United States shaped areas of settlement for Mexican American laborers, contributing to the development of Mexican American communities in these regions. Likewise, a booming agricultural industry in California drew workers of Mexican descent influencing domestic migration of rural to urban resettlement. A feature of Mexican American communities to this day is that unlike in other cases of massive waves of migration, which have a distinct beginning and end, the migration between Mexico and the U.S. is continuous. The communities that form are continually

[69] George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

influenced by recent migration. As such, it is often the case that the needs, concerns, and social welfare of recent migrants are ever present within Mexican American communities.

The majority of Mexican railways were owned or financed by U.S. investors, which established connections between burgeoning cityscapes along north south railroad lines within Mexico. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, "railroads, mining, and agricultural interest, began … sending agents into Mexico in order to recruit Mexican workers at farms, railroads, haciendas, cities, mining districts and villages with promises of great wealth and free transportation."[70] As railroad companies implemented plans to expand railways throughout the United States, they sought Mexican men as laborers, *traqueros,* to complete these projects.

Compounding factors influenced this move toward a Mexican labor force in railway development. Conditions of exploitation and impermanence, shaped in part by U.S. immigration policy, cultivated what railway companies regarded as an unskilled and expendable workforce. In the late nineteenth century, Chinese migrant labor laid the foundation of the U.S. transcontinental railroad, but the 1882 passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act abruptly curtailed the immigration of "laborers" from China. The mechanisms of a racialized laboring class surfaced in the Chinese Exclusion Act provision which barred Chinese immigrants from citizenship. Between the continuing reliance on Chinese migrant labor to endure the dangerous and exploitative working conditions, while simultaneously barring access to citizenship, the processes which ascribe racialized meaning onto bodies become evident through the status of a "perpetually foreign" and "unskilled" workforce. At the turn of the twentieth century, as U.S. infrastructure and industrial development— railways, agriculture, and factory labor—relied largely on a Mexican workforce, similar patterns of racialized discourse

[70] Jeffrey Marcos Garcilazo and Vicki Ruiz, *Traqueros: Mexican Railroad Workers in the United States, 1870-1930* (University of North Texas Press, 2012), 48, http://muse.jhu.edu/book/20567.

materialized. Furthermore, given the racial and economic stratification in Mexico, this labor force was likely largely composed of Indigenous workers – the detribalized survivors of Spanish colonization.

By 1914, in the United States, "Mexicans had become a noticeable presence in the burgeoning agricultural regions of South Texas and California … Mexican workers provided the human labor power for the region's agricultural revolution and laid the infrastructure for the modern Southwest's economy."[71] Wage economies reveal a great deal about the social and political locations of its workers. The kinds of labor widely recognized and highly valued in society offer insight into the hierarchical structures of society. Yet within this undertaking of developing the infrastructure and economy of a nation, built on the backs of a migratory labor force at the turn of the twentieth century, and on the backs of enslaved laborers in the decade preceding it, their labor was rendered expendable if visible at all. Further it underscores the assertion of Evelyn Nakano Glenn that all forms of labor are gendered, raced, and classed.[72]

Mae Ngai argues that the construction of this transnational Mexican labor force – where dependency operated alongside pejoratives and notions of expendability (removal via deportation), this "constituted a kind of 'imported colonialism' that was a legacy of the nineteenth-century American Conquest of Mexico's northern territories."[73] The development of a constituency of Mexican laborers, particularly braceros and "wetbacks," can be understood through the lens of colonialism. Imported colonialism, as Ngai posits, is an apt description of the mechanisms at work. To expand on this point, is to reach further back than U.S. conquest of northern Mexico to, once more, consider the colonial logics of Mexico. That, in the construction of a Mexican workforce in the United States, just as had

[71] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 129.
[72] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Divide of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 1–43; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender & Class Oppression," *Review of Radical Political Economies* 17, no. 3 (1985): 86–108.
[73] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 71.

developed in Mexico, the collision of colonial projects then produced a subordinated racialized, gendered, labor force.

Due to differential values placed on labor, and the crafted distinction between skilled and unskilled labor, much of the labor performed by Mexican migrant workers – labor that made and continues to make life as we know it possible – was largely rendered invisible. Ngai continues, "the agricultural labor market assumed a distinctive migratory character," as "streams of landless laborers, including families, now followed the seasons of cotton, fruit and vegetable crops," drawing a "large numbers of new immigrants from Mexico, " Ngai further argues that the "formation of the migratory agricultural workforce was perhaps the central element in the broader process of modern Mexican racial formation in the United States."[74] As the demand for agricultural labor grew and because of the low wages paid to laborers, families labored together. Ultimately, the migratory movement across what was, at the time, a porous border between Mexico and the United States, signaled a reliance on migrant labor. As a result, the commodification of Mexican immigrant laborers extended to the community at large and cast Mexicans, even those born in the United States, with a foreignness similarly ascribed across other racialized laboring classes. Negotiations with foreignness would shape the identity for generations to come.

The 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act imposed a comprehensive quota system that limited the number of immigration visas based on country of origin. While the act did not impose restrictions on immigration from Canada, or Latin American countries, it did establish U.S. Border Patrol and introduced the concept of "illegal" immigration. Under the new law, the U.S. would admit three percent of each nationality based on the population of foreign-born from each country recorded in the 1910 decennial census. This thereby ensured higher admissions of people from northern and central

[74] Ngai, 130–31.

Europe. The Johnson-Reed Act extended the Chinese Exclusion Act and took matters further by barring immigration from all Asian countries and this law authorized a close watch on the contagious borders of the United States. Many immigrants from China circumvented immigration restrictions, by traveling first to Canada and Mexico with the intent to surreptitiously cross the northern and southern borders. As a result, "illegal immigration" across land borders developed into a successful enterprise by the turn of the twentieth century.[75]

Demonstrative of racial triangulation, a modernization project within Mexico sought to "whiten" the body politic by encouraging a flow of Chinese immigrants into the Northern state of Sonora. *Blanqueamiento* (whitening), a colonial project aimed to modernize the northernmost region of Mexico by leveraging Chinese immigration.[76] In the collision of colonialism in the attempt to displace and/or disappear Indigenous and African lineages. The invitation of Chinese migration into Sonora reveals how under colonialism, the nation state invokes the power to restructure and rework racial categorization in the interest of upholding colonial structures of Anti-Indigeneity and Anti-Blackness. Beyond the maintenance of a system of racialized labor and class subordination, as these colonial structures in Mexico and the United States collided, they worked to uphold the project of white supremacy that is the maintenance of white economic power, and political and social influence.

Immigration to the United States proved to be equally as important to the project of nation making, and national identity. While the quota system of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act did not impose limits on immigration visas in in North America, the quota system signified a shift in racial logics which distinguished "colored races" from white Europeans. Moreover, the new immigration law

[75] Julia María Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 11, http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781469601786/.
[76] Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960*; Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940* (Baltimore, Md., United States: University of Illinois Press, 2017), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/washington/detail.action?docID=4843902; Julian Lim, "Chinos and Paisanos: Chinese Mexican Relations in the Borderlands," *Pacific Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (2010): 50–85, https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2010.79.1.50.

"differentiated Europeans according to nationality and ranked them in a hierarchy of desirability."[77] This policy, by design, "constructed a white American race in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness distinct from those deemed not white."[78] By 1925, the United States established a militarized border zone along the southernmost border of the United States deploying an active border patrol in El Paso, Texas. As this constituted how the state rendered the immigrants of unauthorized entry, "illegal aliens from Europe and Canada were perceived and treated differently from those of Mexican or Asian origin."[79] By 1929, Congress passed a law to criminalize unauthorized entry into the United States, rendering those determined to have violated this law subject to both deportation and separate criminal charges; this law thus rendered those charged to be ineligible for re-entry. In the year 1930, "Mexican" operated as a discrete racial category on the United States census, crystalizing the racial formation of Mexican as *other*. When considering the racialization of Mexicans on the U.S. census, one must consider the implications of racialization, particularly as it takes place during economic crises and job scarcity. The years spanning the Great Depression (1929-1941) in the United States initiated a wave of deportation, sponsored by the federal government, resulting in the mass expulsion of immigrants. Mexican communities were targeted by government sponsored removal programs. Camille Guerin-Gonzales argues that the support of Mexican repatriation campaigns during the during the Great Depression owed to the refusal to recognize Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants as permanent members in U.S. society. A first wave of repatriation began in Los Angeles, California, as local and county authorities initiated a repatriation program to "get rid of Mexican families receiving unemployment relief … [w]ithin months, repatriation spread to every region in the

[77] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 24–25.
[78] Ngai, 24–25.
[79] Ngai, 63.

country."[80] Mexican Repatriation movement "repatriated" Mexican immigrants under the premise that eliminating their presence would alleviate unemployment, as well as lighten the economic burden of assistance programs. These mass repatriation sweeps operated indiscriminately with little concern for those affected. Many United States citizens of Mexican descent were relocated to Mexico, some without any family or community ties in Mexico; others left under duress to avoid the deportation sweeps.[81] This demonstrates the material consequences and displacement of the construction of an expendable, exploitable, racialized workforce.

Communities of Mexican descent encountered everyday harassment, segregation, diminished educational opportunities, and exploitative working conditions. Although the language designating Mexican as a distinct racial category would be removed from the 1940 census, the children of Mexican immigrants to come of age in this decade lived in continuation of racialization. The generation to came of age in the United States, in the mid twentieth century, as a generation of U.S.- born citizens of Mexican descent, they carried these memories in the development of their own political identity and consciousness. Throughout California and the Southwest this generation began to articulate a distinct identity, shaped by experiences often shared among those within Mexican immigrant communities. Mexican youth who came of age recognized that "the struggle which forged a Mexican American identity was powerfully rooted in the decade of the 1930s."[82] Tracing these histories of family formation, kinship structures, migration, and labor, provide context and clarity in how subcultures that encompass kin-making emerge. The social, economic, and cultural landscape of labor and migration provide the foundational framework for understanding the emergence of a Mexican American

[80] Camille Guérin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams : Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 78.
[81] Francisco E. Balderrama, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, Rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).
[82] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 12.

politicized identity as well as the subsequent emergence of subcultures which draw from a shared collective experience or history in the construction of community and individual identity. As politicized identities develop into cultural icons such as El Pachuco and La Pachuca, they leave an indelible mark on cultural consciousness. In the shared recognition of experience, this cultural consciousness develops into a kinship across time.

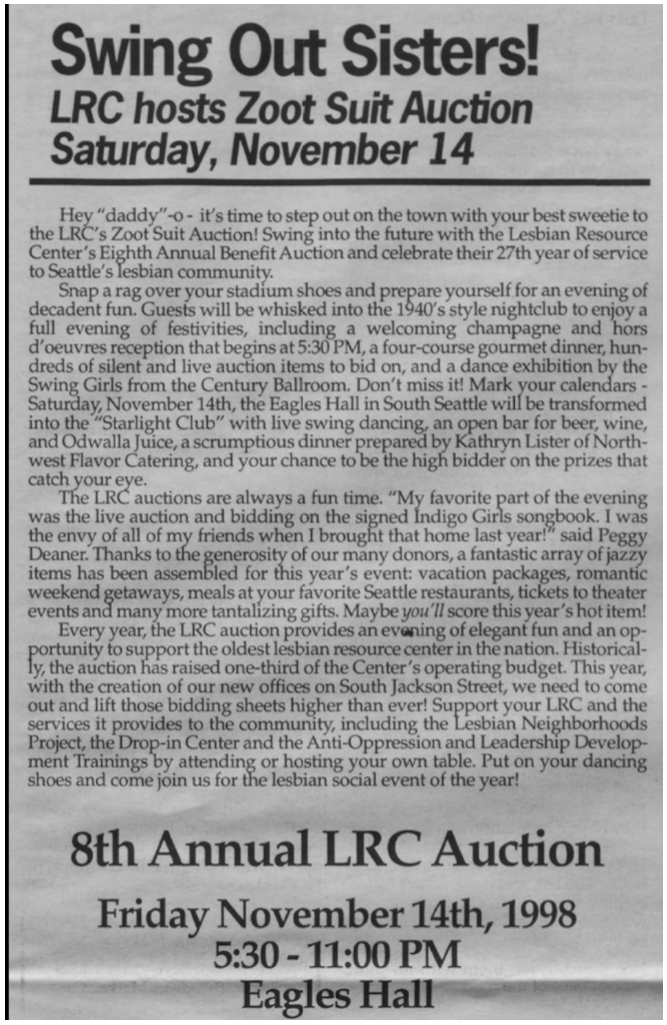
Chapter 2. FINDING FAMILIA

2.1 SOMETIMES IT'S NOT JUST FASHION.

"Hey 'daddy'-o- it's time to step out on the town with your best sweetie to the LRC's [Lesbian Resource Center's] Zoot Suit Auction!" In November 1998, the Lesbian Resource Center of Seattle threw its annual fundraiser, hosting a 1940s themed event, which transformed the Eagles Hall South Seattle venue into the "Starlight Club" for an evening in which the "guests will be whisked into the 1940s."[83] This gala advertisement raises so many questions: Who came up with the idea and how did it come to them? Why did they feature the zoot suit at the center of a 1940s themed party? What might they have known about the zoot suit's origins, grown out of the 'drape suits' popularized by Black jazz musicians in Harlem in the 1930s, or the controversy the zoot suit carried when worn by Mexican American when the United States was at the height of the Second World War? How many of the LRC planners had been aware that this fashion piece, symbolic of a bygone era, represented a powerful subculture of anti-assimilationist resistance? The zoot suit was an "exaggerated fashion" that "not so much defined as defied an era of wartime conformity" and, according to one of its early makers, "'was not a costume or uniform from the world of entertainment." Rather, the zoot suit, "came right off the street and out of the ghetto.'"[84] Did the LRC planning committee acknowledge the Mexican American zoot suiters who helped to put zoot suit fashion and pachuquismo on the map of public consciousness? Did they, or the guests in attendance know about pachucas, the Mexican American women who donned zoot suits and short skirts? With over five decades passed, how many attendees drew from their own memories to style the evening, perhaps reaching back into their own childhoods to recall

[83] "Swing Out Sisters!," *LRC News: The Lesbian Resource Center's Community Voice* 17, no. 10 (November 1998).
[84] Robert Thomas Jr., "Harold Fox, Who Took Credit for the Zoot Suit, Dies at 86," *The New York Times*, August 1, 1996, sec. D.

their elders or what they had seen in the news and other media? As a decidedly queer event, how might dynamics of masculinity and femininity play out in the evening? Would these dynamics resemble the butch/femme bar scene that provided refuge for queer women in the 1940s? That this era, and the zoot suit featured prominently in this fundraising event, is telling of how the fashion and symbols of subcultures of resistance travel across time and space. As these iconic representations travel, it also, importantly, asks how the meanings they symbolize change or stay the same over time, and how one must attend to the risk of cooptation.



Swing Out Sisters!

LRC hosts Zoot Suit Auction Saturday, November 14

Hey "daddy"-o - it's time to step out on the town with your best sweetie to the LRC's Zoot Suit Auction! Swing into the future with the Lesbian Resource Center's Eighth Annual Benefit Auction and celebrate their 27th year of service to Seattle's lesbian community.

Snap a rag over your stadium shoes and prepare yourself for an evening of decadent fun. Guests will be whisked into the 1940's style nightclub to enjoy a full evening of festivities, including a welcoming champagne and hors d'oeuvres reception that begins at 5:30 PM, a four-course gourmet dinner, hundreds of silent and live auction items to bid on, and a dance exhibition by the Swing Girls from the Century Ballroom. Don't miss it! Mark your calendars - Saturday, November 14th, the Eagles Hall in South Seattle will be transformed into the "Starlight Club" with live swing dancing, an open bar for beer, wine, and Odwalla Juice, a scrumptious dinner prepared by Kathryn Lister of Northwest Flavor Catering, and your chance to be the high bidder on the prizes that catch your eye.

The LRC auctions are always a fun time. "My favorite part of the evening was the live auction and bidding on the signed Indigo Girls songbook. I was the envy of all of my friends when I brought that home last year!" said Peggy Deaner. Thanks to the generosity of our many donors, a fantastic array of jazzy items has been assembled for this year's event: vacation packages, romantic weekend getaways, meals at your favorite Seattle restaurants, tickets to theater events and many more tantalizing gifts. Maybe *you'll* score this year's hot item!

Every year, the LRC auction provides an evening of elegant fun and an opportunity to support the oldest lesbian resource center in the nation. Historically, the auction has raised one-third of the Center's operating budget. This year, with the creation of our new offices on South Jackson Street, we need to come out and lift those bidding sheets higher than ever! Support your LRC and the services it provides to the community, including the Lesbian Neighborhoods Project, the Drop-in Center and the Anti-Oppression and Leadership Development Trainings by attending or hosting your own table. Put on your dancing shoes and come join us for the lesbian social event of the year!

8th Annual LRC Auction

Friday November 14th, 1998
5:30 - 11:00 PM
Eagles Hall

Figure 1
A clipping from LRC News: The Lesbian Resource Center's Community voice. The Lesbian Resource Center, founded in 1971 produced a monthly newsletter which addressed local politics and national politics pertinent to the LGBTQ community of Seattle, advertisements featuring local queer and queer friendly establishments, as well as local events. This clipping from November 1998 advertises the upcoming LRC benefit auction, and celebration of 27 years serving the Seattle community.

Pachucas emerged as an expression of subversive gender in relation to, but not as minor characters, or as an offshoot of the male form of pachucos, immortalized in the iconic figure of El Pachuco. Rather, pachucas reveal the queer underpinnings sexual identities, specifically butch/femme aesthetics and style. Both pachucas/pachucos and butch/femme surface as distinct formations of identity and culture by the mid-twentieth century in the United States, which viewed both communities pejoratively. Both communities were scrutinized for their supposed indecency. Both communities found ways to forge identities to cultivate scenes and places of belonging. This chapter argues that the challenges enacted by pachucas to normative expectations of gender and sexuality, forged among Mexican American female youth during WWII. This demonstrates both experience and a politicized identity which continues to contribute to Chicanx consciousness in the twenty-first century. That is, in the transformation of pachucas – the young women who participated in the culture of *pachuquismo* to *La Pachuca,* she becomes symbolic figure significant in the evolution of Chicanx politicized identities, carried forward in time. Situating pachucas alongside butches and femmes, in the historic context of their subcultures and community formations contribute to an understanding of how La Pachuca continues to hold significance in Chicana and queer youth community formations of today. [85]

2.2 Mexican American as a Politicized Identity

The young adults who came of age during the mid-twentieth century navigated the complex terrain of identity as it played out as much in their social and communal lives as on the stage of the nation state. "The production of cultural identity is dynamic and subject to historical, geographical,

[85] La Pachuca and El Pachuco appear capitalized when referenced as symbolic figures or icons. They appear lower case in reference to their historical moment.

and political change."[86] As such, the process of becoming—the active engagement in which identity, the perception of self, and subjectivity, perception in relation to others takes shape. Formations of identity do not rely on a "fixed self" but instead reflect the "subject in process."[87] Identities and subjectivities emerge through continued engagement with geographic, political, and social histories through processes of re-articulation. These histories, and the stories we tell about them, contribute to processes of cultural formation.

The term "Mexican American" emerged in Los Angeles during the late 1930s out of student-led organizations. Founded and run mostly by high school students, the "Mexican American Movement" was "the first Chicano organization formed by and for students" composed of "second generation young people" who built their platform for organizing on "the progress of Mexican American people through education."[88] This youth led organization, developed out of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) clubs of southern California nurtured an understanding of ethnic identity while attending to the "internal conflict" of navigating the "balance between what was 'Mexican' in one's past with what was 'American' in one's present," and it demonstrated concerns "about the future and what the term Mexican American implied."[89] While the Mexican American Movement advocated for education within the Mexican American community, the conditions of education for Mexican American youth "haunted MAM's leadership" as it became apparent that the structural barriers to education greatly impacted the Mexican American community.[90] Education presented itself as a conduit for Americanization, if not by desire then by force. As historian Vicki Ruiz states, "education and employment were the most significant agents of Americanization.

[86] Habell-Pallán, *Loca Motion*, 7.
[87] Habell-Pallán, 7.
[88] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 255.
[89] Sanchez, 255.
[90] Sanchez, 259.

"Educators generally relied on an immersion method in teaching the English language to their Mexican pupils. In other words, Spanish-speaking children had to sink or swim in English-only environments… Admonishments such as 'Don't Speak that ugly language, you are an American now,' not only reflected a strong belief in Anglo conformity but denigrated the self-esteem of Mexican American children and dampened their enthusiasm for education."[91] If education factored as a means through which to "Americanize" Spanish-speaking children, thus pushing an assimilationist narrative, it operated at the risk of shaming the cultural practices, knowledge, and history shared within these children's families and communities. While cultural practices do change over time, and across generations, forced assimilation pushes beyond the limits of generational shifts in attitudes and practices. Language figures as a primary example. When the pressure of assimilation demands the disavowal of language, it introduces an element of rupture. In the amputation of language, one's history as expressed and understood through linguistic practice becomes unreachable. To sever linguistic connections, in the most brutal sense of the word, cuts off intergenerational and ancestral relations, histories, and knowledge – in a process that was often psychologically traumatizing is, if not physically violent, compulsory education demanded severance in the enforcement of English only education. Education when it functions as a mechanism of forced assimilation, enacts violence and erasure.

While the classroom can operate as a place of rupture, education also figures as an important pathway toward enfranchisement and political power. As such, education became an important site of political organizing for Mexican American communities. In 1930, in the town of Del Rio, Texas which sits just north of the Rio Grande, Jesús Salvatierra brought a lawsuit against the Del Rio School District, charging that school development and funding allocations deprived Mexican children of

[91] Vicki Ruíz, "'Star Struck': Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican-American Woman, 1920-1950" (Scholarly Resources, 1996), 127.

educational opportunities. [92]With a population of only 11,693 in 1930, the city of Del Rio was a small city, yet this case demonstrates an example of both a negotiation with race classifications as well as demands for access to education.[93] The state of Texas practiced segregation, as drawn from the 1876 Constitution, setting in place separate schools for white and black students, further extended to "Hispanic" students. "From 1902 to 1940, especially after 1930, Texas school districts opened segregated schools for Hispanic children. By 1942-1943, these schools were operated in 122 districts in fifty-nine counties throughout the state."[94] Represented by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a newly formed civil rights organization, established in Corpus Christi, Texas, Salvatierra and other parents of Mexican children, challenged the Del Rio School district. The Salvatierra suit, the first case in which Texas courts reviewed the actions of local school districts regarding children of Mexican descent. "Jesús Salvatierra and several other parents hired lawyer John L. Dodson on March 21 to file a suit charging that students of Mexican descent were being deprived of the benefits afforded 'other White races' in the previous year."[95] The District Judge Jones heard the case and ruled in Salvatierra's favor, granting an injunction. However, Del Rio Independent School District challenged the ruling in the Texas Court of Civil Appeals in San Antonio. Upon hearing the case the court reversed the ruling and voided the injunction. The Del Rio Independent School District justified educational inequity on the premise that Mexican school children missed a significant portion of the school year due to migratory labor. A s families moved to follow harvests, children necessarily

[92] My paternal grandmother was born in Del Rio, Texas in 1924. If census records accurately account for the highest level of education completed, they paint a picture of the foreclosed opportunities Mexican children encountered. While this is one of the many conversations I wish I could have had with my grandmother, I also recognize it may also be a topic one wishes to avoid.
[93] Robert C. Overfelt, "TSHA | Del Rio, TX," The Handbook fo Texas Online, accessed March 3, 2023, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/del-rio-tx.
[94] Cynthia E. Orozco, "TSHA | Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed November 24, 2022, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/del-rio-isd-v-salvatierra.
[95] Rudolfo Acuña and Guadalupe Compeán, "Excerpts from Independent School Dist. Et Al. v Salvatierra Et Al., 1930.," in *Voices of the U.S. Latino Experience* (Greenwood Press, 2008), 575–83, https://publisher-abc-clio-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/9780313087837/775.

accompanied their families, often performing physical labor alongside them. As a result, Mexican children suffered a prolonged absence at the beginning and end of each school year. The justification to deny educational opportunities to Mexican and Mexican American children due to the demands of the agricultural industry and its exploitation of migrant workers functioned by design to cement the status of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as an expendable labor force.

The significance of this case brought against school segregation in Texas demonstrates a community's engagement in the struggle against structural oppression, and, in turn, signal a politicization of identity. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the development of a pachuco subculture was developing within Texas at this time. Despite the reversal of the ruling in appellate court, this case set the precedent for subsequent legal battles regarding school segregation. Notably, the language of the case reveals strategic measures taken up by Mexicans and Mexican Americans and demonstrates a negotiation with power that figures in the racialization of Mexican Americans in the aforementioned phrase *the benefits afforded other White races.* Leveraging European (Spanish) ancestry afforded some degree of citizenship rights otherwise denied through accessing legal designation as white. As a complicated strategic move, success in claiming legal whiteness has operated with the awareness that whiteness, though a constructed identity, holds prestige and opportunity, thus translating into material benefits, such as the distribution of wealth and access to resources.[96] Alignment with a proper European ancestry could not be afforded to all Mexican Americans; agents of state bureaucracy based their determination of whiteness on visual assessment.[97]

[96] Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, American Crossroads ; 38 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 47, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1463630.

[97] Natalia Molina discusses the circulation of "visual depictions" of Mexicans as an effectively constructing the image of a "typical Mexican," offering a visual vocabulary to reinforce anti-Mexican sentiments. Although Molina demonstrates this use of visual assessment in the case of public health, it is within reason to consider that these notions carried over into other facets of social and political life. For more on this see Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (University of California Press, 2006).

The approval or denial of marriage licenses could be determined on the basis of the court clerk's determination of race. In a collision of colonialisms between Mexico and the United States predicated upon the projects of displacement, genocide, and enslavement, to claim to whiteness as a legal category required a disavowal and erasure of Indigenous or African ancestry, in a particular negotiation with state power that ultimately reified rather than challenged white supremacy. As Natalia Molina suggests, "Mexicans may have also wanted to disassociate themselves with blacks because of their own internalized racism, as whiteness was also preferred in their home country."[98] Beyond the legal advantages of claiming whiteness in a racial system that operates predominantly in a black/white binary, Molina's attention to internalized racism brings the personal and social components of race making.

Institutions of the state, as well as negotiations within communities, and within families, constitute a framework of structures for understanding identity. In the exercise of state power, such as through immigration policy, this identification operates as categorization, for the purposes of legibility to the state, not necessarily to establish visibility or political power, such as in the case of immigration policy, or in constituting a migrant labor force. Evident in negotiations with state power, these identities may be taken up or challenged by communities, as a reinterpretation of the meaning ascribed to their respective identity, such as in the case lodged against the Del Rio Independent School District.

The decades leading up to WWII reveal "the development of ideologies among second generation youth and demonstrates how they viewed themselves and their surroundings," offering an important insight into "the history of adolescents and young adults in American society" who are often overlooked, which is "especially true for Mexican American youth."[99] This is expressly apparent in the

[98] Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, American Crossroads ; 38 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 48, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1463630.
[99] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 256.

historical records which prominently feature Mexican American youth in urban settings. In one of the first uses of "Mexican American" as an organizing principle, a student led organization out of Los Angeles offers insight into a generation's negotiation with identity as it pertains to the roles and responsibilities of society. Of course, the totality of the varied range of experiences among Mexican American youth cannot be represented in a singular organization, but, as an example of politicized language, the organizing of the Mexican American Movement proves useful. Organizations such as MAM demonstrate a degree of negotiation with identity that offers the terms and language with which to discuss it. In its usage, the term Mexican American signaled changing iterations of both Mexican and American identities to conciliate contradictory notions of national belonging and citizenship.

The de jure racism that Mexican American youth witnessed throughout their childhood, for some, contributed to ambivalence toward the United States and notions of "Americanism." Here the subversive power of the zoot suit, and in particular the women who wore them or otherwise participated in pachuquismo come into play. Situating Mexican and Mexican American identity within the historical context of early twentieth century immigration policy, labor practices, educational access, and organizing, sheds light on the emergence of subcultures of resistance. Subcultures and identities of resistance illuminate critiques of the state. Co-creators of subculture and identity, embody these critiques in their demands to be seen in self- and community-defined terms (as well as through the *refusal* to be seen). Identities and subcultures of resistance operate as resiliency practices. To co-create spaces of legibility and recognition demonstrates the transmutation of grief into organizing, (political) joy, and pride – carved out in these communities – in spite of disillusionment with social and political disenfranchisement.

2.3 Overlapping Departures - Violence in the Jim Crow South

As migration plays a significant role in the processes and influences on cultural formation, it is important to consider concurrent migrations that ultimately contribute to the development of cultural identities and subculture movements. For Mexican American and Mexican descendant communities, a second wave of migration, beginning in the 1930s cultivated new cultural spaces for their communities. In a move westward, and a blend of internal and cross-border migration, Mexican Americans, and Mexican immigrants traversed the Southwest toward California; many seeking employment in the state's booming agricultural industry. During the 1940s, and especially as a result of WWII, as "seemingly overnight" Los Angeles "became the nation's second largest industrial manufacturing center … by 1943, more than half a million people were employed in ship, plane, and steel production in Los Angeles."[100] Through the growth in urban cityscapes, this wave of migration overlapped, briefly, with the Great Migration. The overlapping phenomenon– the migration of African Americans fleeing the south and the violence wrought in the post-reconstruction era – introduces the possibility that Mexicans in the borderlands, likewise, relocated for a multitude of reasons.

Willian Carrigan and Clive Webb introduce an expansive consideration of the racial terror of lynching to consider the reign of terror inflicted upon Spanish speaking communities – primarily of Mexican descent – in *The Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States 1848-1928.* As the lynch mobs enact their violence both as in public spectacle as well as under the cover of darkness, the lives stolen remain under documented. For reasons beyond the reigning vigilantism following the U.S. acquisition of northern Mexico, unlike the "spectacle lynchings" of African

[100] Elizabeth Rachel Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 7.

Americans, involving instances of torture and mutilation that drew crowds in the thousands, such cases were rare among Mexican lynching victims.[101] This, too, contributes to the dearth of data regarding mob violence against Mexicans. Carrigan and Webb offer that while conservative estimates place the death toll in the thousands, the focus of their research traces the 547 documented lynchings, specifically targeting Mexicans throughout the U.S. south, southwest, and west coast. "The number of Mexicans executed by vigilantes compels us to reconsider the geography of mob violence as a whole. A standard lynching map of the United States depicts mob violence as being predominantly a phenomenon of the Deep South."[102] These documented accounts reveal peaks and valleys in the violence and reveal episodes of heightened economic competition, intertwined with existing racial prejudice. Swells in violence occurred in the decades of the 1850s, immediately following the annexation of northern Mexico into U.S. territory; the 1870s, in the mining regions developed out of California's Gold Rush, and again the 1910s at a height of anti-Mexican prejudice, and the fears of insurrection. The period between 1915 and 1919 is known as the *Hora de Sangre* – the hour of blood, due to the murders of Tejanos killed at the hands of vigilantes and Texas Rangers alike.[103] With this documented massacre contributing to the overall death toll, the data reveals that despite these ebbs and flows, racial violence held steady throughout the decades in Texas. For instance, where California's violence ebbed with the fizzle of the Gold Rush, the accounts in Texas held steady over time. Carrigan and Webb posit that given the less populous regions of the southwest, by comparable numbers mob violence occurred in the same scale as the violence endured by African Americans; gestures toward a consideration of mob violence beyond conventional understandings – as a previously less understood occurrence directed toward affected Mexican communities in the Southwest. This is a reminder of

[101] William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 80.
[102] Carrigan and Webb, 6.
[103] Carrigan and Webb, 86.

where colonialisms collide, anti-Blackness operated as a component of both Mexican and U.S. race-making yet there are these overlapping structures of violence which complicate the negotiations with power, as taken up by Mexican and Mexican American communities.

The period of migration overlaps and the shared routes toward Los Angeles reflect the parallels of racialized violence throughout the South and Southwest. A mass exodus of African Americans fleeing the violence of the post reconstruction decades marked the lynching era and the daily humiliations of the Jim Crow South. Beginning around 1910 and spanning generations, this migration slowed enough to signal its conclusion by the1970s. African Americans migrated northward and westward, in "response to an economic and social structure not of their making … they did what humans have done for centuries when life became untenable… they left."[104] The influence of this migration. The influence of this this concurrent migration and the similarities in experiences with disenfranchisement and racialized violence introduced an element of community new community formations (and kinship possibilities), in these relocations. Importantly, though, even as there were shared elements to experiences under white supremacy and its violence, these communities navigated racial tensions occurring in these spaces of overlap.

Many Black migrants traveled westward to El Paso, which not only features prominently in the development of pachuquismo; this city at the threshold of an international border between Mexico and the United States also represented an "unspoken border between the Jim Crow South and the free Southwest."[105] Though El Paso may have represented the line of demarcation for the Jim Crow South, this did not necessarily make El Paso safe for Black migrants. As a region caught between the two lands, both of which were historically entangled in the history of slavery and genocide, border towns

[104] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 14.
[105] Wilkerson, 199.

like El Paso, were "ripe for ambiguity… in border towns freedom was arbitrary and unpredictable."[106] These border towns – or *borderlands* as Anzaldúa would call them – represent a space of power struggles and contested governmental rule.

Black migrants who sought refuge in California hailed from Texas and its neighboring state to the east, Louisiana. The Great Migration shaped the population of Los Angeles with 47,343 Black migrant residents in the region by 1940. Of those who settled in California, 21,438 had left their homes in Texas, while 15,961 departed from Louisiana.[107] Migrants who arrived in California met disappointment upon encountering familiar hostilities and systematic exclusions such as redlining, "some colored people who had made the journey, called it James Crow in California."[108] Structures in place nurtured division and competition in this the new terrain of California, particularly in employment with the intent of division and divisiveness. Employers hired at their own discretion, where racialized exclusion varied from one location to the next. Some employers excluded African Americans, but they permitted Mexicans; others hired African Americans while excluding Mexicans; while others, still, implemented rules to maintain the structures of a segregated workplace such as prohibiting all but specified service-related interactions between groups.[109] Such discriminatory and segregationist practices expanded to include other minoritized communities as well. For instance, reflecting on her experiences as a young Japanese American woman, prior to the United States involvement in WWII, Yuri Kochiyama gestures toward exclusionary hiring practices as she recounts,

[106] Wilkerson, 199.
[107] James Gregory, "America's Great Migrations Project: Mapping the Great Migration (African American)," Tableau Software, accessed March 1, 2023, https://public.tableau.com/views/GreatMigrationAfricanAmerican/STORYBLACK?:embed=y&:showVizHome=no&:host_url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublic.tableau.com%2F&:embed_code_version=3&:tabs=no&:toolbar=yes&:animate_transition=yes&:display_static_image=no&:display_spinner=no&:display_overlay=yes&:display_count=yes&publish=yes&:loadOrderID=0.
[108] Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 211.
[109] Wilkerson, 236.

> I was looking for a job and didn't realize how different the school world was from the work world. In the school world I never felt racism. But when you got into the work world, it was very difficult. This was 1941, just before the war. I finally did get a job at a department store…It was a big thing because I don't think they had ever hired an Asian in a department store. I tried because I saw a Mexican friend who got a job there.[110]

In a familiar refrain of racialized laboring classes, Kochiyama writes, "most Japanese were either in some aspect of fishing, such as in the canneries or went right from school to work on the farms."[111] Speaking directly to the experience of Black migrants who comprised the Great Migration, Isabel Wilkerson writes, "into this world arrived the migrants from the south, looking for a place for themselves far from home not knowing what to expect in a city with a whimsical caste system and no rules anyone else could see."[112] The intensity and effort given to the systems designed to maintain a hierarchy through racial stratification underscore how revolutionary pachuquismo rebellion was, as its style and aesthetics were drawn from and co-created across marginalized communities.

2.4 PACHUQUISMO

In order to contextualize the emergence of subcultures of resistance, an understanding of the conditions of the dominant culture proves fruitful. As noted in previous sections of this dissertation, the analysis of labor, migration, and racialization prove necessary for contextualizing pachuquismo. Class and race subjugation – the realities of disenfranchisement and social injustice, set the stage for the cultivation of pachuquismo, and a subcultural production that extended beyond Mexican American

[110] Yuri Kochiyama, "Then Came the War," in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg and Soniya Munshi, Tenth edition (New York: Worth Publishers/Macmillan Learning, 2016), 411.
[111] Kochiyama, 411.
[112] Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 234.

communities in a politics of understanding and shared by across marginalized youth. “Beginning in the late 1930s, young working-class Mexican American men and women who felt rejected by both American and Mexican society responded with a counterculture of language, fashion, dance, and music.”[113] Utilizing the well-traveled railway routes laid by the *traqueros* who preceded them, the laborers of their parents and grandparents and grandparents’ generation, some participants of the burgeoning subculture in development in cities throughout the Southwest identified themselves as pachuco. The origin of the term denotes the path of migration, as young Mexican Americans “traveled to Los Angeles from El Paso, Texas, a city that they also called ‘Chuco,’” thereby adopting the moniker from a “contraction of ‘Para Chuco’ (by way of El Paso).”[114]

Pachuco/pachuca as a term has been a divisive one. The figure of el pachuco / la pachuca lands differently based on generation and the politics of respectability. Reinforced by the following reference definition, pachuco reflects commonly held dispositions toward pachucos and pachucas as evident in the literal definition of the terms. Merriam-Webster defines pachucho as “a young Mexican-American having a taste for flashy clothes and a special jargon, and usually belonging to a neighborhood gang.”[115] According to Oxford Languages, pachuco/a is defined firstly, in reference to its colloquial meaning in Mexico as que es feo y se viste mal, or “ugly and poorly dressed.” Its second definition suggests origins linked to the subculture emergent in the United States:

[113] Marisol Berríos-Miranda, Shannon Dudley, and Michelle Habell-Pallán, American Sabor: Latinos y Latinas en la Música Popular Estadounidense = Latinos and Latinas in US Popular Music, trans. Angie Berríos-Miranda (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 77.

[114] Berríos-Miranda, Dudley, and Habell-Pallán, 77.

[115] “Definition of PACHUCO,” accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pachuco.

> Joven de origen mexicano, de clase social baja, que vivia en las ciudades del sur de Estados Unidos de América en la decada de 1950 y que se caracterizaba por defende su identidad como grupo social frente a las costumbres estadounidenses.[116]

> Youth of Mexican descent, of low class, who lived in the cities in the southern United States during the decade of the 1950s, characterized by defending their identity as a social group, in the face of the customs of the United States.

This second definition offers a fragment of the history of the subculture as its definition gives the pachuco and pachuca a sense of time and place, as well as indicating a social consciousness. This definition which locates the pachucho as a young person of Mexican descent, dwelling in cities in United States provides a time and place for the subject. The statement of clothing also indicates sense of cultural identity expressed in style, in resistance to the expected customs of the United States. While this definition figures pachucos/as in relation to a social ethnic identity, it offers an uncritical notation of class, stating "de clase de social baja," literally "low class." With understanding that language dictionaries do not offer the complex history of social consciousness, noteworthy in these definitions are the reverberations of dominant narrative, drawn from apparatuses of the state to offer a disparaging view of pachucas/pachucos: class stratification and racialization, criminality, and deviance. Fortunately, curated digital spaces provide nuance and depth in their descriptions, making evident a vibrant culture of pachuquismo as a powerful and subversive resistance to social injustice and assimilationist demands of the United States, offering some push back against the exclusive associations with delinquency.[117]

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[116] "'Define: Pachuca' - Google Search," accessed February 16, 2023, https://rb.gy/pra99u.
[117] Examples of easily accessible representations of pachucos that challenge narratives of delinquency can be found here: https://latv.com/the-untold-history-of-pachucos; https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/pachucos-not-just-mexican-american-males-or-juvenile-delinquents

The zoot suit has a history of its own, with its exact origins contested. What developed into the zoot suit style has largely been credited as originating out of jazz clubs in Harlem in the late 1930s. The zoot style and its popularity caught on and traveled with Black jazz artists. During the war years, as this style picked up momentum, the zoot suit aesthetic circulated among urban youth. As jazz toured the United States, the youth brought fashion influence with them – emerging out of experience, wherein the similarities of experience resonated across and between communities. The visual signifiers of the zoot suit, worn by Mexican American youth developed into what Catherine Ramírez defines as *style politics*. Style, Ramírez argues, operates as "signifying practice (in this case, the display of the zoot subculture's codes via clothing, hair, and make up)," whereas "style politics … refer[s] to an expression of difference via style. This difference often relies upon and derives from conspicuous consumption."[118] Participation in zoot suit culture, and the development of pachuquismo represented both the intentional curation of style wherein young Mexican Americans created and participated in popular culture, and also the intentional politicization of identity as represented through fashion, and other visual circuits of representation. Mexican American youth "gravitated with enthusiasm toward swing jazz during the war years, and thus it is not altogether surprising that the clothing and dance styles once associated with black urban subculture became just as popular among similarly marginalized populations."[119] In fact, while pachucos and pachucas were "distinguished by their exuberant clothes and a distinctive style of speech," and in their engagement in leisure activities, particularly around music and dance, they not only claimed public space as their own, they cultivated shared affective space. These spaces of leisure and recreation were filled with music comprised of the "combined elements of Mexican Corridos, Latin Caribbean dance music, blues and jazz," which "laid the foundation for later Chicano music, expressing and transforming the painful 'in-between'

[118] Catherine S. Ramírez, "Crimes of Fashion: The Pachuca and Chicana Style Politics," *Meridians* 2, no. 2 (2002): 3.
[119] Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, 19.

experience of Mexican Americans … bringing together Chicanos, African Americans, Filipinos, Japanese Americans, and Anglos on the dance floor."[120] The dance floor then becomes a powerful site for rebellion, particularly in the convergence of multi-racial, multi-ethnic communities, where shared pleasure and joy are acts of political resistance. The gathering of young people in these dance halls represent the space of leisure and recreation, that is, pleasure for its own sake. In the deliberate gathering of communities otherwise siloed, the leisure spaces carved out by pachuquismo may be regarded as *convivencia* in *"*the deliberate act of being with or present with each other."[121] The contributions of pachuquismo cultivated spaces of liberation, allowing for, not only the crossing of national borders but also cultural borders, blurring the lines between communities. In doing so, both the differences of their experiences as racialized subjects, nuanced by class, gender, and sexuality, as well as a shared understanding, all overlapped.

More than just a fashion statement, as the zoot suit traveled and gained popularity among youth of color, it came to symbolize the emergence of subcultures of resistance. The zoot suit which enabled its wearer to express creativity and artistry, thus empowering self-expression. Among Mexican American youth, in the urban, working class, communities of Los Angeles, and other urban areas, pachucos and pachucas forged a multi-racial, multi-ethnic community, and a subculture of pachuquismo, which fostered the expression of cultural identity, through styles of dress, forms of language, and recreation and leisure activities. The zoot suit itself symbolized agency and representation, and a negotiation with meanings of identity. As a visual signifier, the zoot suit had the capacity to convey a politicized identity. Pachucos and pachucas, through visual circuits of legibility,

[120] Marisol Berríos-Miranda, Shannon Dudley, and Michelle Habell-Pallán, *American Sabor: Latinos y Latinas en la Música Popular Estadounidense = Latinos and Latinas in US Popular Music*, trans. Angie Berríos-Miranda (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).
[121] Martha Gonzalez, "'Mixing' in the Kitchen: Entre Mujeres ('Among Women') Translocal Musical Dialogues," in *Performing Motherhood; Artistic, Activist and Everyday Enactments* (Demeter Press, 2014), 83.

gestured toward a thriving counterculture in which Mexican American youth and youth of color asserted their presence, defied discrimination, and embodied a resistance to dominant cultural norms and expectations of assimilation. Cultural expression, cultural production and the creativity that flows between and among participants in this cultural creation gesture toward varying degrees of political engagement, from a generation of youth navigating the complex terrain of place in a tense socio-political environment. Elizabeth Escobedo writes that pachucas represent "one of the best examples of second-generation daughters both becoming part of and a symbol of shifting gender and racial ideologies on the World War II home front."[122] As pachucas challenged dominant ideologies in public realms, they pushed against familial expectations within the family and the home. La Pachuca, as a controversial figure, serves as a symbolic representation of resistance through to this day.

2.5 PACHUCAS

The dominant narratives of 1940s zoot suiters centers around Mexican American men. However recent scholarship has drawn attention to the women who participated in this subculture with specificity to the ways in which women participated in the development of this counterculture, and importantly to the development of political a consciousness. Young women who dressed in pachuca style did so for a variety of reasons.

> More than a fashion rebel, the wartime pachuca represented an important symbolic site on which debates regarding the changing social landscape of the war years unfolded. Using style and behavior as a way to challenge ideas of respectability and to assert a distinctive identity, pachucas defied mainstream notions of proper feminine decorum as well as static, traditional

[122] Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, 9.

> definitions of Mexican femininity … the pachuca came to represent a female figure whose dangerous sexuality demanded restraint. All the more dangerous was how pachucas seemingly mixed their blatant sexuality with a politicized identity of Mexican American womanhood. [123]

For Mexican American women in urban cities, the Second World War provided economic opportunities previously unavailable to them. Elizabeth Escobedo, in *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front,* writes,

> …[D]efense industry work offered women of Mexican descent an unprecedented opportunity for cleaner jobs at higher pay … historically relegated to positions in agriculture or the domestic and service sector, women of Mexican descent, like their African American and Asian American counterparts, increasingly found that jobs in wartime industries were not only plentiful but also paid very well.[124]

The Second World War initiated a profound change for women in the paid workforce. While the war dramatically changed the landscape of gendered labor, in an important consideration of the ways in which wage-earning shaped women's engagements outside of the workplace, one must remember that while women of color already participated in wage labor, however, they were relegated mostly to low paying positions in service and textiles. So-called "female" professions, such as teaching and nursing, paid lower wages than male dominated professions like law and medicine. Furthermore, the prevailing perception that male heads of household should be the sole breadwinner, resulted in restrictions against hiring married women. It remains important to note, however, that the practice of restricting employment for married women, typically only applied to white women born in the United States. Women of color, immigrants, white ethnic, and working-class women, especially those deprived of educational opportunity, were not affected by the marriage bar. Due to the limited

[123] Escobedo, 18.
[124] Escobedo, 77.

economic opportunities afforded to them and the communities in which they lived; these women continued to work beyond marriage, in many cases these women worked alongside their family members.

Defense industry work enabled upward mobility for women of color, their entry into the workforce differed from that of white women – especially married white women entering the labor force for the first time. Women's entry into the work force, en masse, illuminates underlying racial stratification, evident in the hiring practices of the war, and segregated workplaces. Escobedo argues that Mexican women "found opportunity in the fact that they tended to occupy a kind of 'racially in-between- social position in the wartime workplace, receiving a noticeable level of tolerance" than their Black colleagues.[125] Escobedo continues, noting "the long and complicated history of the Southwest, where historically Mexicans faced denigration as foreigners and members of an inferior 'mongrel' race yet legally could make claims to whiteness."[126] Federal and state laws recognized Mexicans as white, or otherwise, did not define Mexicans as "negro" or "colored" thus "shielding Mexicans … from the legalized and at times more pervasive forms of segregation and exclusion" that their Black colleagues endured.[127] In the collision of racialization, Mexican Americans accessed opportunity and mobility within the racial structures that disenfranchised Black communities. Historian Quintard Taylor, writes, "African American employees encountered individual problems: an unwarranted pay deduction or transfer, antiblack remarks by supervisors or coworkers, or social segregation, as recalled by Fanny Christina Hill, 'They did everything they could to keep you separated … They just did not like for a Negro and a white person to get together to talk,'" but, as Hill emphasizes, "'[t]he War made me live

[125] Escobedo, 97.
[126] Escobedo, 97.
[127] Escobedo, 97.

better… Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folks' kitchen."[128] In the wartime economy, women of color experienced economic mobility, coupled with spaces of leisure. These spaces of leisure became sites of cultural exchange, as evidenced by the popularity of the zoot suit. "Mexican American youths increasingly ventured outside of their communities to frequent public spaces on the streets, and in dance halls, all-night cafeterias and night-clubs in Los Angeles, often dressed to the nines in zoot attire."[129]

By asserting their right to public space, demanding visual recognition, and by co-mingling among communities of color, they drew the attention of city officials and law enforcement. The visibility of Mexican American youth flouting norms while wearing the zoot suit led law enforcement and city officials to identify their "dress and behavior as evidence of criminal tendencies … launching an all-out 'war on crime,' the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) engaged systematically in selective law enforcement during the World War II era, heavily patrolling Mexican neighborhoods and pursuing curfew and vagrancy violations in barrios with more vigor than in white sections of the city."[130]

The women who participated in pachuquismo were considered deviant by the larger society of both middle-class Mexican American communities and Anglo society. Their behavior challenged relationships with gender and sexuality in addition to the flashy style of dress. A "pachuca could typically be identified by her controversial clothing, company and behavior."[131] First, the clothing, regardless of whether she refashioned the zoot suit, pairing the trousers and fingertip coat with a cardigan or V-neck sweater, or if she wore a knee length skirt, paired with bobby socks and huaraches,

[128] Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (W.W. Norton, 1998), 286; See Fanny Christina Hill's full interview in Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).
[129] Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, 21.
[130] Escobedo, 21.
[131] Escobedo, 25.

or if she donned zoot suit in full, without modification, this represents a challenge to the norms of gender of the time, especially pertaining to the expectations of sexual purity and ideal womanhood inscribed onto young women through religion and family expectation. In these stylings of the zoot suit, pachucas also demonstrated various expressions of femininity, through an expression that could be read as hyper femme to a masculine or butch presentation. These stylizations and the space in which to express them signified certain aspects of social freedom, allowing these young women to challenge norms of gender and sexuality as they claimed space in new ways. Respectability politics in full force stepping outside of normative expectations evoked a tremendous sense of panic. Although not all women who participated in the zoot suit aesthetic identified as pachucas, engaged in gang activity, or sexual activity, the impact, and their breakthroughs reverberated throughout the community. While the sexual behavior of young Mexican American women during this time underwent intense scrutiny as both "Euro-Americans and Mexican communities" deemed that "pachucas represented a dangerous example of the increasing public role of all women during WWII."[132] These fears of "unbridled sexuality" not only represented a "disruption of conventional family patterns" but also evoked anxieties over miscegenation, from both communities.[133] Pachucas created a distinctly female Mexican American formation by resisting assimilationist narratives. Negative reactions toward pachucas, particularly among elders in Mexican American communities throughout the United States, revealed the fragility of middle-class status among Mexican Americans. Anxiety among elders in society, who objected to pachucas, disapproved of their refusal to adhere to the politics of respectability. In addition to forming a social kinship with their peers, pachucas created new ways of thinking about the meaning of Mexican American identity. Pachucas, in their claims to the right to public space as young women, asserted their position as female citizens of the United States. Simultaneously, these rebellious young

[132] Escobedo, 30.
[133] Escobedo, 30.

women highlighted what they wanted to highlight about themselves as the children of Mexican immigrants, and as citizens of Mexican descent. In sum, pachucas placed their own stamp of femininity on what it meant to be Mexican and Mexican American living in the United States.

For Mexican American women, the agricultural boom of the early twentieth century opened avenues for factory work, offering a route for women to leave the fields to labor in a different sector of agricultural production. This move was lucrative, as moving into the packing production of agricultural labor, like cannery work, offered higher wages than compared to agricultural field labor. By the time the defense industry called women to work en masse, Mexican American women had participated in wage labor for generations. Defense industry work offered an unprecedented economic boost to young Mexican American women. However, as Mae Ngai and Evelyn Nakano-Glenn argue, all labor is racialized and gendered. In the move from agriculture to factory labor, Mexican American women, as well as other women of color, confronted a hierarchy of stratification. Women in factory work earned less than their male colleagues and were routinely denied opportunities for advancement. Women of color, especially Black women in defense industry work, were relegated to the jobs considered "dirty work."[134] In response to unjust working conditions women continued in the vein of previous generations. They formed unions and organized for better working conditions.[135]

The participation of Mexican American women in the wartime economy labor force, allowed for greater participation in consumer culture. Mexican American women pushed the boundaries of social expectations of modesty to participate in the kinds of luxury and leisure activities previously only afforded to Anglo-Americans. Because the defense industry offered significant economic gains, "war work in any job category meant a vast improvement in women's social and economic

[134] Escobedo, 90.
[135] Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*; Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*.

circumstances, and particularly for women of color."[136] Therefore, not only did work in the defense industry offer immediate material gains, Mexican American women's participation in consumer culture challenged the social and economic subordination of Mexican American women.

The degree to which these defense industry workers regarded their work as part of the larger project of the war effort is met with a pause to consider overlapping or compounding motivations in the decision to enter defense industry work. "Imbued with the American dream, young women (and men) believed that hard work would bring material rewards and social acceptance."[137] This idea implies that hard work is the foundation of the American Dream. However, due to the racial stratification of labor and the construction of a perpetually foreign labor force, Mexican American women struggled against these conditions in their pursuit of the American Dream as many were denied the opportunities afforded to white women, and Mexican men.

In the anti-assimilationist intent of pachuquismo, it is reasonable to recognize the ways in which pachucas were active in the rewriting of its meaning. In a wartime economy punctuated by both patriotic austerity measures, the sudden flush of economic gains, and any visual displays of excess demonstrated by Mexican American women threatened the social order. Nevertheless, the defense industry and wartime economy offered access to material goods and leisure activities not previously available to Mexican American women. The desire for the accouterments of middle-class affluence featured prominently in the aspirations of young Mexican American women. "The Mexican community was not immune to [an] orchestration of desire, and there appeared a propensity toward consumerism among second-generation women."[138] Within families, consumerism and participation in American leisure culture increased intergenerational tension, where traditional Mexican values seemed

[136] Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits*, 85.
[137] Ruíz, "'Star Struck,'" 128.
[138] Ruíz, 129.

at odds with American social life. Second-generation Mexican Americans negotiated the desire to become "'good Americans'" which in many ways, resulted in "a rejection of Mexican identity."[139]

With new economic freedoms, Mexican American women saw their opportunities expand. "While one woman might rationalize her wage-earning role as an extension of her family responsibilities, her U.S. born daughter might visualize her own income as an avenue to independence."[140] Some women used their earnings to move outside of the home into their own apartments. In an unprecedented move toward greater independence, unmarried women lived on their own or with other women. Here, links between economic labor, consumer culture, and the formation of sexual identities begin to surface. Though inaccurate to assume that all Mexican American women's desires for independence suggested a refusal of marriage, or that the relationships between cohabiting women should always be read as an expression of same-sex desire, their actions illuminate this possibility. With few exceptions, historiographies of Mexican American women presume heterosexuality. Heteronormative assumptions have resulted in the erasure or minimization of alternative formations of friendship, kinship, and community relationships, while precluding the possibility of non-heterosexual sexualities. Sexuality studies intervene to open new possibilities of sexual identity formation, in ways that mitigate the erasures in heteronormative presumptions. Moreover, though one cannot assume that expansions of homosocial interactions and shared living arrangements functioned to cover for same sex desire, one cannot minimize the role of women's community building and friendship in the development of lesbian and queer communities.

Informed by a political climate of patriotism and austerity, Mexican American women, particularly pachucas, cultivated new forms of identity throughout California and the Southwest.

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[139] Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*, 19.
[140] Ruiz, 19.

Pachucas directly challenged the wartime family which ascribed norms and expectations onto family roles, as well as labor output and leisure activities. Negotiating with these ideals manifested in an engagement (and at times tensions) with families, within communities, and through leisure and consumerism. Participation of leisure within the United States unveils the varying degrees of tensions as families and communities often fostered a strong connection to Mexican culture and tradition, which, at times stood at odds with the white cultural hegemony of the United States. Conflicts between elders and youth within Mexican American families and communities reveal an ongoing, at times contentious, process of individual, community, and political identity formations. Pachucas desire to express their gender and sexuality through visual circuits of resistance and recognition, signaled negotiations with power as racialized, gendered, and classed subjects. For the pachucas, who elicited panic, these negotiations demonstrated the extraordinary expectations burdening women with regard to sexuality, reproductive labor, and citizenship. This, in turn demonstrates the relationship between family, labor, leisure and nationalism as well as an articulation of ideologies of gender, race, class, nation and sexuality.

With the increased presence of women, generally, in public space in the war years, pachucas amplified anxieties as they signified a rebellious sexual liberation. Then, to consider deeply the challenges of pachucas to norms of gender and sexuality, creates the possibility to consider sexual expression and sexualities beyond heteronormative structures. Just as aspects of citizenship and national belonging are constituted in opposition to a racialized other, queerness operates to define and politicize heteronormative family structures. Ideologies disciplining the family function in response to the alleged threat of subversive sexualities. As the fiction of the nuclear family shores up a traceable line of material and social inheritance, heteronormative family structures, therefore, contain inheritances, effectively determining access to resources, as noted in chapter one. In the decades

following WWII, the heteronormative family became increasingly exemplified as the norm, literally and symbolically, amid fears of foreign invasion, the perceived threat of communism, or the "red scare," as well as in the pathologizing of homosexuality, as expressed in the term "lavender menace." Bearing the burden of social and biological reproduction, young Mexican American women navigated these tensions in particular ways. Not only did these women negotiate with the "discipline" of family, but they were also negotiating with the notion of "belonging" to the nation.

2.6 Creating Kinship Through Queer Curatorial Practices

In 2015, multi-media artist Guadalupe Rosales embarked on a "community generated archival project" manifesting "from the under/misrepresentation and historical erasure of Latin@/x communities in Southern California."[141] *Veteranas and Rucas*, an Instagram account curated by Rosales began with her own photographic collection, documenting Chicanx youth culture in Los Angeles. Veteranas and Rucas is "dedicated to our SoCal women, [r]eframing and celebrating our past by sharing our stories…" As the account has grown Rosales engages in a reciprocal exchange with community members who offer photographic submissions and captions to be featured on the account. In the process of "collecting photographs of the unrecognized communities… guided by instinct," Rosales enacts a queer curatorial praxis, an intervention into the "traditional archives that exclude marginal communities."[142] Though not initially intended as an archive, it has developed into one garnering national recognition. In its inception, Veteranas and Rucas highlighted youth and party scenes of the 1990s. However, as its popularity grew, and the project developed into an archive of its

[141] "About," Guadalupe Rosales, accessed May 25, 2023, https://www.veteranasandrucas.com/about.
[142] Carribean Fragoza, "Back in the Days: Guadalupe Rosales and Her Archive of Chicano Life in Los Angeles," *Aperture*, no. 232 (2018): 44–51.

own, Rosales expanded the project, publishing photographic submissions dating as far back as the 1940s, featuring pachucas as formative members in the party scenes of Los Angeles.

I first encountered *Veteranas and Rucas,* in 2017 at the suggestion of a colleague in the Women Who Rock mentorship workshop. I had presented the seedling of this project to my colleagues. Grappling with the limits of the traditional archives, I contemplated alternative options among this community of *feministsa* scholars, to include curated art exhibitions, alongside traditional archival forms.[143] As I have returned to the page regularly over the years, I have appreciated not only the photographs, but have also given a great deal of consideration to the processes

On April 1, 2022 a photograph of the Insatiables party crew graced the Instagram account. This photograph had been featured in the 1993 issue of Street Beat Magazine, as the nine women who gathered and posed together were featured as "Chicanas of the month." As Chicanas of the month, these women had to "throw the best parties, have the best fashion, and roll deep to parties." In D-I-Y fashion, these party crews, which consisted mostly of teenage girls, scouted party locations, ranging from backyards to warehouses, designed and printed their flyers and promoted parties as part of an underground party and rave scene. The photograph is hauntingly similar to a photo of railroad workers taken in 1940, in Tucson Arizona.

Of course, the circumstances are different, but I cannot help but consider that despite these differences there are similarities. Likewise, what would these women think if they saw each other's photographs? Would they recognize one another? Would they feel a kinship with one another?

[143] I would like to offer tremendous thanks to the organizers of the Women Who Rock mentorship workshops, and Dr. Andrea Delgado who tapped me on the shoulder following a flash presentation of my research to direct me to *Veteranas and Rucas.*

Figure 2
"Insatiables Party Crew." Instagram Post, April 4, 2022. This photograph from 1993 bears a haunting similarity to the photograph of WWII era Mexican American railroad workers.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb0teyFJv8f/.

Figure 3
"Southern Pacific Railroad Female Workers During WWII." 1940. Mexican Heritage Project Special Collection. Arizona Historical Society Library and Archives.

CHAPTER 3 ARE YOU FAMILY? QUEER COMMUNITY KINSHIPS

A momentary exchange that took place nearly twenty years ago resurfaces in this project. One afternoon, when I lived in Sacramento, as I waited at a bus stop, I encountered a stranger and struck up a conversation. I estimated that we were close to the same age, in our early twenties, though I suspected he might be a few years older. To me, he presented as legibly queer, whereas I was aware that, as a feminine presenting person, most presumed me to be heterosexual. I often held my cards close, leaning into this form as a form of protection as I was in the thick of navigating the homophobia rampant in my family of origin. Yet, it also represented a degree of invisibility to the queer community. This conversation moved differently. By the time we boarded the bus, we chose seats next to each other to continue chatting. I remember how intentionally I stated my afternoon plans "with my girlfriend." Without skipping a beat, he looked at me, leaning back to get a better look of my whole self, "Oh! Are you family!?" Although I had not heard this phrasing before, the context made the intent of the question clear, and in the moment enabled us to share a nod of recognition of each other. We exchanged phone numbers. Our friendship lasted through a season and a handful of parties. Still, I have returned to this moment many times to consider the ease in the question of familyhood. I had intentionally offered contextual cues to ensure my legibility as a queer person, as at the time, most presumed heterosexuality. "Are you family?" welcomed disclosure (or confirmation) while still affording privacy and protection from the unknown public around us. As homophobia continues to result in rejection by queer folks' families of origin, familyhood and kinship formations are restructuring among queer kin. Had the phrase offered recognition and familiarity of shared struggle, and of shared triumphs? Audre Lorde writes, "what I had most regretted were my silences. Of what had I ever been afraid… My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you." The transformation of silence into language, again underscores a movement toward connection, and

ultimately action. Lorde continues, "…for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences. And it was the concern and caring of all those women which gave me the strength to scrutinize the essentials of my living"[144] *If the essentials of living exist in the space of breaking free of silence, where words are desperate to be heard, then what does it mean to overcome the fear of silence. If the fear that has kept me silent is a fear of annihilation, annihilation would anyway, whether I chose to speak or not – coming to pass, most certainly, if silence were sustained. While this project is not exclusively about my family, my family relationships, or experiences with family, such narratives appear where relevant. This is to acknowledge that these formative experiences have shaped and continue to shape my relationships to kin and community, continually resurfacing within questions that seek to examine the cultivation and creation of political identities and communities, notions of belonging, and of recognition, and kinship.*

When I first moved to Seattle for graduate school, I lived in a studio apartment in a 1901 brick building called the Abbottsford. located in the Yesler Terrace region of First Hill. Tucked away in the corner of a dead-end alleyway, this four-story brick building, mostly studio apartments, and a few one bedrooms, offered some of the more affordable rents in the city. Important to me, it also offered a fairly direct bus route to the University of Washington's Seattle campus. As one of the few remaining historic multifamily buildings, nestled among the modest homes, hospitals, and housing projects, I encountered families - both elders and children in my day-to-day interactions. While I've moved a few times since living there, most of my time in Seattle was while I lived there. Some of my fondest memories of Seattle bring me back to these early moments in this neighborhood, and this snapshot in

[144] Audre Lorde, *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde*, Transgressing Boundaries (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2009), 40–41.

time. Gentrification – though certainly well underway in surrounding neighborhood had only just begun to manifest itself in this neighborhood.

The building adjacent to where I lived is a Seattle Housing Authority building, Kebero Court. The word Kebero refers to a style of drum, important to cultural traditions in East Africa, reflecting the heritage of many who will call Kebero Court home or who will live and work in the surrounding neighborhood." (SHA Kebero Court website – cite if keeping). While the waitlist time is undetermined as of 2023, the waitlist is open, and according to the Seattle Housing Authority website, the SHA prioritizes housing for families at 30% of the median household income or lower. I welcomed living in a neighborhood, with families, children, and elders. I enjoyed the sounds of family chatter, as school buses picked up and dropped off children. I found this to be especially delightful during snow days, as these children, with the day to play, filled the air with delightful squeals and giggles, sledding down the snow-covered cobblestone embankment situated between our two neighboring multifamily complexes.

The central location of First Hill put me within a mile's walk of the surrounding neighborhoods and districts. South took me to the International District, or Beacon Hill just beyond, whereas heading north took me to Capitol Hill. Walking westward took me downtown by way of Pioneer Square, and east brought me to the Central District. I spent most of my time walking the north/south routes between the International District, and Capitol Hill. It was on these walks that I noticed just how much construction was taking place. I could register the change, but without historical memory, just as soon as a new building went up, I could not remember what had been there before.

I celebrated my first Thanksgiving in Seattle with a potluck in the community room with queer elders, thanks to an invitation from my neighbors down the hall. They were a gay couple in their mid-fifties, and we were among the queer family living in the building at that time. In fact, one time when a

friend, and colleague visited, and we stood outside, watching people come and go, they jokingly asked, "is it a requirement to be queer to live in this building?" But, by then I had already begun to observe how annual increases in rent and housing fees initiated a change of residents within the building. In the process of gentrification, "poorer communities are converted to high-end neighborhoods with expensive housing options… as property prices increase …even when the living spaces in a gentrifying area remain … developers attract new residents with higher incomes … the influx of these new and more affluent residents puts pressure on the housing market that produces inflated rents and prices that effectively displace low-income residents." Although nothing in the building changed from year to year, rent increases and increased or additional fees, such as pet rent, and an increased charge for public utilities (water, sewer, garbage) resulted in cost-of-living increases between 8% - 12% per year. I watched as these increases pushed queer elders and people of color out of the building, and out of the neighborhood. I watched as my neighbors, many long-term residents, moved out one by one.[145]

There were aspects of living in this neighborhood that felt familiar, and as such offered a great deal of comfort. I noticed it the first time I walked down to the International District. I felt it in the sounds. As I walked down Twelfth Avenue, the neighborhood's thruway for traffic and emergency vehicles, I passed a handful of plazas, before turning to head down Jackson Street. Here. under the cover of the I-5 overpass, was the rush of traffic, the white noise of high-speed tires on concrete. The sounds of commercial trucks; the way the semi-trailers rattled and reverberated, sound vibrating, carried down through the pillars of concrete below. It reminded me of North Highlands, the small working-class suburb just north of Sacramento where I had lived with my mother. I used to walk a mile down a main drag, occasionally stopping to get a donut on my way to work or school. Once I'd reached the freeway on-ramp, I'd head down a long flight of cement stairs to catch the light rail at its

[145] "Examining the Negative Impacts of Gentrification," accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-journal/blog/examining-the-negative-impacts-of-gentrification/.

end of the line stop. With the thruway overhead, the freeway running parallel to the tracks, I would find a seat on the wire benches, and I would wait. Sometimes I'd listen to music on a portable CD player, but a lot of the time I would write. I had not realized I had also been creating the memories of a sonic landscape, until I heard it with such familiarity again. I stopped and looked around, to notice the similarities and differences between these two places I'd come to know.

I moved out of the Abbottsford, following a relationship breakup that altered my living situation (my then girlfriend and I had moved into a one bedroom in the building; when we split, I could no longer afford the rent in the building). I moved into a smaller studio unit in yet another historic building three fourths of a mile north, just at the edge of Capitol Hill – the change in the demographic just a few blocks north was unexpected, and while I lived across from Seattle Academy and the Seattle University, the presence of adolescents and young adults attending a private academy held no comparison to sharing a neighborhood with families. While the change in the neighborhood came as a surprise only after living there, in the process of finding the place, at this point, I had enough of a sense of the Seattle housing market to ask some key questions. I knew to ask if the building's owners had any plans to sell, which would have likely slated the building for demolition and new development. Likewise, if I could not get a straight answer about projected rent increases, I was able to get a sense of it by asking about tenant longevity or turnover.

I settled into my new home, now on the edge of the Capitol Hill neighborhood. Affectionately called the "gayborhood" by queer elders, Capitol Hill was the LGBTQ epicenter of Seattle's heyday in the 1990s. While rainbows painted on the crosswalks in the heart of the neighborhood nodded to this community history, a shift in vocal timbre registered gentrification's impact. As of 2023, a new housing project called Pride Place is underway, a project to provide affordable housing to LGBTQ

seniors. It's with mixed feelings that I consider the likelihood of long wait lists, and the inadequacy for one building to meet the needs of entire communities displaced in the wake of gentrification.[146]

3.1 BECOMING QUEER FAMILY

This chapter further complicates the figure of la pachuca by showing how aspects of their subversive expressions through clothing, music persists over time and geographic space – beyond young Mexican American in California and the Southwest to ethnically diverse communities in the Pacific Northwest. La Pachuca transforms from a historical actor to a figure representative of subversive modes of behavior, to signal other forms of rebellion that carry forward into the present. Through visual circuits of recognition, pachucas created an exchange among and between girls and young women. Style, as Catherine Ramirez refers to it, operates as "a signifying practice, in this case the display of the zoot subculture's codes via clothing, hair and cosmetics," whereas style politics refers to "an expression of difference via style."[147]Aspects of pachuca style and style politics hold a continuing influence. Tracing a genealogy of pachucas, reveals a relationship not only to Chicanx and womxn of color communities of today, but also under explored connections to communities of queer women, particularly queer women of color. We see a glimpse of this potential in the 1998 LRC Zoot Suit Auction.

In a historiographic narrative which begins in the United States in the 1940s, this troubles contemporary terms already circulating in this chapter: queer, and Chicana/Chicanx, as well as terms

[146] A 2008 documentary*, A Place to Live: The Story of Triangle Square*, chronicles the nation's first and largest housing project specifically for LGBTQ seniors. Directed by Carolyn Coal, he documentary introduces the planning and development of the housing project and follows seven LGBTQ elders as they enter the lottery to be among the building's first residents. Nancy Val Verde, who will appear later in this chapter, appears in this documentary. See: *A Place to Live: The Story of Triangle Square*, Documentary (NoCo Media Group, Bittersweet Productions, 2008).
[147] Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*, 56.

that will surface later in the chapter, "butch" and "femme." Making sense of these terms in the contemporary moment also requires a look further back in time to consider the social and political forces shaping these words and their etymology. To first address the term queer, here its use functions as a descriptor for people who subvert normative gender and sexual expectations as dictated by a heteronormative patriarchal society. This chapter operates from this understanding of the term, to trace both its pejorative application, and its subversive potential. The reading of queer in the context of sexuality, originates from a twenty-first century vantage point, reflecting significant changes in its meaning since entering into the lexicon of sexuality by the 1920s. As this chapter focuses on the lives of queer *women*, the overlap in subversiveness with pachucas, and their contributions to contemporary organizations of kinship, it is useful then to consider the broader history of same-sex love and romance between women, particularly in the United States.

Judith Butler reminds that "'queer' has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names, or rather, the producing of a subject through that shaming interpellation. 'Queer' derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization … an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time."[148] Although queer holds a long history of pejorative meaning, its reclamation emerged amid justice activism in the 1980s and 1990s. As a political term, "queer emerged into public consciousness, " as a term that "challenged the normalizing mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects."[149] In its reclamation, queer serves as an analytic to interrogate the social processes that not only produce recognized identity, but also function to sustain identity.[150]

[148] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 18, https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17.
[149] David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, *What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?*, Social Text 84 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1.
[150] Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz, 1.

The term queer, then, not only functions to describe non-normative gender expression, and sexuality, but also invokes social and political power.

Queer, nevertheless, remains a contested term as it originates from a discourse that "has a history that not only precedes but conditions its contemporary usages."[151] With the politicization of identity and desire, in as much as terms are useful, they also introduce limitations. Butler asserts the terms used in the politicization of identity require ongoing examination of who may claim identifiers, and the meanings they carry. For instance, the reclamation of queer must also account for its continued use as a slur. In its deployment to shame and stigmatize, the term queer represents how language and social institutions interact to reinforce heteronormativity. Even in reclamation, pejorative turns still carry the heavy weight of, often violent, histories.

> As much as identity terms must be used, as much as 'outness' is to be affirmed, these same notions must become subject to a critique of the exclusionary operations of their own production: for whom is outness an historically available and affordable option? Is there an unmarked class character to the demand for universal 'outness'? Who is represented by *which* use of the term, and who is excluded? For whom does the term present an impossible conflict between racial, ethnic, or religious affiliation and sexual politics.[152]

As the identifier queer requires careful attention so as not to overlay twenty-first century language, the usage of "butch" and "femme" require the same care. In their historically contextualized meaning, the shaping of identity as informed by butch/femme performance and aesthetics, drew from cultures of working class, urban, pre-Stonewall lesbian communities in the United States. Like queer, the language, its meaning, and its usage have been contested, and have shifted over time. In Marie Cartier's explanation, the navigation of queer communities, and the recognition of queer women

[151] Butler, "Critically Queer," 19.
[152] Butler, 19.

during the pre-Stonewall period "cannot be taken out of historical context."[153] In fact, this historical context provides the necessary foregrounding for contemporary expressions and uses of language, such as 'fucking with gender' which, as Cartier notes "are contemporary millennial terms for gender deviance or playing with gender" noting that such language gestures toward both historic and contemporary butch-femme cultures, wherein "the historic culture operated under a different set of strictures than does the contemporary culture," and that these "historical realities must be taken into consideration when discussing when discussing pre-Stonewall gender deviance, specifically butch-femme—otherwise we risk playing with the gender of our ancestors when we are discussing gender deviance at a time when gender deviance was anything but a game."[154] To recognize and acknowledge kinship across time, to build and nurture spiritual kinships with queer ancestors, or to engage in queer curatorial practice, then, demands that in addition to acknowledging the spark of familiarity, we allow space for unfamiliarity and misrecognition. In addition to tracing the connecting (familiar) threads through time, we must also account for difference and historical distance. This does not invalidate the potential for recognizing kinship across time, rather it is the starting point from which these kinships deepen. As we consider our queer ancestors within their historical context, we also better interrogate our subjectivity and positionality in the contemporary moment.[155]

Lillian Faderman's historical monograph, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* documents cultural and political realities among what may now be recognized as lesbian communities, beginning with an acknowledgement that the language of lesbianism was slower to catch up with the actions which might be recognized as such. Faderman

[153] Marie Cartier, *Baby, You Are My Religion: Women, Gay Bars, and Theology before Stonewall*, Gender, Theology, and Spirituality (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 6.
[154] Cartier, 6.
[155] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's work *As We Have Always Done* has greatly influenced my thinking with regard to not only spiritual kinships we share with our ancestors, but also the relationships we are building *as future* ancestors to future generations.

begins her account with the concept of romantic friendships, introducing the possibility to historians to, not only recognize same-sex romance and courtship between women, but also the possibility for sexual contact. Among middle class women, in the early twentieth century, the romance and love shared between young women was widely viewed as "'a rehearsal in girlhood of the great drama in a woman's life,' where a woman's love for one another was thought to 'constitute the richness, consolation, and joy of their lives."[156] While romantic friendships could be traced back hundreds of years prior to their moment of flourishing in the early twentieth century, feminist organizing and agitation among educated and professional women, contributed both to the bloom of romance between women, as well as to the critical attention it garnered from sexologists in the same era. Political and economic enfranchisement, available to "ambitious women of the middle class" meant that women "no longer needed to resign themselves to marriage in order to survive," thus extending the possibilities of this girlhood rehearsal of the great drama of life, very much into the adult lives of women.[157]

As romantic friendships, and the refusal of marriage appear in the historiography as sites of potential reading for lesbianism, documented accounts of women's sexuality take noticeable turns when it comes to class. Whereas Faderman posits that accounts of evidence of same sex relationships between lower class women appear in the historical record, not necessarily because they occurred with greater frequency, but due to the harassment lower class women faced by the criminal courts. Absent from criminal courts, no such record exists for "respectable women."[158] Regarding classed constructions of gender, in which women's respectability was predicated on chasteness, Faderman suggests,

[156] Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, Between Men--between Women (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 11.
[157] Faderman, 12.
[158] Faderman, 2.

> one might speculate that since they generally lived in a culture that sought to deny the possibility of women's autonomous sexuality, many of them cultivated their own asexuality, however, surely for some, kissing and hugging eventually led to other things, and their ways of loving each other were no different from what the twentieth century would describe with certainty as lesbian."

Faderman's intervention by incorporating a classed analysis of the construction of gender to reveal the possibilities of seeing expressions of sexuality previously concealed has been an important intervention in the history of women and sexuality. However, an absence of a race analysis, leaving her subjects in an unmarked racial category leads to the presumption that Faderman's presentation of romantic friendships offers a history of white women only.

Farah Jasmine Griffin's work, *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends* inquires into the letters exchanged between Rebecca Primus and Addie Brown, two black women of different class locations, during and after the Civil War. Griffin, in a review of the letters Addie Brown wrote to Rebecca Primus between 1859 and 1868 explores the possibility of a romance between them. Griffin citing Faderman's earlier work, challenges the default assumption of heterosexuality. Perhaps not surprising, reviews of the book seem to not know what to do with the sexuality aspect of it. Among the reviews, many gloss over the aspect of sexuality, offering that the book offers a "fascinating" account Black of women's life in this pivotal moment of U.S. History. Another acknowledges the potential for a queer reading, stating that Griffin hints at the possibility of a friendship that is more than just platonic. However, Dianne Batts Morrow takes up Griffin's argument directly, and in so doing challenges the premise of Griffin's research. Morrow writes,

> Of particular import, Griffin contends that 'Brown's letters reveal a close romantic relationship between the two women.' Griffin allows that Brown's explicit avowals of love for Primus and

> expressions to effusive hugs and kisses correspond to nineteenth-century norms of female emotional bonding … She cites historians, [Carroll Smith-Rosenburg and Lillian Faderman [who] have shown that nineteenth-century white women often slept together… both speculate that some of these relationships may have been sexual as well … Griffin writes, 'several of Addie's letters have fairly explicit references to erotic interactions between herself and Rebeca … it seems clear that the passion and love were mutual'. Without corroborating evidence, however, Griffin can at best merely speculate that a sexual relationship existed. [159]

While it is true that Griffin draws an analysis based upon only that which remains of the letters Rebecca had saved, this may direct attention to the limits of the archive without foreclosing the possibility of a romantic relationship between these two women. Griffin does, in her work, acknowledge the limits of the available archival material at the intersection of gender, race, class and sexuality. In this way, it becomes less about the demonstrable proof that a sexual relationship existed, and more about the reading the archive for this possibility. It is precisely the paucity of evidence that Griffin contends with as she confronts the historic erasures of the lives and expressions of queer women, especially queer women of color and queer working-class women. As historically marginalized communities leave little evidence in the archives due to systemic erasures, these erasures demand speculation to create in the absence speculation to create in their absence the possibility of recognition. Speculating that there may have been a sexually romantic relationship shared between these two Black women of different class positions during the volatile period of Reconstruction is what opens up the possibilities for alternative readings of the archive.

[159] Diane Batts Morrow, "Review of Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends: Letters from Rebecca Primus of Royal Oak, Maryland, and Addie Brown of Hartford, Connecticut, 1854-1868," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 1 (2001): 175–76, https://doi.org/10.2307/3070111.

Faderman does not cite the origin of the term "lesbian" or its original meaning when it entered the lexicon, but it does appear to have done so in the late 19th century with lesbianism and by early twentieth century with "lesbian" as identifier of sexuality. Faderman's account of class offers an important insight into understanding how lesbianism has historically been linked with deviance and criminality, not necessarily because women who appear in the court records were more likely to engage in lesbianism, but rather because these women were more likely to be harassed in relation to their sexuality generally. Unlike the asexuality ascribed to respectable women, working-class women, and women in poverty were not granted the same protections of respectability.

By the turn of the twentieth century, sexologists altered views of women's shared intimacy with each other, introducing a pathology into romantic friendships as scrutiny into these relationships took a more sexually explicit turn. Faderman suggests however, that with the proliferation of theories that sought to characterize and distinguish certain feelings and interactions as pathological, that, to up that point, had fallen within the spectrum of "normal," sexologists created the conditions for the establishment of lesbian communities. By the end of the World War I, "the tolerance for any manifestations of what would earlier have been considered 'romantic friendship' had virtually disappeared," and in the reassertion of heteronormativity and patriarchal dominance, "women were urged to forget their pioneering experiments in education and the professions and to find women and to find happiness in the new companionate marriage."[160] Companionate marriage, idealized as a heterosexual partnership of companionship and cooperation came to represent the marital archetype, particularly for middle class white women. Despite the premise of companionship and cooperation, companionate marriage failed to address economic or social inequality outside of the home. By the

[160] Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 35.

1920s companionate marriage became the social expectation, contributing to the development of contemporary understandings of "normative" family formations that persist to this day.

With the differentiation between terms used for normative sexuality and those which were determined to be pathological terms used to describe women who engaged in sexual and romantic relationships with other women, entered into medical and academic discourse. These terms carried with them, ascribed attributes corresponding to identity. Yet, in daily vernacular, for most women, few identified as lesbian prior to the 1940s, an occurrence recorded in the narrative accounts of queer women who came of age during that time. Arden Eversmeyer, founder of the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project (OLOHP) established in 1998, and based in Houston, Texas, sought to record and preserve the histories of lesbian elders in the United States. In the twenty plus years of labor, the Old Lesbian Herstory Project has archived more than 800 *Herstories* with records beginning as early as 1916. In December 2022 I reached out to the Old Lesbian Oral History Project via their website's contact form. I soon received a reply to my inquiry from Margaret Purcell, the OLOHP manager. In our email exchange I learned that Arden Eversmeyer died one month prior. Margaret Purcell, having assumed tasks previously in Arden's care, generously provided numerous oral histories of women born in the 1920s and 1930s. Repeatedly throughout these narratives, the women interviewed mentioned that they felt they were the only ones, noting that many did not identify as lesbian (or gay) long after they recognized the difference in their feelings. Arden, herself, born in1931, provided her own oral history when she was interviewed for the Outwords Archive in 2017. In an echoing narrative, Arden states that even as she came to build relationships with other lesbians, she did not "come out," as it would be understood in the contemporary moment. The community Eversmeyer built with other lesbians developed while she was in college at Texas Women's University (then Texas State College for Women). This experience offered clarity for Eversmeyer; she noted that throughout her life she had

felt "out of sync" with people. In college, among the many lesbians in her community, Eversmeyer offered,

> I was in sync with these people without the words being said … I met the woman who would become my first lover… We didn't have vocabulary back then. There was no vocabulary. There was nothing in print, no periodicals, no organizations. You know, finding that kind of group to come out in was a miracle because those were the years when basically the only way gay people would connect was at a bar.[161]

Among the *Herstories*, I obtained from the OLOHP, records revealed the following: several women indicated that in the years during which they began to sense that they were different, there were no words, and few other women, if any, with whom to identify. Many had not known *how* to identify until well into adulthood, into the 1940s. Self-identification as lesbian followed. To return to Faderman's argument, that white, middle-class womanhood had been constructed on the premise of respectability, one may read the lack of a vocabulary to relegating discussions of sex and sexuality to the realm of taboo topics. However, as Eversmeyer, and several of the women interviewed for the OLOHP were white, well-educated, professional women, one may then consider that this lack of vocabulary results from the class and race location, which as noted earlier, develops out of the construction respectability ascribed to white, middle-class womanhood.

While some may not have known how to identify, Faderman argues that by the 1930s, the presence of lesbian slang, "provides evidence of the existence of flourishing lesbian communities," and that "much of the slang originally came from women's prisons."[162] Within correctional institutions, lesbianism, Faderman posits," was sometimes situational and sometimes a lifetime commitment was

[161] "Arden Eversmeyer," *The Outwords Archive* (blog), accessed May 28, 2023, https://theoutwordsarchive.org/interview/eversmeyer-arden/.
[162] Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 106.

common … From the correctional institutions the argot seems to have filtered into working-class, and sometimes middle-class lesbian society."[163] While some of the slang of this era has fallen out of circulation, some still circulates within the context of contemporary queer communities.

Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis's *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* provides an account of working-class lesbian life by focusing specifically on Buffalo, New York beginning in the mid-1930s through the early 1960s. Within the context of inter-ethnic and multi-racial communities, working class lesbians "created a community whose members not only supported one another for survival in an extremely negative and punitive environment, but also boldly challenged and helped to change social life and morals in the U.S."[164] Kennedy and Davis's commitment to research and documentation of community formation among working-class lesbians builds upon Faderman's, offering nuances to class and race dynamics within lesbian community formation. Although Kennedy and Davis's approach their research with a sharper focus, by limiting their research to the community of Buffalo New York, their study contributes to the larger narrative of lesbian communities by revealing the nuances of race and class dynamics at play in an urban, working-class setting.

Terms such as "dyke," "bulldyke," "bull dagger, "gay," and "drag" – the latter two especially – circulate casually in queer communities today. The former three terms listed circulate with caution. "Dyke," "bulldyke," and "bull dagger" originate within specific raced and classed contexts. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* offers insights into the ways in which language evolved and shaped community formation, particularly among working-class lesbians, and it does so while acknowledging the ways in which language continues to shift in its uses throughout lesbian communities. Kennedy and Davis offer context and explanation for terms; they note that within "gay liberation's strategy to

[163] Faderman, 106.
[164] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, 20th anniversary edition. (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 1.

redefine past terms of oppression and reclaim them with positive meaning," because of their historical pejorative meanings, these would not be terms with which women identified.[165] In the decades prior to gay liberation, terms like "dyke" were not used in the language of self-identification, and still today, are handled with care even within lesbian communities.[166] Although in the contemporary, moment many adopt "dyke" as a term of identification, it still has the capacity to carry the weight of a slur, even within the community. Kennedy and Davis explain, "dyke" had derogatory meanings which operated both within and beyond the lesbian community and was deployed as an insult. "Dyke," was (and still is) "used by straights to stigmatize lesbians as social misfits," just as it was also deployed by "more upwardly mobile lesbians to indicate crudeness…"[167] As a result, this term carries gender and race connotations with it today, even as it may circulate among middle-class queer communities.

That lesbian slang of the 1930s persists today, and that it originated from women's prisons, could reveal the long shadow of perceived criminality and deviance ascribed as inherent to homosexuality. Though the focus here is not on the history of women's incarceration, it is useful to interrogate further the relationship between non-normative sexuality and gender expression and the reasons women were incarcerated. That women were more often incarcerated for "crimes of moral turpitude' – prostitution, 'lewd' behavior and vagrancy," this illustrates the scrutiny to which working class women were subjected.[168] Prisons of the early twentieth century emphasized reform. The intent in teaching incarcerated women to sew, and cook was to rehabilitate them to adhere to societal expectations with regard to gender and sexuality.

[165] Kennedy, 68.
[166] Kennedy, 68.
[167] Kennedy, 68.
[168] Jessica Pishko, "A History of Women's Prisons," JSTOR Daily, March 4, 2015, https://daily.jstor.org/history-of-womens-prisons/.

The threat of arrest persisted well into the 1940s. In some cities municipal codes legislated against crossdressing. Though rarely enforced today prohibitions against cross-dressing were common up through the mid-twentieth century. Among the urban cities that passed restrictive laws, San Francisco targeted cross dressing directly, with public decency laws specifying prohibitions against persons "wearing a dress not belonging to his or her sex," or "wearing apparel of the other sex," whereas cities such as Los Angeles and New Orleans prohibited indecent dress without the mention of cross dressing.[169] Tre Ford, interviewed by Arden Eversmeyer, was nineteen years old in 1948, and spoke of the bar scenes in New York.

> I went to bars when I was young. I went to a few bars in the 1940s, and '48, when I moved to New York, I went to gay bars. And that was when things were pretty bad; people were scared to death to walk into a bar. They were scared to death to be in the bar. They were scared the police were going to come in and raid. They did it all the time, and people lived in mortal fear they were going to be arrested and lose their jobs, get kicked out of school. That kind of stuff. Gays have always been intimidated… You didn't worry about being gay when you were on the street, you just worried about being gay when you were in a bar. You couldn't wear as many as two articles of male clothing or you could be arrested…

In Marie Cartier's work *Baby, You Are My Religion,* her interview with Nancy Val Verde reveals the reality of repeat arrests. Nancy Val Verde, helped to create one of the first lesbian bars in East Los Angeles, Redz, by prohibiting men from entering. In her interview with Cartier, Val Verde reveals that she was about seventeen when she was first arrested for "masquerading," by failing to wear three items of women's clothing. At one point she spent three months in county jail. While Val Verde would get picked up for masquerading, she often faced additional charges and resulting in the

[169] Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco*, Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

development of a criminal record. Eventually, Val Verde hired a lawyer, and upon obtaining a barber's license, successfully petitioned the court to be permitted dress in male clothes as it was in accordance with her profession. Val Verde's accounts of repeated arrests reveal the over policing of working class, queer communities of color.

> They always coupled it with something else… like, drunk. No, you're a felon… suspicion of something. They picked me up again. For masquerading still … that's when I got a lawyer. Three items, they ever asked me… Here I am, three strikes against me. Butch, Chicano, and poor.[170]

Given the scrutiny and the possibility of being arrested for crossdressing, it was difficult for many lesbians to crate community outside of people's private homes. While in the 1940s and 1950s, bar scenes helped to carve spaces where queer women could gather, most lesbians never went to bars. Because it was so difficult to find spaces for lesbians in these decades, community formations have been predicated on racial, ethnic and class identities. Faderman writes that through the 1930s,

> …Unless one was lucky enough to become an insider in a group, lesbian life…could be lonely. Since there were no personal ads, no lesbian political organizations, and few special-interest groups for lesbians, none of the social abundance that exists today in many American cities, contact often depended on chance. And because silence was so widespread, it was possible that one often missed the chance. Many lesbians probably really did feel then, that … 'we all walk alone.'[171]

By the 1940s, however, things began to change. Between the rural to urban migration, changes in the labor force, and economic mobility, women especially participated in public life in new ways,

[170] Marie Cartier, "Dissertation: Baby, You Are My Religion: The Emergence of 'Theelogy' in Pre -Stonewall Butch - Femme/Gay Women's Bar Culture and Community" (Ph.D., United States -- California, The Claremont Graduate University), accessed May 30, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/docview/744394112/abstract/67C95FDF112042C6PQ/1.
[171] Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 107.

cultivating new possibilities for leisure activities and queer community spaces. As discussed in the previous chapter, wartime labor demands dramatically altered the landscape of women's work and women's participation in the public sphere. Women found themselves in settings that were, as a result of the war, insulated from men. Whether it was women on the factory floor, or women entering the armed forces, women, married or not, found themselves occupying the public sphere in new ways, which elicited anxieties, not only with regard to gender, but also with regard to sexuality. The codification of "U.S. Service women … maintains gender norms as it consolidates and links nation and empire. In particular, it keeps female soldiers who too closely resemble the ideal (male and masculine) soldier –namely the butch lesbian – at bay."[172]

Having gained a degree of economic independence, women experienced a degree of freedom from the structure of the male head of household as sole economic provider. In the wartime years, as married women assumed the economic responsibilities of their households, what this also presented for unmarried women who were not interested in marriage was the opportunity to support themselves on their own. John D'Emilio draws the connection between wage labor and economic independence to the exploration of sexuality and the development of sexuality as a political identity, stating,

> As wage labor spread and production became socialized, then, it became possible to release sexuality from the 'imperative' to procreate. Ideologically, heterosexual expression came to be a means of establishing intimacy, promoting happiness, and experiencing pleasure. In divesting the household of its economic independence and fostering the separation of sexuality from procreation, capitalism has created conditions that allow some men and women to organize a personal life around their erotic/emotional attraction to their own sex. It has made possible the

[172] Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*, 145.

> formation of urban communities of lesbians and gay men and, more recently, a politics based on a sexual identity.[173]

In addition to the taboos that dampened conversations of sexuality among middle-class women, this may offer an alternative explanation for why so many women who came of age in the 1940s felt some apprehension in identifying or disclosing their gay identity, despite the fact that they lived and loved in ways that would be recognized as lesbian or queer by contemporary standards. While social norms and expectations of the generation of women coming of age in the 1940s and 1950s prohibited explicit disclosures pertaining to sex and sexuality, made apparent in their reluctance to speak openly about sex and sexuality, as D'Emilio argues, it was the disaggregation of sexuality from the demands of marriage, family, and the expectations of sexual reproduction, that carved out new possibilities for recognizing sexuality. Again, D'Emilio argues that,

> Only when individuals began to make their living through wage labor, instead of as parts of an interdependent family unit, was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity – an identity based on the ability to remain outside the heterosexual family and to construct a personal life based on one's attraction to one's own sex.[174]

The challenge to the demands for sexual reproduction as implied and embedded within normative family structures was still relatively new. The development of a political sexuality, that is, the possibility of being able to construct a personhood on the premise of the erotics of pleasure, regardless of sexual orientation, emerged out of this moment. In the years to follow this possibility ushered in the phenomenon of politicized sexual identities. This, as much as social norms regarding disclosure, may have prohibited women's conceptualization of sexuality, particularly non-

[173] John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michéle Aina Barale, and David Halperin, 1993, 470.
[174] D'Emilio, 470.

heteronormative expressions of sexuality, as a means of identification. Sexuality had not been conceived of in this way prior to this moment. While sexual exploration and pleasure were not new phenomena, the distancing from procreative demands was new. With the economic freedom to participate in leisure activities, and in situating sex and sexuality as a site of pleasure (and leisure activity), heterosexual women, and queer women alike negotiated new terrains of relationality. This is why the pachucas conjured up so much panic – whether heterosexual or not – because they were freed up by the increase in discretionary spending and freedom from heteronormative patriarchal structures.

3.2 Becoming Queer Familia (placeholder title)

In the wartime economy, women enjoyed a greater degree of economic independence. Women encountered other women due to a greater presence in the workforce. Some women, as a result of their labor, may have found an easing up of economic need to marry. Adherence to the heteronormative family structure, the unit of residence and the unit whose members as a matter of course pool a common basis of economic support, shifted as women's wage earning increased. This is not to say that because of increased earning potential, women could disavow marriage, entirely; but it is possible that the economic freedoms enabled a prolonged period of adolescence. With opportunities for leisure and recreation came opportunities for an exploration of claims to public space. "Benefiting from the wartime environment, female zoot suiters experimented with their social and sexual roles, by adopting personas that asserted new claims to public life. Some use their status as wartime wage earners to push for the privilege to socialize."[175] If, young Mexican American women saw sex as an "opportunity to experience a sense of excitement and pleasure in the context of lives typically defined by discrimination, poverty and severe social restriction," then it is worth considering that such excitement

[175] Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2007): 140, https://doi.org/10.2307/25443504.

and pleasure occurred beyond within the context of heterosexual flings and romances. In looking at how greater economic and social freedoms enabled explorations of sexuality, it is useful to consider that this cannot be limited to an understanding of sex, sexuality and sexual expression as limited to women's encounters with men. The very presence of more women in public spaces, coupled with the increased density of urban centers due to previous decades of migration, also facilitated sexual encounters between women. Queer gathering spaces fostered kinships pre-Stonewall. An interlocutor in Dr. Cartier's research states recounts,

> What was great about the bars, as I always keep saying, when being gay was not known to the public-was not out. There was such a feeling of belonging to something, you know? Everybody felt such a kinship. One gay person and another gay person. And you'd feel that in the bars. And there was an awful lot of warmth and good spirit. This was before the Stone, Stonewall…. And there were raids on the bars in those days. So, you had to be careful. Raids police would come and get - put somebody in the paddy wagon and you ran out the back door … we never got caught in a raid, but we heard about it a lot. … I just remember the feeling of it. Seeing women dancing together … the feeling was just wonderful. Like my goodness. You know it was all acceptable and these were very decent looking people. They were very nice-looking people and it made you feel like you weren't that much of a freak. That's what the feeling was.[176]

Alternative kinship formations, often referred to as chosen families, have been an essential survival tactic of queer communities given the social and structural violence of homophobia.

[176] Cartier, "Baby, You Are My Religion," 454.

This work does not presume that pachucas and queer women existed as discrete communities, or that these communities never overlapped. In the very reference of Redz in East Los Angeles, one may consider an overlap between mid-twentieth century pachuca culture and lesbian bar scenes. Given Val Verde's repeated arrests for "masquerading" one may consider Redz as a potential gathering space for the pachucas who wore the masculine form of the zoot suit, in particular. This poses a challenge to the dominant narratives of Mexican American women, particularly pachucas, in their ever present hyper-feminine, heterosexual presentation. The reassertion of hyper-femininity performs the labor of maintaining heteronormativity, and even as it continues today, draws upon the same logic of panic of the era, and contributes to an erasure of the women who transgressed gender norms by opting to wear the zoot suit. "Like Rosie the Riveter and the World War II era W.A.C. … service woman's femininity and heterosexuality must be accentuated and produced, for as la pachucas's exclusion from the American and Chicano imaginaries has shown us, normative gender and heterosexuality are indispensable to the project of nation building."[177]

Catherine Ramirez acknowledges the women who wore the masculine form of the zoot suit as a "butch" presentation of pachuca style. Ramirez deliberately employs the term "butch," and so chooses to read the women presented to her in the archive as such. Ramírez writes that, although some of the pachucas dressing in masculine clothing "may not have identified as butch –that is women who are 'more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles, or identities than with feminine ones' … I want to read them… as such."[178] In Los Angeles cross-dressing was illegal. Ramírez continues: "the term 'butch' may not have been used among Mexican Americans during the early 1940s, but this should not rule out its retrospective and self-conscious use as an analytic category."[179] These choices,

[177] Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*, 145.
[178] Ramírez, 79.
[179] Ramírez, 79.

and Ramírez's transparency in making them, gesture toward a kind of queer curatorial practice of its own, thus offering the opening for a more focused queer reading of La Pachuca. To read the term "butch" as located alongside pachucas immediately called upon a history of queer women, and the emerging lesbian community, built around underground clubs, and social practices of butch/femme gender formations within these clubs.

The literature in both queer histories, as well as in dominant narratives in Chicano history, might lead one to conclude that these communities shared little overlap, but this says more about the historiography of, and the curatorial practices, this project fights against in the presumed ephemerality of the lives of queer women of color. Dominant historical narratives on the history of queer women in the mid-twentieth center on the narratives of white women, reflecting the limits of the archive, and the generational attitudes toward how forthcoming women may have been regarding discussions of sexuality. It is reasonable to assume that these communities, did in fact, overlap – that there were queer women participating in and contributing to pachuquismo, interrupting a predominant history of queer women as a history of white women. Although differently situated, pachucas and queer women endured scrutiny regarding expectations of race, class, gender, and sexual behavior. At the intersection of subversive sexualities, pachucas offer an insight, even a point of recognition, among communities of queer women. The nascent butch/femme communities of queer women of the mid-twentieth century offer a traceable thread in articulating community and identity formation and kinship amid negotiations of social and state power. In taking up queer as a practice and analytic of resistance, the communities that developed challenged normative structures of family, and kinship – and the very structures that inform notions of citizenship and national belonging. Likewise, style politics and self-fashioning play an important role in queer communities, thus playing an important role in self-expression and signaling legibility.

Like pachucas, the visual circuits of recognition styles of dress, mannerisms, and social activities shared among queer communities, created possibilities for recognition. Because these women participated in style politics, that is, "the expression of difference via style" it is not frivolous to consider fashion, and self-presentation[180]. These circuits of recognition played an important role in legibility, that was at times coded to be readable to within the community, and this, in turn, shaped the formation of communities. Recognition offers a degree of safety in shared identification, yet there is also something to be said for the dance of legibility that can be read on bodies if only one knows how to look/see/recognize – for instance, the accouterments, mannerisms, etc., recognizable within the queer community but otherwise overlooked – coded and hidden in plain sight. One thing that I want to note, however, when talking about style politics among queer communities, is, of course, what it means to present as "straight," (heterosexual) and how this is negotiated. Presenting as straight, historically, just as passing for white, or passing as "respectable," affords a modicum of safety; and to be assumed white, to be assumed straight, or even respectable, for some, are never available options. For those who may negotiate with these terms, the safety afforded is always tenuous: contingent on behavior and association. Without minimizing the privilege afforded in the ability to pass, I am interested how, for those who could otherwise pass, the decisions to create a legible a subversive politic, and to be made legible by behavior and association offer recognition and belonging. And I am interested in the negotiations made within these communities when legibility operates as both a source of joyfulness, kinship, and belonging, as well as vulnerability to violence. As Alix Genter writes, "Queer legibility could enable entrance into lesbian communities and attract one's next lover as well as

[180] Ramírez, "Crimes of Fashion," 3.

provoke hostility, violence, and arrest. In this context, appearance carried tremendous significance, and butches and femmes employed diverse strategies to both convey and conceal their queerness…"[181]

The ways that pachucas destabilized the myth of the model minority or troubled the politics of respectability is what actually makes them such a threat to "family" structures and social norms. Their presence exposes the precariousness of Mexican American communities in the liminal spaces of the racialized other, and the limits of their mobility from a constructed laboring class. The refusal to adhere to assimilationist narratives evokes tremendous anxiety in its threat to dominant cultural norms. Likewise, their claims to sexual autonomy and gendered self-expression (whether femme or butch), demonstrate the workings of a new generation who worked through their relationships with material culture, as they simultaneously partake in it, and contribute to it. Queer people, like hypersexualized women of color, were also never seen as respectable. Queer folks were also ascribed deviance in this era.

Pachucas dressed subversively, intentionally, cultivating alternative expressions of gender, in both a masculinized expression, as well as a hyper-feminized expression. Likewise, pachucas located claimed their sexuality, locating sex as a site of pleasure in the face of sexual stereotyping. Pachucas, "seemingly mixed their blatant sexuality with a politicized identity of Mexican American womanhood." [182]In doing all of this, they re-racialized, re-ethnicized, themselves, re-gendered themselves, on their terms, as they wanted to be seen. For this reason, their legacy carries on today.

[181] Alix Genter, "Appearances Can Be Deceiving: Butch-Femme Fashion and Queer Legibility in New York City, 1945–1969," *Feminist Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 605, https://doi.org/10.15767/feministstudies.42.3.0604.
[182] Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic," 135.

CHAPTER 4 KIN-MAKING THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICES

A note on terms:

This chapter centers the organizing of Rain City Rock Camp (RCRC), located in Seattle, Washington, Sampaguita Rock Camp, in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Chicxs Rockerxs, in Southeast L.A. In this chapter I discuss rock and roll camps for gender marginalized youth that have developed in relationship to a coalition of camps in the Girls Rock Camp Alliance (GRCA). These organizations are dynamic and changing. As such, this chapter reflects a moment in time. The origins of girls rock camps, and the Girls Rock Camp Alliance, developed in the early 2000s utilizing the language of "girls" to specify the community that the camps wished to reach. As a counter to sexism and misogyny in the social lives of young people, rock camps employed language to intentionally center girls. As camps developed adult programs, they, too, were developed with the language of camps for women. Initially many of these adult camps were called "Ladies Rock Camp."

In recent years, in an effort to recognize the more nuanced articulations of gender and gender-based violence and oppression, camps have engaged in dialogues regarding the limits and exclusions imposed in the usage of the terms: "girls," "women," and "ladies." Rain City Rock Camp was, at one time, Girls Rock! Seattle, then, Rain City Rock Camp for Girls. References to the dialogues of name changes came up in my interviews regarding Rain City Rock Camp, as both a reflection of Rain City Rock Camp's founding mission, new directions, and hopes for the camp's future. The decision to remove "girls" from the name developed out of deep consideration for its trans and nonbinary community members who, though they may not identify as girls, women, or (the classed connotation) of lady, still experience gender marginalization and the gender violence of misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia. Likewise, Chicxs Rockerxs demonstrates greater inclusivity to gender marginalized communities, by replacing the feminine form of "a" in "Chicas" and "Rockeras" with the gender

expansive notation "x." The Sampaguita Rock Camp Instagram page denotes that it is a Filipina/x/o-oriented camp, and in my conversation with an organizer, she shared with me the organizers' intentions to create welcoming spaces for queer and nonbinary Filipinx youth within their communities.

In this chapter, I will refer to these camps and their mission as they have been referenced within the interview, or within the temporal context in which they are situated. In conversations regarding Rain City Rock Camp, where such terms appear as: "girls rock camp," "women," or "ladies rock camp," this does not imply that rock camps operate, or operated with any intent to exclude trans, non-binary, two-spirit, and other gender marginalized communities. It does, however, reflect the ongoing dialogues regarding language, articulations of politicized identities, and processes of change, as well as a recognition and responses to areas of growth and development within the camp community. When they employed the language of "girls" and "women," my interlocutors paused to interject with clarifying context, that the language itself dated to a time prior to more nuanced dialogues about gender to demonstrate a feminist reflexive awareness among organizers within the organization.

I draw from my involvement with Rain City Rock Camp, as well as interviews with organizers of Rain City Rock Camp, Chicxs Rockerxs and Sampaguita Rock Camp. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways that rock camp programming creates spaces of kinship and relational identity formation via the organizing and implementation of a 6-day music camp. Music functions as a tool for consciousness raising and social justice activism. Rain City Rock Camp, an equity-focused, youth-oriented, arts-based nonprofit, as well as similar mission focused camps, push beyond the standpoint of organizing "with youth in mind" to shift the paradigm of non-profits "serving" youth in their communities to organizations or collectives that that build in collaboration with their communities. Camp programming develops through an ongoing active engagement with youth campers' needs and

concerns as *they* express them. This youth centered structure of guidance supports the development of an intentionally empowering space, which carries over into the organizing spaces for adults, as well as into the extended communities of campers. This chapter will speak to both the ways in which the thoughtful, and intentional culture cultivated within rock camps facilitate transformative experiences for youth, organizers, and volunteers. I situate these camps as a lens through which to view creative kinships, and kinship formations.

I selected participants for my interview based on the following criteria: long term involvement with Rock Camp (5+ years, ideally, consecutive, and involvement in curriculum planning or implementation). I interviewed 12 organizers, all were eager to talk about Rock Camp and share their experiences and insights. As I reached out to members of the Rain City Rock Camp community, I was directed toward other camps which these organizers felt were relevant to my project, which included Sampaguita Rock Camp, a Filipinx-oriented camp located in the San Francisco California Bay Area, and Chicxs Rockerxs, located in Southeast L.A., a camp for youth of color, with an emphasis on Chicanx youth. For this project I conducted interviews, all of which were between 1-2 hours in duration. When I began interviewing, I was contacted directly by a former camper, now organizer with Chicxs Rockerxs, who upon hearing about my project asked to be involved. These interviews were guided by a series of questions, that remained consistent throughout each interview, with minor details changed to maintain relevance to the respective camp, and follow-up questions based on the information shared. Each person interviewed has been assigned a pseudonym.

References to each camp may be abbreviated, based on how these camps are known in their communities. There are various kinds of music camps available to youth however, in this dissertation I maintain my focus on camps operating within the framework of feminist, social-justice organizing for gender marginalized youth. I utilize capitalization, for the terms “Camp,” and “Rock Camp” when they

are signifiers for specific camps within this movement. The terms “Camp” or “Rock Camp” often stand in for the proper name of the camp or camps folks are involved in, and likewise, because there are strong relationships shared between camps, it is not uncommon for individuals to share connections between camps.

4.1 Rain City Rock Camp

“It’s life changing.”

Rain City Rock Camp (RCRC) in Seattle, Washington is a nonprofit youth arts program with a focus on self-expression, self-esteem, and the expression of social justice through music. RCRC is part of a larger movement seeking to build a more inclusive music landscape by getting more instruments in the hands of girls and gender marginalized youth. The camps develop programming from a feminist, anti-oppression framework, and support youth leadership through intergenerational mentorship. Rock camps, in cities throughout the United States, provide day camps that run for 6 days, where campers attend workshops, learn an instrument, form bands, collaborate to write songs, and perform at a showcase. Rain City Rock Camp is one of a network of over 50 like-minded camps, inspired by the pilot Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls, established in Portland, Oregon in 2001. Many of these camps work in collaboration with the Girls Rock Camp Alliance (GRCA) which is an international membership network of youth-centered arts and social justice organizations. The GRCA provides “space for community building to our membership in order to build a strong movement for collective liberation.”[183] The GRCA holds an annual conference and provides resources and support to new and

[183] “Mission,” Girls Rock Camp Alliance, accessed April 16, 2023, https://www.girlsrockcampalliance.org/mission.https://www.girlsrockcampalliance.org/mission“Mission.”

established camps, connecting similar mission-oriented camps across the United States and internationally.

Formerly Girls Rock! Seattle, Rain City Rock Camp is "the only nonprofit in the Seattle area that combines music education, gender responsive programming and a commitment to positive social change,"[184] RCRC aims to,

> center and support youth and adults of marginalized genders, both in the content of our programming and in the identities of the mentors who are a part of our community. RCRC programs address holistic aspects of positive development—like building self-esteem and encouraging self-expression while offering strengths-based, collaborative music learning. Participants in our programs receive instrument instruction from local musicians…write … and perform original songs… examine the music industry through a social justice lens … all while ROCKING OUT in a supportive, empowering community.[185]

Music remains at the foreground of rock camp, with the intent to carve out space for those who have been historically excluded, or uncredited in music. Rock camps typically follow the format of a 6-day long summer camp for youth, with some camps offering a 3-day, weekend-long camp for adults. With music as the touchstone of camp, music becomes the conduit through which individuals engage in collaborative creative expression. Because camp programing includes activities that require collaboration as well as individual engagement, camp becomes a space in which campers negotiate with identity at multiple levels. Camper's negotiations with identity unfold amid an individual reflective process through feminist, social justice-oriented workshops, as well as in relation with others in the camp community in the application of the skills developed at camp. This move between personal

[184] "About Rain City Rock Camp for Girls | Rain City Rock Camp," March 1, 2013, https://www.raincityrockcamp.org/about/.
[185] "About Rain City Rock Camp for Girls | Rain City Rock Camp."

reflective engagement and collaborative activities, combined with the intentional structure of support ensured by organizers and volunteers, creates the possibilities for rock camp as a site of self-exploration, and community building. Youth are encouraged to step into leadership roles, backed by the organizers and larger volunteer community of camp. Adults who may come to camp as campers are then encouraged to volunteer. While youth camps are structured with camp as the container for social interaction, adult campers are encouraged to join the community of organizers and volunteers through activities that extend beyond camp, creating the "behind the scenes community" of camp who then show up for the youth in camp at show case events. Many campers and volunteers, alike, return to camp year after year. Camp operates as a site of creativity *and* creative kin-making.

The kickoff event ushering in the dream of Rain City Rock Camp into the reality of the Seattle feminist organizing landscape, was, fittingly, a concert held at Seattle's Vera Project, a local youth focused non-profit with a focus on D-I-Y art and music. The poster for the Girls Rock! launch party feels like camp, its presentation carries the camp aesthetic of being bright and bold. Against a black background, a bright pink heart draws the eye to the block-lettering illuminating from within the heart. The first line of text, molded to the shape of the heart, is the largest feature of the text, announcing the yet- to-be-known, GIRLS ROCK! SEATTLE. This launch party kicked off in December of 2008 and featured local bands-as part of a "50 shows in 50 states" fundraiser benefiting the newly formed Girls Rock Camp Alliance, as well as, locally, to announce and fundraise for Girls Rock! Seattle/ Rain City Rock Camp. With the launch party at Seattle's Vera Project, Rain City Rock Camp-established itself amid a network of nonprofits sharing in the mission for youth-oriented arts, and D-I-Y community spaces. This foundational relationship with the Vera Project continues to the present day, as the Vera Project has been a frequently-used venue for RCRC Summer Camp Showcases, and, as programming

developed, the host facility for smaller camp events, such as the weekend-long adult rock camp programs.

The Vera Project, an "all ages nonprofit space dedicated to fostering personal and community transformation through collaborative youth-driven engagement in music and art," offers a necessary third space for youth and young adults.[186] A "third space" is a place of leisure, that is neither the home (first space) or work/school setting (second space), that anchors communities, enabling the convening of peoples in either spontaneous or planned encounters. In the waves of gentrification, third spaces diminish. In Seattle, as neighborhoods have been transformed by the increase of high-density housing, this comes at the expense of the small business neighborhood staples. How such staple businesses interact with other community organizations factors in as well. Piecora's Pizza, a family-owned pizzeria with a 33-year history near the Pike/Pine Corridor had been a local hangout, offering a gathering spot for organizers of Rain City Rock Camp, in both pre-camp planning, and post-camp debriefs. A supporter of Rain City Rock Camp Rain, Piecora's hosted the Rain City Rock Camp volunteer appreciation parties, and often donated pizzas for RCRC events. Piecora's closed its doors in April of 2014, sold to Equity Residential. Based in Chicago, Equity Residential is one of the nation's largest real estate investments companies-and owns over forty properties in the Seattle metropolitan area, thirty-one in Seattle proper. Chloe Apartments on Madison, a 137-unit apartment building, occupies the block where Piecora's once stood, and is just one of several newly constructed high-density apartment complexes on the block.[187] As of May 2023, rents at Chloe begin at $1,905 for a 493-

[186] "About – The Vera Project," accessed April 20, 2023, https://theveraproject.org/about/.

[187] David Schmader, "Piecora's Pizza to Close Forever on April 15," The Stranger, accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.thestranger.com/food-and-drink/2014/04/02/19185283/piecoras-pizza-to-close-forever-on-april-15; "Seattle's Popular Piecora's Pizza Closes Tonight after 33 Years," Puget Sound Business Journal, accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/blog/2014/04/seattles-popular-piecoras-pizza-closes-tonight.html.

square-foot studio. Other available listings include a 707-square-foot one-bedroom, listed at $3,095.[188] From this, we see, not only the economic displacements caused by gentrification, but also, the loss of community space. The new buildings that take over neighborhoods in the process of gentrification demonstrate that "common in gentrification efforts, urban planning shifts from 'fostering community formation' to 'investing in the city with money and consumption-oriented spaces that resemble suburban shopping malls that exclude low-income, and people of color.'"[189] High-density "luxury" residential apartments, geared toward higher income earners, demolish spaces of leisure. While retail spaces on the ground floors of such apartment buildings are common, these are often spaces of transactional engagement, such as higher-end retail shops, fitness studios, and an occasional coffee shop. While a coffee shop *could* be inviting, the cafes in the places of gentrification often feature limited seating, if any, awkwardly sized tables adhering to a minimalist aesthetic, and often incorporating metal seating into their design. These are intentionally unwelcoming spaces, mirroring the exclusionary design aesthetics of hostile architecture designed to purposely restrict the uses of public space.

At the time of its founding, Rain City Rock Camp was entirely volunteer run. Presently, RCRC operates with three year-round staff positions, which include the Executive Director, Program Manager, and Operations and Administrative Manager. In addition, RCRC may employ program-specific part-time staff. RCRC works under the guidance of a 12-member board of directors. As a non-profit organization, RCRC relies on the support of volunteers to ensure its success. "Without our community of passionate volunteers, Rain City Rock Camp could not exist."[190] The volunteer roles are

[188] "Chloe on Madison Apartments - Pike/ Pine Corridor - Brand New Apartments | EquityApartments.Com," accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.equityapartments.com/seattle/pike-pine/chloe-on-madison-apartments##unit-availability-tile.
[189] "Examining the Negative Impacts of Gentrification."
[190] "Volunteer for a Program | Rain City Rock Camp," March 1, 2013, https://www.raincityrockcamp.org/volunteer/.

essential to the function of camp. Many volunteers have held various roles in camp, with many adults having experienced camp firsthand as a camper at ARC or having known youth campers. Much like campers, many volunteers do return year after year, and are celebrated annually in a volunteer appreciation ceremony. This continuity in the returning of volunteers fosters the overall growth of the RCRC Community.

Volunteer roles in leadership, those which involve direct camper-engagement, are open to adults of marginalized genders, while adults of all genders are welcomed and encouraged to join in much of the behind-the-scenes work that makes for a successful camp and showcase experience (food crew, medical, media, and showcase). Volunteers with music experience may volunteer as an instrument instructor, or band coach. Instrument instructors facilitate small group lessons for beginning and intermediate learners, with opportunities to teach vocals, keyboards, guitar, bass, and drums. Likewise, musical experience comes in necessary for the role of band coach. Band coaches support campers in their songwriting process, providing structure, encouraging collaboration, paying attention to, and recording camper ideas. Camp also has roles available to people without musical experience. Camp counselors help to create a safe and supportive environment for campers, and the mental health crew provides support during summer camp; this support extends to all campers as well as staff and volunteers. The mental health crew positions do require prior experience in the fields of mental health or social work; and these services provide vital support for anyone adjusting to the potential challenges involved in camp, especially since, "our 'fun' work at camp is also a vehicle for dismantling systems of oppression on an intra- and inter-personal level."[191]

Rain City Rock Camp hosts several camps throughout the year. The focus of RCRC programming is summer camp; since its founding, RCRC has held at least one session of youth camp.

[191] "Volunteer for a Program | Rain City Rock Camp."

The youth camp programming is a week-long (six days) day camp (9a-5p) for gender marginalized youth between the ages of 8 and 15, with internship opportunities available for campers ages 16-18. During this 6-day-long camp, campers are taught how to play an instrument, with no previous musical knowledge required. Campers are paired with others within their age brackets to form a band, share their newfound skills and ideas, and write an original song that will be performed on the sixth day to a public audience at a local music venue. In addition to musical collaborations, campers participate in collaboration-focused workshops which, not only foster learning how to work with one another, but also how to express themselves creatively.

Historically, RCRC has offered anywhere from one to two "sessions" of camp, using the facilities of an elementary school to transform classrooms into "rock rooms." In addition to the one to two sessions of camp each summer in Seattle, RCRC has offered a week of camp south of Seattle, in Federal Way, with South Sound Rocks! (SSR). South Sound Rocks! reaches youth of a different demographic than the Seattle sessions, given the makeup of South Sound neighborhoods. For these historically Black, Brown, and working-class communities, South Sound Rocks! is a camp in which youth of color share space with one another, where they are not among the few in the group – they are the majority. In addition to these youth camps, RCRC offers a week of camp for experienced campers from the ages of 14 to 17-in the Advanced Music Program (AMP). Off-season camps for adults occur twice per year, in the spring and fall. These camps are a condensed version of the weeklong camp, containing many of the same elements, but packed into three days, Friday through Sunday~~,~~ with the showcase held the evening of the third day. RCRC also holds a year-round teen leadership program called Amplified Teen Voices (ATV), for high school-aged gender marginalized youth-with previous camp experience. As interns, the youth involved in a given year's ATV cohort, continue~~s~~ to develop their peer-to-peer relationships both within the camp community and in the larger Seattle community.

During camp, ATV interns act in a leadership role with younger campers, working alongside adult volunteers. The mentorship relationships within camp are bidirectional. This means that RCRC staff and adult volunteers provide support and mentorship to ATV interns in areas of leadership, a critical role of ATV in providing a crucial voice in how RCRC works with youth, and in its direction as an organization.[192] This is an important and distinctive feature of camp, in not only the development of intergenerational relationships which values and center the insights and experience of youth – but, also, in a society where young people, particularly teens, are regarded as insignificant, at best, or delinquent in the worst-case scenario. Moreover, the intentionality of this structure aids in nurturing the kinship relations that make up so much of the affective space of camp. As this chapter considers explorations in kinship through creative practices, these kinship formations take the shape of both long-term relationships-built over the span of the history of camp, as well as the kinships established in the three-to-six days of camp.

One of the focal points of camp is to get campers, youth especially, on-stage-in a music venue to demystify what could otherwise be an intimidating space. With the exception of in-person camps held during the Covid-19 pandemic with safety measures in place, this resulted in *virtual* collaboration and a *virtual* web-based showcase, defeating the purpose of a main component of camp programming, which is to get campers, whether youth or adults on an actual stage, performing for a public audience. Rain City Rock Camp works with local venues to facilitate this happening. In partnership with local venues, RCRC, like many other camps, works with local venues to host showcases. As explained above, these spaces of leisure are critical for communities, and thus, these partnerships are important, and have a particular impact on youth. In a profit-over-community-driven urban development structure, *youth* are an unmentioned category of the displaced. All-age venues are few and far between,

[192] "Amplified Teen Voices | Rain City Rock Camp," May 27, 2014, https://www.raincityrockcamp.org/programs/youth-programs/amplified-teen-voices/.

with more closing with each passing year. Young people have fewer opportunities for recreation, especially free or low-cost recreational activities. This again, speaks to the loss of third spaces, particularly for young people.

Within the larger structure of the nonprofit landscape, an organizer with Rain City Rock Camp notes, "There aren't many leaders of color in the nonprofit landscape … Most small to midsize organizations are white women led. When you go into a higher budget, large organization, it's white male led." Attending to these structural realities within the nonprofit landscape of Seattle, and nonprofits broadly. RCRC continues its efforts to create inclusive programming, as a multi-racial organization, and organizers are contending with the realities of gentrification, which continue to displace families with whom RCRC shares community.

Each day of RCRC programming follows a theme, with workshops and activities carefully planned to provide both the emotional and logistical support for campers to do the work they need to do, while still, most importantly, having fun. The scaffolding of the day's themes prepares campers for the days ahead. Campers arrive at camp on "Make New Friends Monday," where they are introduced to the concept of camp, camp directors, volunteers, and, of course, one another. By "Try New Things Tuesday," campers have already been introduced to their bands, and have completed their first band rehearsal! Since the second day of camp can feel *more* nerve-wracking than the first, this day's theme gives campers ample space and encouragement to just try. "Wacky Wednesday," a day in which campers dress in whatever they deem wacky (guided with the clarification that the cultures, and styles of others are not wacky), allows campers, and volunteers alike, to blow off steam. With an emphasis on mutual engagement, everybody dresses for "Wacky Wednesday," campers and adult volunteers alike. Adult participation breaks down the hierarchies of authority, challenging what campers may encounter in a typical school setting, or shared spaces with adults. In the traditional settings of school,

for instance, youth may be asked to engage in activities without the participation of authority figures. However, in the space of camp, adults are expected to participate in all camper activities as well. Within this purposeful structure, we see that the willingness to share in things like "Wacky Wednesday" is not just about being silly, but intentionally creates an intergenerational community of mutual respect. It also is the space in which organizers witness campers (and adults) try out new personas, where gender is a part of that exploration.

"Thankful Thursday," which begins the wind-down of the week, encourages campers, through a ritual of gratitude, to begin to reflect on their time at camp. Campers receive a yarn necklace, with a bundle of shorter yarn threads tied loosely to the necklace. During morning assembly, the camp director invites campers to put on their necklaces, explaining that the individual strands of thread are to be pulled from their bundle, and tied onto the necklace of another person while expressing gratitude for them. As the camp director models what this might look like, campers start to get interested, and the whole community of folks is offered the dedicated time within the morning assembly to participate in this ritual. As the ritual continues throughout the day, campers give and receive threads to and from their fellow campers (and instructors) in instrument instruction, their bandmates, and band coaches. The community of volunteers will often take time aside within instrument instruction and band practice to begin the exchange, offering encouragement, by *doing,* for campers to follow suit – which ensures, also, that each camper is recognized.

> I love "Thankful Thursday," because a lot of camp is "Let's be loud! Let's stand in a circle and scream! Let's chant stuff! Let's yell stuff!" And, yet, coexisting with all that loud toughness is this squishy element where you're learning and growing and offering vulnerable bits of yourself as you try new things, as you say something brave in a workshop. And then we're at Thursday, it's almost the end of the week, and we can already start reflecting on why we're

> grateful for specific people around us that week…I love that we, in the midst of all this shouting and singing, we pause to get squishy with each other.[193]

> I really appreciate Thankful Thursday … everyone's participating in this… [it] can be very touching and very moving. You know sometimes, I would get 'thank you's from campers that I wouldn't have expected to … or they would say something that I wouldn't have expected them to say. It's in those moments you realize how much of an impact just these first four days have been. I love that tradition… it's just a piece of building that community… the camp culture of positivity, openness and sharing, and comfort.[194]

"Find My Voice Friday" harkens to a lyric in the camp theme song, "I find my voice," offers another boost of encouragement to campers before their showcase.[195] In the context of the larger mission, camp cultivates the space in which campers feel safe in exploring and expressing who they are, as they want to be seen and heard. While this is a theme for Friday, specifically, the impact of "finding one's own voice" carries through the entire week for youth campers, adult campers and even volunteers. As many of the folks I spoke with about RCRC had at one point in their journey with camp, been involved as an adult camper, their reflections demonstrate that finding one's own voice is not a process important only to youth, but to organizers and volunteers alike.

The structure of each day at camp includes a warmup, instrument instruction, workshops, breaks for snacks, and play, and band practice. Each day, campers experience live music, when camp hosts a series of guest performers to perform a "lunchtime set." This 30-minute set provides an

[193] Stella, Rock Camp Interview, March 14, 2023.
[194] Max, Rock Camp Interview, March 12, 2023.
[195] Fridays were, at one time Forever Friends Friday, where campers exchanged bracelets. Campers receive tiny microphones clipped to their lanyards. Whether bracelets or miniature microphones, Fridays offer a campers a token to take with them,

opportunity for campers to engage directly with musicians. With fifteen minutes dedicated to performance and fifteen minutes dedicated to question and answer, campers are granted the opportunity to demystify aspects of artistry or performance, as well as to get to know the performers. Given the longevity of camp, past campers are often invited to perform in these slots, offering a unique engagement for past and present campers to dialogue from a shared understanding of the camp experience. As with all other leadership roles in camp, performance spots are reserved for women and non-binary artists, with an encouraging invitation extended to artists of color. Artists are paid a stipend for their time, which, in addition to providing material support, serves as an intentional interruption to the status quo of music performance. As a practice, paying a guest artist a stipend for their performance goes against the grain of artist performance.

4.2 Chicxs Rockerxs and Sampaguita Rock Camp

In its organizing of Chicxs Rockerxs in Southeast L.A., the organizing of camp develops in direct response to the needs of the community. This uptake of D-I-Y (do-it-yourself) / D-I-T (do-it-together) that is less about a demand for alternative forms of cultural production, AND more about mutual aid and community care reflecting the uniquely situated motivations of organizers within the Southeast L.A. Chicxs Rockerxs community.

> The mission of Chicxs is to amplify the voices of girls, gender expansive youth and trans youth, through mentorship and social justice, to empower themselves in their communities. And so that is 100% true. As a woman identified musician, I've always been navigating in spaces of punk and ska, those were like my big things, but I never really saw women in those spaces. And even as a woman, I thought, a lot of *machismo* in those spaces where sometimes I would

be playing bass and men would come up to me in and say, ‘You play okay, for a woman,’ …or just different things. So, when I went into Chicxs, I realized that there are so many women musicians, there's so many people interested in music. It just created this space that I didn't feel, or I didn't, didn't get all of those racist ideas, and that's another thing to talk about, all those other sexist ideas. It was literally a utopian space where we're all encouraging to one another. I didn't feel anyone negative towards me. And in fact, they tried things that I never would have, I think in the outside world, because everyone was just so encouraging to just say *taco core*. And that's a mantra that we have, *taco core,* means to just do it, who cares? And that's something that it really resonated with me. I thought for the first time somewhere that I truly was accepted in.

One of the biggest things about southeast Los Angeles: this is a Black and Brown community. It's a low-income community. One thing we realized that there were no musical creative spaces at all for youth. So that's one of the reasons why intentionally we wanted to create it there because all of us are either from southeast L.A. or we're in neighboring communities… So, it's this community of people that are Black and Brown, but also a community where it's very marginalized because it's so small hubs. When we go into bigger music scenes, most of those things are dominated by Anglo white, and very male centric. So, those of us that have been musicians, those of us that are volunteers and staff, have been in those other spaces where we didn't feel that we belonged in those spaces. And there was a sense of outsiders. Because we are connected through music, cultural identity was very important for us. And we didn't see ourselves represented in the people in the music. And, if you've been talking about the music industry, you don't really see Black and Brown folks, especially in marginalized communities

> that are represented in the music industry. And especially if we're talking about women, or queer folks, or just, in general, we don't see that. So, it was very intentional, that we create a space that it intersects all these identities that we have, introduces the *rockerx* identity, but also intersects the culture identity and intersects the class identity, is very important, too. So, creating that was 100%, something where I found people that were dealing with all these identity things in different spaces, to create this space of our own, which is essentially see ourselves.[196]

The organizers of Sampaguita Rock Camp who have created a Filipinx specific camp, also strive to create a space in which campers experience and knowledge is reflected back to them. Within its name, Sampaguita Rock Camp is an homage to the national flower of the Philippines, as well as to Tessy Alfonso, a prolific Pinoy rock singer from the Philippines dubbed the Queen of Rock, with an active music career beginning in the late 1970s and well into the 1990s. Sampaguita Rock Camp held its second showcase in March 2022. As an active organizer in the community, the first cohort of campers had been funneled in through an existing relationship with the Sama Sama Cooperative. Sama Sama is "a collective of Pilipinx, and Pinipinx-American parents, community organizers, artists and educators living in the San Francisco Bay Area."[197] Sama Sama strives to bring together cultural resources within the community to create a fun and engaging space 'to cultivate and understand their unique identity as Pilipinx-Americans."[198] Crafting a camp space that holds cultural relevance is important in Sampaguita Rock Camp organizing. As with other camps, the aesthetics of space are carefully considered in creating the atmosphere of camp. Camp, held in the backyard of a fellow

[196] Julieta, Rock Camp Interview, April 4, 2023.
[197] "Sama Sama Cooperative," Sama Sama Cooperative, accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.samasamacooperative.org.
[198] "Sama Sama Cooperative."

organizer, transformed her backyard into a beautiful space, "set up with woven mats [like] in the Philippines, and this is how the girls would sit outside."

Looking ahead at future curriculum, the organizer I spoke with reflected on the intersections between identities, cultures, and music making, and the potential within camp to explore these things in community.

> Because there are some gender queer kids … how we compiled the group, we really didn't make space … to have discussions or talk about that. I think that would be something we should do more of this year. And also, just the Filipina component of it. How do we make this actually a Filipino space besides just showing Filipino artists, or when the girls come in, they would be blasting some Sampaguita music, an so they would hear the Tagalog language…. One of the artists was one of the founding mamas from Sama Sama who is a culture bearer, and she plays the Kulintang and did a lesson with them that day. …
>
> I was thinking about… how rock bands, or rock music is a colonial thing, where Filipinos are trying to be American, or trying to maybe be alternative, or trying to be *other* what they're told to be. So, I wonder if there's a way to re-Filipinize our culture. In Sama Sama we always talk about this third way of being Filipino and like how you don't have to be American, you don't have to, you know, try to become indigenous in a play in a place where you're not indigenous, you know? But you can, you can still be part of this, like creating this new way to be Filipino. So, I think that also translates over to Sampaguita, too, where we are trying to create something new that hasn't been there before.[199]

[199] Elisa, Rock Camp Interview, March 30, 2023.

Important in the context of organizing in the face of gentrification, Sampaguita Rock Camp builds on established business relationships, and community relationships within the San Francisco Bay Areas. The Starry Plough pub hosts Sampaguita Rock Camp events. Again, these are important relationships in the success of grassroots and nonprofit organizing. Likewise, it is important to recognize the some of the limitations of nonprofit organizing. When I asked about future plans for Sampaguita Rock Camp, and while there are hopes for the continuation of camp there are some reservations about camp growing so large that its direction and management requires significant oversight. With an awareness of the nonprofit structure, in which organizations operate with the oversight of a board of directors, the small scale organizing of camp pulled together and held in an organizer's back yard has its appeal.

4.3 GIRLS ROCK! DOCUMENTARY

In 2007, the Portland Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls was the subject of a documentary film *Girls Rock! The Movie.* When *Girls Rock!* opened in selected cities the following year, with Seattle as one of the host locations, the documentary generated buzz about the burgeoning movement of girls rock camps springing up in the United States. In Seattle, the awareness generated from the film's release garnered much of the public interest and support necessary to launch a camp, since the documentary was screened as a part of a recruitment campaign to connect with the public and establish the necessary volunteer base to get the camp up and running.

The *Girls Rock!* documentary offers an insightful view into a week of camp through the narratives of four campers between the ages of 7 and 17. The documentary recreates the D–I-Y aesthetic of zines, as statistics about girl's self-esteem and stress-related illnesses flash across the screen. Drawing from the musical influence and motivations behind the Portland camp, the film

centers the third-wave feminist movement of Riot Grrrl at the center of the narrative arc for inspiration. Setting the frame of the film, the voice of the narrator tells the story: "Once upon a time, a generation of rock heroines was born, the result of an experiment gone terribly right…" as images of famous Riot Grrrl era musicians flash across the screen, in the form of magazine cut-outs, PJ Harvey, Kelley Deal of the Breeders, Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth, and Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill, pop up as if blooming from their papercut world. "These women challenged the role of girls in music, and society, with their do-it-yourself girl power."[200] As the narrator's voice pauses, the voice of Kathleen Hanna commands sonic space, shouting: "Revolution, girl style, NOW!" When the narrator resumes, she talks of the demise of Riot Grrrl, as images of disembodied legs alongside a recognizable paper cut out of Britney Spears begin to fill the screen. Strategically animated, this segment offers a visual representation of the sexual objectification so rampant in mainstream popular music. Shortly after Britney's rise, she is displaced by a pair of sexually suggestive legs, unidentifiable beyond belonging to a thin white woman. Throughout the documentary film, these animated informative interludes contextualize the mission of rock camps to combat the violence of sexist oppression and does so by crafting a narrative for a selected audience: a generation of most likely white women, who would have come of age in the United States in the 90s – by drawing from the recognizable aesthetic of riot grrrl. Even though there are womxn of color featured in the film in leadership roles and girls of color featured in the documentary itself, the documentary presents whiteness as an unmarked analytic from which to engage with the troubles and triumphs of girlhood.

Girls Rock! generated enthusiasm for rock camp by offering the heartwarming narratives of four young girls' experiences with camp. The documentary, while other girls provide commentary, largely focuses on the following four girls: Palace, a seven-year-old elder sister to a brother with Down

[200] *Girls Rock!*, Documentary, Music (Girls Rock Productions, 2008).

syndrome, who deals with anxiety resulting from parentification; Amelia, eight, whose parents, especially her father, offer encouragement to her creative expression, introducing her to bands like Sonic Youth, which, in reading his affect, appear to be as significant to him as she is curious about the noise of feedback and distortion for which these bands are known; the third girl, Laura, is a fifteen-year-old Korean American girl from Oklahoma. Her parents, an older white couple, share Laura's adoption story, as a transnational, transracial adoptee.[201] Throughout the film, we see Laura's nuanced negotiation with a refusal to "fit in" to normative expectations of her, and the loneliness that stems from the absence of feeling accepted by peers. I cannot help but consider how her experiences with adoption and racialization contribute to the complexity of these negotiations. Misty, the eldest of the four, at seventeen, whose parents are notably absent in the introduction, is introduced as she says, "looking back at the things I've done, I could have died any of those days." As the documentary continues, we learn that Misty is in a substance use recovery program and living in transitional housing. Later when Misty's grandmother is introduced, audiences learn that for the majority of her life, Misty moved between the care of her grandparents, foster care, and group homes. As her grandmother shares about Misty, she speaks with compassion for Misty's struggle and search for belonging.

Not only does the documentary shed light into the world of camp, but we also see through the craft of the narrative, a glimpse into the expectations placed upon girls and adolescents. I cannot help but consider the possibilities hinted at in the documentarian's choice to highlight each of these girls'

[201] I wonder, had it been fully up to Laura's discretion, whether she would have chosen to share this information about adoption. I also recognize that with the presentation of her parents who do not fit the presumed expectations of racial sameness, that her parents may have felt compelled to share this story to make their family formation legible within the framework of normative family structures. Because we do not see the behind-the-scenes discussions of what to include or cut from the film, or the participants' involvement in this process, we cannot know how participants felt about their portrayals in the film. Likewise, it is important to consider that their thoughts and feelings about their representation may change over time. I recognize that for documentary filmmakers, these are complex negotiations that require an attentiveness to power differentials in gathering data and in the production of narrative(s), and in research involving youth, these dynamics are further complicated by the differential power relationships between youth and adults.

family structures. While the documentary shows us the girls' experiences navigating camp—from workshops to band collaboration—in as much as the documentary is about camp, it tells a story of the possibilities for connection as an addition or alternative to, normative family kinship structures. The decision to feature different aspects of each girl's "family life," calling upon family members to contribute to the film's content, signals that rock camps provide more than just a week of instrument instruction and a chance to get up on stage. Rock camp creates space for connection and foster kinship, both long-term and kinships that span the duration of camp. This chapter engages with this possibility.

Concepts of family, kin-making, and belonging surfaced in my interviews with organizers with camp. One organizer with Rain City Rock Camp offered,

> There are so many things that are going on at camp. There is this space of belonging that is created, and there's a lot that goes into that. I think for some of the young people coming to camp, it's the one place where they've been looking for it, and they've found it. And the cool thing about that is that they can take it away with them and take some of the elements of what they've learned about how to create a space of belonging and bring that into friend groups; bring that into their own communities, if they aren't seeing it happen.[202]

While the documentary performs the labor of getting folks excited about camp, offering the springboard from which Rain City Rock Camp could garner the material support needed to get up and running, it soon becomes apparent that the mission of "building self-esteem in girls" and combatting sexism in the music industry, is not the *only* labor that camp (and its volunteers perform).

[202] Noelle, Rock Camp Interview, March 22, 2023.

4. 4 ROCK CAMP ORIGINS & RIOT GRRRL. IT'S A NEW ERA

In 2001, the first Rock and Roll Camp for Girls, developed out of a Women and Gender Studies' major undergraduate senior project. Misty McElroy, a graduate of Portland State University and the founder of Portland Rock 'n' Roll Camp For Girls, described her motivation for establishing the camp: "…having worked in the music industry for nine years… [Misty] drew on her personal experiences to provide an opportunity for as many girls as possible to possess something she never had: a sense of entitlement to her own voice."[203] In 2004, the Willie Mae Rock Camp opened the second rock camp for girls in the United States. By 2005, Girls Rock! Chicago emerged, when "two groups of like-minded women, both seeking to start a Chicago camp, found each other and combined resources."[204] In 2007, Girls Rock! D.C. opened its doors to campers. 2008, saw the founding of the Bay Area Girls Rock Camp. From these camps the Rock Camp movement was underway.

Riot Grrrl punk influenced the founding of the Portland Rock 'n' Roll Camp for girls, and, likewise, is credited with inspiring numerous camps across the country. Riot Grrrl, known for its cultural production in the way of music, D-I-Y creation of alternative media through self-published zines, and in self-referential participation in "third-wave feminism," enacted "a commitment to girl empowerment and self-representation."[205] While Riot Grrrl carries a strong influence in the foundation of rock camp, and maintains its presence in numerous camp scenes to this day, Riot Grrrl as a point of origin does introduce an element of tension given the exclusionary history of the movement. It is necessary to acknowledge the critiques of Riot Grrrl, and its influence in the founding of Girls Rock

[203] "Origins :: Rock Power For Girls," accessed April 16, 2023, http://www.rockpowerforgirls.org/origins.php.
[204] "About - Girls Rock! Chicago," *Girls Rock! Chicago* (blog), accessed April 16, 2023, https://girlsrockchicago.org/about/.
[205] Kevin Dunn and Maysummer Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution': Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing," *Women's Studies* 41, no. 2 (March 2012): 136–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2012.636334.

camps. However, given the powerful and transformative work generated through camp, attending to these critiques requires thoughtful consideration and care.

To acknowledge the critiques of Riot Grrrl in both grassroots organizing, and academic feminist scholarship – is to acknowledge that as a movement, Riot Grrrl, developed a feminism lacking an intersectional framework. Longstanding critiques of the movement are that it was exclusionary to working-class women, and women of color. The co-optation and mainstreaming of Riot Grrrl, contributed to a simplified narrative of Riot Grrrl which further invisibilized the contributions (and critiques) by working-class and women of color organizers who were a part of the riot grrrl movement and parallel punk scenes. The mainstreaming of subcultural and political movements necessitates reconfiguration and narrativization palatable to the largest possible audience. As movements and subcultures are "rebranded" in this way they are defanged and depoliticized. This is not to imply total eradication of political power of these movements. The continued presence of these subcultures and organizing communities, which include a critical uptake of pachucas, queer kin-making, and feminist punk continue to demonstrate an active engagement in subversive, revolutionary politics of resistance. It does, however, demand critical attention to the fact that the repackaging of revolutionary organizing becomes vulnerable to co-optation and depoliticization. Ultimately, a productive critique creates possibilities for new directions of camp (that are already in motion), as subsequent generations of leadership find themselves farther from the Riot Grrrl era, or entering organizing spaces from different points of origin, and with different motivations.

> …in the geographical distribution of GRCA camps, it is important to note the camps' confrontations with patriarchal power that often dictates what expressive means, and thus political power girls and women should have. Such provocations, like the experimental punk aesthetics of bricolage and the riot grrrl sound-collages, are built into the rock camp's …

> 'disruptive discourse' … The programmes for each camp vary depending on regional culture and the organizers' interests.[206]

In this way, "rock music" operates beyond the limits of its genre defined meaning, harkening back to a history of political protest, and challenges state oppression, and operates beyond a U.S. centric narrative.[207] Whereas "punk" takes up the D-I-Y ethos of experimentation and critique of normative social structures.

As the narrative of Riot Grrrl is told, the Riot Grrrl punk movement sought to carve out a space for women in punk scenes. Riot Grrrl subverted masculinist punk scenes which not only "reflected some of larger society's patriarchal tendencies," but produced a social scene that, as misogyny seeped further in, not only excluded women, but also threatened bodily harm.[208] Punk, traced back to scenes in New York City, and a class-conscious UK Punk scene in the 1970s, attests to dynamic evolving scenes often influencing one another. The "original British punk scene," was saturated in "class politics and working-class culture," wherein "punks tended to view established social conventions as hypocritical obfuscations" to the "brutality of real life."[209] The punk scene spread, moving through transnational circuits of cultural production, evolving as it traveled. Punk scenes surfaced in major urban cities, such as Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, as well as in small towns throughout the U.S. In time, punk scenes surfaced in multiple continents.

While punk scenes may have developed with a consciousness of class politics, they fell short in the development of a critical gender and race analysis. As punk scenes grew, they became closed off and unwelcoming to women, especially women of color. Michelle Habell-Pallán's article, "Death to

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[206] Jessica A. Schwartz, "Sí Se Puede!: Chicas Rockeras and Punk Music Education in South East Los Angeles," *Punk & Post-Punk* 5, no. 1 (2016): 45–65, https://doi.org/10.1386/punk.5.1.45_1.
[207] Eric Zolov's *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* is a powerful and fascinating study of the reforming and reshaping of the U.S. import of rock and roll, when rearticulated in the expressions of Mexican youth contributed to a major counterculture rebellion, *La Onda,* in the wake of the 1968 student movement.
[208] Dunn and Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution,'" 139.
[209] Dunn and Farnsworth, 137.

Racism and Punk Revisionism" argues for greater attention to how women of color influenced punk scenes, focusing specifically on Chicanas as cultural producers and agents of change. Habell-Pallán, writing about Chicana punk artist, Alice Bag, demonstrates how the embodiments of cultural history, knowledge, and experience manifest on stage. Attentive to the critical contributions of women of color in Punk, Habell-Pallán argues for the possibility of a more sophisticated narrative of punk. She writes,

> By examining Alice Bag's sound and gestures, we can begin to reconstruct a history …. [to show] how much of the scene's richness was due to the creativity and generative difference of its racialized subjects. Alice Bag's performance style provides evidence of a strong Mexican influence in Hollywood punk, [and] yields a more nuanced picture of the scene.[210]

Bag, in recent years, has achieved the overdue recognition as the predecessor to Riot Grrrl. Habell-Pallán's attentiveness to Bag's claims to shaping of sonic and physical space, not only reveal the cultural influences of ranchera music—particularly in what Habell-Pallán calls her "piercing high-pitched punk rock *grito,*" but also the embodied expression of grief, rage, and frustration that defies normative expectations of Mexican American femininity. Habell-Pallán writes, "Often accused of being too aggressive on stage, [Bag] performed in pink minidresses and severe make up," creating a signature look of "dramatic cat eye chola makeup."[211] Habell-Pallán further articulates the transmutation of embodied knowledge and experience into corporeal expression as she writes,

> Alice locates her stage rage in the anger and helplessness she felt witnessing domestic abuse within her family. However, when she speaks about her family, her words acknowledge ambiguity … Alice's complex emotions were fully released in performance. If she felt helpless to protect the ones she loved, in the persona of Alice Bag she controlled the stage … Bag

[210] Michelle Habell-Pallán, "Death to Racism and Punk Rock Revisionism," *Pop: When the World Falls Apart: Music in the Shadow of Doubt*, 2012, 249–50.
[211] Habell-Pallán, 254; Habell-Pallán, *Loca Motion*, 158.

> recalls … 'All other violence that I'd stuff down inside me for years came screaming out … all the anger I felt towards people who had treated me like an idiot as a young girl because I was the daughter of Mexican parents and spoke broken English, all the times I'd been picked on by my peers because I was overweight and wore glasses, all the important rage that I had towards my father for beating my mother just exploded.'[212]

If Riot Grrrl encompassed the expression of righteous rage, then Bag indeed laid the foundation. In the recent attention given to Bag in the chronology of punk history, music reporter, Isabela Raygosa echoes Habell-Pallán stating, "Alice Bag was the original Riot Grrrl, way before Courtney Love or Kathleen Hannah."[213] Habell-Pallán's curatorial practice, situating Bag in the chronology of punk history, enables recognition of Bag as foreshadowing the Riot Grrrl movement with the embodied rage of Bag's punk rock *grito*, ringing out in the face of race, class, and gender violence. The reverberations of Bag's *grito* initiate a collapse of temporality, eliciting an affective resonance that spans generations.

The term "Riot Grrrl" developed, in part, within a written exchange between Bratmobile bandmates, Jen Smith and Allison Wolfe. In their correspondence, writing in reference to an uprising that erupted in the Washington D.C. neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, Smith called for a girl riot.[214] Residents of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood took to the streets in response to an officer-involved shooting following a Cinco de Mayo street celebration. Daniel Enrique Gomez, a resident of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and an immigrant from El Salvador, was paralyzed when he was shot in the chest by rookie officer Angela Jewell. Reflecting a long history of police brutality toward the predominantly Spanish-speaking immigrant community of Mount Pleasant, violence erupted as

[212] Habell-Pallán, "Death to Racism and Punk Rock Revisionism," 253.
[213] Latino USA, "Alice Bag: The Chicana Punk Who Rioted Before Riot Grrrl," NPR, accessed June 9, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2017/10/20/557627770/alice-bag-the-chicana-punk-who-rioted-before-riot-grrrl.
[214] The exact language of the letter is unknown, however, it remains that this informed the name of the movement.

"rumors swept through the community that police had shot and killed a handcuffed man."[215] While police contended that Gomez had one hand free, as he was shot while in the *process* of being handcuffed, it is of little consequence in the wake of the violence of an oppressive, weaponized police force. The violence of May 5th, "was a reflection of deeper tensions between the Hispanic community and police."[216] Residents within the community cited constant profiling and harassment, as well as failures of the police to use the most basic Spanish-language skills to engage with the community. Gomez was arrested and shot without Spanish-speaking officers present.[217] A Washington Post article published on May 6 reports that due to the undocumented status of many residents of the community,

> …Many … fear arrest and possible deportation. 'We are oppressed by the police', said Moses Ortiz … If you look Spanish or speak Spanish, they're suspicious of you.' … white people who go to a park with a soccer ball and a cooler of beer aren't' bothered, but Hispanics 'get in trouble' for the same behavior because 'police know they won't complain or and won't cause any trouble … Another said that if he had known how life would be here, he would not have left his native El Salvador. 'I never imagined how it would be here. If I had unknown I was going to suffer as I have suffered, I wouldn't have come … the discrimination is constant, the questions 'Are you legal? Do you speak the language? Do you have your documents? And now, this violence … I regret coming here. If you are going to die, it's better to die in your own country rather than outside.'

Members of the Mount Pleasant community spoke to reporters, following the riots. In an unidentified news segment, found by searching "Washington D.C. Riot, 1991" an unidentified man

[215] Ruben Castaneda and Nell Henderson, "Simmering Tension Between Police, Hispanics Fed Clash," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, May 6, 1991.
[216] Castaneda and Henderson.

interviewed speaks on the chronic neglect of their community by city government. “We have needs. We have need of housing, we have need of jobs, we need training, and for many years, we are requesting that. Where is that?”[218]

Police brutality had made national news only months earlier in Los Angeles California, with the videotape of four officers beating Rodney King. The video recording circulated throughout the U.S., accompanied by a transcript of police communications later that evening in which officers joked during commentary on the beating, laced with racial slurs. Each of these accounts of police brutality went to trial. The Gomez trial ended in a mistrial, whereas in the Rodney King trial, officers were acquitted. The acquittal of the officers involved spurred waves of protest in streets of L.A., the following year, between April 28 and May 4, 1992.

In researching the riot referenced in the letters exchanged between Smith and Wolfe, the imprecise mention of the “riot” made it appear as though there a greater geographic distance between Smith and the vaguely referenced uprising. With more attention paid to the details of who came up with the spelling of Grrrl, Smith’s reference to the riot read as an abstraction, as though awareness of the uprising was mediated and distanced in the way that national news segments produce the 30-second clips of civil unrest occurring “elsewhere.” I was quite surprised to find that this riot that garnered national attention had not occurred in a far off “elsewhere” but in the *same city* that was the originating location of the Riot Grrrl movement.

I would like to note the repetition of erasures, from the obscure reference to a riot as part of the narrative of Riot Grrrl origins, to the unidentified video segment, featuring an unidentified man attesting to the needs of the community. The critique of Riot Grrrl as inaccessible to, or invalidating of, the experiences of women of color, it can be understood in this example. The co-optation of the

[218] *The 1991 Washington, D.C. Riot (May 5, 1991)*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59ozbi9eib8.

language of a riot, in reference to the grief and rage as expressed in response to state sanctioned racial violence, enacts erasure. For the Latino immigrant community of Mount Pleasant, their riot embodied the pent-up response to state sanctioned racial violence of police brutality, and social death governmental neglect. These forms of violence demand a radical politics of care, and care that operates in a true D-I-Y ethos where D-I-Y attends to the systemic neglect and denial of material and social resources. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, these are the sites from which politicized identities and subversive subcultures of resistance develop. It appears, then, that as Riot Grrrl was co-opted by the mainstream, its political relevance simplified in a rebranding from Riot Grrrl to "girl-power," so, too, was the public outcry following the shooting of Daniel Enrique Gomez.

As Riot Grrrl has been recognized as a major influencer to rock camps, it is with the acknowledgement that the lack of a race and class analysis contributed to the downfall of the Riot Grrrl movement. Over thirty years removed after Riot Grrrl, rather than drawn to camp through Riot Grrrl, folks may first learn of Riot Grrrl through rock camps. This shift, therefore, creates the possibility to address the limitations and critiques of the movement, and the relationship of rock camps to it. An anti-racist, anti-oppression framework has been incorporated into the curriculum of Rain City Rock Camp, as well as in the screening process and training sessions for camp volunteers. Rain City Rock Camp organizers have interrogated the organization and its own position within the Seattle community of nonprofits, founded as a predominantly white-led organization. Rain City Rock Camp is not alone in the work of interrogating the limitations of its origins. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance implemented an anti-racist training seminar as a part of its annual conference and has continued in anti-racist strategizing in its curriculum development. The decision of the GRCA to focus on anti-racism in their organizing, reflects the acknowledgement and interrogation of systemic racism. This is especially important in relation to the early Rock Camp movement, and nonprofits generally, as predominately

led by white women. Given the role of the GRCA to provide resources and support for camps, that anti-racist training remains a primary focus and has been implemented in its resource sharing, indicates that the need for anti-racist training had been expressed across the coalition of camps.

> One year… we [RCRC organizers] went to the Girls Rock Camp Alliance Conference… This was the beginning of a more mainstream awareness of institutional systemic racism, versus individual racism, and what allyship really means - some of the language we use now, we learned there. We were really thoughtful and intentional about bringing that back to camp and thinking about our programs in a different way and thinking about our marketing in a different way, thinking about messaging and our community building in a different way. Then actually seeing what workshops around these topics were age appropriate to do so we started doing workshops on anti-racism, on allyship, and did that in the adult programs too. … it was transformational … the most important part of the work is being as inclusive and as safe and true to the communities we serve with … It was a catalyst to be … more thoughtful and more intentional… and that's another way of creating a stronger tie as individuals, that's a different type of shift in a person to go through that experience with others and to be able to be changed together.[219]

In May of 2023 I attended the annual GRCA conference, held virtually as a safety measure considering the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In one of the workshops, facilitators encouraged organizers to come to the GRCA with the transitions they encounter in their respective camps. Currently, many camps are in the process of changing the name of their camps and camp programing, to better reflect gender inclusivity. To emphasize the supportive role of the GRCA, the workshop lead offered encouragement by reminding those of us in attendance that the transitions taking place within

[219] Ondine, Rock Camp Interview, March 18, 2023.

individual organizations are changes that many other camps have worked through or are currently working through. When the facilitator offered this encouragement to the group of organizers, I thought of the GRCA initiated anti-racist training discussed in interviews. It is important to acknowledge, of course, that to continue organizing from the place of an intersectional feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression framework, the work is always in process.

4.5 Material and Affective Culture of Camp

In the days leading up to camp, Rain City Rock Camp campers, as well as program volunteers, receive a welcome packet with a tour guide to keep with them through each camp session. These spiral bound booklets are customized to the role of campers and volunteers, meaning that while some pages in the tour guide are shared across every booklet, the tour guides feature specific pages dedicated to specific instruments (in the case of campers), and guidelines for volunteers. Camp tour guides are not only a valuable resource for campers, but they also work as an archive community of relationships. Toward the front of the tour guide is the schedule for the duration of camp. On these first pages of the camper tour guide, the pages are filled with the photos and bios of the folks with whom campers engage. Tour guides include short bios of RCRC staff, workshop facilitators and musical artists who will perform for camp. These bios, especially the snapshots of performing artists, offer documentation of bands and their performances in a moment of history. Since all the guest artists are women and gender-marginalized folks, it just feels important that their presence is recorded. Likewise, workshop information reveals the network of community relationships established between organizers and friends sharing in the mission of camp, as it also reveals the values important to camp. Workshops include necessary structural components, meaning workshops designed to facilitate self-awareness in

communication, or to introduce the basic components of a song and songwriting practice; they also address identity, self-love, and community care. Following the tour guide booklets' bios, are spaces to write out band norms and record notes from their music instruction periods. Toward the middle of the tour guides, women and nonbinary artists are highlighted in snapshots, bios, and QR codes linking campers directly to their music. The last of the interactive pages within the tour guides contain the space for workshop notes. The final pages of the tour guides contain testimonials from former campers and volunteers, as they reflect on the ways camp impacted their lives, and why they continue to stay involved. Within these testimonials, former campers often mention the sense of family, kinship and/or community that camp has created.

The artifact of the tour guide, like the banner made up of band logos, offers something tangible, a container for a moment in time – a material object that holds not only the memory of a time and place, but also the *feeling* of it. These objects represent the processes developed with the band, a space for notes from the workshops, and practice notes. For instructors, tour guides offer volunteer resources, which preserve camp's directions and focus at the time of their printing, with tips and resources for educators and band coaches. Just as campers have space to record their processes, the tour guides for volunteers offer space for their reflection, and space to begin to plan and respond to any issues that may have arisen during camp. Taken together, or across the years, these objects tell the story of the organization and the story of people who participated in it. The fact that the tour guides are provided by camp moves beyond the practicality of keeping campers, especially youth, on task, or supporting campers in the logistics of knowing what to do, what campers have been working on, and what is coming up. It also moves beyond the presumption that all campers would have the material resources to bring *to* camp, though this is certainly an important consideration in terms of accessibility. While the tour guide serves those purposes, it also works to foster the idea that womxn, girls, gender-

marginalized communities, queer communities, and communities of color can participate in joyful leisure, and take up space, and that their camp experiences are worthy of being remembered and worthy of documentation. The tour guides supplied are visual signifiers of camp. As a distinctive camp object, they are more likely to be preserved than an empty notebook that could otherwise easily get lost in the shuffle.

The significance of these material objects showed through in my interviews with organizers of Rain City Rock Camp. In developing the questions that I asked participants in this study; I included the invitation to bring an object with them that reminded them of camp. These items ranged from a collection of "Thankful Thursday" necklaces, show posters, lanyards, and a binder of memorabilia, including news clippings, letters, and band photos from camp. It became clear in the interviews that for the organizers, many of whom at one point had attended camp in one of the Adult Rock Camp sessions, these artifacts hold tremendous significance. The preservation of these objects by organizers speaks to the importance of preserving local histories. As many who spoke of camp reported that camp changes lives, the tour guides, objects, and memorabilia preserved by camp organizers are the documentation of the powerful impact camp has on the lives of those involved.

Without a doubt, camp is a meaningful space for the people involved. Camp, for organizers and campers alike, gives way to self-actualization. Self-actualization is made possible, however, as a result of the intentional creation of a camp environment, ensured by organizers and volunteers. The emphasis of camp is not only about teaching campers new skills, or teaching an instrument, it is also about accepting folks as they are, with an openness to who they may become, and what they may be working through. In the community of camp, therefore, there exists an awareness that these processes can be very messy. The cultivation of this environment for youth campers inevitably carries over into the lives of adult organizers, as they too are welcomed and supported as they learn, not only how to

support campers in their processes of collaboration, community formation, and self-exploration; but how to be supported themselves, in their own processes of self-exploration and community building. As commentary on the impact RCRC organizing has had on their own lives, participants shared the following:

> Being in … that safe space where there's no expectations on who you should be, or what you should look like... it was just really about a safe space to express yourself… it just brought me a lot of empowerment; it brought me a lot of— it gave me what I think I didn't get as a kid. … and I wasn't expecting that, necessarily…. I wasn't expecting it to affect *me* the way that I was hoping that it would affect campers, you know? So, I think being a volunteer in the organization is, I think, just as pivotal and just as life changing as it is to be camper.[220]

> To this day, I don't bury my voice at work, especially in the last few years, but when as before, I'd be like, Oh, I can sit on that I can like, deal with that in the background after that meeting after that incident – in essence, I can I can make it work, I can fit in, I can meld and mold. And you know, now I'm like, 'No, I have a voice it is valid. I have points to make.' And I'm also going to call out inequities. Right? I'm not going to sit back and code switch…to please other people, because they're not used to hearing me in that way… Camp helped me do that. Where's your voice? Where's that inner voice inside? … [Camp] helped me, now. … providing me the opportunity to be like, 'Okay, reflect, don't be afraid to hear your own voice … because the others need to hear your voice, too. You need to be able to represent yourself and represent your constituent groups [to others].[221]

[220] Max, Rock Camp Interview.
[221] Dinah, Rock Camp Interview, March 31, 2023.

> There are a lot of aspects of camp culture that I carry into my everyday life… First and foremost, "You rock!' instead of apologizing for something that doesn't warrant an apology… I have over time felt less and less the need to shrink myself…or feel like I'm imposing when I ask for what I need … I think if there wasn't the Rock Camp support kind of secretly hugging me invisibly as I walked through my life, I wouldn't be reminded [of that support] … I might lose it.[222]

These reflections on the impact of camp in the lives of organizers reveal the ways in which the relationships of mentorship are multi-directional, and that in the commitment to fostering a community of support and encouragement for youth, organizers may be replenished in the environment they strive to create.

As an important component of rock camp, the creation of the physical camp space occurs across all camp events, regardless of their location. This contributes to an affective resonance in camp spaces; it *feels* like camp. There *is* an energy about camp. A feeling that buzzes the moment doors open. This is created, in part, by the ways in which the artifacts of camp, from banners to wall tapestries and string lights hung from the ceiling, transform a school into an alternative environment; into a third space. Likewise, the energy of rock camp is fueled by the participation of returning campers and volunteers. They bring the energy of having witnessed the "magic" of camp in previous years, and this generates excitement. The stories shared about camp were spoken in the register of affect. As participants reflected on their experiences with camp, they spoke using terms of "magic," "powerful," "transformative," and "life-changing." As narrators spoke of what makes camp magical and life changing it became clear that it is in the creation of space for community. Specifically in the

[222] Stella, Rock Camp Interview.

space created for youth-empowerment, in which youth are welcomed and free to express themselves as they are, and moreover, in their expressions, youth are responded to in meaningful ways. Camp spaces subvert normative expectations of gender, sexuality, intergenerational relationships, and hierarchies of age, in the enactment of claiming physical space, and in the transformation of these spaces into sites for exploration, collaboration, and joy.

When Rain City Rock Camp holds showcases with venues in Seattle and Tacoma, organizers and volunteers arrive early to not only set up gear but to transform the physical space to reflect the atmosphere of camp. A Rain City Rock Camp banner is displayed prominently at the stage. The banner is displayed at the front of the stage or hung in full view at the back of the stage as a backdrop for performers. The stage, set up with gear provided by camp, will feature a sparkly red drum kit with the Rain City Rock Camp umbrella logo emblazoned on the kick drum, and among the most meaningful transformations of the space, the banners band logos from previous years of camp adorn the room. These banners are made up of square cut-outs from campers' collaborative band logo design and screen-printing workshop. In these workshops, campers work together to create a logo for their bands, to screen print on shirts for themselves and their families. An additional square of fabric is screen-printed so that it may be crafted into a new banner reflective of the year's programming. These are not only signifiers of the camp atmosphere, but also operate to actively call in a history of RCRC. The banners are an ever-growing archive of the moments that transpired at camp. Speaking of the importance of the banners,

> We create a pennant kind of flag… the flags are tied up by year. And so, you have a collection of those flags. So, we have collections going back several years now, of all of these bands, logos, that really capture, not just that moment, but again, that the spirit of creation … they are memorialized. Because these flags come with us in any kind of public event that we go to, they

> show, again, the point of creating a band … they don't have to be around forever; they could have just been that moment. But what it does, is that moment of, that time; [that] work; that grouping at that time in [the camper's] life. …They have that experience, and it is there. … to show them, for everybody, I think it is beautiful, it's powerful. It shows the impact again, that like things don't have to be forever to be impactful. … it is one of the most beautiful artifacts of our culture. [223]

These artifacts offer reminders of the memories carried through camp, and that the memories deserve acknowledgement and recognition. These artifacts signify the kinship built across the years of camp and through band formations. Importantly, because of the ways in which camp organizers transform physical and affective space by the people who inhabit it, subverting masculinist, heteronormative spatial dominance that prescribes who may occupy public space. "When you go to a showcase, it's what you see. It's who you see. You often see a large audience of girls, women, trans and non-binary people … often you may not see large gatherings of people [of these communities] in music venues."[224] As in previous chapters, the intentional claiming of space takes on social and political meaning. A component of Rain City Rock Camp organizing prioritizes intentional claiming of public space by gender marginalized folks. Claimed for expressed purpose of joy, the embodiment of joy is political. These claims to space draw back to the claims to physical space enacted by youth and women of color and queer women of prior generations. This, then, gestures toward an intergenerational kinship between camp communities, queer youth, and queer and women of color, not only emerging in the relationships built within camp, but across the time, spanning through time, blurring the line between the living and the dead.

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[223] Clara, Rock Camp Interview, March 19, 2023.

Clara.

This is the praxis of preserving and documenting moments in the histories of feminist organizing, even if at the hyper local level of a one organization's work. These are the engagements in the struggle against erasure, in asserting the value in the preservation of the moments and experiences within these communities, in spite of, or even because of, their ephemerality. The artifacts of previous years of camp, and the transformation of physical and affective space, enact a politics of resistance.

An organizer with Chicxs Rockerxs shared similar sentiment to the space of camp, speaking to the radical potential of camp organizing, and the continued commitment to create spaces for community and spaces for camp.

> Rock Camp has honestly changed my life. And, I think it has changed many others. That's why people want to come back. … It's an ongoing thing. In this little space, it's a very hopeful space. But I think it brings everyone that energy that they need to recollect themselves; to see this is the fight we're doing. We're very intentional about having a social justice component. And, I think that a lot of our members are sometimes burned out in this fight for social justice, but being in camp kind of restores your energy, even with adults. It benefits the campers and adults at the same time. We're pushing forward for creating positive change. … and I miss camp, now. We have 'Rock Camp Blues,' [an expression that denotes missing camp] But, camp is coming again![225]

At the same time, there is recognition that the space of camp, constructed as radical opposition to the norm, can make it difficult for campers in their return to life outside of camp. An organizer shared,

> I think it would have been cool if there were the capacity to look at how to support people in the transition out of this sphere and understand the impact of that loss. How it can be almost

[225] Julieta, Rock Camp Interview.

> like there's harm in the loss of the sphere… the camp space, and knowing … it's not even just the physical space, but knowing that it exists, and that you have this community, these friends and these allies who are … with you in this space, in universal space … is something that our young campers could take with them, Then with belonging there's this opportunity for healing and I think that depends on the age range of how much that is needed – I think we saw that a bit more in the adult spaces, but also with young people, too. [226]

4.6 Song as Testimonio & Making Kin

As a characteristic of white supremacist culture, especially embedded within capitalism, perfectionism saturates much of our daily lives. Capitalism's demand that labor must be productive carries the implicit expectation that, in order to justify leisure activities (non-productive time) one must demonstrate their worthiness to participate in said activity – that one must be good enough at the hobby or demonstrate measurable improvement in order to justify time spent in non-productive recreation. This leaves little room for participation in hobbies simply for the sake of the pleasure, joy, and connectivity they bring. In late-stage capitalism, the pressure to engage in productive labor manifests in a side hustle culture – carrying within it, not only the expectation that one must be good at their creative pursuits to justify their participation in them, but further to monetize them. Understandably, this is increasingly necessary given housing costs and economic precarity. The culture that is cultivated at camp is one carving out space for creativity for its own sake. With an emphasis on the experience of collaboration in community, self-exploration within community, and building environments of joyful empowerment, camp communities emphasize critical-making communities.

[226] Noelle, Rock Camp Interview.

Critical-making communities engage intentionally in activities which provide "the opportunity to reflect on and intervene in systems of power and as expressions of civic responsibility… offer a space (and the means) … to question national identity, reflect on one's own position in society, and advance social change.[227]" Cultivated in spaces of mutual trust and responsibility between organizers, campers, and volunteers, to intentionally disavow perfectionism for the sake of fun and creative expression is revolutionary. Volunteers indeed shape the camp experience, and with this awareness, Chicxs Rockerxs offers a mini camp for volunteers as part of the volunteer orientation. An organizer from Chicxs explained,

> We do a mini camp for them, where we have them do the fun activities that campers do… we do a scream circle, where, yeah, we have people in a circle just scream as loud as they can. We do songs with them. I think that's cool because they get to experience what the campers experience, even if it's only for a day. We teach them … these campers going to be going in [and] some of them don't have experience with camp; they might be nervous… volunteers as well, they come in nervous. So, we show them [in] the volunteer orientation, what these campers are going to go through and how [if] they're feeling nervous as volunteers, imagine what the campers are feeling … you want to tell our volunteers to participate in activities, and to promote it, not being afraid to try new things. We teach that to the volunteers because sometimes if the volunteers themselves are timid, or they're not excited about things, it shows the campers that, and [the campers] get nervous. … it's cute because sometimes [campers] remember the volunteers, and they get excited to see them, too. That always warms my heart because of the fact that volunteers can make an impact with youth. It's just really nice to see

[227] Matt Ratto et al., *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media* (Cambridge, UNITED STATES: MIT Press, 2014), 334, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/washington/detail.action?docID=3339737.

> that they get excited to recognize someone, and when they recognize that person, they know they are going to be safe. They are going to have a good time. [228]

The intentional disavowal of perfectionism creates room to flail, to try, and to experience pleasure and joy.[229] Further, because perfectionism stifles creativity and thus stifles expression, perfectionism effectively silences the story sharing that could happen otherwise. The freedom to *try*, without the expectation of perfection, enables the *content* of expression to make its way through, enabling both the life-affirming process of sharing stories, and bearing witness to them. Reflecting on the importance of creative expression, and in particular the power of collective songwriting, Martha González, offers:

> A song as a sonic and literary manifestation is life's soundscape, a unique cathartic memento, and a powerful political tool. Without question, a song is also an important historical text. A person's *testimonio*, ("testimony"), life views, triumphs, aphorisms, and struggles … expressed in song lyrics. In this way song lyrics can be viewed as knowledge and theory. Multiplied by community, they can be a powerful exercise in consensus and collective knowledge production … poetry and/or creative expression is *not* a luxury…[230]

To participate in these spaces, to occupy these spheres with campers and camp events, is to bear witness to these stories. In as much as the campers' tour guides, program flyers, banner flags, and handmade screen-print t-shirts contain the stories of camp, the stories shared within the space of camp, emerging within workshop discussions, band collaboration, song lyrics, and more, tell the stories of the social and political moment. As demonstrated in the memories and artifacts of pachucas, and queer

[228] Emilio, Rock Camp Interview, April 4, 2023.
[229] When I gave a colloquium among faculty and peers in the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department, during the Q&A one of my colleagues commented that camp creates a space where it's okay to be terrible at things, to fumble, and to fail. Incidentally, ARC programming had just begun for that weekend. One of the bands' chosen name was *Room to Flail*
[230] Gonzalez, "'Mixing' in the Kitchen: Entre Mujeres ('Among Women') Translocal Musical Dialogues."

kin-making of previous generations, these resiliency practices, of sharing stories and bearing witness to them, are life-giving.

In 2022, I volunteered for South Sound Rocks! A camper showed up on the final day of camp, the Friday before the showcase, wearing a freshly screen-printed band t-shirt created the day before. A camper had taken a red ink pen and had written in capital letters across their sleeves: TRANS RIGHTS. The following day at the showcase, the camp director took the stage wearing their own camp t-shirt, and having followed the lead of the camper, they had written, in red ink TRANS RIGHTS on the sleeves of their shirt. It is within these gestures of recognition, validation, and care, as directed and guided by youth that create this culture of empowerment in camp. In 2023, in the wake of devastating blows to access legal to reproductive justice, terrifying anti-trans bills, and attacks on education these affirmations are lifesaving.

As I conducted interviews with organizers, at a few moments across a few different interviews, I noticed some hesitation in response to the limits of the language of the nonprofit sector, particularly around the language of "service." Understandably, this evoked some discomfort, as "serving" denotes a transactional exchange reflective of a disproportionate power relationship. I interpreted this discomfort to reflect both the limits of the available language in nonprofit community work, as well as reflexive awareness of the relationship between camp and its surrounding community. Camp and its programming aim to *meet the needs of youth* and do so by following the lead of youth in camp and the community. Camp taking its leadership cues from youth subverts the hierarchical power dynamic between youth and adults. Moreover, while the language of "service" operates in the nonprofit sector, Camp spaces place an emphasis on the relational meaning making, and community building aspects of *engagement* with the public. Yes, camp offers services, however, in equal measure, involvement with camp emphasizes community responsibility through leadership opportunities. Camps like RCRC and

Chicxs have been around long enough for campers to have "grown up" in camp; now presented with opportunities to assume different roles within the organizing community.[231] When Emilio, an organizer from Chicxs learned about this project, he reached out to me and asked if I would be interested in talking to an organizer who had once been a camper at Chicxs. He offered a unique perspective on the impact of camp. He shared,

> I was probably fourteen, and I remember when I joined it was – mainly we catered [to] only girls; for SELA (Southeast Los Angeles) youth. At the time I was questioning my gender, but I remember going to camp… it was the first time I got to explore my gender, because even though it was catered for girls, a lot of people, especially the volunteers, were gender non-conforming. That's what made me connect a lot to Chicxs, and why I was so interested to be more involved. … and, because I grew up with music… I've been playing guitar for as long as I can remember… Camp gave me a way to use my skills., not just on my own but working with others…. It was something I really didn't have an opportunity to my own. I think that is what made people love to come, because it's not really something you see every day, or something you can do with the resources in SELA.[232]

As Emilio continued, he spoke of the supportive mentorship received at camp, extending skill development beyond music making, to organizational leadership and community outreach.

> Chicxs introduced Sobrinxs, kind of like an internship opportunity, And I worked with the board members at the time, they focused on teaching us how to plan or organize a community event, how do you fundraise for camp since we are a nonprofit.[233]

[231] In May of 2023, Rain City Rock Camp hired for the role of co-program manager. A camper who had attended *the first* RCRC camp applied for the position. I was included in a group thread announcing that the former camper had been offered, and accepted the position, among the emojis expressing elation and tears of joy, one organizer wrote, "The future of camp is NOW!"
[232] Emilio, Rock Camp Interview.
[233] Emilio.

I want to note here the use of the language of kinship in this passage, which demonstrates the intentional kin-making practices running throughout the multiple camp communities. Tia (aunt) and Tio (uncle) are terms of respect offered to elders, without the requirement of blood relation. Sobrinx, a gender-inclusive term for niece or nephew reflects a relationship of mentorship while actively calling on the language of family. I would like to note, here also, that upon contacting organizers at Chicxs, I mentioned that I am involved with Rain City Rock Camp in Seattle. I sent my inquiry over email, with a boost of support from my Co-chair Dr. Michelle Habell-Pallán who has an established relationship with Chicxs Rockerxs as well. I received a reply soon after, in an email that informed me of the Chicxs Rockerxs consensus-based decision-making process. This reply included the closing line: *We really appreciate that you are part of the rock camp family and are already familiar with what we're doing.*[234] These are the kinships that move through space and time, moving across digital transmission to offer recognition, inclusion, and – a calling in of kinship in the familial language of belonging.

These intentional kinship formations are demonstrated further, when I asked about the kind of support provided by the mentors at camp, [interview] continued:

> They are, like, family to me now. They definitely created a safe space for me. It wasn't about making money; it wasn't about them doing all the work. I definitely took on, finding a location [for the event that we were planning], thinking about how we want to promote the event. And they supported me through. They gave me the resources that I needed to do that. They told me about people to contact. They also helped – because I don't have a car and I don't drive so sometimes, to find locations, I can't be the one to do that. But, they supported me and my other Sobrinx with my ideas. They never turned down anything that was 'out there.' They wanted me

[234] Chicxs Rockerxs SELA, "Re: Research Involvement / Interview Request," March 14, 2023.

> to be creative. And just to use the resources, we have to create something that centered community and bringing people together. That definitely made me learn how to be a leader on my own, but also how to use the resources I have. And I use *them* as a resource, too. Their support encouraged me to continue being a Sobrinx – them not dismissing me as just someone lower than them– they even said themselves, 'the title of Sobrinx doesn't mean you are not an [official] organizer of Chicxs, we're a team together.'[235]

When Emilio transitioned from Sobrinx into the role of Comadre, (another term of kinship and closeness, Chicxs uses for adult organizers), Emilio was reminded, that in transitioning to Comadre, doing so did not invalidate his role as an organizer in Chicxs, when he was a Sobrinx. Instead he was reassured, "We're all Chicxs. We're trying to do the same thing, which is to create Camp, and create a space for community." [236] As our conversation concluded, I asked Emilio of there was anything more he would like to share. Emilio offered, "Camp is really important… It definitely changed my life, and has changed other campers as well … the organizers, all of them have become like family to me … I can't put into words how camp changed my life. It's just *important.* I hope it continues forever."[237]

In *Making Kin Not Population* Adele Clarke offers, "We need to generate new kin inventions, new concepts and practices for making kith and kindred, as well as attending to and attuning to how people and peoples already make and value other than biogenetic kin in a non-imperialist way… valuing 'belonging' as much as – or perhaps more than – 'blood relation.'"[238] These practices are evident above.

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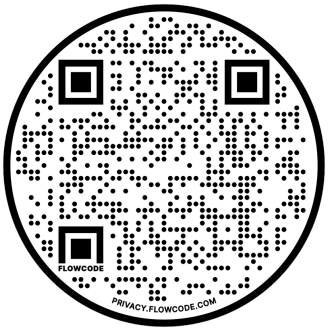
[235] Emilio, Rock Camp Interview.
[236] Emilio.
[237] Emilio.
[238] Adele E. Clarke and Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Making Kin Not Population*, Paradigm (Chicago, Ill.) ; 56 (Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018), 33.

In addition to the kinship practices occurring across time, I turn also to band formations as spaces of kinship. To think about this band as a kinship formation is to consider the ways in which camp, borrows from the structures of kin-making in the assignment of roles among bands. While bands maintain agency in how they collaborate, there still are certain expectations of roles. Bands, then, become sites in which the typical roles campers hold in their families and among their peers may be reasserted, or even challenged. Navigating these new roles creates new potentials for thinking through relationality. In 2010, a Rain City Rock Camp band, *Buzzing Silence*, demonstrates how band formations navigate through disruption and resolution. As the camp, each band member had a sense of their roles and expectations, but the band was thrown into a state of flux when a band member dropped out before the showcase. Because this was only the second year of programming for Rain City Rock Camp, organizers had not yet encountered the scenario of a camper dropping out. As a first-time occurrence, it contributed to considerable anxiety on the part of organizers, in their concerns over how the remaining band members would participate in (and experience) the showcase. Organizers provided campers with various options for how to proceed, ultimately supporting the band to proceed in whatever felt best for them. The band decided to still take part in the showcase, presumably performing their song as an instrumental piece. As the band took the stage, after a gentle intro to the song, the drummer holding a simple, steady beat, began to sing. By the second chorus, her bandmates joined in. With their kinship structure disrupted, the remaining members of the band demonstrated the ways in which disruption may lead to new possibilities. Not only did this experience reshape the kinship structure of the band, but it also significantly impacted organizers, creating a lasting memory that continues to inform organizers approaches to camp, which is to support youth, ensure their agency, and let them lead the way.



Sometimes Love is Just a Game - Spotify

Sometimes Love is Just a Game
- *Buzzing Silence*.

I used to dream of love.
But, now I understand,
It wasn't what I thought it was,
You wouldn't take my hand.

Love is just game.
Will I win or will I lose?
Turns out it's all the same.
And, the butterflies seem to fade,
Away.

I used to dream of love
Or was it just infatuation?
Something deep inside me says,
Must have been my imagination.

Love is just a game
Will or win or will I lose?
Turns its all the same
And the butterflies seem to fade,
Away

I used to dream of love.
And, now I have to say,
It isn't always black and white.
Sometimes love is grey.

Love is just game.
Will I win or will I lose?
Turns out it's all the same,
And the butterflies seem to fade,
Away

4.7 Rock Camp Interventions

One of the focal points of camp is to get campers, youth especially, on stage, in a music venue, to demystify what could otherwise be an intimidating space. With the exception of camps held during the Covid 19 pandemic safety measures, which resulted in *virtual* collaboration and a *virtual* web-based showcase, a main component of Camp programming is to get campers, whether youth or adults on stage, performing for a public audience. Rain City Rock Camp works with local venues to facilitate this happening. In partnership with local venues, Rain City Rock Camp, like many other camps, works with local venues to host showcases. As explained above, these spaces of leisure are critical for communities, and thus these partnerships are important, and have a particular impact on youth. In a profit over community driven urban development structure, *youth* are an unmentioned category of the displaced. All ages venues are few and far between, with more closing with each passing year, campers access spaces, young people have fewer opportunities for recreation, especially free or low-cost recreational activities. … speaks again to the loss of third spaces, particularly for young people. Rain City Rock Camp takes this further offering in carving out space in what are otherwise male dominated spheres, for gender marginalized folks. Womxn, girls, and gender expansive folks not only have an opportunity to congregate together within the space of camp, but their very presence subverts societal gender norms. Speaking on the ways in which camp intentionally carves out space for girls, non-binary, queer and trans youth and adults, an organizer talked about the impact of the showcase taking up physical space during showcases:

Tour guides, the booklets that campers keep with them throughout the duration of camp, arrive to campers in the mail the week before camp in a welcome kit. Packed along with their tour guide, campers receive a lanyard with the RCRC logo, securing their “Artist” pass, with earplugs, and a guitar pick tucked in. Lanyards come with a pronoun button pinned to them, indicating the pronouns they

selected in their application. As campers arrive to camp and discover there are more options, some explore their options, even if for a day. The final item in their welcome kit is a t-shirt, which campers will screen print, by hand, with a band logo that they designed in collaboration with their bandmates. Campers and volunteers are given these shirts to keep, and campers are offered additional shirts to make for their friends and family. As campers screen print, once they're done making shirts, they screen print a square of fabric which will be held by camp, and tied to a banner, with all of the camp logos, across all of the camp sessions for that year.

Music is a conduit at camp for the work of social justice. As a feminist organization with an emphasis on gender justice and equity work, the experience of camps and its workshops are designed to not only foster creative expression, but also lay the foundation for collaboration and self-expression through social justice, anti-oppression frameworks. The interventions of camp extend beyond the community of campers and volunteers, by creating the platforms of opportunity for musicians who are part of the larger communities shared with camp. Camps host featured artists for gigging musicians in the community, by an invitation to perform a short set for campers with a Q&A. These are generously paid opportunities for musicians to perform for an audience of campers to help demystify the performance aspect of musicianship. Gigging musicians refers to musicians who perform their music for the public. As a standard practice, musicians are expected to "pay the house," first, taking home a proceed of ticket sales only after the venue has been paid for the use of the space. Upon booking a show artists receive an advance which will highlight the details for load in, and available equipment, threshold amount set aside to pay the venue, and remaining artist compensation: typically, a percentage of ticket sales once the threshold is met, drink tickets, and possibly a food, or a discount on food, if the venue has a full kitchen. While there are variations from venue to venue, in Seattle, in 2022, the threshold begins at $150. Once funds from ticket sales meet this threshold, 85-100% of remaining

proceeds will be split between acts on the bill, with a typical bill featuring three to four acts. From there payments are allocated according to band arrangements. While bands are not expected to pay the house if they do not meet the minimum threshold, distinguishing it form a "pay to play" scenario, this payment structure affects the material reality of artists. Venues are reliant on an artist's draw and stay afloat through the business of booking shows; artists that draw a crowd offset operating costs. However, this common practice for bands to pay venues first, could indicate the structural vulnerability of arts funding, and a shared precariousness among venues, workers on the service side of venues and musicians.

Following the pandemic, The Stranger, Seattle's free weekly news and events publication, published an article offering insights from local musicians on this payment structure, as it came into focus with venues reopening following closures during the Covid pandemic. As with the variation of practices from venue to venue, artists hold a variation in opinion, ranging from a lack of acceptance to outright critique. As one artist notes, the concern is less about "how much artists are being paid," rather a concern "which artists are being paid" directing attention to inequities in opportunity for Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) artists to get on stage. Another artist, who supports her work mostly through gigs at wineries and restaurants, places the onus on the greater community of Seattle to support live music, given that payment practices as they are "a reality of the industry—and that's why artists need the community to come out and support them."[239] Chanara Caupain, a Seattle hip-hop and pop artist critiqued the existing payment structure. "Caupain sees that artist/venue relationship as a partnership. The venue provides a space for musicians to perform, but the artists are also bringing people to the venue and need to be compensated monetarily for that. Payment—and transparency about

[239] Dan Ray, "Should You Pay a Band in Drink Tickets? (No.)," The Stranger, accessed April 26, 2023, https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2021/07/29/59683087/should-you-pay-a-band-in-drink-tickets-no.

that payment – is a sign of respect."[240] Caupain posits that payment in drinks and food, should not be the primary means of payment, and if included, should be included along with a monetary payment. "It's problematic to pay a community that struggles with substance abuse in those substances… 'what people don't realize is that as artists, we're receiving that payment but a lot of the time it's not going to us … 'it's going to the people that are working on your set.'"[241] An artist viewing their original artistry as an opportunity to hone their craft, while otherwise drawing on the income generated from performing at wineries, refers back to the question of which artists access opportunities to play – and the kinds of opportunities offered. Not all bodies have access to the same kinds of spaces. Wineries, as a leisure activity among white middle class and affluent communities perpetuates exclusion – as demonstrated in 2015 incident of a group of Black women getting kicked off a Napa Valley Wine excursion for talking and laughing too loudly, prompting the viral spread of #LaughingWhileBlack on twitter. The three perspectives highlighted in the *Stranger* certainly cannot capture the scope of artist perspectives, however, these perspectives, and the analysis these artists provide reveal dynamics of power along the axis of gender and race. Among the two people of color featured in this article, it seems reflective of the labor that Black women routinely perform, to not only propose a total revision of the payment structure, but to also note the implications of paying a community in what could be considered its vices. In an industry that is both male dominated and predominantly white, at the intersection of race and gender, what do these opportunities look like? Caupain's critique and demand for a complete overhaul is necessary, ultimately benefiting all artists. This highlights the overlapping precariousness of both the music industry and service industry.

I began this chapter with the phrase, "it's life changing" In almost every interview I conducted, I heard this phrase spoken back to me. It surfaced at different points in each interview, sometimes at

[240] Ray.
[241] Ray.

the beginning, as participants expressed their excitement to talk about camp, sometimes in response to the questions I asked, and, as if to underscore the importance of the work that camp does, it was spoken emphatically, as I thanked my participants and asked, “is there anything else that you would like to share?” Many spoke from their own experiences of their lives changed. Several spoke of the transitions that occurred during involvement with camp, owing the possibility of discovering and exploring previously hidden aspects of their identity to the supportive and encouraging environment camp cultivated and nurtured. In many of the interviews, especially with long time volunteers, questions and answers carried an affective resonance - an unspoken but felt in the exchange of words to the impact of Camp.

Figure 4
This photo shows the entrance to the school that was the site for the Rain City Rock Camp summer camp, 2023. "You belong here," written at the entrance demonstrate the transformation of physical space. Photo courtesy of Max.

Figure 5
Screen printing workshop at held at South Sound Rocks, 2023. An organizer offers a demo and tips and tricks in the process of screen printing. Photo courtesy of Max.

4.9 Camp Theme Songs

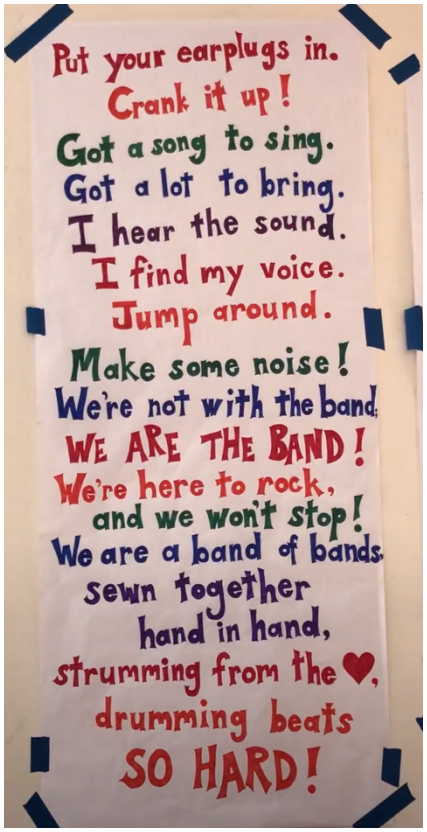
Rain City Rock Camp Theme Song
ARC Showcase Clock Out Lounge, Seattle, WA.
May 12, 2023,

Rain City Rock Camp

Put your earplugs in, crank it up!
Got a song to sing,
Got a lot to bring.
I hear the sound,
I find my voice.
Jump around.
Make some noise!
We're not with the band,
WE ARE THE BAND!
We're here to rock,
And we won't stop,
We won't stop!
We are a band of bands,
sewn together,
Hand-in-hand,
Strumming from the heat,
Drumming Beats
SO HARD!

Rain city, pour your sound on me.
This is the sound of a new generation.
This is the sound of a revolution!
REVOLUTION!
WE ROCK!

Seattle / Rain City



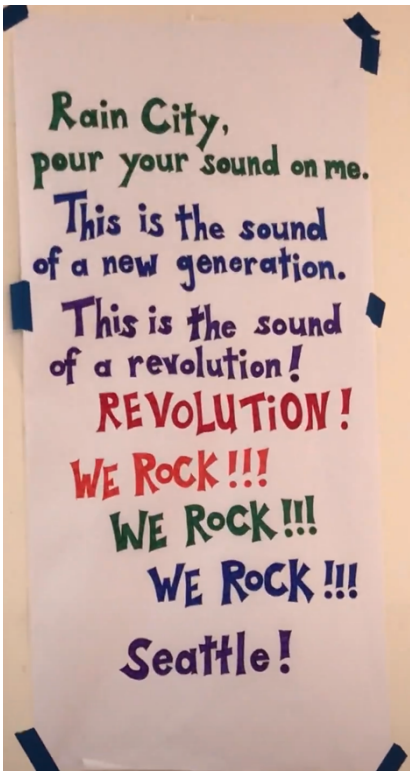


Figure 6
Lyrics to Rain City Rock Camp theme song posted for campers to see and sing along.

Photo courtesy of Max

Chicxs Rockerxs Camp Theme Song

Figure 7: Chicxs Rockerxs logo and about page.
All information pertaining to Chicxs Rockerxs is provided in Spanish and English. Images courtesy of Chicxs Rockerxs web page: https://www.crsela.org/

Chicxs Rockerxs

Tu Momento/Your Moment
Quién eres? Quién quieres ser?
Ahora es tu hora de poder
Sí se puede! (sí se puede)
Con chicxs a tu lado
Finalmente Tu momento a llegado

Who are you? Who do you wanna be?
Today is your day, listen and see
Yes we can! (yes we can)
With chicas on your side
Your moment has finally arrive

Chicxs rockeras!
Chicxs rockeras!

Y ya llego nuestro tiempo
Vamos a cambiar nuestro mundo
Y ya llego nuestro tiempo
Vamos a cambiar nuestro mundo
Chicxs Rockerxs! Our time is now!

Quién eres? Quién creres ser?
Ahora es tu hora de poder
Sí se puede! (sí se puede)
Con chicas a tu lado
Finalmente Tu momento a llegado

Who are you? Who do you wanna be?
Today is your day, listen and see
Yes we can! (yes we can)
With Chicxs on your side
Your moment has finally arrived

Chicxs Rockerxs!
Chicax Rockerxs!

Figure 8 (left top)
2023 Sampaguita Rock Camp for Filipinx Girls programming announcement. Graphic design by Katrin Davis. Sampaguita Rock Camp

Figure 9 (bottom right)
Sampaguita Rock Camp highlight reel. Recognition of the Starry Plough Pub and their support of Sampaguita Rock Camp.

Images courtesy of Sampaguita Rock Camp social media: https://www.instagram.com/sampaguitarock/

Sampaguita Rock Camp

Rock like Sampaguita
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!

Beautiful and strong
Joined together in song
We're jamming we our band
Together we'll stand

Rock like Sampaguita
Rising like a phoenix
Rock like Sampaguita
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!

Everyone realize
Revolution's on the rise
We're ready to go
(YELL) HEY! Sama sama tayo!

Rock like Sampaguita
Rising like a phoenix
Rock like Sampaguita
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!

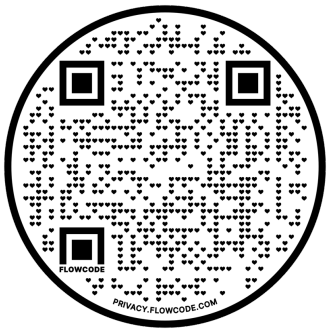
Let's take to the stage
'Cause we were born to play!
Let's take to the stage
'Cause we were born to play!

Rock like Sampaguita
Rising like a phoenix
Rock like Sampaguita
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!
We're Rock 'n' Roll FILIPINX!

(YELL) SAMPAGUITA ROCKS!

CONCLUSION: LIFELINES

ODE TO MY FAMILY



Ode To My Family - The Cranberries

Understand the things I say.
Don't turn away from me….

On Friday, May 12, I attended a Polyphonic Research conversation with Dr. Daphne Brooks. As the conversation moved to the songs that inspired us, I thought of Ode to My Family by the Cranberries. As the first lines of lyric hummed through my brain, I felt a wave of emotion with the realization that in a matter of weeks, I would be graduating with a PhD. Beyond that, this song, an *ofrenda* to family, begins with the simple plea, a desire to be heard, to be seen.

This dissertation looked through the lens of kinship and community to arrive at the conclusion that kin-making is a process. Our kin are who we create them to be, nurturing relationships from a deep ecology of reciprocity. Kinships are created in various forms and through various practices. Kinships span across time and through communities. Some kinships are fleeting, such as the kinships in the band formations, existing in that configuration for the duration of camp. Other kinships persist through generations, in the recognition of our kin in the looking at a photograph, in the reading of the words, or the lyrics they leave with us as their memory.

At times, kinship, a chosen family or the making of *familia*, is forged out of necessity. In these practices of kin-making and in the development of political identities that form out of the spaces of subculture and counterculture, kinship operates as a means of survival against the oppressive structures of the white middle-class heteronormative family. I honor the kinship of pachucas who did the labor of carving out space - carving out space for gender expression, for sexual freedoms… of demanding joy, and seeking it out. I recognize the kinship of *family*, our queer kin, who have cultivated families of belonging, birthed from an understanding and shared experience of familial and societal rejection.

This project also considers kinships created in the shared spaces of creative projects, and in shared goals, and dreams of hope… of finding our people in the process. These are kinships that form through the labor and joy of creating spaces for community, subverting the traditional expectations that indicate that the roles of mentor and mentee are predicated on a hierarchy of age, or that the benefit flows only one direction. Kinship exists in practices of creating spaces where we are safe to explore who we are in relation to others, where we are asked to collaborate, and shown how to do so; where we are celebrated for our willingness to try – in the cultivation of a space where we are encouraged to stumble. These spaces where we are not afraid to be seen trying are made possible by previous generations demanding to be seen. Because they demanded to be seen.

TU MEDIA NARANJA - FOR NANA

Tu media naranja
In my mind, I hear it in Spanish,
The way it would have fallen from my grandmother's mouth,
When she asked about love.
But when I speak it, I say it in English.
I lost the language of my grandmother,
In the generation between us.
Now I am afraid to get it wrong.

When I was seventeen, I met my grandmother.
I wanted to know what she looked like,
Perhaps then, I could recognize myself.
One evening, the child from photographs on the mantel,
Stood awkwardly, in her kitchen – live and in the flesh.
I wish I could remember what we talked about then.
Memory fragmented, almost immediately, by overwhelm.
Until the day we met, my life proceeded in photographs.
An existence contained within sporadic school portraits,
And in a name spoken in somber tones.
Still, she kept my name at the tip of her tongue,
Her baby's baby.
A name that told the story of love and loss.

Tu media naranja
Your half orange.
I keep a photograph of my grandmother on my altar.
The life she lived, frozen in time, in a portrait.
I wonder about the things we held in common.
Had she lost the language of her grandmother, too?
Did she hold precious memories in fragments?
What do we make of our names ---
Telling the stories of love and loss.

Your half orange.
I introduced her as my best friend; it felt easier this way.
I knew that my grandmother prayed to a Catholic God,
I prayed to a Christian God, too.
Was this the God her grandmother?
I lost the language of prayer,
Praying to a God of judgment and vengeance.
A God who said we were wrong.

When I was seventeen, I went to bible study,
I tried to be a good disciple, but, in church, I didn't fit in.
Still, I turned the pages and followed along.
I sang songs, confessed my sins, and prayed for forgiveness.
I believed in the promise of heaven and feared damnation.
The book of Leviticus. The book of Revelation.
I cloaked my love in secrecy and my desire in shame.
Too much already lost, I chose not to risk losing more.
An existence hidden in letters written in code,
And confessions of love spoken in hushed tones.
Still, I found my way in the dark, lovers on my tongue,
My baby, my baby.
I spoke names that told stories of love and loss.

Tu media naranja
Your half orange
I search the archives for photographs of queer kin
Proof of existence. Proof of life lived.
I wonder about the things we hold in common,
The languages we have lost, and the languages we create.
The precious memories we hold in fragments.
Searching for our other halves in a record of our names,
Telling the stories of love and loss.

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APPENDEX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pronouns
+?

1. Why were you moved to create or become involved in Rain City Rock Camp? How did you come to this, or what led you to your decision?

2. How long have you been involved with Rain City Rock Camp? In what ways have you been involved with Rain City Rock Camp? How did you hear about it/ first get involved?

3. What does Rain City Rock Camp provide to you every day (or in the opportunities in which you are involved)? Does it nurture you? Could you explain?

4. How would you speak of the impact of Rain City Rock Camp on its members? Could you speak of this impact on youth?

5. Do you see any difference between the work Rain City Rock Camp has done with adults? Do you see the impact is different? In which ways? Could you elaborate?

6. Do people return year after year? How do you see that having an impact? How does it impact you?

7. Rain City Rock Camp has a camp playlist – if you are familiar with it, are there any songs that stand out to you as reflective of camp? Could you share why? Do you have any favorites?

8. Are there any camp traditions? Official or otherwise? How did they develop? Why do they stick around?

9. Rain City Rock Camp has a theme song. Are there any lyrics that stand out to you? Or any moments that stand out to you regarding the song?

10. What is the vision for the future? Or what do you hope for the future of Rain City Rock Camp?

11. If you brought something with you, could you tell me a bit about it? Could you describe it and why you brought it with you today? What meaning does it hold for you? If you didn't bring something, but wish you had, what would you bring?

12. Anything else you'd like to share?

Thank you so much for your time and participation in this interview!

VITA

Michelle Morado (she/they) originally from California completed their graduate work at the University of Washington, Seattle. Their doctoral dissertation examines histories of kinship, family, and community by exploring the influence of material and popular culture as well as D-I-Y and creative practices in shaping community identity formations. Their work has been greatly influenced by organizing with the Womxn Who Rock Collective and the Womxn Who Rock (Un)Conference which underscores the importance of arts activism in a project that bridges local communities of color to preserve the crucial histories of women in social justice organizing. Michelle worked behind the scenes contributing to the WWR archive of musicians, artists, and media makers. As a musician and active member of the Seattle music community, Michelle serves on the board of directors for Rain City Rock Camp, an arts based non-profit organization that uses music to empower girls/womxn and gender marginalized communities by nurturing creative expression through music and providing media literacy education.