

PROGRESSIVE SCIENTISM:
PAUL SCHUSTER TAYLOR AND THE MAKING OF
MEXICAN LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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In his 1929 presidential address to the American Sociological Society, University of Chicago sociologist William F. Ogburn pronounced the severance of the social sciences from social work, the field of inquiry upon whose coattails much of the social sciences had developed. The new “scientific sociologists will not...be statesmen, leaders, or executives,” he predicted, but neither would they be “armchair sociologist[s],” secluding themselves within the ivory tower of academia. Rather, the scientific sociologist’s laboratory would be the whole of society, and he would come to know his data “by the closest of connections with the sources, wherever they may be...He will be found with the staff of the courts, in the factory, at the headquarters of the political party, in the community centers.”¹ Like the social worker of the past, Ogburn believed that the scientific sociologist would be concerned with the betterment of society, but that he would distance himself from the practical application of his research findings. Ogburn admitted to his audience that disciplining themselves and future scholars to be scientific sociologists would not be easy—it would require them to “crush out emotion,” “taboo [their] ethics and values (except in choosing problems)” and spend most of their time performing “hard, dull, tedious, and routine tasks.” Yet the potential value to be gleaned from such disciplined, scientifically rigorous studies would be “pure gold and worth the trouble,” for the social scientist would ultimately advance the evolution of society by providing reformers with the information necessary to solve the nation’s most pressing social problems.²

The social sciences never fully achieved the vision articulated by Ogburn in his presidential address. However, scientism had a profound impact on the social scientific community in the post-World War I era. Disillusioned with the prospects of achieving true

¹ William F. Ogburn, “Presidential Address: The Folkways of a Scientific Sociology,” *Publications of the American Sociological Society* 24 (1930), 7-8.

² Ogburn, 10-11.

reform and indeed, of society's "progress" after the devastation of the war, social scientists turned to quantifiable data. As one witness at a Social Science Research Council conference reported in 1925, the new emphasis on behaviorism marked "a shift from understanding to control."³ In keeping with the new emphasis of the social sciences, research endeavors were no longer primarily funded by religious or charitable organizations. Instead, new, capitalist-funded organizations like the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation and its outgrowth, the Social Science Research Council, funded a variety of social scientific projects. Between 1922 and 1929 alone, the Laura Spellman Rockefeller fund contributed \$41 million to American social science, social work, and institutions.⁴ As historian Dorothy Ross has noted, these new sources of funding generally supported projects that were disinterested from controversial political or social questions and were a "major catalyst for the focus of social science on scientific method" during the 1920s and beyond.⁵ But social scientists everywhere did not readily accept the yoke of scientism and those who did did not necessarily abandon Progressivism.⁶

The intellectual biography of labor economist Paul Schuster Taylor exemplifies the coexistence of Progressive thought with the new scientism. Taylor, raised in Populist and Progressive Iowa, trained at the University of Wisconsin and the University of California in the late 1910s and early 1920s. He undertook one of the first academic surveys of Mexican life and labor in the United States in the late 1920s and early 1930s, published as the eleven-volume series *Mexican Labor in the United States*. Taylor conducted thousands of interviews with labor contractors, businessmen, farmers, local school and government officials as well

³ Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 404.

⁴ Ross, 402.

⁵ Ross, 401.

⁶ For a discussion of the debates among social scientists over use of the scientific method, see Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

as the laborers themselves in areas throughout the nation. His use of a scientific rhetoric, his largely absent narrative voice, and his accumulation of empirical and statistical data set his work apart from the slim extant research on Mexican communities in the United States, conducted, to that point, by Christian missionary societies and governmental agencies.⁷ Yet Taylor's understanding of urban and rural labor were guided by Populist and Progressive assumptions that idealized the small farmer and, as such, viewed the agricultural structure of the Southwest with disdain because it prohibited land ownership. From the beet fields of Colorado to the steel mills of Pennsylvania, Taylor believed that he observed a new phenomenon in which individual labor was devalued and the distribution of land adverse to ownership. While the demography of the migrant labor was indeed changing rapidly, the historical record suggests that the agricultural changes Taylor described as revolutionary had in fact been many years in the making. Migrant labor had been a crucial part of American farm labor for decades, while as early as the 1860s farmers were encouraged to specialize and produce items for commercial sale.⁸ Furthermore, though Taylor was himself racially progressive, his assumption of scientism at all costs betrayed his research intent of describing and understanding Mexican American life and culture in order to quell anti-immigrant hysteria.

This paper examines the regional studies of Dimmit County, Texas; Imperial Valley, California; Chicago, Illinois; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and South Platte Valley, Colorado that comprised labor economist Taylor's series *Mexican Labor in the United States* in order to explore the following questions: How does one's lived experience shape their intellectual

⁷ Victor S. Clark, "Mexican Labor in the United States," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, No. 78 (September, 1908); Kathryn Cramp, Louis F. Shields et. al., "Study of the Mexican Population in Imperial Valley, California, March 31-April 9, 1926" (New York: The Council of Women for Home Missions, 1926). Both available in the Paul Schuster Taylor Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California [hereinafter, Paul Taylor Papers].

⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 39.

production? How did someone who was raised in Progressivism adapt to the social scientific culture of the twenties? More importantly, who is Mexican? How did the social sciences define Mexican identity and describe Mexican life for both the academic and general public?⁹

Despite the lasting influence of *Mexican Labor in the United States* among historians interested in twentieth-century Mexican American life and migrant labor, Taylor's early scholarship has received little attention from historians of the social sciences, who have largely focused on the academic production of the Chicago school.¹⁰ Between 1915 and 1935, the Chicago school of sociology indeed loomed large within the social sciences, churning out study after study on urban ethnic communities and "problem" populations in the United States.¹¹ Even though Mexican immigration to the United States flourished during this period, the presumed rural-dwelling, Southwestern Mexican population was overlooked by a social scientific community more interested in urban life.¹²

Perhaps the best treatments to date of Taylor's early life and academic career are found in two recent biographies of Dorothea Lange, renowned photographer of twentieth-

⁹ Taylor's series was comprised of 11 volumes, but, as the non-regional studies were compilations of statistics, I did not include them in this analysis.

¹⁰ Examples of recent monographs that cite Taylor's work as a secondary source on Mexican life include: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Free Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹¹ Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3; Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 29; Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," *The American Historical Review* 99, No. 4 (October, 1994), 1066. Examples of studies of the intellectual production of Chicago school social scientists include Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹² Two exceptions to this are the work of Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio and that of Chicago School sociologist Emory Bogardus at the University of Southern California. Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield, who produced several studies of Mexican communities, conducted a study of Mexican life in Chicago in 1924, but his findings remained unpublished until 2008. Both Gamio and Bogardus wrote about Mexican immigration and the Mexican life in the United States, but it is not discussed in this essay as Taylor's work came first. Based on my examination of Taylor's personal papers held at the University of California, it appears that Taylor was familiar with Gamio's work and maintained correspondence with Redfield after the publication of *Mexican Labor in the United States*, but no record of correspondence with Bogardus exists.

century American life and Taylor's second wife. Linda Gordon's *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* and Jan Goggans' *California on the Breadlines: Dorothea Lange, Paul Taylor, and the Making of a New Deal Narrative* both provide rich descriptions of Taylor's collaboration with Lange on articles, governmental reports and their 1939 monograph *An American Exodus* that described the hardships faced by "Okies" and Mexican Americans who migrated to California during the Great Depression in search of work. Unsurprisingly, as the foci of these works are Lange and Lange's partnership with Taylor, respectively, there is little about the contributions that Taylor made to the field of labor economics or his scholarship on Mexican Americans prior to meeting Lange.¹³

Contemporary scholars have analyzed the intellectual production of social scientists regarding specific ethnic communities in the United States. Henry Yu's *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* examines the scholarship on Asian Americans produced by first by Protestant missionaries and then by sociologists at the University of Chicago throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Examining the records of such large projects undertaken by Chicago students and faculty as the Survey on Race Relations as well as master's theses, Yu describes how scholars who studied the "Oriental Problem" structured how Americans inside and outside of academia viewed Asian Americans. Though many of the ethnic studies scholars at Chicago endeavored to dispel the stereotypes about Asian Americans prevalent in America through their scholarship, their work unintentionally reinforced an Orientalist discourse.¹⁴ No scholar has yet examined social scientific production about Mexican American life. By examining the work of one

¹³ Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); Jan Goggans, *California on the Breadlines: Dorothea Lange, Paul Taylor, and the Making of a New Deal Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

scholar of Mexican American communities, Paul Taylor, this essay represents a preliminary effort toward understanding how the social sciences impacted the ways in which Mexican American life and labor were understood by those both within and outside of academia.

Paul Taylor's early life cannot be understood without the related political movements of Populism and Progressivism that so shaped his upbringing. The Populist movement was the first major political movement in the United States to attack industrialism. Uniting farmers in the rural plains and mountain states who were angered by the steady price deflation of farm goods that had occurred between 1865 and 1897, the Populist platform supported the coinage of silver, a graduated income tax, and the direct election of U.S. senators. In 1892, the Populist party nominated Iowan James B. Weaver for president; though they only captured 22 electoral votes and 9% of the popular vote, the movement retained its fire into the 1896 election, when William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate, campaigned on a largely Populist platform. Though Bryan, like Weaver, met defeat at the polls, many Populist beliefs persevered (and met success in) the twentieth century.

Much of the Populist rhetoric was built upon an "agrarian myth" that idealized the self-sufficient farmer, a man who existed independently of commercial interests. The reality of the self-sufficient farmer in nineteenth and twentieth-century America was, however, dubious because farming had long been commercialized. Historian Richard Hofstadter dated the transition from self-sufficient to commercial farming as complete by around 1850 in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, quoting from an 1868 issue of the Illinois periodical *Prairie Farmer* that proclaimed, "The old rule that a farmer should produce all that he required, and that the surplus represented his gain, is part of the past," as evidence of the entrenchment of

commercial farming principles in Reconstruction America.¹⁵ In the western United States, tenant-operated farms represented 49.7% of all farms in Texas by 1900, while in California, large landholding had predominated since 1848, when Mexican land grants were seized by the victors of the war with Mexico.¹⁶

The Progressives, whose heyday is roughly plotted between 1900 and 1920, were, to borrow the terminology of Daniel Rodgers, largely middle-class “insiders”—individuals as varied as missionaries, economists, and lawyers—who drew upon the language of “outsiders”—notably, Populists, labor activists, and farmers—in order to articulate their grievances as well as their social visions.¹⁷ Progressives alternately borrowed from the languages of antimonopolism, the sciences, corporate efficiency, and the social gospel to denounce the unrestrained individualism that was to blame for the rampant vice and corruption in American cities. To name a few achievements, Progressives instituted minimum wage laws, built city parks, secured the direct election of United States senators, banned the sale of alcohol, and created the Food and Drug Administration to promote consumer safety. United by the brass rings of “progress,” “power,” “efficiency,” and “organization,” Progressives hoped to recreate a sense of community within American society.¹⁸

Paul Taylor was born in an atmosphere of Populist and Progressive change in Sioux City, Iowa in 1895 to Henry Taylor, a lawyer and school superintendant active in Progressive politics, and Rose Schuster, a former teacher. A predominantly white, Protestant community comprised of Swedish, Norwegian, Irish, Italian, and German-descended individuals, Taylor

¹⁵ Hofstadter, 39

¹⁶ Foley, 33.; Weber, 23-49.

¹⁷ Daniel T. Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” *Reviews in American History* 10, No. 4 (December 1982), 123-126.

¹⁸ Warren I. Susman, “The Culture of the Thirties,” in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973; reprint, Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 2003), 156.

knew of just one “colored” family in Sioux City, the postman’s family.¹⁹ Though Sioux City was a bustling city of nearly 40,000 that boasted an elevated railway, Taylor remembered fondly the sense of community he felt during the several occasions on which he visited his uncle’s 120-acre “typical family farm” in southern Wisconsin, comparing the wooded landscape and “rolling countryside” to his grandfathers’ ancestral home of Morbach, Germany. The neighbors gathered several times a year to help harvest oats and wheat on each others’ farms. Labor agreements were informal—his uncle recorded the days of labor he owed and was owed in a little book, and Taylor supposed that many of the neighbors kept track of labor in the same way.²⁰

As a teenager, Taylor worked summers on a much larger 2,000-acre farm, where he had his first encounters with migratory labor, a crucial, if often overlooked, component of Midwestern agriculture since at least the 1860s.²¹ Migrant men, in the words of historian Frank Higbie a collective “at once strangers and familiars, homeless and linked to communities, marginalized socially and central to the extractive economy” rode the rails with the seasons, working alternately in logging, mining, construction, and agriculture.²² Taylor remembered encountering men from small-town Missouri on the Iowa farm, but laborers often traveled from as far south as New Orleans. One migrant laborer who was interviewed by the U.S. Committee on Industrial Relations in 1914 reported that he had immigrated to the United States from Norway and had first worked on an Iowa farm owned by fellow Norwegians. From Iowa, the laborer traveled to Minneapolis, to Denver, back to Minneapolis, then to Montevideo, Minnesota, then back to Minneapolis to travel to a

¹⁹ Paul Taylor, Oral History Interview conducted by Suzanne Reiss, *Paul Schuster Taylor, California Social Scientist*, Vol. 1: *Education, Field Research, and Family* (Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973), [hereinafter, *California Social Scientist*], 33.

²⁰ *California Social Scientist*, 57-58.

²¹ Hofstadter, 39.

²² Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 4.

railroad construction job in North Dakota. From North Dakota, he headed to the Pacific Northwest for a series of logging jobs.²³ Migrant workers in the Midwest faced a host of unsavory conditions that contributed to high turnover rates, indicating that Midwestern migrant labor was perhaps not so wholesome as many imagined. The Minnesota Department of Labor reported the appalling conditions in one labor camp in 1914; beyond serving the men rotten food, there were no toilet facilities and men were housed in abandoned boxcars next to weeds “filthy with excrement and old clothes fairly alive with vermin.”²⁴

On the Iowa farm on which Taylor worked, however, he was shielded from the harsh conditions that the typical migrant laborer encountered, a naïveté which strengthened his belief in the distinctiveness of the labor and land ownership systems he would encounter in California. Though farm wages were modest and the work could be strenuous, Taylor believed that the Iowa conditions were humane and that the migratory labor was merely a stopgap on the way to land ownership for the laborers. The migrant men of Taylor’s memory were largely “small town people or subsistence farmers at home” who traveled north to earn extra cash. Taylor recalled one Danish immigrant who was a year-round employee on the farm and, though he and Taylor were paid the same monthly wages, Taylor “knew that the next year the Dane was going to rent and operate a farm. He was on the way to ownership, on the agricultural ladder.” Although they occupied the lowest rung of the agricultural economic ladder, Taylor believed that the migrant laborers of his youth possessed the resources to carve out a niche for themselves in the property-owning middle class of America. By contrast, industrial workers, in Taylor’s mind the antithesis of the idyllic

²³ Higbie, 30-31.

²⁴ Higbie, 40.

subsistence farmer, “weren’t on much of a ladder,” lacking the ability and initiative required to carve out a niche for themselves in the property-owning middle class of America.²⁵

Yet another difference distinguished the turn-of-the-century Midwestern migrant laborers from those Taylor studied in California—their ethnic homogeneity. Approximately 95 percent of the laborers in the upper Midwest were classified as “white” by the 1900 U.S. Census, indicating that they were either American born of northern European ancestry, Americanized European immigrants, or recent immigrants from northern Europe.²⁶ In a landscape dominated by Americans of Scandinavian descent, the migrant laborers were better able to blend in when compared to their western counterparts. In the Imperial Valley of California, by contrast, Taylor estimated that Mexican-descended individuals comprised a conspicuous third of the population, outnumbering the African American, American Indian, Japanese, and “Hindu” races who worked the land at the turn of the century.²⁷

Taylor’s insistence in the purity of Midwestern agricultural labor and his idealization of land ownership had much in common with the social scientists who preceded him. Progressive social historians, economists, and sociologists alike borrowed from the agrarian myth most recently employed by the Populists in order to mount critiques against capitalism, industrialism, and the degradation of manual labor. Frederick Jackson Turner, historian and author of the “frontier thesis,” is perhaps the most well-known. His acclaimed essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” was originally presented before a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago in 1893. “So long as free land exists,” wrote Turner, “the opportunity for a competency exists, and economic power secures political power.” According to Turner, land ownership and the struggles for daily survival

²⁵ *California Social Scientist*, 56

²⁶ Higbie, 105.

²⁷ Paul S. Taylor, “Mexican Labor in the United States: Imperial Valley, California,” from *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Vol. I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930) [hereinafter, “Imperial Valley”], 2.

had not only “Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race” Scotch-Irish, Dutch, and English-descended individuals, they had engendered the best ideas of the American political system.²⁸ It was in the tidewater region of Virginia, he emphasized, that plantation owners dependent upon slave labor “lived in baronial fashion,” but it was western Virginia, home of Thomas Jefferson’s idealized yeoman farmer, that had compelled its statesmen to adopt a more liberal suffrage policy in 1830.²⁹ After the 1890 census proclaimed the closing of the frontier, Turner cautioned that industrialization had fostered an excessive individualism in American society which “allowed a laxity in regard to governmental affairs which has rendered possible the spoils system, and all the manifest evils that follow from the lack of a highly developed civic spirit,” echoing the Progressive ambition for a reformed government.³⁰

As Richard Hofstadter has argued, Turner’s thesis was not the first time in which agrarian purity and the centrality of the frontier to American democracy were asserted.³¹ Nearly six decades earlier, Alexis de Tocqueville remarked upon the importance of the frontier myth to the American people when he claimed that memories of the “march across these wilds, draining swamps, turning the course of rivers, peopling solitudes, and subduing nature...haunt every one of them in his least as well as in his most important actions and [may be said] to be always flitting before his mind.”³² Populists were the most recent group to have drawn upon the agrarian/frontier myth in order to articulate their vision for American society. The influence of Turner’s thesis in political, popular, and academic circles owed largely to its arrival at a particularly chaotic moment when both labor struggles and

²⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 23.

²⁹ Turner, 32.

³⁰ Turner, 27.

³¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 56.

³² De Tocqueville quoted in Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians*, 57.

agrarian crises beset American society. Progressives eager to reform government and quiet civil unrest readily adopted Turner's frontier thesis to remark upon the corruption of the city and lionize the farmer.³³

After high school, Taylor entered the University of Wisconsin in the fall of 1913. Pressured to study law and follow in his now-deceased father's footsteps but passionate about the investigative social justice work that he was exposed to in his economics seminars, Taylor double-majored in law and economics. At the time Taylor attended, the University of Wisconsin was a major center of economic and Progressive intellectual activity spearheaded by the hiring of Richard T. Ely as the first full-time professor of economics at the university in 1892. Ely was soon eclipsed by his students, E.A. Ross and John R. Commons, as exemplars of the "Wisconsin idea," the merger of Progressive politics, research, and activism.³⁴ Taylor took courses with all of Wisconsin's star scholars, later recalling that "LaFollette 'Progressive' thought...just permeated the atmosphere."³⁵ During his tenure at Wisconsin, Commons helped found the American Association for Labor Legislation with Ely, served on the presidential-appointed U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, and was instrumental in the establishment of a School for Workers to educate industrial laborers about workplace and union issues, to name just a few achievements.

Commons promoted a broad-ranging view of the field of economics. Far from instructing his students how to manipulate complex formulae and conduct cost-benefit analyses, he encouraged them to draw upon history law, sociology, and political science in order to reveal the problems of labor, whose solutions, he believed, lay beyond the walls of

³³ Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians*, 85-87.

³⁴ Malcolm Rutherford, "Wisconsin Institutionalism: John R. Commons and His Students." *Labor History* 47, No. 2 (May 2006), 164.

³⁵ *California Social Scientist*, 56.

the classroom.³⁶ In the summer of 1907, Commons traveled to Pittsburgh with three graduate students to study labor conditions in the city's notorious steel mills that would form a part of the Pittsburgh Survey, one of the first comprehensive American social surveys. The Pittsburgh Survey was written for a general audience so that the findings might "become part of the common understanding" and trigger nationwide urban industrial reform.³⁷ Commons and his students conducted interviews in the workers' homes and social clubs, observing the workers' lives first-hand; with union leaders; and with health experts. His undergraduates at Wisconsin read from the volumes of the *Pittsburgh Survey* and were urged to devise their own research topics, while his graduate students were further encouraged to experience industrial labor first-hand by working in the industries they hoped to research. Although Paul Taylor was not one of the estimated forty-one graduate students whose dissertations Commons supervised, his mark on Taylor's approach to research was indelible.³⁸

After serving in the Marines during World War I, Taylor returned to Wisconsin to complete his undergraduate studies. In the war, he was gassed and had been hospitalized for three months, leaving him with a tubercular condition that would be aggravated by colder climates. After receiving his degree from Wisconsin, Taylor debated whether to study law or economics in graduate school. A meeting with sociologist and former professor E.A. Ross was the turning point in his deliberations. Ross advised him that if he studied law, he would likely secure a good job in one of the best legal firms in the country and, if he was lucky, perhaps get the chance to argue a case in front of the United States Supreme Court that

³⁶ *California Social Scientist*, 55-56.

³⁷ Margo Anderson and Maurine W. Greenwald, "Introduction: The Pittsburgh Survey in Historical Perspective," in *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Margo Anderson and Maurine W. Greenwald (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 7.

³⁸ Cecilia Tichi, *Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 88.

would really pique his interests. If Taylor studied economics, on the other hand, he could always choose to research those subjects that interested him. Taylor prepared to study labor economics at Columbia. En route to New York, however, he was diagnosed with “arrested TB” and advised to conduct his graduate studies in a warmer climate. Unsure whether he would be admitted to the program on such short notice, Taylor headed west to enroll at the University of California, Berkeley.

Though Berkeley’s doctoral program in economics was “in its infancy” in 1919, and lacked any scholar of Commons’ eminence, Taylor felt at home in the environment in which he could “feed [his] Wisconsin-nourished interests in a fresh field.”³⁹ It was economist Carleton Parker who had the greatest influence on Taylor’s graduate studies. Like Commons, Parker was active on behalf of labor issues and championed a sociological-historical approach to the study of economics. Influenced by Freud, the burgeoning field of eugenics, and behaviorism, Parker wanted to move economics away from the hard sciences and towards the social sciences. “Modern economics,” he wrote in his essay collection on migrant workers in California, “tends to think in and talk of static states, the market price, an exchange value, constitutionality, reasonable freight rates, a just rate of interest.” Yet those formulas concerned themselves little with “human organic welfare;” they were “fatally faulty in their simplicity, in their obvious practicality, in their easy useableness.”⁴⁰ Parker’s study of the migrant laborer in California, though admittedly undertaken with little prior knowledge or understanding of the migrant laborer or his conditions, was an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of contemporary economic theory. In his study of a riot among 2800 migratory hop pickers on the Durst Ranch in Wheatland, California in the summer of 1913

³⁹ *California Social Scientist*. 97.

⁴⁰ Carleton H. Parker, *The Casual Laborer, and Other Essays*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 29-30, 29.

led by the notorious Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Parker enumerated the sanitary conditions, job turnover, marriage rates, union involvement, and even sexual habits of the laborers in an effort to understand the motivations behind the riot. Parker's study did not mask its disapproval of the migratory laborer, describing him as, "shifting, without legal residence, under-nourished as a universal rule, incapable of sustained interest, with no reserve of money or energy to carry out a propaganda."⁴¹ In Parker's view, however, the workers' support of radical IWW unionism was the result of their dismal living conditions. The laborers were "the finished product of an environment which seems cruelly efficient in turning out beings moulded [*sic*] after all the standards society abhors."⁴²

Inspired by the sympathetic yet scientific studies of Commons and Parker, Taylor set out to conduct a study of agricultural labor in the western United States in early 1927. In the research proposal that he submitted to the Social Science Research Council, Taylor reiterated the uniqueness of California agriculture, explaining that he hoped to employ Commons' method of "applied economics" to study the West Coast.⁴³ Unfamiliar with labor patterns in California, Taylor did not even know where to find the Mexicans. The lack of knowledge about Mexican life is exhibited in the following statement by Taylor when asked about his research design:

Designed it? I went out in the middle of it, stumbled into it. First I asked people, "Where are the Mexicans?" I asked people in agriculture. "You find them up around Napa," wrote the response, so I went up there. Well, it was in February, the wrong season. In the vineyards they told me "Yes, we have them in the grape-picking season, but they are not here now. Others suggested, "See what you can do over in the city." So I went over to the Southern Pacific in San Francisco; I knew the SP used them. I arranged with them, by name-checks, to get for me the record of the increasing use of Mexicans on maintenance of way. I pent a month or so around the Bay, trying to see what data might be available

⁴¹ Parker., 29.

⁴² Cornelia Stratton Parker, *An American Idyll: The Life of Carleton H. Parker* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1919), 83.

⁴³ Goggans, 63.

in governmental offices or employers offices. Then I started down the Valley. When I got as far as Madera and Merced, then I ran into Mexican colonies. At Los Angeles, I got glimpses of the magnitude and spread of the Mexican population. When I got into Imperial Valley, I found that a third of the population there was Mexican. So that was where I made my first intensive field study.⁴⁴

Though not the first study of Mexican Americans to be conducted, Taylor attributed the significance of his *Mexican Labor in the United States* to the fact that it was the first major academic study of *any* immigrant group that was undertaken while the immigration of that group was at what he described as its “flood tide.”⁴⁵ *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, by Chicago School sociologists William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, was published in 1918, nearly four years after Polish immigration to the United States tapered off; W.E.B. DuBois’ landmark study *The Philadelphia Negro* was drawn up in 1897, over a decade before the first Great Migration of African Americans north. Between one million and one and a half million Mexican immigrants are believed to have entered the United States between 1890 and 1929, impelled by dispossession of land as well as the expansion of irrigated agriculture in the Southwest and the growth of the railroad.⁴⁶ By the mid-1920s, immigrants from Mexico outnumbered U.S.-born individuals of Mexican descent; by 1930 just 18.6% of the Mexican population in the United States were native-born of native-born parents.⁴⁷ It was estimated that ethnic Mexican workers comprised nearly 17% of the unskilled construction labor force and nearly three-quarters of the farm labor force in California.⁴⁸ The impact of Mexican labor on the economy and labor relations in the United States was largely overlooked for the first few decades of massive Mexican immigration, but with the

⁴⁴ *California Social Scientist*, 106-107.

⁴⁵ *California Social Scientist*, 107.

⁴⁶ David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 40.

⁴⁷ Ngai, 74.

⁴⁸ Gutiérrez, 45.

passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act in 1924 and its imposition of quotas upon immigrants from many parts of the world (except Mexico) and the creation of the Border Patrol to monitor the southern border, debates about restricting Mexican immigration took on a new urgency.

Beyond its contemporary resonance, Taylor believed that *Mexican Labor in the United States* would be invaluable to future social scientists because it employed a field study technique. “What value, scientific and administrative,” Taylor wondered in a 1934 research proposal, “would not be placed today upon well-documented field studies of the French Revolution of the 18th century...the Russian Revolution of the 20th, [or the] Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries?”⁴⁹ Placing his proposed research topic in league with the major events of Western history reflected both Taylor’s unwavering faith in scientism and the extent to which he believed that the large-scale reliance of Western agriculture on farm labor was revolutionary.

Taylor’s studies of Mexican labor in the United States primarily engaged with three distinct yet overlapping endeavors: defining and describing the Mexican American; discussing the changing system of agriculture, and examining the migration of Mexican Americans north from Mexico to areas throughout the United States. In the forward to the first volume of *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Taylor explained that when the project was undertaken he, “decided to commence with a series of detailed studies of selected regions or topics.” The studies would, he hoped, “reveal as by a cross-section the nature of the Mexican migration to the United States...[making] evident the characteristics which are common to the progress of Mexican migration in all parts of the United States, and those which are

⁴⁹ Paul S. Taylor, “Field Research on Problems of Rural Resettlement” [nd] Paul Taylor Papers, Box 14, Folder 12.

diverse.”⁵⁰ Upon examining Taylor’s studies, one is struck by the sheer number of tables, documenting everything from annual precipitation to school attendance among children of different ethnic groups to the yield of sugar beet harvests. Statistical data and a heavy dose of scientific language as well as a largely absent narrative voice in some sections let Taylor’s interviewees do much of the talking. This proved frustrating, however to readers who hoped that the social sciences’ embrace of the scientific method would reveal unequivocal “truths” about the nature of migrant Mexican labor.

One of the first difficulties Taylor faced was in defining “Mexican” identity. In each of his Southwestern studies, Taylor problematized what he viewed as a rather artificial distinction between individuals of Mexican descent as either “Spanish American” or “Mexican.” In his view, the use of the “inclusive yet accurate” term “Spanish-speaking” to refer to all individuals of Mexican descent would not only be far less complicated—both groups were, socially and economically-speaking, “practically in the same position”—it would also avoid offending both groups, who disliked being mistaken for the other.⁵¹ That Taylor was himself conflicted about the true nature of the distinction between Spanish Americans and Mexicans is evident in his use of the terms in order to connote cultural as well as class distinctions. Though in the introduction to his first volume of his series Taylor conceded that some Mexicans were middle and upper-class businessmen and land owners, particularly in the Calexico region of California, he made it clear that his studies were “not concerned” with such individuals, thus imbuing the term “Mexican” with a class differentiation.⁵² Rather, the Mexicans he was interested in had also been laborers in Mexico, occupying the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in their native land. “Spanish-

⁵⁰ “Imperial Valley,” ix.

⁵¹ Paul S. Taylor, “Mexican Labor in the United States: Valley of the South Platte, Colorado” from *Mexican Labor in the United States* Vol. 6 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929) [hereinafter, “South Platte”], 104.

⁵² “Imperial Valley,” 2.

American,” by contrast, referred to American-born persons “whose ancestors colonized southern Colorado or New Mexico in the days when they were successively Spanish and Mexican territory.” Although Spanish Americans were often as poor as the average Mexican, they had historically been “dry farmers and owners in the Southwest,” a heritage which endowed them with a greater capacity to advance socio-economically.⁵³ Taylor was doubtful that physical characteristics differentiated Spanish Americans from Mexicans. Despite Spanish American claims to have more Spanish than indigenous blood, Taylor hypothesized “the race difference, in so far as it exists, is based on descent from Indian tribes different from those which inhabited the interior of Mexico; and probably somewhat greater proportion of Spanish blood” but suggested that some of those physical characteristics might be attributed to different diets rather than biological divergence.⁵⁴ Both Spanish Americans and Mexicans were presented in contrast to “Americans,” English-speaking individuals born in the United States or highly Americanized descendants of European immigrants.⁵⁵ When discussing un-Americanized white ethnics, such as the Polish or Russians in South Platte, Colorado, Taylor referred to them by their ethnic heritage, as if emphasizing their residence outside of the American cultural and social milieu.

Taylor’s studies presented the migration of Mexican laborers as an unnatural phenomenon that accompanied the rudimentary, “plantation-style” agricultural system of the western United States. Imperial Valley, California, had “chang[ed] rapidly from desert in 1900 to an area of intensive agriculture,” while in the Valley of South Platte, Colorado, “it is the development of intensive agriculture in the north, principally the single crop, sugar beets,

⁵³ “South Platte,” 215-216.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 213. As a racial category, “white” was also capacious because it didn’t necessarily refer to color but rather often to “English-speaking Americans or Americanized Europeans” except when in opposition to “Negro,” in which case it referred to European-descended individuals.

⁵⁵ “South Platte,” 213.

that has thus drawn Mexican labor far from its accustomed habitat in the Southwest.”⁵⁶ With the changing landscape and transition to commercial farming, the American West became more connected. Dimmit County, Texas, transmogrified from “a sparsely settled cattle and sheep range of the southwestern frontier” to “an irrigated district which watches intently the daily fluctuations in the market price of Bermuda onions in New York.”⁵⁷ Echoing Frederick Jackson Turner, Taylor suggested the effect of the eclipsing frontier on manhood, dramatically proclaiming that “the hand of Mexican labor is grubbing out the chaparral of south Texas. The farmer is invading the range of the cattleman. The Mexican vaquero still rides, but in fenced pastures,” his dwindling numbers “heavily augmented by compatriots who have crossed the Rio Grande to serve as onion clippers, cotton pickers, and general farm laborers.” Mexican laborers were thus clearing the chaparral—the wild shrubbery that grew in the hot, dry climates of California and Texas—in order to make way for the rail and telegraph lines that would connect the isolated country to the East. In the process of clearing the land, Taylor intimated that they were also destroying the fabric of manhood, numbing the mind as skilled, rugged laborers—vaqueros—were replaced by unskilled laborers whose livelihood was less indicative of masculine identity: the “onion clippers, cotton pickers, and general farm laborers.”⁵⁸

Mexican Labor in the United States evinces a conflicted relationship with modernity. It is in this respect that Taylor exhibited the turn away from Progressivism. Most progressives supported advances in technology as long as they led to improved well-being for the parties concerned. To the typical Progressive, settlement, electrification, and improved communication with the outside world would all have been considered positive

⁵⁶ “Imperial Valley,” 2; “South Platte,” 97.

⁵⁷ Paul S. Taylor, “Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas,” from *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Vol. I (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1929), 300.

⁵⁸ “Dimmit County,” 295.

developments. According to Taylor, however, commercial agriculture constituted a “heavy invasion” on the part of the farmers in Dimmitt County, Texas. The first settlers, “men and women who entered the prairie, settled it, lived through the Indian raids and cattle stealing, [and] drove the trail to Kansas” had lived in isolation for many years, intermarrying with each other. But in 1908, telephone lines were installed; in 1909 the first automobile ride to San Antonio was reported and, by 1926, “a paved highway was run the length of the county” while “electric light and power lines and real estate development projects are preparing the way for additional homeseekers” who would, in Taylor’s view, exploit the land.⁵⁹ Through statements like the preceding one, Taylor expressed his discomfort with modernity, placing himself in a category with 1920s “anticivilization” intellectuals who questioned the extent to which “progress” had brought cultural advancement by studying regions typically characterized as “backward” or primitive. One such intellectual was Stuart Chase, an economist whose bestselling 1931 monograph *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* juxtaposed Muncie, Indiana, site of the *Middletown* study, with Tepotzlan, Mexico. Chase concluded that Tepotzlan was “far more American than Middletown” because its people “live[d] from the soil and the forests” and were not machine-driven.⁶⁰

Beyond purely economic reasons for looking upon migrant labor with disdain, such as the depression of wages, Taylor bemoaned the practice’s effects on social advancement. Migrant labor crippled one’s opportunity for landownership, both by paying wages too low for anything but subsistence and by destroying initiative among Mexicans, a population that already had a questionable drive to succeed. Unlike the “immigrant Dane” and other “small-town subsistence farmers” who helped out with the harvests in order to raise the money to

⁵⁹ “Dimmitt County,” 302.

⁶⁰ Stuart Chase, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* (New York: MacMillan, 1931), 15-17.

purchase their own farms, the migratory labor system in the Southwest destroyed the prospect of land ownership, helping to create an “atmosphere of impermanence.”⁶¹

The lack of landownership in Imperial Valley, California existed despite the availability of income-producing land that could be bought at prices similar to those in other parts of the country. Most of the land in that region was held by absentee owners who “hold now for increase in values attendant upon settlement of these water questions; or who prefer the high cash rentals paid by the growers of truck crops to farming for themselves.”⁶² In his South Platte study, Taylor drew attention to the low rates of Mexican landownership and the lack of Mexican advancement from field labor to farm ownership, a status that German-Russians and Japanese had managed to achieve by their second or third year after arrival in the region. Taylor included a table that listed the nationality of sugar beet growers in Northeastern Colorado between 1909 and 1927. In 1909, a mere .5% of beet growers were Mexican, but by 1927, that number had increased to 2.1% of the total. By comparison, in 1909 16.7% of beet growers were German-Russian, while by 1927, that number had skyrocketed to 35.2% of all beet growers. Taylor believed that the Mexican’s low rate of land ownership could partly be attributed to both a labor system that in 1909 had made conditions for farm purchase by German-Russian and Japanese immigrants more favorable and the groups’ longer residency in northeastern Colorado. Ultimately, however, a great “cultural gap” existed between Mexicans and Americans. According to Taylor, “[Mexicans] do not bring with them from their culture and class the background for undertaking agriculture independently according to American methods,” nor did they possess “the ambition for individual acquisition of property” or “the foresight necessary for its

⁶¹ “Imperial Valley,” 31.

⁶² “Imperial Valley,” 31

accomplishment.”⁶³ Rather than aspiring to land ownership in their new home, Mexicans preferred the security of “a contract price for hand labor to the larger but more uncertain rates from growing beets on shares,” a further dig on Mexican masculinity.⁶⁴

As bad as conditions were in the rural Southwest, however, Taylor viewed conditions in urban America as worse because of the urban environment’s additional disintegrating influence on family structure. Fewer families migrated to the Chicago-Gary region, and, when compared to those in the Southwest, Taylor claimed that urban-dwelling Mexicans experienced “a release from the controls of the accustomed environment which comes from the mere fact of migration...the unbalanced sex ratio, the laws and customs of the United States, the entrance of Mexican women into industry, the education of Mexican children in American schools, and an American environment, are all sources of strain on inherited attitudes and relationships among Mexican immigrants.”⁶⁵ However, other indicators of racial progress—fluency in the English language, American-style dress, and better hygiene were observed in the urban regions in contrast to the Southwest.⁶⁶

The picture that Taylor painted of Mexican life in the United States was grim when measured against the “American” way of life. Mexican children, by and large, did not perform as well in school as their American peers. Mexicans were at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, receiving low wages for the work they completed. Their prospects for assimilation to the American mainstream were low because Mexicans often lived, worked, and studied separately from Americans and other immigrant groups. The work that they did was repetitive, almost mechanical and provided no opportunity for advancement.

⁶³ “South Platte,” 190-191.

⁶⁴ “South Platte,” 190-191.

⁶⁵ Paul S. Taylor, “Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region,” from *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), 193-194.

⁶⁶ Paul S. Taylor, “Mexican Labor in the United States: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania” from *Mexican Labor in the United States* Vol II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932) [hereinafter, “Bethlehem”], 18-20.

Their living conditions were often dilapidated, overcrowded, and unsanitary. Taylor believed that wide cultural gaps existed between Americans and Mexicans, but was insistent that environmental influences rather than racial, biological differences accounted for social and economic disparities. To take the example of schools, Mexican children were generally lower achievers than American children, but Taylor contended that their low performance was not a sign of any deficiency in Mexican intelligence. Rather, “poverty, manifested in a variety of ways, social ostracism, and retardation, coupled with insufficient appreciation of the advantages of education to offset the effects of the first three obstacles” were the principal factors preventing Mexican children from regular school attendance and discouraging them from continuing beyond what was mandated by state laws.⁶⁷

Taylor was less certain whether racial discrimination against Mexicans by Americans could be considered one of the “environmental factors” impeding Mexican socioeconomic advancement or, indeed, whether racial discrimination was significant at all. In his Chicago study, Taylor doubted “whether as yet race has been an important handicap to promotion of Mexicans, although it has militated against their initial employment.”⁶⁸ Once Mexicans were employed, Taylor believed that racial conflict was bred by economic proximity: when Mexican [industrial] laborers frequently came into contact with African American and European immigrants on the same occupational level as themselves or slightly superior, tensions arose. In a Chicago factory, one Mexican laborer reported that, “The Polish foreman is a devil. He will work the Mexican like a dog. We get all the hard work to do and the Europeans get the easy work. They are mean and swear at us all the time.” Because Americans in Chicago were “seldom in positions of competitive equality with or immediate superiority to the Mexicans where personal friction is likely to result,” Taylor heard few

⁶⁷ “Imperial Valley,” 76.

⁶⁸ “Chicago,” 112.

complaints about Americans.⁶⁹ In Dimmit County, Texas, Taylor noted the white antipathy towards Mexicans expressed in interviews, but argued that “in general, but by no means invariably” such attitudes were limited to poor whites. Taylor described the claim by one interviewee that, “The Mexicans can keep their places and I keep mine...Say ‘Mr. or Mrs. To Mexicans? No sir-ee! Not to the class we have around here!’” as “indicative of the popular [lower-class] attitude” in Texas.⁷⁰ By contrast, a wealthy white individual would be more likely to corroborate the statement of one “large landowner” who claimed that he “[didn’t] believe in the importance of national differences. Only cultural differences are important.”⁷¹ By connecting racism so strongly with economic class, Taylor was, in effect, trivializing the entrenchment of racism within American society.

Taylor’s decision to both include and place in context the testimony of such a broad swath of popular opinion made it appear that he condoned racist-motivated practices like school segregation and white-only primaries. Describing the social ostracism of Mexican children by their white peers in integrated schools, Taylor maintained that some educational benefits to segregation did exist because the practice mitigated the effects of the language barrier and avoided “race friction.” He admitted that educational reasons for segregation “play[ed] only a part” in community decisions to segregate or integrate their public schools, but concluded that support for segregated schools, while not “universal,” was “widespread and includes Spanish Americans and Mexicans” as well as Americans.⁷² With regard to white-only primaries, Taylor stated that some Mexicans resented discrimination and the blockage of the exercise of their democratic rights. However, he included the testimony of one Mexican who justified the white-only primary because, “They [the white men] used to

⁶⁹ “Chicago,” 114 and 113.

⁷⁰ “Dimmit County,” 421.

⁷¹ “Dimmit County,” 428.

⁷² “South Platte,” 216-218.

make the Mexicans go in and vote as they wanted them to vote; they gave them whiskey, etc. The ranch men voted [for] the Mexicans.” White-only Democratic primaries were not an affront to Mexican political activity because it had never truly existed; white men, “ had to do something” to ensure Mexicans would vote as they wished so they excluded them altogether and, in the words of the laborer, “it is all right but that was Americans’ fault, not our people’s fault.”⁷³

Taylor’s presentation of conflicting data and his equivocation on crucial matters were not lost upon Walter Watson, a reviewer for *The American Journal of Sociology*. Watson acknowledged the work that Taylor’s study of Dimmit County, Texas, did to dispel the stereotype of the “urban-dwelling Mexican” as “criminally inclined,” “inadequately controlled by family organization,” and “a too-frequent charity case” but wondered if Taylor’s studies were too dispassionate. Watson concluded that Taylor’s lack of a well-defined hypothesis and even-handedness, while “factually and literally accurate,” were “physically wearing and scientifically disappointing” and recommended that Taylor put his extensive research to use to make a more pronounced argument.⁷⁴ Taylor sympathized with the plight of the dispossessed everywhere and “was concerned with social situations that I thought were out of kilter.”⁷⁵ But the language of scientism masked Taylor’s moral convictions, placing the onus on the reader to interpret the data as they saw fit. Roy L. Garis, a professor of economics at Vanderbilt University as well as a eugenicist and an ardent supporter of immigration restriction read Taylor’s studies thoroughly, highlighting passages of his “Valley of the South Platte Colorado” study in which interviewees confirmed

⁷³ “Dimmit County,” 407.

⁷⁴ Letter, Robert Redfield to Paul S. Taylor, January 18, 1929. Paul Taylor Papers, Box 14, Folder 8; Hector D. Estrada, “Un Libro Yanquí Sobre Arandas” *El Jalisco* March 21, 1933, Paul Taylor Papers, Carton 1, Folder 28; Walter T. Watson, “Review: *Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas*” in *The American Journal of Sociology* 37, No. 2 (September, 1931), 312-313.

⁷⁵ *California Social Scientist*, 56.

stereotypes about Mexican-descended individuals. Passages that he underlined and noted that he should use included a county superintendent's declaration that "The respectable white people of Weld County do not want their children to sit along side of dirty, filthy, diseased, infested Mexicans in school," and Taylor's own observation that his interviews revealed "that a strong undercurrent of sentiment favors segregation not only on educational grounds, but on grounds of personal and sex hygienic standards, and of race as well."⁷⁶ A xenophobic article in *The Geographic Review* by one W.M. Davis further illustrated the tractability of Taylor's findings. Discussing the low "cultural level" and social isolation of the typical Mexican immigrant as an argument against their permanent settlement in the United States, Davis insisted that, "No one who reads Dr. Paul S. Taylor's detailed studies of Mexicans in California and Colorado can fail to be impressed by the depth of [the] social gap [between Mexicans and Americans]."⁷⁷

Given the inattention to Mexican American life exhibited by many academics throughout the twentieth century, one wonders to what extent the series had an impact on the social scientific community. A search through the indices of the *American Economic Review*, the *American Political Science Review*, the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, leading journals of the social sciences, as well as the *Book Review Digest* reveals that, beyond an acknowledgement of the publication of the installments of *Mexican Labor in the United States*, just a handful of reviews were written. Taylor realized that his work on the migrant Mexican labor did not place him in the on the pulse of the labor economics field. Upon the publication of *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Taylor recalled that the chairman of the economics department at Berkeley advised him that it was time to "come back to the

⁷⁶ Roy L. Garis' personal copy of the South Platte study is found in the Jean and Alexander Heard Library of Vanderbilt University. "South Platte," 216-217.

⁷⁷ W.M. Davis, Untitled article in *The Geographic Review* 21, No. 2 (April 1931), 61. Paul Taylor Papers, Carton 1, Folder 28.

center of [his] field” and study “something like workman’s compensation.”⁷⁸ As the story was handed down to Taylor, one of the members of the faculty editorial committee at the University of California Press doubted that anyone would ever care to learn more about Mexican labor, telling a fellow committee member that, “he goes out and he talks with Mexican laborers, and he puts down what they say, and then he wants us to print it!”⁷⁹ But it would be wrong to assume that *Mexican Labor in the United States* fell on deaf ears. That the study was funded by such a prominent foundation as the Social Science Research Council—and that Taylor found a way to publish all of the volumes, albeit out of sequence, in such difficult economic times—is telling of the study’s perceived value to the social scientific community.

In the words of historian Warren Susman, the literature on “marginal men”—the “forced wanderers, vagabonds, and tramps”—were the “special legacy” of the 1930s. Memorialized in novels like John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, Edward Dahlberg’s *Bottom Dogs*, or Jack Conroy’s *The Disinherited*, marginal men did not “listen to the radio, go to the movies, or read *Life* magazine.” If the 1930s were “*the* decade of participation and belonging,” then marginal men resided outside of the American social and cultural mainstream.⁸⁰ Yet even the marginal man belonged to a greater community, finding a home within the Communist Party or the Federal Writers’ Project, both institutions that facilitated his search for community. The case of the Mexican laborer exposes the limitations of whiteness that surrounded “marginal men” status. Ignored by academics and artists alike, Mexican immigrants and their descendants built communities in the towns and cities in which they settled, attentive to the American cultural mainstream but not dependent upon it.

⁷⁸ *California Social Scientist*, 99.

⁷⁹ *California Social Scientist*, 99.

⁸⁰ Susman, 171-172.

It was not until the 1960s, when Chicano activists clamored for increased political and social recognition, that the social scientific community “rediscovered” the Mexican American—and would find itself completely unprepared for them.

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“OUT-IMAGINING” THE OTHER:
SPANISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE DUTCH IN THE
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ATLANTIC WORLD

By

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For years, historians of the Dutch Atlantic have had to challenge assumptions that Dutch commercial and shipping activities in the Americas were less profitable than similar projects undertaken in Asia. Believing that the series of nineteenth-century events that beset the Dutch Atlantic commerce—Great Britain’s abolition of the slave trade, the independence of many Spanish American colonies, and Napoleonic conquests—were indicative of events in the Atlantic sphere during the seventeenth century, many historians long ignored the legacy of Dutch prowess in Atlantic trade as well as Dutch colonization activities in the Americas.⁸¹ Over the past twenty years, a flurry of scholarship has appeared that has both proven the profitability of Dutch Atlantic ventures to the fledgling Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century and augmented our understanding of Dutch colonization in an attempt to rectify “the general lack of appreciation for the Dutch Atlantic experience.”⁸² However, historians continue to permit knowledge of what would eventually transpire by the eighteenth century—namely, that the Dutch would lose many of their holdings in the Americas and never revisit the glory of the 1628 Piet Heyn plunder of a Spanish silver fleet—color their interpretations of the Dutch “threat” to Spanish interests.⁸³ We “know” that the Dutch Atlantic empire never rivaled the Spanish in terms of size or

⁸¹ Victor Enthoven and Johannes Postma, “Introduction,” in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2003), 4-5.

⁸² Enthoven and Postma, 8. See, for example, Wim Klooster, *The Dutch in the Americas, 1600-1800* (Providence, RI: The John Carter Brown Library, 1997); Virginia W. Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering in the Golden Age Netherlands* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); P.C. Emmer, *The Dutch Slave Trade, 1500-1850* (New York: Berghahn Press, 2006); Willie F. Page, *The Dutch Triangle: The Netherlands and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1621-1664* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).

⁸³ J.H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 270; Wim Klooster, “Illicit Riches: The Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden, 1995, 49; Piet C. Emmer and Wim Klooster, “The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion Without Empire” *Itinerario* 13 (February, 1999), 31-48.

longevity, but how did the Spanish who lived in the Americas during the era of Dutch Atlantic expansion perceive the Dutch?⁸⁴

This paper explores Spanish attitudes towards the Dutch throughout the seventeenth century in the “marginal frontiers” of the Iberian Atlantic empire as well as in its nerve centers. It is a preliminary endeavor towards outlining themes for further research in the field of Dutch-Spanish interaction in the Atlantic World. The ways in which Dutch beliefs about Spanish activity in the Americas, crafted within a rhetoric of Dutch “innocence” and Spanish “tyranny,” catalyzed Dutch interest in exploration and trade were examined in Benjamin Schmidt’s 2001 monograph *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World*. Though visual representations of the Americas and treatises urging exploration such as those Schmidt analyzed had neither need nor counterpart in Spain, using Inquisition cases, letters from Spanish officials stationed in the Caribbean as well as South America, maps, and printed pamphlets, Spanish perceptions of the Dutch in economic as well as socio-cultural contexts can be outlined.⁸⁵ These varied documents all testify to what Kris Lane has termed the “out imagining of the other” that so often occurred in the Atlantic world, a region in which claims to power over native peoples, the landscape, and other Europeans were tenuous at best.⁸⁶ Representations of the Dutch as “enemies” looming just beyond Spanish ports stood in tandem with representations of the Spanish monarchy as “invincible,” while desperate pleas for assistance from the Spanish crown contrasted assertions that divine

⁸⁴ In his article, “The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion Without Empire,” Piet Emmer argues that Dutch expansion occurred outside of the purview of empire and that, if indeed, the term “empire” must be used, it refers only to the fifteen year period between 1630 and 1645, when the Dutch held northeastern Brazil. Simply put, Emmer argues that Dutch Atlantic ventures were indeed characterized by failure, evidenced by high mortality rates and subsequent lack of manpower, an unprofitable slave trade, and factionalism and mismanagement in the Dutch West India Company.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of Dutch print culture, see Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 8; for a discussion of Spanish print culture, see Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 144-145.

⁸⁶ Kris Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas, 1500-1750* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 7.

providence was on the side of the Catholic Spanish. Inquisition cases in which the Dutch were indicted wedded religious heresy to other illicit activities, such as piracy and smuggling. The many interactions between the Spanish and the Dutch no doubt created a complex view of the “other.”

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the relationship between the Dutch and the Spanish underwent a variety of changes in both the European theater and throughout the Americas. The northern Dutch provinces, in which a vocal Dutch Reformed Protestant contingent held sway, broke off from the Spanish Habsburg-controlled Netherlands to form the Dutch Republic in 1579, initiating the Eighty Years’ War with Spain. In spite of the conflict, however, Dutch trade flourished. Spanish trade embargoes that blocked necessary commodities like salt from entering the Republic as well as a desire for luxury goods like sugar and tobacco, advancements in cartography, and the growth of the Dutch shipbuilding industry combined to push the Dutch towards the Atlantic.⁸⁷

In 1592, a Dutch Reform religious refugee originally from Spanish-controlled Antwerp named William Usselinx began to advocate for the establishment of a West India Company (WIC) that would emulate the East India Company. Usselinx hoped that the WIC would establish plantation-based colonies in the Atlantic and also have a strong missionary component to convert native peoples to Dutch Reformed Protestantism. The States of Holland approved a preliminary plan for the WIC in 1606, but few shared Usselinx’s missionary zeal, hoping instead that the company would become a tool with which to assert Dutch trade interests but not necessarily Dutch warmongering.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the WIC project was temporarily shelved in light of the contemporaneous

⁸⁷ *Illicit Riches*, 6; Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 62-63.

⁸⁸ Hank Den Heijer, “The Dutch West India Company, 1621-1791” in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce*, 81

peace negotiations taking place between the Spanish and the Dutch Republic, as the Dutch feared this would seem too bellicose. After a lengthy stalemate between the peace and war parties within the Dutch Republic, the peace party, led by Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, ultimately prevailed. This victory, in concert with the financial crisis of the Spanish, led to the Twelve Year Truce with Spain from 1609 to 1621. Under the conditions of the Twelve Year Truce, the Spanish king recognized the independence of the Dutch Republic and Dutch territorial claims in the Indies.

The peace, however temporary, that prevailed in Europe and allowed the unprecedented growth of northern Dutch cities like Amsterdam had less resonance in the Americas.⁸⁹ Inter-imperial trade, smuggling, and piracy continued to be a problem for Spanish officials in the years of “peace,” while language referring explicitly to the Dutch as “enemies” was used.⁹⁰ In a 1615 letter sent from the city of San Miguel de Piura y Puerto de Paita, in Peru, chief magistrate Juan de Andrade Colmeneros warned officials in Spain that he had learned of “enemy Dutch” ships in nearby Chile as well as just 30 leagues from Callao. Piura, the oldest colonial city in Peru, would have been particularly vulnerable to attack because it was a major hub for the transport of silver.⁹¹ Emphasizing the laboriousness of his task and the difficulties that the Spanish faced in protecting their ports, Colmeneros wrote that his province “faces an arduous task because these five ships could contain more than 800 men,” adding that Dutch entry would place everything in “a state of great anxiety.”⁹²

⁸⁹ Victor Enthoven, “Early Dutch Expansion in the Atlantic Region, 1585-1621” in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce*, 21.

⁹⁰ Letter, Juan de Andrade Colmeneros to S.M., July 20, 1615, Audiencia de Quito, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, [PARES].

⁹¹ John C. Super, “Partnership and Profit in the Early Andean Trade: The Experiences of Quito Merchants, 1580-1610” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 11 (November, 1979), 66.

⁹² Letter, Juan de Andrade Colmeneros.

In a 1618 coup d'état, the leader of the peace faction in the Dutch Republic, Oldenbarnevelt, was beheaded and the belligerent party, led by Prince Maurits, came to power. Meanwhile, in Spain, the Duke of Lerma, chief minister and one of Spain's advocates of peace with the Netherlands, was dismissed from office in 1621, catalyzing the conclusion of the Twelve Years' Truce. Upon the resumption of open hostilities, deliberations over the proposed WIC were reopened. On June 3, 1621, the Dutch West India Company was chartered, stating in the preamble to its charter that its most important objectives were "shipping, trade, and commerce with the West Indies, Africa, and the Americas."⁹³ Yet that statement hardly belies the antagonistic nature of the WIC from its earliest years and the extent to which it was an instrument in the war against the Spanish writ in a New World context.⁹⁴ One of the first expeditions of the WIC went to Brazil under the leadership of Piet Heyn in December 1623 and January 1624, where Dutch forces attempted to monopolize the lucrative sugar trade. Though the nearly 5000 Dutch men who landed on Bahia de Todos os Santos in northeastern Brazil proved a formidable opponent, causing the flight of many Bahians, the Spanish soon quashed Dutch hopes of a Brazilian monopoly by sending 12,500 men across the Atlantic in 1625.⁹⁵ Dutch failure proved to the WIC leaders that their fledgling organization lacked the necessary manpower and capital needed to secure territory.⁹⁶ Though the Dutch at the time lacked the necessary resources to make territorial conquests, they continued Caribbean raids as well as privateering ventures, making small

⁹³ Den Heijer, 85.

⁹⁴ Den Heijer, 85.

⁹⁵ Klooster, 20.

⁹⁶ Den Heijer, 87.

gains as when they blocked the sailing of a ship loaded down with gold coming from Quito.⁹⁷

Their opportunity for Atlantic territorial expansion finally arrived in 1628, when Dutch privateer Piet Heyn captured an immense Spanish silver fleet at Matanzas, Cuba. His plunder yielded 177,000 pounds of silver, 66 pounds of gold, 1,000 pearls, and tropical produce totaling nearly 12 million guilders in value.⁹⁸ Emboldened by Heyn's capture, the Dutch attempted a second attack on Brazil in 1629; this time, they were successful. From northern Brazil, the Dutch moved to Curaçao in 1634, Aruba and St. Eustatius in 1636, establishing a strategic Caribbean triangle. Spanish fears of Dutch encroachment were also reflected on the Pacific coast of South America. In a 1628 letter, president of the Quito courts Antonio de Morga noted that "the Dutch enemies with many ships arrived on the Brazilian coasts of Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro last year [1627]." De Morga reported on the setup of his men in their posts in Guayaquil, noting that he had divided each ethnic group so that they would know where to go during a potential skirmish, placing "blacks and mulattoes in their place and Indians in the other." As we shall see, fears that the Dutch would incite Indians and Africans to rebel against the Spanish by were not uncommon.⁹⁹ Though historical evidence shows that the Dutch had few territorial designs on the Pacific coast, preferring to concentrate their efforts on the Caribbean and Brazil, de Morga's petitions for help suggest that the Dutch also threatened Spanish territorial sovereignty elsewhere.¹⁰⁰ Alternatively, de Morga's descriptions of danger could have been as much a

⁹⁷ Letter, the Audience of Quito to S.M., July 10, 1624, Audiencia de Quito, Archivo General de Indias, Seville [PARES].

⁹⁸ Lunsford, 199.

⁹⁹ See also *Casos notables sucedidos en las costas de Lima* (Seville: Juan de Cabrera, 1625) [PARES].

¹⁰⁰ Letter, Antonio de Morga to S.M., May 15, 1628, Audiencia de Quito, Archivo General de Indias, Seville [PARES]; Den Heijer, 96-97.

reflection of reality as of his desire to project himself as a loyal, faithful subject to the Spanish crown, willing to undergo any situation in order to preserve Spanish sovereignty.

But if documents from Spanish officials stationed throughout the Americas reflected a fear of Dutch encroachment, printed documents projected confidence that the Spanish would prevail against the Dutch enemy.¹⁰¹ In *Casos notables sucedidos en las costas de la ciudad de Lima*, a pamphlet printed in Seville around 1625, the author described the failed attempt of Dutch privateers to capture a ship loaded down with silver that was traveling to Cartagena. The author included the testimony of a soldier the Spanish had captured, instructing the reader to “Pay attention to the testimony of the Greek soldier taken prisoner by our [forces], to the men taken from that land, who died, the food they were given, and other things.” The testimony included was not, in fact, that of a Greek soldier but of a Flemish man of German birth who was a “gunner” for the Dutch enemies. The soldier testified to the fact that “wheresoever they [the Dutch] met with the Indians and black-mores they caused a rumor to be spread amongst them that they came to recover their liberty and settle them in it.” This further reflected Spanish fears of Dutch inducement of Indians and Africans to join the forces against the Spanish and helps to explain why the soldier stationed in Guayaquil noted the locations of his black and Indian soldiers. The Low Country mariner also described the captains of the ships as avaricious and uncaring, noting that the Admiral would probably die from “grief and vexation” that he was unable to capture the silver fleet he had hoped, while the Vice Admiral was “very cruel.” He admitted that he and many of his fellow shipmates, which he estimated at 2,500 men among the entire fleet, were “discontented by reason that

¹⁰¹ *Casos notables sucedidos en las costas de Lima*. Quotations from this document are taken from the English version of the pamphlet, published as *A true relation of the flecte which went under the Admirall Jaquis le Hermite through the Straits of Magellane towards the Coasts of Peru, and the Towne of Lima in the West Indies* (London: Mercurie Britannus, 1625), which is identical to the Spanish version with the exception of the title page—the Spanish claim that a soldier is Greek while the rest of the document asserts that he was, indeed, Flemish. The English version is available via Early English Books Online.

they could not get Biskit, and other victuals” and that the Admiral was “loath to land his men, fearing that many of them would run away.” The unglamorous portrayals of life in the Dutch Armada described by the Dutch seafarer could have been voiced by any sailor of the seventeenth century, regardless of nationality or allegiance, who undoubtedly faced difficult conditions and an uncertain future on the high seas. That the Spanish published this information, however, both suggested that they thought that their soldiers were treated better and intimated that the Dutch were not invincible. By exploiting Dutch discontent, the Spanish could ensure that the Dutch would not prevail in their territorial and privateering conquests.

A pamphlet printed in 1639 which described Portuguese victories in Brazil against the Dutch went even farther towards asserting Dutch vulnerability. Translated into Spanish from a letter written by an official in the Portuguese court to his son, the pamphlet, entitled *Victorias de las armas Católicas en Brazil*, claimed that the Catholic forces were “invincible.” The letter-writer recounted two different battles that had taken place in the Brazilian frontier in which the Dutch claimed that they would not give up their fortifications without first giving up their lives. In both instances, of course, the Portuguese and Spanish forces were victorious: in one battle, the writer estimated that three Iberian soldiers had died while 400 Dutch had died; in the other battle, he claimed that 80 Iberian soldiers had perished, but over 600 Dutch died. The overwhelming victories of the Portuguese and Spanish Catholic forces against their Protestant Dutch foe were a testament to the fact that the Catholics had divine providence on their side.

From praising God for his assistance in the victory, the letter transmogrified into a polemic against Dutch hubris. The author wrote that it was the hope of the Portuguese that “within a short time Pernambuco will be restored” and “the arrogant Icarus from Holland

will be overcome by the rays of the fourth planet, Philip IV, so that they will know what their wax wings are.”¹⁰² The metaphor of Icarus suggested that the Spanish viewed the Dutch as immodest in their endeavors to conquer Brazil, while their defeat demonstrated that, just as Icarus did not belong in the sky, the Dutch did not belong in the Atlantic as colonizers and would soon be put in their place by the rightful proprietors of the New World, the Catholic Spanish and Portuguese. To be certain, 1640 was the last year of the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns under Philip IV, but comparing the Spanish and Portuguese monarch to a single “planet” or the sun evinced the union of the two crowns under the Catholic faith.

If, as Benjamin Schmidt has claimed, the Dutch argued for an increased presence in the Americas by crafting a rhetoric of Spanish “tyranny” and Dutch “innocence,” the Spanish can be said to have used a similar rhetoric to justify their continued presence. In a map dating shortly after the Dutch conquest of Curaçao in 1634, the artist, Francisco de Ruesta, described the geography of the island, noting its “good air and soil” as well as its salt marshes and lack of rivers and water. The island was inhabited by 50 houses of baptized Indians, “about 450 souls” in its two towns, who supported themselves by corn and the trade in skins and cheese. When the Dutch entered, the artist claimed, they numbered 1,000 men and disembarked 600, conquering Curaçao in just a month because there were only eight Spanish who could defend the island. The island looks peaceful; two tiny mission towns, with crosses of the church clearly visible” are on the map of an island dotted with salt marshes. The only hint of conflict was the seven Dutch ships drawn menacingly in the

¹⁰² *Victorias de las Armas católicas contra holandeses en Brazil* (Madrid: Antonio Duplastre, 1639) [PARES]. Icarus is a character in Greek mythology who was imprisoned on the island of Crete. He attempted to escape with his father, Daedalus, who constructed wings for himself and his son out of wax and feathers. Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun because the heat would melt the wax on his wings, but, excited by the thrill of flying, Icarus got too close to the sun and fell from the sky, drowning at sea.

southern ports of Curaçao—no walls or Spanish military are depicted save a small Spanish castle. The map is evocative of the degree to which the Spanish felt that their presence and dealings with native peoples were for the benefit of the natives; an observation of the commodities they traded to sustain a living suggested that the Spanish had fostered their entry into a material culture; that they were baptized signified the work the Spanish had already done during their tenure on Curaçao. The numerous anchors that surrounded the island, representing landing spots, furthermore, might have indicated that the artist thought that the island could easily be reconquered, particularly given that the map was dedicated to the president of the Consejo de Indias.¹⁰³

The conquest of Curaçao, regarded as “readily defensible” by Madrid officials, undoubtedly held psychological resonance for the Spanish.¹⁰⁴ Located just forty miles north of Spanish Tierra Firme (modern-day Venezuela), Curaçao developed into a lucrative trading hub (particularly for the sale of slaves), headquarters for the Caribbean division of the WIC, and a hotbed for smuggling and piracy under Dutch auspices. A *junta de Curaçao* was established to determine ways to recapture the island, and it sent reconnaissance expeditions around the island at least several times. A dispatch sent by spy Francisco Núñez Meilán to Madrid attested to the island’s vulnerabilities: he observed that the port of Santa Barbara on Curaçao was unguarded because the Dutch had retreated to their fortifications.¹⁰⁵ Curaçao became the elusive brass ring of the Spanish over the next decades, though reconquest was never actually attempted due to Spain’s contemporaneous war with France and other engagements against the Dutch in Brazil. Anger over the Dutch conquest of the island

¹⁰³ Francisco de Ruesta, “Descripción de la isla de Curaçao que entraron los holandeses en 28 de Julio de 1634 años,” 1628, *Catálogo de Mapas y Planos de Venezuela*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, [PARES].

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 274.

¹⁰⁵ Letter, Francisco Núñez Meilán to unspecified, October 17, 1635, *Diversos Colecciones*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid [PARES].

undoubtedly provoked the Spanish to massacre all of the Dutch in their small colony on Tobago in 1635.¹⁰⁶

The 1648 Peace of Munster, which ended the Eighty Years' War with Spain by recognizing Dutch independence, also prohibited trade between their respective colonies.¹⁰⁷ Antagonism between the Spanish and the Dutch continued as the Spanish came into conflict with other European powers, while new trade disputes arose between the Spanish and the Dutch over their alleged supply of arms to Spanish enemies.¹⁰⁸ Dutch piracy, furthermore, increased following the 1648 Treaty. In 1651, the States-General, the national governing body of the Dutch Republic, lamented the mass exodus of individuals formerly “in the Country’s service” who “have bestowed themselves outside of the Land’s service, going [instead] to the pirates and thieves, who presently are so strongly rampant at sea, and with their ships help to perpetrate all sorts of violence, to the great detriment and harm—indeed, the total ruin—of the good residents of these provinces.”¹⁰⁹

Hostilities between the Spanish and the Dutch and views of the Dutch as a continual “threat” in the era of supposed peace were reflected in both letters from officials throughout the Atlantic and in Inquisition cases. The governor of Cartagena de Indias, Pedro Zapata de Mendoza, bemoaned in a 1658 letter that the Dutch “committed frauds in [their] search for silver” and that their activity “fogged up the glass” of his tenure in office.¹¹⁰ Zapata, who had entered office in 1654, found his time in office “overshadowed by a preoccupation with

¹⁰⁶ *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World*, 274.

¹⁰⁷ Linda M. Rupert, “Waters of Faith, Currents of Freedom: Gender, Religion, and Ethnicity in Inter-Imperial Trade between Curaçao and Tierra Firme,” in *Gender, Race, and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 153.

¹⁰⁸ *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World*, 375.

¹⁰⁹ States-General *Pardon aan de zeeleden* of August 25, 1651 quoted in Lunsford, 39.

¹¹⁰ Letter, Don Pedro Zapata to S.M., November 23, 1658, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, [PARES].

the fortifications and defense of Cartagena.”¹¹¹ Owing to his vigilance while in office, Zapata asserted that the Dutch were unable to enter Cartagena or ports downwind, though in 1659 he faced a litany of infractions, including charges that he had given preferred soldier posts to his own servants and that he had not held his court in a public place.¹¹² If the Dutch were a threat, letters also reflected a preoccupation with new threats: in a 1661 letter from the attorney of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo wrote to the King to let them know that there were foreign ships in the waters, referring to the French, English, and Dutch as “enemies.”¹¹³

In 1659, Juan de Grave, a Dutch pirate, was brought before the Inquisition in Cartagena de Indias on charges of heresy. The appearance of Dutch pirates before the Inquisition tribunal in Cartagena was not uncommon: many of those arrested for piracy voluntarily submitted themselves before the Inquisition Tribunal, preferring to be prosecuted as “heretics” rather than facing an inevitably more severe punishment before the civil justice, while the Dutch comprised the second-most represented group before the Inquisition after the English.¹¹⁴ According to a “mulatto” witness who had been on a ship traveling with the company of Juan Camperos and Francisco Luis to Tolú, Columbia, de Grave, accompanied by eight Frenchmen, boarded the ship and forced some of its crew to undress and to go under the hatch of the ship as he killed the crewmembers who remained on deck. Interestingly, the most egregious events to transpire on the ship were not the alleged murders of the crewmembers but rather de Grave’s blasphemous desecration of a flag painted with saints’ images that flew on the ship. De Grave allegedly took a flag depicting John the Baptist on one side and Our Lady of the Rosary on the other and asked

¹¹¹ Julia Herráez Sánchez de Escarche, *Don Pedro Zapata de Mendoza: Gobernador de Cartagena de Indias* (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1946), 57.

¹¹² Herráez Sánchez de Escarche, 88.

¹¹³ Letter, Jacinto de Vargas Campuzano to S.M., June 1661, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, Archivo Nacional Histórico, Madrid [PARES].

¹¹⁴ Fermina Álvarez Alonso, “Herejes ante la Inquisición de Cartagena de Indias.” *Revista de la Inquisición* 6 (1997), 239 and 241.

his captives to identify the images. When they responded, de Grave uttered something that intimated that John the Baptist deserved to have his head cut off. In learning that the other image was of Our Lady of the Rosary, the “holy mother and protector” of the ship, de Grave proclaimed that she was a “whore.” De Grave’s religious blunders continued when he spied a crewmember praying with a rosary and asked him what he was doing. When the person responded that he was praying the Ave Maria and the Our Father, de Grave told him that, “It isn’t necessary to pray in such a serious way.”¹¹⁵

Three witnesses testified in de Grave’s hearing, an uncommon occurrence in Cartagena Inquisition trials.¹¹⁶ Their stories varied slightly—some claimed that de Grave’s accomplices were French Catholics, while others claimed that de Grave himself was not Dutch, but French. The French allied with the Dutch throughout the seventeenth century, placing them in a position of mistrust. Each witness corroborated the flag story, suggesting both the severity of de Grave’s crime and that the Inquisition officials wanted to be certain that they understood the evidence against de Grave. For the record, the senior inquisitor referred to de Grave as both “Dutch” and as a “*pebelingue holandés*.” “*Pebelingue*,” a term that never made it into the official Spanish lexicon, was a corruption of the place name “Vlissingen,” a seaport in the Northern Provinces of the Netherlands. Vlissingen was also the spot from which many of the Dutch privateering expeditions were launched. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *pebelingue* came to signify “someone or something from Vlissingen” but also a “pirate, corsair, buccaneer, or filibuster.”¹¹⁷ It is unclear which of the meanings was connoted when referring to de Grave (though he

¹¹⁵ “Proceso de fe de Juan de Grave,” 1659, Tribunal de la Inquisición de Cartagena de Indias, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, [PARES].

¹¹⁶ Álvarez Alonso, 257.

¹¹⁷ Engel Sluiter, “The Word *Pebelingue*: Its Derivation and Meaning,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 24, No. 4 (November, 1944), esp. 685 and 697.

certainly sounds as though he was a pirate), but it is an example of how the Spanish vocabulary was modified by encounters with the Dutch.¹¹⁸

It would be wrong to claim that all who inhabited the margins of the Iberian Atlantic world during the seventeenth century shared the feelings of animosity towards the Dutch reflected in official documents. The Dutch illicit trade with Tierra Firme and New Granada (Colombia) was so successful because it enjoyed widespread support among a variety of settlers, from Roman Catholic clergy to Sephardic Jews, who were often neglected by Spanish supply ships because the regions they inhabited were deemed little more than a “buffer zone” against pirates.¹¹⁹ Smuggling gained importance in the late seventeenth century and helped to sustain the inhabitants of the region as Spanish industrial, textile, and agricultural production declined, leading the Habsburg monarchy to adopt restrictive trade policies that limited exports to America in an effort to drive up prices.¹²⁰ Appropriating a term from geographer Donald Meinig, Linda Rupert has argued that those who participated in inter-imperial maritime trade created “‘new human geographies’ that responded to the physical realities of the Caribbean Sea and its littorals, and to the cultures of the corresponding colonial societies, but were largely independent of the political boundaries of European imperial spheres.”¹²¹ Spanish consumers who participated in illicit trade were quick to denounce their suppliers as “pirates” whenever they were caught. In 1565, English privateer John Hawkins repeatedly visited Curaçao to stockpile meat, and many Spanish documents of the time record that his activities were “piracy.” However, an investigation of commercial records from that same year indicate that the exchanges with Hawkins were

¹¹⁸ “Proceso de fe de Juan de Grave.”

¹¹⁹ Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 19-20; Linda Rupert, “Contraband Trade and the Shaping of Colonial Societies in Curaçao and Tierra Firme.” *Itinerario* 30 (2006), 36.

¹²⁰ Grahn, 19.

¹²¹ Rupert, 35.

voluntary, suggesting the scrutiny with which documents that proclaim “piracy” must be examined.¹²²

One Inquisition case from Cartagena in 1700 attested to smuggling’s countenance in the margins of empire, even among government officials. In the case, a doctor making his rounds of a prison discovered a letter penned by a Dutch Jewish slave trader named Felipe Henriquez, already in prison for smuggling and heretical beliefs.¹²³ In the letter, Henriquez thanked a litany of individuals for their help in a separate smuggling operation, implicating the governor of Cartagena, Don Juan Diaz Pimenta; Don Manuel de Puga, warden of the prison; and Don Domingo Ariguiano, a member of the Inquisition Tribunal, in the illicit trade.¹²⁴ That such a variety of individuals—including a member of the very organization whose purpose was to root out heresy and dissent—were involved in an act that subverted Spain’s imperial goals attests to the importance of smuggling. That they were willing to conspire with a Dutch Jew, an outcast on two counts, further implies that negative images of Jewish and Dutch individuals depicted in official documents were not necessarily omnipresent.¹²⁵ Amicable relations between the Dutch and Luso-Hispanic individuals also extended to more personal spheres, complicating the purported Luso-Hispanic Catholic unity against the Protestant Dutch. Brazil was chosen as a site for the WIC’s colonial endeavors in no small part because of its lucrative sugar trade, but it was also chosen because there were many New Christians and other individuals who lived there who would find it to their advantage to cooperate with the more tolerant Dutch.¹²⁶ Marriage between Portuguese

¹²² Rupert, 36-37.

¹²³ For more on Philipe Henriquez see Wim Klooster, “The Jews in Suriname and Curaçao,” in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1400-1800* (Providence, RI: The John Carter Brown Library, 2001), 359-360.

¹²⁴ “Proceso Criminal de Miguel Iriarte contra Felipe Enriquez y el Doctor Horst,” 1700, Tribunal de la Inquisición de Cartagena de Indias, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, [PARES].

¹²⁵ For more on the complexity of Spanish [Catholic] views towards Jews, see Stuart Schwartz’s *All Can Be Saved*, esp. 79-118.

¹²⁶ Schwartz, 193-194

Catholics and Dutch Protestants in Dutch Brazil were common, if problematic for Protestant and Catholic clergy who worried about the “insecurity of national and religious identities.”¹²⁷ When the Portuguese revolted against the Spanish Habsburg monarchy in 1640 to restore the independence of the Portuguese crown, they found ready allies with the Dutch. The alliance, however, was only temporary, as the Dutch refusal to abandon its Brazilian holdings, Dutch attacks on Portuguese holdings in Africa, and other factors contributed to increased hostility between the two groups.¹²⁸

To many of the Spanish scattered throughout the seventeenth century Americas, the Dutch continued to represent a threat to Spanish territorial sovereignty, trade, and religion. These threats persisted in spite of the fact that Dutch territorial claims in the Americas indeed dwindled after the loss of Pernambuco in 1654 and New Amsterdam in 1674 and that the Dutch West India Company (WIC) was going bankrupt following a multitude of failed privateering expeditions.¹²⁹ As we have seen, not all who interacted with the Dutch viewed their presence in the Spanish Americas as a threat: some in fact viewed it as a necessity. Spaniards living in the “marginal frontiers” of the Spanish empire: places like Tierra Firme, the northern coast of Venezuela, were often ignored by Spanish supply ships focused on lucrative Mexico and Peru and welcomed Dutch smugglers as provisioners of necessary goods.¹³⁰

This paper does not presume to be a thorough examination of the spheres in which Atlantic interactions between the Spanish and the Dutch occurred throughout the seventeenth century. The Dutch slave trade is one notable omission from this study, as

¹²⁷ Schwartz, 196.

¹²⁸ Schwartz, 197-198.

¹²⁹ *The Dutch in the Americas, 1600-1800*, 35 and 39.

¹³⁰ Linda M. Rupert, “Contraband Trade and the Shaping of Colonial Societies in Curaçao and Tierra Firme.” *Itinerario* 30 (2006), 36.

human commerce was one of the largest trades in which the Spanish and Dutch participated during wartime, particularly when the Portuguese supply was cut off after Portuguese independence.¹³¹ Its exclusion is due rather to a paucity of sources available to a researcher in Nashville, Tennessee; future studies of Dutch-Spanish interaction must include the slave trade.

If anything, this project speaks to the need for additional cultural histories of the Dutch Atlantic; for more studies that illustrate how those living in the Americas created “new human geographies” that challenged the limitations to interaction placed on them by imperial powers distant from the realities of daily life in the colonies. It also suggests that further studies of Spanish-Dutch interactions in the seventeenth-century Atlantic must also include Portuguese perspectives, as the official ambitions of these powers were closely intertwined until 1640.

¹³¹ Han Jordan, “The Curaçao Slave Market,” in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce*, 223.

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