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The Good, The Bad, & The Fortified: How the Complex Relationship between Military Bases and Mexican Americans Shaped the Southwest, 1942-1975

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Interdisciplinary Humanities

by

Andrew Sanchez Garcia

Committee in charge:
Professor David Rouff, Chair
Professor Veronica Castillo-Muñoz
Professor Kevin Dawson
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May 2024

The Good, The Bad, & The Fortified: How the Complex Relationship between Military Bases and Mexican Americans Shaped the Southwest, 1942-1975

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“Work Smart Not Hard.” – Dr. Monica I. Garcia

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ABSTRACT

The Good, The Bad, & The Fortified: How the Complex Relationship between Military Bases and Mexican Americans Shaped the Southwest, 1942-1975

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Humanities
University of California, Merced, 2024
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This dissertation explores select military bases within the United States' Southwest and their relationship with Mexican American communities, in Atwater, California, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. This study is explored in conjunction with an examination of the expansion of military bases and installations throughout the U.S. Southwest from 1942 to 1975. The establishment of military institutions initially prompted positive changes in the communities where they grew, but their presence and eventual absence brought devastating consequences. Military institutions and installments created new economic and labor opportunities and helped form new communities. However, when these bases were no longer needed, surrounding communities suffered due to significant economic downturn and detrimental environmental impacts.

I seek to utilize an intersectional lens focusing on race, ethnicity, class, and gender to explore the transformation of Mexican American communities alongside the expansion of U.S. military bases. Furthermore, I will analyze the ways in which the U.S. military's presence differed in California, New Mexico, and Colorado, due to regional factors, demographics, and the branch of military, demonstrating the unique development of each state and the Southwest region. The purpose for taking a cross regional approach is to provide a comparison of these regional factors in the different states to exemplify what differences and similarities developed alongside the establishment of certain military bases. Moreover, this analysis shows military bases had both positive and negative impacts on surrounding communities, especially on Mexican American communities. This approach emphasizes the need for further study on the impacts of military bases over time, taking into consideration, war time, social movements, and the evolution of labor and social standings held by Mexican Americans in the U.S.

The U.S. military provided many benefits, however, as I show throughout this dissertation, for Mexican Americans and their communities, initial advantages and opportunities provided by the military's presence did not last over time nor were they equally allocated throughout World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The most touted benefits of military service were financial security, employment with opportunity for growth, medical care and for some, a path to U.S. citizenship. This is contrasted with the harmful effects on families during war times and periods of conflict, the negative impacts on physical and mental health, and post service disappointment when promised benefits did not materialize. This is also evident when a military establishment leaves a community: their absence detrimentally effects the overall health and stability of the

community. Additionally, this dissertation will focus on how, and if, Mexican Americans are remembered or honored for their military service, labor, political accomplishments, public service, education and activism within their communities. These acts are significant because they were often created or transformed by the U.S. military's presence. This project aims to contextualize the relationship between Mexican American communities and the U.S. military beyond service and further examine the true benefits and damaging consequences of the military's presence and absence.

Introduction

The defining features of twentieth century U.S. history were the tremendous changes prompted by the country's involvement in profitable and horrible wars, which provided many economic, social, and political opportunities for the nation and its citizens. This dissertation analyzes the U.S. military and its expansion between 1942 and 1975 with a special focus on the growth, involvement, and impact of militarization on Mexican American communities. Furthermore, this dissertation explores Mexican American ties to military service, the establishment of military bases, and how the history of their connection to the growth and sustainability of the U.S. military has been represented. Mexican American individuals and communities have had connections to the U.S. military, notably in military service and combat since the American Civil War. The military has offered minoritized communities and ethnic groups many opportunities to demonstrate their patriotism, gain employment, and access to new career pathways unavailable in their home communities. The many benefits of U.S. military service had significant impacts on Mexican American communities, especially when they were part of the establishment of a military base.

Military bases in the U.S. have contributed to the defense of the nation and have played a significant role in national and international military operations. These military bases also played an important role in the growth and transformation of local communities which shared the same geographical space. Scholarship on Mexican American and other communities of color within the U.S. can be complicated and be further enhanced with analysis on the influence of the establishment of military bases. This approach helps reshape the history of Mexican descended communities, the intersections between race, nation, and citizenship, and the scholarship on multi-ethnic communities. This dissertation's arguments explore how Mexican Americans both benefited from and were negatively affected by military service. This is reflected in the exploration of the establishment of military bases, the numerous impacts of military bases on neighboring communities, and the ways Mexican Americans' military service are remembered or forgotten. For example, the military offered Mexican American servicemembers access to education opportunities through the G.I. bill, however, due to rampant racial discrimination, many were denied or faced additional challenges in obtaining these benefits. These barriers and challenges prompted the creation of Mexican American veteran organizations that aided veterans and fought for benefits on their behalf. This advocacy garnered greater focus on the many racial issued Mexican Americans faced in and out of military service.

Reshaping the Scholarship

Scholarship on communities of Mexican descent in the U.S. from 1940 on has mainly focused on the U.S.-Mexico border, agricultural labor, and the urban areas of the colonia and barrio. Focus on military bases and their adjacent communities reshapes the questions, methods and interpretations of the significance of Mexican descended communities in the U.S. This is because military bases and installations inherently changed the ways a community formed and interacted with their surroundings. For example, the presence and physicality of a base raises questions about belonging, accessibility, and community involvement. A military base is a unique place with structural and functional

features meant to exclude. There are buildings with specific military and base maintenance functions; it is surrounded by barbed-wire fences and armed guards for security; and there are additional guards monitoring its entrances, movements of its personnel, and the accessibility of its resources.

A military base can stand within a community and seem integrated, but it is ultimately isolated from the larger public domain. This isolation, however, as this dissertation demonstrates, is at times broken through instances of public outreach, which include the organization of open and free festivities. One significant example was the celebration of U.S. Armed Forces Day at the Castle Air Force Base (CAFB) in Atwater, California. This day of patriotism and comradery was celebrated with an open invitation to the public, near and far, to admire the achievements and technological advancements of the U.S. military at the base. This contradictory notion of exclusion most of the time and inclusion sometimes, demonstrates an alternative way to consider how a military base fits into the surrounding community. This approach is significant because it provides new opportunities to explore the deeper and public ties a military base has to the community, especially when their evolution over time is considered. Furthermore, it increases the understanding of how the closure of a military base can greatly impact its surrounding community.

Race, Nation, Citizenship

Part of this dissertation's intervention is its research on the formation and downfall of military service in relation to Mexican Americans and their communities, which provides new avenues to consider questions about the intersections of race, nation, and citizenship within the study of community. Scholars have written, analyzed, and interpreted the development of the Civil Rights Movement in the Southwest and have touched on the connections between race, nation, and citizenship. However, this dissertation takes a new perspective on these aspects by finding the connections between the establishment of military bases and their influence on community formation, identity, and diversity. The establishment of military bases diversifies neighboring communities with the influx of a multi-ethnic military personnel, who are drawn to military bases for training and employment. Those who did not live within the base itself found housing within the surrounding community, thus creating new interethnic interactions and racial relationships. For example, the Castle AFB in Atwater, CA, contributed to the growth of a Black community within neighboring communities and helped accommodate Black military personnel working and training at the base.[1]

Questions of nation are inextricably tied to notions of patriotism and service for the sake of the country. Serving within the military proves one's devotion to one's country by conveying their willingness to risk their lives for its defense. The presence of a military base within a community proves the community's patriotism and instills a sense of pride that could be promoted to residents and visitors. The questions of nation and patriotism are also connected to notions of citizenship. The aspect of citizenship is especially prominent within Mexican American communities, because being a part of the U.S. military was one way to

[1] Sarah Lim, "Museum Notes: Black Gold: Second influx of families," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA),* February 24, 2007: 02, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/117806076CA26058.

gain citizenship. People of Mexican descent were and are willing to enlist and fight in the military to become legal citizens. The presence of a military base, specifically within ethnic communities, allows for this research to undertake a re-examination focus about the role of the military in the accessibility to citizenship. The shift in Mexican American self-identity and its evolution over time, particularly during the war years (1942-1975), is also considered in connection with the notions of citizenship and community. Furthermore, Mexican Americans' presence complicates the notions of patriotism, nation, and region by adding issues of race and ethnicity into the conversation. This further highlights questions about discrimination within the U.S. military as a whole. Scholarship on ethnically diverse communities thus benefits from research on the ways the presence of military bases impacts ethnic community development and identity. This consideration of the military provides a richer understanding of how these communities were established, how they evolved, and why and if they survived. This approach illuminates different instances of racial and ethnic discrimination, especially from the 1940s on. As will be explored in the following chapters, racial and ethnic discrimination pervaded the military and the American public more generally, but not always in the same ways. Mexican American servicemen had to navigate two different realms and faced the consequences of this discrimination. For example, Chicanos who fought in the Vietnam War faced discrimination, from Anglo Americans and other ethnic groups, thus adding to the complexity of race relations and interactions under this context of the military.[2] This dissertation provides insight into how this was conducted within the military, during the wars overseas, and when these veterans returned to their home communities.

Exploring how the military fits into the history of ethnic communities reveals the extent of racism and discrimination within the military and in military bases, and further, how this affected neighboring communities. This is exemplified in the story of a Mexican American WWII pilot, Henry Cervantes, one of the few Mexican American Air Force pilots who served in WWII. Cervantes encountered instances of racism and discrimination within the military, and even recalls a race riot, which broke out in a Denver, Colorado military base due to rising racial tensions between White and Black airmen.[3] Focusing on the military, its bases and installations, sets a model for studies of other ethnic communities by providing information on how these communities interacted with one of the most powerful entities in the U.S. and how these interactions further affected their growth and survival.

The focus on military bases and their adjacent communities provides new questions to consider within the scholarship of Mexican descended peoples and other multi-ethnic communities. The physicality of military bases themselves provides new avenues to think about community relations and the notions of belonging and exclusion. The concepts of race, nation, and citizenship are complicated with analysis of military bases and their neighboring communities, especially for those of Mexican descent, by exploring racial relations and access to citizenship. Finally, scholars studying other multi-ethnic communities should consider military base communities to gain a new perspective of the growth and evolution of their communities. The uncovering of the histories of communities of color, their social standings, education and the labor opportunities, and legacies is

[2] Some Chicano Vietnam veterans in their accounts from their service noted of times of both friendly and feuding relations with platoons consisting of Chicanos, Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Indians and Anglos. As seen in *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam*, ed. by Charley Trujillo. San Jose, CA: Chusma House Publishers, 1990.

[3] Henry Cervantes, *Piloto: Migrant Worker to Jet Pilot* (Hellgate Press, 2002).

significant. This dissertation provides an example of this needed approach by focusing on the transformations of military bases, neighboring communities, Mexican American veterans, and how the impacts of military influences on individuals and the community as a whole.

Thesis/Core Arguments

The U.S. military offered many benefits, but for Mexican Americans, the initial advantages and opportunities provided by the military's presence did not last over time nor were they equally allocated throughout World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. This dissertation explores the position of Mexican Americans prior enlisting or being drafted in the military and the end of their service over the three wars. Military service was viewed as a means to provide for oneself and for their country. However, after WWII this idea began to wane and by the time of the Vietnam War, this notion was directly challenged and no longer seen as a viable option for young Mexican Americans or Chicanos, especially with the rise of the Chicano Movement. This argument considers how the wars impacted U.S. and military expansion, what benefits were offered to veterans, how Mexican Americans' view of military service changed over time, and how racial discrimination prevailed despite military service. The idea of initial benefits and negative impacts over time is also explored when analyzing the establishment of military bases and their impacts on neighboring communities reflects military service Mexican Americans experienced from WWII to Vietnam. The following section further explains the key questions and Ideas addressed within this dissertation and provides crucial information from supplemental scholarship.

Key Questions and Ideas

The first idea and key question addresses the benefits of military service, community, and social mobility: Did Mexican Americans view military duty as "service" or as a necessary means to an end while living in a segregated and discriminatory society? For many, especially Mexican Americans, joining the military provided opportunities largely unavailable to them in other employment and social sectors. Scholarship on Mexican Americans within the military convey how veterans' home communities and families were affected during wartimes and provide further context to why they enlisted, their achievements within the military and their overall experiences while serving. For example, David Gutierrez's *Patriots from the Barrio: The Story of Company E, 141st Infantry: The Only All Mexican American Army Unit in WWII*, provides a case study revealing why some Mexican Americans enlisted, highlighting their accomplishments and a collection of their wartime experiences. Gutierrez also emphasizes veterans' actions during battles, how the army offered higher pay than other civilian employment ($21 a month), war decorations men received during and after the war, and the conditions they faced when they returned home.[4] Works like this provide historical and contextual background, but more studies are needed about the direct and lasting effects of war and military service on Mexican American communities.

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[4] Dave Gutierrez, *Patriots from the Barrio: The Story of Company e, 141st Infantry: The Only All Mexican American Army Unit in World War II* (Chicago: Westholme Publishing, 2018), 25.

The second question concerns the processes of community formation: When were Mexican American communities formed; where were they established, and who were in these communities in the states of California, New Mexico and Colorado? How did the presence of the U.S. military influence Mexican American community development within CA, NM, and CO? Current scholarship has addressed the connections between the labor, migration, settlement, and segregation of Mexican and Mexican American communities. These scholarly works provide context to why Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals faced exclusion and discrimination within labor, education, and opportunities of social mobility. Additionally, there are works, which address the formation of military bases and defense installations within suburban communities, such as Andrew Friedman's *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* and Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. These works, which will be analyzed further in relation to the arguments of this dissertation, detail how the transformation of suburban communities was a direct result of federal investments into national defense, which included defense contracts and the creation of defense installations. However, additional research is needed to explore the connections between military base relations and localized communities, and the development of ethnic communities and race relations.

These different regions and their communities were formed in part through migration for labor opportunities, which included jobs within military bases. Although there was limited direct funding into neighboring communities from military bases themselves, they were transformed from the migration of servicemembers and their families and new job opportunities. Military bases impacted the regions they resided in including their neighboring Mexican American communities. The following chapters will provide additional examples of these impacts and the transformations they prompted as a direct result from military base establishment.

The third idea regards the connections between government legislation and social and racial/ethnic movements in Mexican American communities and are addressed with questions regarding benefits and participation in activism: Did legislation enacted to fund base projects and infrastructures translate into any benefits for neighboring communities? How did this affect the community's relationship to the base? This focus on opportunities from military service through U.S. legislation and the rise of civil rights movements will contribute to the analysis of the divisions between military benefits and the deterioration of military service and military institutions within Mexican American communities, which is the overall aim of this dissertation. As this work will argue, the enthusiasm and opportunity evident in the high levels of Mexican American enlistment from WWII through the 1950s noticeably waned as the U.S. entered into unpopular wars and the rise of the Civil Rights in the 1960s. These questions will help explore how U.S. legislation connected to benefits of military service for Mexican Americans, such as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act or GI Bill. The Civil Rights and the Chicano Movement greatly influenced both Mexican and Mexican American communities, but this research explores these influences and see if they carried over into the relationship between local communities, military service, and military bases.

While military bases were able to acquire enormous sums of federal funding, little went directly into neighboring communities. Despite the lack of direct funding the expansion of the bases themselves contributed to the growth of surrounding cities and

brought more opportunities for communities, which included more jobs that served the expanding military base and its residents. Different social movements, while they impacted the views of the military and military service along with Mexican American community activism, did not directly impact military bases themselves. Mexican American communities within the Southwest participated in social movements, but their relationship with the community and bases was not found to be significantly negatively impacted. However, cultural/communal attitudes towards military service shifted decisively as a result of Vietnam and the Chicano movement. These ideas help emphasize the significance of this study and the importance of taking a closer look into community studies in conjunction with military bases.

The fourth question concerns employment and employment opportunities for Mexican Americans: How is the military as an employer defined and how it has impacted a neighboring community over time? This question aims to understand how those of the Mexican American communities viewed the military as an employment opportunity and how this view changed during the turbulent times of the 1960s and 1970s. This will contribute to the further assessment of how Mexican Americans looked for opportunities of social mobility, which the military provided to a point, and how long it took for these views to change.

The exploration of this question allows for an understanding of the direct impacts a military base has on neighboring communities. This research argues military bases and installations were viewed as significant for providing employment for communities. The following chapters will explore the employment opportunities created by these installations and how their presence was viewed by community members. The study of military bases, such as the case study on Castle AFB in Atwater, highlights the impacts of the rise of employment on a community, which were not only significant when the base closed but also had lasting consequences for the city of Atwater and its residents. The study conducted on the Castle AFB will be utilized throughout the dissertation to provide evidence of military base and local community relations.

The final idea addresses memory and remembrance and questions how and if Mexican American veterans, and the wars they served in, have been represented and preserved. This question will be answered by analyzing different mediums such as written text, oral histories, public memories, and physical sites. The aspects of memory will be considered through theoretical concepts of social and collective memory.[5] Social memory and collective memory, in brief, refers to the exploration of social identity and historical memory within a larger community. This is utilized to understand how the military and the service of Mexican American veterans are formed and remembered over time. Moreover, social and collective memory is useful to explore how memorial sites are established, the significance of their locations, what histories they convey to the public, and noting what is missing from these histories. This dissertation will also focus on how, and if, Mexican Americans are remembered or honored for their military service, labor, political accomplishments, public service, education and activism within their communities. This dissertation contextualizes the relationship between Mexican American communities and the U.S. military beyond service. Furthermore, it argues there are parts of this relationship that have been omitted or not fully explored. This is where the work takes an approach into

[5] Scholarly works include James Fentress and Chris Wickham's *Social Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory*, and Paul Ricœur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

taking account how memory is formed and sustained overtime. This study of military bases and Mexican American veterans can contribute to filling in those gaps with the further examination of the true benefits of and devastation brought on from the military's presence and absence.

Methods and Research Sources

In order to fully explore the military's impacts on local communities, the methods utilized in this dissertation include the analysis of oral history and archival materials, which will aid in the examination of audio recordings and written testimonies. An intersectional lens will be used for analysis, which will consider notions of race, gender, community, and memory. Personal oral interviews from veterans, including Mexican American veterans, from the three aforementioned wars will be analyzed and will fill the gaps of mainstream historical narratives.[6] The use of oral histories will highlight what veterans experienced, during their service, especially during war time, and in their homes and communities. This information will be supplemented with archival research, which will help locate other military related sources including service members' records, cemetery information, and planning records pertaining to base developments. The exploration of Mexican American communities will assess the impacts of military service and their proximity to military bases. This assessment will focus on how these communities changed over time and the impacts of military bases and installations, particularly from when they were established up to 1975. An exception to this time frame, is the specific study of the Castle AFB, which will be analyzed until its closure in 1995 and be used throughout the dissertation. This research will also utilize sources, such as city and local newspapers, which have Op-ed pieces, and important headlines. Additionally, census reports, civic records, city development plans, civil planning records, and environmental reports will also be utilized.

Supplementary materials for this dissertation include archived materials such as state governor papers, letters from different organizations, and individual correspondences, which aid in the exploration of military service within Mexican American communities. The locations for these materials are found in both physical and online sources.[7] The physical resources were found in university and state records within California, New Mexico, and Colorado.[8] In addition to the physical cities of Atwater, Colorado Springs, and Albuquerque, this dissertation benefits from visits to veteran and civilian cemeteries with a particular focus on military gravesites. These veteran cemeteries provide important information about who served within a specific location. Headstones have specific names of veterans, their rank and service branch, what wars they served in, and their birth and death dates; this type of information is useful for a focus on specific people when needed.[9] Other sources of information include the viewing and reading of established statues, plaques, memorial sites, artworks, exhibits, and museums across California, Colorado, and New Mexico. The information found, or lack thereof, within these public places and sites provides insight into

[6] Oral recorded interviews have been found from the Library of Congress (online). Another source: Oral History Center from The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[7] An example of an online resource: The National Archives.

[8] Hoover Library, Stanford University, University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado State University, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and New Mexico State Archives.

[9] Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

what parts of the historical narrative about Mexican American veterans are visible, how these areas are presented to the public, and what kind of images or representations are formed from these public displays.

Dissertation Significance

This dissertation research is situated within the scholarship of U.S. military history, Mexican American history, community studies, and memory. This research seeks to provide a new understanding in the connections between military service, military bases, and communities of color. Moreover, it seeks to understand how the military influenced the community's development over time. Furthermore, this research will illuminate how Mexican American civilians and veterans received employment and social opportunities, while simultaneously facing the consequences of racial discrimination and the social, economic, and environmental effects created by military bases and installations. This dissertation is distinct in its comparison of different locations across the Southwest, which allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the impacts of the U.S. military on ethnic communities. Mexicans Americans have served in many wars dating back to the U.S. Civil War and the Spanish American War, and thus have proven a sense of loyalty for their country. And yet, ethnic hostility towards Mexican American had not lessoned over time.[10] This research explores the juxtaposition of fighting for a country but not receiving significant recognition from the larger community and society.

The first chapter explores the development of military installations in the Southwest. The landscape of the Southwest, with the demographics of the cities and specific military installations including military bases utilized within this study, will be addressed. These military installations, their labor and economy, will also be analyzed through an alternative approach that views military communities as company towns. I argue these factors influenced military bases and what bases offered communities, both beneficial and negative. The second chapter addresses Mexican American civilians before the start of WWII. Specifically, the chapter argues the shaping of the Mexican American identity, challenges Mexican American communities faced, and labor opportunities within the Southwest are directly connected to the increase in mass military participation. The third chapter provides an exploration of Mexican American service in the military: their service experiences, new opportunities for wartime labor, Mexican American women's labor during wartime, and the creation of a sense of community while in military service. This chapter argues that military service shaped Mexican Americas' perspective of the military as a pathway for upward mobility and useful benefits in contrast to the limited opportunities within their home communities. The fourth chapter focuses on the treatment of Mexican American veterans when they returned home from war, and the post-WWII emergence and influences of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movement. The chapter argues Mexican Americans' experience as returning veterans contributed to their shifting views of the military from positive to negative by the onset of the Vietnam War and the continued racial issues within their home communities. The fifth chapter addresses Mexican American community development in relation to military bases. I discuss the violence and hidden histories tied to the Mexican and Mexican American communities and focus on how these communities developed after

[10] Richard A. Garcia, ed., *The Chicanos In America, 1540-1974: a Chronology & Fact Book* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1977), 200.

WWII. This chapter explores examples in Colorado, New Mexico, and California in the ways the military bases and installations influenced the transformations of these communities. This chapter argues how these influences reflect military service for Mexican Americans, initial benefits but over time the creation of negative consequences. Chapter six focuses on memory and explores how Mexican American military service is remembered. This will be accomplished by noting what is absent from the historical narrative along with an analysis of memorials and other acts of remembrance. It is argued how this consideration of memory is important due to the gaps of Mexican American influences in relation to the military. Finally, the dissertation will conclude with an epilogue that considers further questions in relation to military service today, the incentivized or "deals" conducted by the military and exploring selected Mexican American communities whose residents were impacted by the wars, military bases, and city development.

Ch. 1: Development of Military Installations in the Southwest

The deliberate and strategic establishment of military installations provided the U.S. military with platforms to train soldiers, store weapons, sustain the nation's defenses, and support international operations. Domestic military bases were critical to urban development, social transformations, and community development within the U.S. Southwest, especially in California, New Mexico, and Colorado. This dissertation utilizes the establishment of domestic military bases and community studies to demonstrate the drastic urban and social transformations caused by the presence of the U.S. military. Furthermore, this dissertation argues for the critical consideration of how military bases and defense installations impacted local communities, specifically how and why their economies, demographics, and urban layout changed. The erection of military bases and installations greatly benefited surrounding communities by bolstering their economies and increasing labor opportunities for residents. However, these establishments had negative impacts on local communities, which were left to navigate unprecedented environmental and economic consequences when military installations left the area.

This chapter will first examine the landscape of the Southwest exploring the three states of California, New Mexico, and Colorado. This first section will briefly address each state's history of the development of Mexican American communities and as well as the military connections including of the development of military bases starting with the onset of WWII. These connections will reveal why the military was able to establish itself within these Southwestern states. The location and nearby community, along with the population, land availability, and military branch, all played a crucial role in the decision to pick an area to house a military base. The next section will focus on the impacts of federal government investment in domestic bases on surrounding communities. These investments directly affected local communities by increasing population growth, labor opportunities, and the construction of infrastructure. The final section will focus on analyzing the structure of company towns in order to provide an analytical analogy to further understand the impacts and influences of military bases as a labor force. The comparison of military bases to company towns will allow for a clearer understanding of the intricate functions of military bases in relation to labor and community. The chapter will also use the Castle AFB to analyze the topics of community and population, federal investment into military bases, and labor for the local communities. This base, during it operation and after its closure, significantly impacted its nearby communities, their economies, environments, and demographics. As this dissertation will argue and exemplify, community and military studies like Castle AFB are significant in order to provide a more in depth study on the impacts of military bases on the neighboring communities and even for the larger Southwest.

Previous scholarship has focused on the macro views of the history of military bases; their economic impacts on the landscape they occupy, the significant contributions to national defense, and their demise with demilitarization. This dissertation, however, takes a more focused approach and considers communities' perspectives in assessing the effects of military service and the presence of military bases within their lives and communities. To accomplish this objective, this chapter explores the experiences of Mexican American communities, the establishment, building, and operation of military bases, and the multiple significant impacts to the states of California, New Mexico, and Colorado.

The Landscape of the Southwest

The U.S. Southwest experienced many significant twentieth century transformations with the establishment and expansion of industry, increased migration, changes in government legislation, and the development and strengthening of diverse and ethnic communities. The concept of the military-industrial complex contributed to the establishment of military bases and facilities throughout the nation, which brought its own employment and revenues to surrounding communities. This concept was developed as a result of WWII creating a link between big business and the militarized federal government as explained by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his Farewell Address to the Nation on January 17, 1961.[11] These military installations also brought significant employment gains in other sectors, such as retail, service industries, and housing services for growing suburban communities, which developed from the defense-related manufacturing sector.[12] The Southwest region, and the target states of California, New Mexico, and Colorado, will be briefly explored, with a focus on the histories of their Mexican American communities and military connections. This is beneficial as the Southwestern region was a prime target for future and continued development of military related sites due to vast land availability, an abundant labor force, the focus on labor and wartime industry, and migration to the West Coast.

California- "The Golden State"

California has been an essential state for the growth and stability of the Southwest, and the nation, because of its abundant resources, agricultural production, and its ability to attract migrant labor. The state's diverse natural landscape, the coast, mountains, and agricultural flat lands, provided optimal space for the establishment of various industries, agriculture being one of the largest. The state was a popular destination for the migration of a variety of national and international groups who sought to acquire land, resources, wealth, and to establish new, profitable industries. The state would be governed by different nations who wanted to control and profit from its natural resources. In the sixteenth century, Spaniards entered California and established missions, presidios and pueblos along the west coast to sustain control and governance. After the fight for Mexico's independence from the Spanish Empire in 1821, California experienced new shift in government.[13] Another shift occurred in February 1848 when Mexico and the U.S. signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican-American War. The treaty yielded Mexico's northern territories to the U.S., most notably California. On September 9, 1850 California became the U.S.' thirty-first state.[14] Throughout this era of colonization, diverse Native groups continued to live and work throughout the state. They were subjected to violence, disease

[11] "President Dwight Eisenhower Farewell Address," *C-Span*. January 17, 1961.

[12] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 27-8.

[13] Virginia Guedea, "The Process of Mexican Independence," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 116–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/2652439.

[14] "California Admission Day September 9, 1850," *California State Parks*, CA.gov, https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23856#:~:text=In%20February%20of%201848%2C%20Mexico,California%2C%20to%20the%20United%20States.

and forced removal and assimilation. However, Native groups did not disappear, and they continued to live in a shifting society made of nationally and ethnically diverse groups. Notably, Mexican and Mexican Americans had thrived and established unique communities.

Before the target time of this dissertation, these communities had worked in the agricultural sector. Many families would migrate seasonally, depending on the harvesting of certain agricultural products. As the leading producer of agriculture, California needed a large labor force, and this made the state an attractive location for those seeking work. This is exemplified by the ramifications of the Great Depression, which left mass groups in search of work. Significantly, families from the Midwest, specifically Oklahoma and Arkansas migrated en masse to California.[15] Moreover, Mexicans migrated to the state in search of job opportunities they could not find in Mexico. Mexican migrants struggled to find jobs and had problems finding housing, gaining quality education, and assimilating. They worked in low paying jobs and their Spanish language was lost or forcibly hidden. Despite these struggles, Mexicans organized their own social and political organizations and sustained a rich and separate culture. For example, the city of Los Angeles became the largest Mexican community outside of Mexico.[16] New opportunities emerged during wartime with an increase in job opportunities and more opportunities to migrate.

The migrations into California dramatically increased with the outbreak of WWII prompting the need for additional laborers in the agricultural fields and on the railroad lines. More laborers were brought through the Bracero Program, beginning in 1942, which allowed workers from Mexico to enter the U.S. However, discriminatory labor practices prevailed within California's labor sector, which was especially hard on Mexican American and Mexican communities. Migrant field workers dealt with hard and strenuous labor; they lacked suitable housing, and usually received low pay. In addition to these dismal conditions, there were many who lacked the opportunity to find alternative work. Many Mexican American workers were discriminated against and barred from gaining higher paid skilled jobs due to lack of access to proper education and racial discrimination regardless of citizenship.[17] These issues of discrimination within the workplace and notions of citizenship will be discussed further within this dissertation. Mexican Americans were also prominent in the military industry, which grew exponentially in California after the outbreak of WWII.

Fruits and vegetables were not the only things that sprouted in the state as military bases were established throughout California. From the start of WWII through the Cold War, California was a popular site for defense development and infrastructure. The federal funds that were poured into the state created the nation's largest urban military-industrial complex. In 1953 California topped New York as the leading state in net value of military prime contracts awarded. Throughout the next decade, awards to the Golden State amounted to twice as much as the annual amount any other state received. Federal funds, with the annual military and civilian payroll of the Department of Defense in California, funneled

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[15] Andrew F. Rolle and Arthur C. Verge, *California: A History*, (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 262.

[16] Ibid., 265.

[17] Selected works on the Bracero Program discussing migrant field workers and railroad workers, the conditions they faced, the agricultural business of California, and the impacts they had during WWII include; Mireya Loza, *Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom,* Barbara A. Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II,* and Erasmo Gamboa, *Bracero Railroaders: The Forgotten World War II Story of Mexican Workers in the U.S. West,* Ray N. Gilmore and Gladys W. Gilmore, "The Bracero in California," *Pacific Historical Review* (1963): 265-282. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4492181.

more than $50 billion in defense dollars into the state from 1950 to 1960.[18] Federal funds also supported California's growing military population, which increased the state's population by millions. During WWII alone, the state witnessed the arrival of about seven to eight million soldiers, sailors, and marines who received training and traveled throughout the state as they "moved westward into the Pacific." This growth in population also included civilians who worked with in industries that supported the military. By 1960 an estimated 4,500 Mexican women could be found working in aircraft and parts manufacturing throughout the state of California.[19] This demonstrates how the military contributed to the migration for job opportunities and the inclusion Mexican Americans in wartime labor. One result of this mass military buildup in the state was the establishment of the Castle AFB which, utilized throughout this dissertation, demonstrates the transformations and impacts the establishment of military bases had on surrounding communities during operation and closure.

Castle Air Force Base

In utilizing the former military base Castle Air Force Base (CAFB) in Atwater, California a brief background into its establishment and notable highlights from its operation is necessary. The story of the base reflects the topics addressed in this dissertation, specifically, how military bases impact nearby communities over time and how their development changed due to the base itself and the military. The Castle AFB is a unique base that has had lasting impacts since it opened and years after its closure in 1995. Exploring the base's impacts, with a focus on environmental impacts, job opportunities, base relations with local communities, and post-closure experiences, will reveal how the base contributed to the growth and identity of the city of Atwater. The presence of the base prompted migration of military personnel and families into the area. What makes this former base noteworthy, aside from its time of operation, is its lasting legacy. Analysis of this base is an overall assessment in evaluating the true consequences of having a military base within a community and what are the real costs.

[18] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors,* 26.

[19] Escobedo R. Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (UNC Press Books, 2013), 8, 132.

Figure 1. Castle Air Force base, Atwater, California.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castle_Air_Force_Base

Located in Atwater, California, specifically within the San Joaquin Valley, the former Castle AFB provided unique contributions to the city of Atwater. The base served as the destination for multiple families and military personnel within California's Central Valley (see Figure 1). Originally named Merced Army Flying School, this military base was established in 1940 as part of the military's search for locations along the west coast for additional military installations. There was a pressing need to establish a new pilot training school, and the location in Atwater, adjacent to the city of Merced, was picked.[20] The base was officially opened in 1941 and it remained in operation until 1995. This important military base contributes to the historical themes and dialogues of migration for the sake of service during times of war, individuals answering the call of duty and service, and increased labor opportunities due to the presence of a military institution community.

The base was a valued resource during WWII, however its contributions extended beyond the war and lasted until the late 1990s. After the Korean War ended in 1953, the Castle Air Force Base received forty-nine Korean evacuees and provided them with medical care.[21] During the Vietnam War, Castle operated a replacement training unit for B-52 crews and deployed them to Southeast Asia. The Castle's KC-135 aircrafts provided priority airlift of support personnel.[22] Castle played an important role during the Cold War. In April 1946, the base was assigned under the Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was the nation's long-range combat strike force whose mission was to be ready to respond to a strategic

[20] Harold Myers, "Castle Air Force Base," *Air Force Historical Foundation/Bolling Air Force Base,* D.C. (1984): 109.

[21] "October 17 in Merced history," *Merced Sun-Star*, The (CA), October 17, 2003, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/102448B69662DB20.

[22] Bob White, "Atwater Withstands Base Closure: Military Exodus Leaves Benefits For Lingering Civilian Businesses," *Modesto Bee, The (CA),* October 1, 1995: 3, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D50FD88D3AF92.

threat.[23] The base and its crews were ready and available 24/7, if needed, to launch counterattack operations in a matter of minutes. This taskforce was utilized during the Cold War era in the case of a possible nuclear bombing. The base was also a great resource during the operations of Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf between 1990 and 1991. The Castle air crews launched refueling missions and operated the "Desert Express," which carried personnel and supplies to Guam.[24] Overall, the base was a strategic player in the nation's defense. This dissertation will further explore in the ways Castle AFB has impacted local communities in terms of labor opportunities, economy, community engagement, environment, public health and the negative impacts of its closure.

The U.S. military impacted Mexican American communities throughout the Southwest, both in times of war and peace, and can be seen specifically with the Castle AFB. The post-WWII era brought several transformations to varying cities and communities throughout the Southwest. Castle AFB's local cities of Atwater and Merced experienced exponential population growth between the 1940s and early mid-1970s. In 1940 the city of Atwater had a population of 1,235 and continued to grow with increasing of annual growth rates with the highest during 1940-1960.[25] Between 1970 and 1975 the city of Atwater's population grew 24 percent bigger with 14,249 persons.[26] For the city of Merced in 1940 its population started at 10,135 with also increases in population overtime although with not as high of annual growth rates compared to Atwater.[27] From 1970 to 1975 the city of Merced's population jumped 32.8 percent, growing from 22,67 30,122 inhabitants.[28]

These populations had many heads of household who identified themselves as being of Mexican-American origin. In Merced there was about 15.6 percent and in Atwater about 4.4 percent identified with Mexican American heritage within their city's population.[29] Although they were not the majority, there was a prominent Mexican American community and presence within these cities that continued to grow as time went on. There were city wide celebrations for the local Mexican American community such as the "Diesiseis de Setiembre" festivities for Mexican Independence. These festivities were held at the Merced County fairgrounds and included booths selling Mexican specialties, shows, music, dancing, and the crowning of the Miss Mexican American.[30] This particular crowning event was

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[23] USAF Strategic Air Command, The Global Shield, Documentary, 1980, The Best Film Archives, 24:13, https://youtu.be/BZwKceW-Zd0.

[24] Sanford Nax, "Fresno Firms Supply US Forces," *Fresno Bee, The (CA),* September 7, 1990: E5, *NewsBank: Access World News,* https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE8494DEBE8CD1.

[25] Between 1940-1950 there was a +8.74%/yr and between 1950-1960 there was a + 9.87%/yr annual growth rate. https://population.us/ca/atwater/.

[26] Neal Ricker, "Livingston Shows Biggest Population Hike in Area," Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), December 15, 1975: 1. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-14C53CAB177012EC%402442762-14C38982F78BC7E2%400-14C38982F78BC7E2%40.

[27] "Population of Merced, CA," https://population.us/ca/merced/.

[28] Neal Ricker, "Livingston Shows Biggest Population Hike in Area."

[29] Ibid,.

[30] "Celebration Continues in the Downtown Area," Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), September 16, 1977: 1. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-14CC78EE8370B501%402443403-14C86E2814957D82%400-14C86E2814957D82%40.

recorded to draw in large crowds with people from within the Mexican American community in Merced and the surrounding area.[31] This shows this community had a strong presence in and connection to the surrounding area and neighboring city.

New Mexico- "Land of Enchantment"

Similar to California, the state of New Mexico has its own unique historical background in relation to its environment, varied labor opportunities, and ethnic communities. Understanding the state's characteristics is useful to the cross-comparison approach between the Southwestern states that addresses the differences and similarities of the relationship between military bases and the Mexican American communities. New Mexico consists of four main geographic regions each with distinctive landscapes. The northwestern part of the Colorado Plateau, with elevated cliffs and rock formations; the north central region with the Rocky Mountains; the eastern region boasts the Great Plains and mesas; and the southwest and central regions, which are a part of the Basin and Range Province with mountain ranges and long valleys.[32] New Mexico has a long and tumultuous colonial history; the territory was drawn onto a complex indigenous landscape by successive colonial powers from Spain, Mexico, and the U.S. The state played a significant role in the nation's move westward because its ranch land and deposits of gold and silver.[33] Furthermore, New Mexico's labor history is comprised of several industries with diverse workforces, which comprised of workers of different ethnicities, classes, skills, and nationalities such as in mining and agriculture. This labor force greatly contributed to the economic development of New Mexico well into the twentieth century.

After the Mexican-American War and the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the U.S. acquired Mexico's northern territories, which is now the Southwestern region. The acquisition of the Southwest was significant for the U.S. government as it provided new opportunities for U.S. expansion. The State of the Union address in the same year included remarks on how the newly acquired territory was profitable in agriculture and mining.[34] New Mexico gained statehood shortly after the start of the twentieth century, however, the U.S. government did not immediately agree upon the acceptance of the territory. One reason for the hesitation were the racist and discriminatory views government officials had towards the territory's large Mexican population.[35] Few members in legislation understood the importance of the contributions of Mexicans at the time. Despite these views, there were those who recognized the value of the land and its contribution to U.S. expansionistic nation building. President James K. Polk recognized New Mexico's strategic importance to westward expansion and to the nation as a whole.[36] In

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[31] "Coronation Is Viewed by 300," Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), September 19, 1977: 1. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-14CC78F10BC3FC7D%402443406-14C86E29AF0B1C0B%400-14C86E29AF0B1C0B%40.

[32] Corona Brezina, *New Mexico: Past and Present.* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2010), 7-9.

[33] Ibid, 5.

[34] William S. Kiser, *Coast-To-Coast Empire: Manifest Destiny and the New Mexico Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 6.

[35] Ibid., 176.

[36] Ibid., 4.

1912 the New Mexican territory was given official statehood into the U.S. and thus New Mexico became the forty-seventh state under President William Taft and its first governor was William C. McDonald. [37] Santa Fe became the state's capital and the state would accumulate different nicknames, including the "Land of Enchantment."[38]

The presence of Mexicans, and later Mexican Americans, in New Mexico in the early twentieth century can be traced to the migration of miners and laborers to the U.S. Southwest in search of work and to escape the Mexican Revolution that started in 1910.[39] The state's population was diversified once more with the introduction of the railroad, which permanently changed its landscape and people.[40] The railroads brought people of differing ethnicities and nationalities together and prompted new interethnic relationships and interactions. The railroads brought Native Americans, Hispanos, Anglo Americans, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, African Americans, Iowans, and many others from throughout the U.S. and from other countries.[41]

New Mexico's identity was inextricably tied to the state's Hispanic past. According to New Mexican scholars and to many New Mexicans themselves, the term "Hispano" was used to designate all New Mexicans of Spanish Mexican-descent in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.[42] There is also the long-standing Mexican American population, Nuevomexicanos. Professor of Sociology Casandra D. Salgado, who studies in race and ethnicity, argues the Nuevomexicanos emphasized their ties to Spanish heritage within the history of New Mexico to explain their ethnicity and to construct their identity in opposition to Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, Neuvomexicanos varied in their claims to Mexican ancestry, they generally prioritized their roots in the original Spanish settlement in New Mexico to emphasize distinctions in ancestry, nationality, and regionality from Mexican immigrants. However, as Salgado argues, "Neuvomexicanos' persistent claims to Spanish ancestry meant they did not view themselves as racially White. Instead, Spanish ancestry was integral to Nuevomexicano identity because it enabled them to highlight their regional ties to New Mexico and long-time American identities."[43] This illuminates the strong desire to distinguish their identities to their home in the State without being considered White.

New Mexico's cultural development and identity was also influenced by its geographical isolation. In the book, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans*, author George I. Sánchez, who was a pioneer in American educational scholarship and civil rights activism and originally from the state of New Mexico, conducts a foundational study into the people of New Mexico in the twentieth century. This sense of isolation has been seen

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[37] Marc Simmons, *Albuquerque: A Narrative History* (University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 283 and Brezian, *New Mexico: Past and Present,* 19.

[38] Philip Varney, Jim Hinckley, and Kerrick James *Ghost Towns of the West* (Laguna Hills: Voyageur Press, 2017), 249.

[39] Julian Samora, et al., *A History of the Mexican-American People* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 134.

[40] Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920,* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005), 10.

[41] Ibid., 1-2.

[42] Ibid., 11-12.

[43] Casandra D. Salgado, "Mexican American Identity: Regional Differentiation in New Mexico," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.) 6, no. 2 (2020): 179, 180. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649218795193.

within the state's Native American groups in particular.[44] This isolation was also seen in New Mexican villages with its residents with Spanish and Mexican roots. One commonality however was how laborers of different ethnicities suffered through discrimination, unequal pay, deplorable living conditions, racism, and limited job opportunities in New Mexico in the early twentieth century. As the state moved further into the twentieth century more opportunities were established, which did not eliminate labor related issues, but allowed for alternative means of labor. These opportunities sprouted from the state's embedded history involving the military that grew considerably over time.

The state of New Mexico has had a long tradition of military activity, which started with interethnic conflict with Native American groups well before the twentieth century. The U.S. War Department poured millions of dollars into New Mexico on an annual basis in order to provide sufficient supplies, shelter, and to pay troops' salaries. This was an aggressive policy that focused on the neutralization of indigenous forces and economic power by dislodging indigenous control of the land. This goal drove the U.S. military's initial investments and presence in New Mexico. The state was also used to train and educate new military recruits. New Mexico's Military Institute, in Roswell, opened in 1898 and has provided thorough academic and military training for young men of high school and junior college age and still provides such teachings.[45] Various regiments were established in the state, including infantry and cavalry regiments, to take part in nation-building projects. Central to this "nation-building" was the literal hunting down and eliminating of Comanche and Apache groups while keeping Pueblo, Hopi, and Dine peoples in check. These regiments also escorted explorers, settlers, stood as boundary adjudicators, and railway surveyors across the territory.[46]

The Spanish-American War and the First World War gave New Mexicans an opportunity to prove their loyalty through military service. George I. Sánchez within his book mentions how there was a high number of volunteers from New Mexico during WWI; it was more per capita than any other state.[47] Over time the state became a prime location for many more military training sites, which supported U.S. military activity at home and overseas. The military had a strong presence in the region and affected its towns and villages, mining and railroad industries, and even impacted the U.S.-Mexico border. Another significant military activity in the state was the calling and assembling of the military to pursue Mexican Revolutionary leader Pancho Villa. The military was sent to capture Villa after the town of Columbus, NM was attacked during what is known the Punitive Expedition of 1916. U.S. troops entered into Mexico in search for him and although the expedition ended without his capture, it provided invaluable military training and experience aided soldiers when the U.S. officially entered WWI shortly after the end of the expedition.

New Mexico's mining industry had a diverse workforce and racial discrimination, and interethnic tensions were common. Mistrust and hostility increased in the state's mining towns due to a combination of the border politics, the Mexican Revolution, and the attack on Columbus. The increased hostility towards ethnic workers and people, Mexicans and

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[44] George Isidore Sánchez, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (Albuquerque, N. M.: The University of New Mexico press, 1940), 4.

[45] Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New Mexico, *New Mexico: A Guide to the Colorful State* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), 129.

[46] Kiser, *Coast-To-Coast Empire,* 13.

[47] Sánchez, Forgotten People, 26.

Mexican Americans especially, were utilized by industry leaders to keep these workforces disempowered. The Chino Copper Company, for example, used the mistrust towards ethnic workers to justify the use of strong-armed intimidation tactics against Mexican and Mexican American workers. One of the common forms was the use of firings especially if there were any possible connections to unions.[48] Minority groups were alienated and the Anglo's solution for alienation was Americanization. This concept of Americanization towards minority and immigrant groups was imposing assimilating American culture, values, and beliefs, and customs including the adopting of the English language. This latter part will be a particular issue for the Mexican American and Mexican immigrant communities, which will be addressed further on the challenges Mexican American communities faced before the entrance into WWII. The notion of being "American" was intimately tied to the war effort and adopting "100 percent Americanism" became the only way to prove one's loyalty and ensure national security, according to those promoting the war effort.[49]

During WWII New Mexico residents embraced their military tradition and many enlisted and accepted their drafts. Even those with stable jobs and educational opportunities, like college students, enlisted because they wanted to serve their country.[50] During the war Mexican Americans made up a large part of the units recruited from Southwestern states like New Mexico.[51] The state's economy and infrastructure prospered during the war. For example, new military installations were established to train military personnel and to complete military projects, like the creation and testing of the atomic bomb. New Mexico's sparsely settled and large areas were ideal for the use of secret military operations, specifically, the development and testing of weapons, which came into fruition during WWII.[52] The establishment of military bases, such as Kirtland Air Force Base next to Albuquerque, New Mexico (see Figure 2), had direct impacts on neighboring communities, which will be discussed later in the dissertation.

There was also a shift to emphasize vocational preparation and modernization of patriotic citizenship and national preparedness. This preparedness included the dissemination of different kinds of knowledge and the promotion of varied types of work. As part of an official policy of resettlement for Hispanos/as who lived in overpopulated and economically stagnant areas, the federal government established vocational schools in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Vegas in the 1940s. These schools provided training for rural

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[48] Christopher J. Huggard and Terrence M. Humble, *Santa Rita del Cobre: A Copper Mining Community in New Mexico* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 85.

[49] Brezina, *New Mexico: Past and Present*, 27-28.

[50] Walter Hines, *Aggies of the Pacific War: New Mexico College of A&M and the War with Japan* (Yucca Tree Press, Las Cruces, New Mexico, U.S.A., 1999).

[51] Pedro A. Cabán, José Carrasco, Bárbara Cruz, and Juan García, consultants, *The Latino Experience in U.S. History* (Globe Fearon , Pearson Learning Group, 1994), 237.

[52] Everett M. Rogers and Nancy R. Bartlit. *Silent Voices of World War II: When Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met Sons of the Land of the Rising Sun* (Sunstone Press, Santa Fe, 2005), 35.

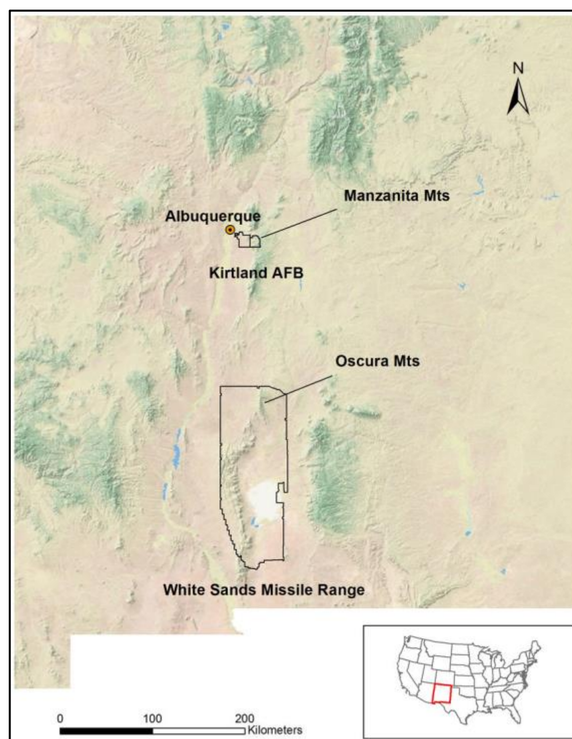

Figure 2. Map showing study areas in New Mexico, USA: Kirtland Air Force Base (Manzanita Mountains) and White Sands Missile Range (Oscura Mountains). https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-showing-study-areas-in-New-Mexico-USA-Kirtland-Air-Force-Base-Manzanita-Mountains_fig5_308632797.

workers who wished to enter the war industries in New Mexico and on the West Coast.[53] Literacy classes were offered in war information, which translated news of the war effort into Spanish and brought vital information to rural villages and towns. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) vocational educational programs and its affiliates emphasized defense related trades such as welding, commercial and aircraft sheet metal work, auto repair, mechanism and radio operation. Hispanic youth responded enthusiastically to the establishment of the War Production program, aimed at contributing to the war effort through labor, production, and service, as a path to material gain and an opportunity for national service. As workers found more opportunities in defense plants and other military sectors, other industries expanded their activities to remedy the demands of the wartime economy. As the demands of a wartime economic increased so did wages and the Southwest entered a new era of relative prosperity.[54]

The context of New Mexico's brief historical background, its environment, labor opportunities, and ethnic communities, demonstrates how its ties to natural resources and histories of military action and participation allowed for the continuation of military

[53] Oscar J. Martínez, *Mexican-Origin People in the United States: A Topical History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 18.

[54] Suzanne Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal* (University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 125-6.

influence. This includes the establishment of military bases during the 1940s through the 1970s making significant impacts to the environment and nearby ethnic communities. This history of mobilization, training, and tense relationships led to an investment and participation in military training and activity especially after the breakout of WWII. This allowed the military to continue to impact the environment and the New Mexicans and Nuevomexicanos who reside in it.

Colorado-"The Centennial State"

As with other Southwestern states, Colorado has its own distinctive history, environment, military ties, and Mexican American communities, making it crucial to this dissertation to understand this state. Mexican and Mexican American populations migrated to Colorado for a number of political and economic reasons; they fled the Mexican Revolution of 1910, they were recruited for labor, and they were in the search of better lives and more opportunities. They labored in the mines, railroads, rock quarries, and in the lucrative sugar beet industry.[55] At the turn of the century there were only a few thousand Mexican Americans in the state.[56] By 1930s the state's population had increased to 1,035,043 with the Mexican portions rising to 5.6% (57,676). This increase for the Mexican portion was in part due to the aggressive campaign in recruiting Mexican labor after 1920 by traveling to small towns across the Southwest and Mexico.[57] By the late 1930s there was the creation of Mexican colonies that were built in most sugar beet producing communities in the state which also resulted in some resistance from the Anglo American community.[58] The state's Mexican American populations resided in three main concentrations: in the San Luis and Arkansas River Valleys, in Denver, and throughout northern Colorado, where they primarily worked in agriculture and coal mining.[59]

Regional differences were significant to how one identified themselves. A popular identification used by those of Mexican descent, was Spanish-American which was also popular in New Mexico.[60] Being referred to as Spanish, as European, was better than being labeled as Mexican, because those of Mexican descent were seen as "lower" and were discriminated against. "Hispano(s)" was another term of identification, which was used both in Colorado and in New Mexico. Hispanos in the past utilized "Spanish," then "Spanish American," and currently, "Hispano/a." Hispanos never saw themselves as Mexicans, as immigrants, or as full-fledged Americans. Those who considered themselves Hispanos did not identify as Mexicans because the span of twenty-seven years (1821-1848), under

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[55] Rubén Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Zlbany, NY: State University of New York, 2007), 6.

[56] "The Excluded Student Educational Practices Affecting Mexican Americans in the Southwest, Mexican American Education Study," Superintendent of Documents, 1972, 81.

[57] Rubén Donato, "Sugar Beets, Segregation, and Schools: Mexican Americans in a Northern Colorado Community, 1920-1960." Journal of Latinos and Education 2, no. 2 (2003): 70. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532771XJLE0202_2.

[58] Ibid., 70.

[59] Zaragosa Vargas, "The Lie of 'America's Greatest Generation': Mexican Americans Fight against Prejudice, Intolerance, and Hatred during World War II," In *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*, 203–51. (Princeton University Press, 2005), 218.

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

Mexican rule, was not enough time to acquire a solid Mexican identity. Hispanos also did not see themselves as immigrants because they never crossed the U.S. border and they were also not full-fledged Americans, since they were not accepted into mainstream American life.[61] Despite their deep roots in American history and their U.S. citizenship, Hispanos were rejected in Anglo-American communities. This discrimination was present in public with signs that read "White Trade Only" or "No Mexicans Allowed." Moreover, these signs applied to everyone who was non-white.

The Mexican American and Hispano communities in Colorado migrated into the state before the twentieth century. These migrations usually followed available labor opportunities and over time diverse communities formed. These communities we at times mixed with Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and Anglos, which resulted in instances of racial segregation. Despite racism and discrimination, these Mexican-decent communities were able to craft their own way living and created their own identities. For example, the city of Colorado Springs, a key city in this dissertation, has a rich migration history. Founded in 1871 by Civil War veteran and railroad industrialist General William Jackson Palmer, the city grew from a frontier town which profited from the gold mines of Cripple Creek. Laborers and their families were attracted to area during the gold rush in Pike's Peak county starting in 1858. The increase in population allowed the city to grow and establish new industries, businesses, and eventually, new military installations. Many groups migrated to, and tourists visited the city; they were attracted to its warm, dry climate, natural attractions such as Pikes Peak, grand hotels and mansions, and the gold rush.[62] The increase in population, natural wealth, and commerce contributed to the development of new neighborhoods and communities within Colorado Springs. Notably, a Hispanic neighborhood began to take form in 1880 with the arrival of Mexicans and over time permanently established itself with a few blocks of homes, businesses, schools, and a church. In the beginning of the last century families from the southern counties of San Luis Valley and Conejos arrived in the area. The main street of the neighborhood was called Conejos, and the name is what the community would be known.[63] This neighborhood will be explored further in the analysis of the impacts of military bases onto surrounding communities and how the communities have changed overtime in Colorado.

Hispanos were established along the northern New Mexican and southern Colorado border; some historians refer to this area as part of the "Hispano homeland." Southern Colorado was different, because Hispanos were U.S. citizens and did not have Mexican identities.[64] Professor Rubén Donato, who studies Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado within the twentieth century, argues that despite the deep history of Hispanos in the region, their U.S. citizenship, and their "Spanish American" identities, they were still treated like

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[61] Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960*, 2.

[62] Elizabeth Wallace, *Colorado Springs* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2003), 7.

[63] According to Leah Davis Witherow, Curator of History at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, "The name of the Conejos neighborhood came from Conejos Street, which ran through the neighborhood. Founded in 1871, many of the original street names in Colorado Springs were nods to rivers and mountains in the West (albeit sometimes misspelled) and others acknowledged the long-standing Hispano (culturally specific/relevant term in present-day Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico) history in Southern Colorado. Among the latter group of names are: Rio Grande, Sierra Madre, Moreno, Costilla, Vermijo, Huerfano, Caramillo, San Rafael, San Miguel, etc."

[64] Wallace, *Colorado Springs,* 8, 41, 89.

Figure 3. Military Installations in the Colorado Springs Area. https://livingcoloradosprings.com/relocation-center/colorado-springs-military/.

their Mexican peers within American society, which included discrimination and racism. Despite their self-identity on the outside, Anglos saw them as Mexicans and treated them as such. In Southern Colorado, ethnic boundaries appear relatively fixed, with racial/class divisions cropping up even within groups of Spanish-speaking workers.[65]

Like New Mexico, Colorado has a long history with the U.S. military. There are numerous veteran residents, and its land was used for various military operations. The U.S. military was used to suppress Native American groups throughout the state through violence and occupation of native land. In the twentieth century, the military continued to exert its power with its suppression of labor strikes led by Mexican, Greeks, and other ethnic communities and immigrants. When the country faced wars overseas the military was turned outwards during WWI and WWII. By the end of WWII nearly 140,000 Colorado men and women had served in the military and more than 4,300 Coloradans gave their lives for their country.[66]

Due to its geography and naturally isolating mountains, Colorado served as an ideal location for the establishment of military installations both during WWII and the Cold War. The state was imbued with military spirit and personnel. Uniformed soldiers became a common sight with the rise of large military bases in Aurora, Colorado Springs, and Denver during WWII.[67] In Colorado Springs, there were military bases and installations which were established during WWII and have continued their operations into the present (see Figure 3.) The 1947 National Security Act allowed the Air Force to establish its own separate military fraction in conjunction with the plans to establish its new academy in Colorado Springs a

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[65] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 27.

[66] Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and Thomas J. Noel, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*. 5th ed. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 301.

[67] Ibid., 302.

year earlier.[68] The Air Force Academy served to provide future pilots and servicemembers, related to the Air Force, the training and education necessary for the continued defense of the county. Colorado's military development, its expansion over time, and the impact on population growth was similar to other Southwestern states. However, regional identities, the development of Mexican American communities, and military base branches established throughout the state differed.

Impacts of Federal Government Investment

Military bases served as locations for military training and acted as tools for national defense, but they also served nearby communities by facilitating the growth of their local economies. Federal investments into military installations also impacted surrounding communities in similar ways. This section argues these impacts were initially beneficial but had negative consequences over time. The potential economic benefit of a military base is the biggest reason why some cities desired one to be built in them or near them. As previously mentioned, the military brought new job opportunities and increased the population with the migration of military personnel and their families. By 1962 defense had become the nation's largest business and provided numerous opportunities for labor and economic benefits both directly and indirectly.[69] Military bases provided jobs for servicemembers and for the civilian sector. Aside from work within the base itself, servicemembers and their families worked and lived near the bases, which boosted local economies. The benefits of increased job opportunities and an overall boost to the local economy are further analyzed in the study of Castle AFB.

Federal Investment in Castle Air Force Base

The Castle AFB was built from the amount of federal investment put into the establishment of bases and military installations; its presence significantly transformed to the local community's economy, population, and identity. New people were brought into the local community, new infrastructures were created, there was an increase in new job opportunities, and a relationship was built between the base and community members. Before finding its home in Atwater, Castle AFB endured several steps leading up to its establishment and construction. As with other military installations, geographical location was a critical factor in choosing Atwater for the new base. The availability of large swaths of land and fields was a significant benefit for a pilot training school, which needed space for airstrips and hangers to accommodate the large aircrafts. The first major federal investment in the base came when the military leased the land and made $4,060,024 available for the base's construction in June 9, 1941. The land was let by Merced County for $1 a year to help ensure a beneficial relationship between the community and the military.[70] The base was initially established within a small agricultural community in the city of

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[68] Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (University of California Press, 2013), 64.

[69] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 26.

[70] USAF Strategic Air Command, The Global Shield, Documentary, 1980, The Best Film Archives, 24:13, https://youtu.be/BZwKceW-Zd0.

Atwater, which became slightly larger after it was incorporated in 1922.[71] Atwater and Merced city officials sought to convince military personnel to pick their location by sending a proposal advocating for why their location was the best suited and willing to lease the land to the military.[72] Understandably, local city officials were drawn to the possible economic benefits a military base could provide for their communities.

Federal investment in the base occurred over time as it continued to grow and incorporate more land, add additional structures, and accumulate more aircraft. Castle AFB over its lifetime received tens of millions of dollars from Congress in order to expand the base and the facilities within it. These included constructing one of the largest runways in California, a mechanic workshop, multiple hangers, a hospital, community center, barracks, and dormitories.[73] For example on November 10, 1952 there was the starting of an eight million dollar construction program along with a $167,000 navigational aid project.[74] Despite these Federal investments into the base itself, little of that funding went directly into the city of Atwater. The only infrastructure that benefited the city was repairs and road improvements, which led into the base. Wider roads leading into the base were needed as the amount of traffic increased.[75] Although there were new infrastructure projects in Atwater, such as the construction of a new civic center and a million-dollar housing project.[76] The base's population grew along with its physical expansion, which prompted the creation of additional accommodations for military personnel and their families. These facilities ranged from utilitarian structures to places of entertainment such as a movie theater, a child care center, a museum, hospital, a pool, recreation center, a chapel, library, and a commissary store.[77] Military personnel needed housing and facilities to conduct their work as pilots and engineers. As will be seen with the company town examples, the employer, or the military, made these accommodations to aid those within their controlled space and to ensure their productivity. Castle AFB's establishment was a product of federal investment which was prompted from WWII had already broken out overseas and the U.S. desired to expand its military. The base's presence became even more significant when the U.S. officially entered the war, however, it has had many roles. With sustained investment the base was able to continue to serve the military and provide other benefits for the cities of Atwater, Merced, and surrounding cities during the 1950s and 1960s.

Similar to other military bases, Castle AFB prompted an increase in population in nearby cities. Castle AFB grew Atwater's population, with the influx of military personnel

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[71] David L. Durham, *California's Geographic Names: A Gazetteer of Historic and Modern Names of the State* (Clovis, Calif.: Word Dancer Press, 1998), 741.

[72] Myers, "Castle Air Force Base," 108.

[73] Magazine, *San Joaquin Valley Salutes Castle AFB*, Unofficial directory and Guide Published by Armed Service Press, Nov 1977, from Merced County Court House Museum, Merced, California.

[74] "November 10, 1952," Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), November 10, 1972: 14. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-14960802F65BACB8%402441632-1495750D1D07B86E%4013-1495750D1D07B86E%40.

[75] United States. Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Military Construction Appropriations, *Military Construction Appropriations for 1982: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Ninety-seventh Congress, First Session, Parts 5-6* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 256.

[76] George W. Clark, *History of Merced County.* Rev. ed. (Merced, Calif: s.n., 1973), 58.

[77] "San Joaquin Valley Salutes Castle AFB," *Armed Service Press*, November 1977, 20-32.

and their families, who moved to the city and to the adjacent cities of Merced and Winton.[78] As mentioned earlier, the presence of a military institution brings people of different skills, ethnicities, and military ranks together. The population of Castle AFB was not homogenous; there were a variety of ethnicities who migrated to, served, and worked at the base. This emphasizes the need to consider the impacts of military installments on the formation of ethnic communities. Notably, the Castle AFB increased African American migration to California and created a large presence of African American air men who lived in off-base housing. Additionally, property owners within the Black community near the base provided living accommodations, dining, and entertainment to members of the armed forces.[79] This is just one example of the lives of ethnic service members at Castle AFB.

Increases in the population of military personnel soon exceeded the living capacity of the base itself. Incoming military servicemen and their families had to find housing in base housing complexes or in nearby cities. Consequently, military families created prominent neighborhoods in surrounding areas. One example is the Loughborough neighborhood in the city of Merced, which was occupied by military personnel and their families when the base was in operation.[80] The small town of Winton being adjacent to Atwater it also received the impact from Castle AFB with itself growing over time with many of the families attached to the based having made their homes in the town.[81] These are examples of the kinds of changes military bases can bring to local communities.[82] The base influenced both the housing and living conditions in surrounding communities. This influence also contributed to the formation of communities and their relationship with the military base/infrastructure.

Military bases and defense installations can be seen as isolated entities due to common images of barbed wire gates, security check points, and armed guards patrolling the facility. Although these do serve an important function in keeping military personnel, weapons, and defense materials safe, they are not representative of the entirety of connections between a base and its accompanying community. There were many ways military bases interacted interact with local communities. Castle AFB was accessible to Atwater's community and to the larger San Joaquin Valley. For example, the base for decades an annual open house, which allowed the public to enter the base, go on tours, watch flying demonstrations, view aircraft displays, and participate in family oriented activities.[83] This unique aspect provides another avenue to analyze base and community relations. In the case of Castle AFB, community members, both local and afar, viewed the military base as truly part of the community and not just as an isolated, cold entity in their space. The significance of this connection is how the civilian populace was taken into

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[78] David W. Lantis, *California: Land of Contrast* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co, 1963), 389.

[79] Lim, "Museum Notes," 02. In a related fact, Camp Carson during WWII (now called Fort Carson) also had a large presence of Black Soldiers. Gail Marjorie Beaton, Thomas J. Noel, and Thomas J. Noel. *Colorado Women in World War II* (Louisville, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2020), 234.

[80] Abbie Lauten-Scrivner, "Merced's Loughborough area getting new attention from city, after years of violent crime," *Merced Sun-Star*, February 4, 2020, https://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/community/article239953628.html

[81] Clark, *History of Merced County*, 54.

[82] As seen in the changes of population and employment in Atwater and Merced with the establishment of Castle AFB.

[83] Betty Reiter, "The last air show: Castle Air Force Base hosts a final fling," An Historical Tribute, Now & Then, *Merced Sun-Star*, September 16, 1994, AA11.

consideration in the establishment of military installations. This is evidence for the significance of the relationship between the community and military bases. Furthermore, it demonstrates the intricate integration of the base within the community economically, socially, and as a source of patriotic pride. However, the non-economic investment into the base, such as the civic identity and community pride, would be amplified from the pain of Castle's AFB closure.

Additional Federal Investments

Federal spending including vast amounts of money poured into national defense, was the main resource to maintain a military base. WWII brought the nation to prepare for war which in turn became a powerful economic engine. For example, in the race for federal dollars, Colorado cities of Denver, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs won the most, but other places also benefited throughout the nation.[84] For the period of 1953-1962, economist Roger Bolton has estimated that more than 20% of Colorado's income resulted from defense spending, making it one of the eight states most heavily dependent on the national defense budget.[85] In May 1940, a billion-and-a-half-dollar increase was provided to the Army to upgrade and build more planes, which was followed by another billion later that year, and nearly $700 million was allocated to the Navy.[86] Following WWII, the U.S. government spent lavishly on military buildup, which was a hallmark of U.S. Cold War spending policies.[87] The creation, development, and federal investment in military bases and defense installations bourgeoned during this time; it dramatically altered the landscape and the economy, increased populations of existing communities, and created entirely new communities. Historian Monica Perales, whose work includes the study of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and company towns, notes how "the escalation of Cold War tensions and subsequent development of the so-called military industrial complex facilitated the rapid expansion of defense and military spending in cities across the Southwest."[88]

There were consequences of the federal investment into military bases and faculties which provide initial benefits for the local communities. In New Mexico for example, since the 1800s the state has continued its military tradition, which included the establishment of new military bases. This was most prominent during WWII as there was mass surge in military development, expansion of military bases, and the building of new infrastructures like military bases, laboratories, military training grounds, and weapon testing sites.[89] New Mexico with its vast amounts of land and natural resources was a popular site to fulfill the needs of the country that was officially at war. One new military base was the White Sands Missile Range facility located in Las Cruces. This particular site was used for atomic bomb research, which gave the U.S. the most powerful weapon used in warfare at the time of its development.

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[84] Abbott, Leonard, and Noel, *Colorado,* 306.

[85] Ibid*.*, 318.

[86] "Pearl Harbor: America's Call to Arms," *Life*, Vol. 11, No. 16, Nov 18, 2011, 31.

[87] Kevin J. Fernlund, ed., *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 29.

[88] Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 229.

[89] Gerald W. Thomas, Monroe L. Billington, Roger D. Walker, *Victory in World War II: The New Mexico Story,* (University of New Mexico Press, 1994), viii.

The Las Cruces facility provided benefits to the local community, which were supplemented with the sacrifices of civilian local residents. After its establishment, the facility utilized both military and civilian personnel from the local Las Cruces community and the New Mexico State University thus providing new job opportunities. The military facility infused hundreds of millions of dollars into the local economy which resulted in over 155 million dollars in a year.[90] Just having the White Sands Missile Range facility alone was able to produce a significant economic boost. The increase in new jobs and other economic benefits gives the impression that military bases do provide some positive impacts for the local community and its residents. However, sacrifices were needed to establish the military base. Large amounts of land were needed for the construction of the base, and local farmers and ranchers gave up their homes and land to create the White Sands Missile Range.[91] This community sacrifice for the sake of defense was a mixed blessing; it brought economic investment, but it had long term, negative environmental impacts, which will later be addressed in chapter five highlighting the negative consequences military bases created for the local communities over time.

The state of California was another popular location for the establishment of military bases and facilities due to its strategic location on the Pacific Coast and established network of agricultural, manufacturing, and transportation. Over time California featured military bases and facilities by the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force. This attracted a large number of contracts to development these military bases to California and the west coast bringing in a massive amount of federal spending. Significantly, between 1950 and 1959 the contracts by the Department of Defense amounted to a sum of $228 billion nationally.[92] The amount of federal funds allocated to California transformed the state into the nation's largest urban military-industrial complex.[93]

Specifically, Orange County was considered to be one of the best strategic locations for military operations and installations. The county was chosen as a desirable site because of the efforts of the Santa Ana City Council, which provided the War Department a leasing and subcontracting offer that allotted a 421-acre ranch property to the department for one dollar per year.[94] With the presence of the military in the county this also brought the benefit for the county's economy. In providing additional insight Lisa McGirr in her book, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right,* analyzes the effects of federal investment during the Cold War argues how the presence of military bases and federal defense contracts contributed greatly to the county's economic growth in the 1960s by providing one of the county's main sources of income.[95] The case study on Orange County's transformation into an important defense center and military suburb demonstrates how federal investment in military installations impacts surrounding communities, specifically its ability to transform a region's labor opportunities and local economy.[96] What is significant in this case study for exploring the question of the kinds impacts created by military bases is demonstrating the amount of government support poured into military development and the

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[90] Ibid., 40-41.

[91] Ibid., 42.

[92] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 25.

[93] Ibid., 27.

[94] The community advocates for Castle AFB also made a similar offer to the military to encourage the picking of the land near Atwater and Merced for the future base.

[95] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors,* 25.

[96] Ibid., 27-8.

impacts on local communities. Local governments worked to allow for the construction of military facilities within Orange County recognizing the potential benefits it would bring.

Federal investment into military facilities also affected the suburbs. One relevant study of the Northern Virginia region provides crucial insight into the exploration of the impact of the military on communities and suburbs. In *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* historian Andrew Friedman provides a relevant case study that explores federal investment and analyzes local transformations prompted by the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other national security institutions. Freidman argues the presence of these defense infrastructures, the CIA and Pentagon, influenced residents' and workers' decisions on where to live and work. Together, real estate agents, homeowners, builders, and landscapers created a suburban domain which also helped serve in military operations. Notably, Friedman addresses how residents within northern Virginia's suburb, whether they knew it or not, occupied a military space, which included homes of covert agents and secret meeting locations to discuss government overthrows and coups.[97] Although not focused on the Southwest, Friedman's study demonstrates how military bases and defense installations are not isolated entities with little to no relations to civilian life, as also seen with Castle AFB. Whether embraced or not residents were included in what military bases and facilities bring with them.

Federal government investment overall played a significant role in the development of suburban communities between WWII and the present. Moreover, federal investment prompted domestic migration for employment opportunities, the creation of new programs, like the CIA, and construction of suburban housing. Furthermore, military need for space transformed the land itself; farm and ranchlands were taken and changed to fit military operations. As this dissertation advocates and these examples in New Mexico, Colorado, California, and Virginia have shown, the multiple factors that influence community development in relation to the military need to be considered. A deeper look into how ethnic communities, their labor, social and economic wellbeing were impacted, can provide significant insight into assessing the impacts of federal investments. Although these selected examples did not feature Mexican American communities specifically, they do provide the context for the establishment of military bases, the potential benefits they offered, and the negative consequences which could arise to the surrounding communities, which will be discussed further later in the chapters. Military bases provided many benefits to cities and surrounding communities, however there is an important argument to consider. For some communities, a military base was the sole source of economic opportunity and support. This is a significant problem when a base is closed: residents lose jobs, local economies tank, and city infrastructure becomes neglected. The aftermath of a base closure will be focused more in-depth with the study of Castle AFB in chapter five.

Military Communities and Company Towns

Military bases and their accompanying local communities share the same geographical space, but their residents do not share the same living experiences. The similarities and differences between military and civilian life surrounding a base have not been adequately addressed in previous scholarship. This dissertation compares the structure

[97] Friedman, *Covert Capital*, 32.

of the company town to the formation of a military base as a method to draw out these connections. This approach helps assess the gap in the scholarship pertaining to base-connected communities and to narrow it by situating this work within a larger context. Several scholars have researched the formation of company towns and have shown their impacts on the formation and division of racial and class lines, which created divided communities. The boundaries and existence of a company town are determined by an industry, and it is further defined by the fixed boundaries of the industry's property. Applying this approach to military bases reveal how they share similarities in terms of their structures, which are formed from labor opportunities and the ways they impacted the formation of a nearby community. The following examples of company towns will further demonstrate this comparison and found similarities.

To gain a deeper understanding of life within military bases and in nearby communities, this section will compare the formation of company towns to the founding military installations. Both company towns and the erection of military bases are similar in their formation around a single source of labor and the institutional control over peoples' lives. The actions of company town residents were often regulated and dictated by a ruling industry, much like the military, or federal government. Housing was established near military bases to ensure their employees and military personnel stayed near their place of work. In both company towns and military bases, the everyday actions and behaviors of employees, how they ate, slept, and shopped, were dictated by the regulations and structures set by their employers. However, some company town residents "found ways to construct culturally vibrant and personally meaningful worlds in spite of, and perhaps even because of, the heavy hand of their corporate benefactors."[98] This analysis of company towns and their residents has revealed how a community forms and is shaped over time, and further, what happens to it when the source of labor disappears, which this dissertation has explored. The selected company towns, including the study of Castle AFB, are explored and analyzed to highlight these aspects.

The structure of Castle AFB included facilities and resources to support the servicemen and their families which lived both inside and outside of the base. Military families and their experiences are another important factor in a base's history. The Castle AFB included family housing and other facilities to accommodate the needs of military families. There was a child development center, a day care center, family pool, community activity center, Castle youth center, and a base theater.[99] The base's supporting facilities helped create a sense of community, which greatly served all who were housed there. As the base grew, off-base housing was created in order to accommodate new service members. There were two off-base housing complexes called Castle Vista and Castle Gardens.[100] These complexes are still being used as housing today. The complex Castle Vista is now called the Castle Vista Senior Duplex Community and was originally built as officer housing.[101] Castle Gardens was a 105-acre housing complex built in 1953 for the personnel

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[98] Perales, *Smeltertown*, 59.

[99] Spy Smasher, "Castle AFB Newcomer video," YouTube, 9:34, Aug 21, 2010, https://youtu.be/c3wclPoM958.

[100] "Off-Base Housing Gets New Lease On Life," *Modesto Bee, The (CA),* October 12, 2000: B1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EFD4713DABFE31B.

[101] "History," Castle Vista Adult Community, https://www.raystoneseniors.com/senior-living/ca/atwater/castle-vista-senior-duplex-community/about-us.

at the base.[102] The complex now still holds the name and is divided into two sets of housing, one called Castlewood for senior citizens and the other being market-rate homes for rent and sale.[103] Other than off-base housing, service members and their families often sought housing in the nearby cities of Atwater and Merced. The structure of the military was not only to hold military aircraft, weapons, and conduct training but also to provide living accommodations for its military residents. These were controlled, regulated, and owned by the base itself and was structured to allow for the military personnel to be able to focus on their labor which included serving military operations and maintaining the base. Aside from Castle AFB, there are other examples of company towns within the Southwest that influenced labor and community formation.

One Southwest company town study that provides relevant analysis was conducted by Monica Perales who explored the formation and memory of a Mexican/Mexican American community within a smelter company town in El Paso, Texas in her book, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community*. Perales utilizes archived materials and former inhabitants' memories that recount the strong ties to their community and vividly remember what life was like for them.[104] This study illustrates how an approach of "balancing memory and historical context allows for a more complicated view of the past, one in which we can reconcile the harsh realities of industrial capitalism with the memories and longing for a place that has vanished."[105] Similar to the establishment of military bases, the geographical location of mining sources determined the site of company towns. The mining work provided a variety of jobs to a predominantly Mexican labor force.[106] In its early years, ASARCO, the American Smelting and Refining Company, maintained a small, racially segregated company town on plant property, complete with a company store, hospital, and other amenities that established its position as the community's patron and served to cultivate a loyal workforce.[107] These features and their influence on the community and workforce is similar to a military base; it is designed to have facilities that keep military personnel within its place. Perales also addresses how community and identity were shaped by the company. The segregated community, not owned by the company, allowed residents, predominantly in the Mexican area, to shape their own identity of where they lived.[108] This case study is significant because it reveals how a community forms a sense of identity on the foundation of a shared source of labor and geographic proximity. On one level a company town's boundaries and its very existence are determined by the industry.[109] This creation of identity, however, was not just a result of industry, but it was

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[102] Mike Phillips, "Housing On Base T0 Get New Life: Atwater Oks Plan To Alter Duplexes," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, November 26, 1997: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D55FE87141E5A.

[103] "Atwater addressing blight," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA)*, May 28, 2003, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1024459F56762BA1.

[104] Perales utilizes the concept of collective memory which "serves as a way "in which groups, peoples, or nations construct versions of the past and employ them for self- understanding and to win power in an ever-changing present"" (276). The quote and for further reading-David W. Blight's "Historians and 'Memory.'"

[105] Perales, *Smeltertown,* 11.

[106] Ibid., 104.

[107] Ibid., 3-4.

[108] Ibid., 2.

[109] Ibid., 58.

formed around the relationships of family, friends, neighbors and shared experiences from work and the larger Mexican American community.

Significantly, the environmental issues, which negatively impacted the health of smelter residents, needs to be highlighted. Similar issues plagued military installations and their accompanying communities. Although the smelter company provided jobs and a place for Mexican American community development, environmental issues, specifically pollution, were pervasive. Despite dangerous toxins in the soil, water, and air, Mexican and Mexican American residents did not want to leave their community, which they had formed outside of the company; it had become a part of their identity.[110] However, once the company closed the smelter residents had to move, but the memories of their community stayed with former residents. Similar with military base closings, one consequence of closure is the outward migration of former residents. Once the main source of employment is removed, there is little to no means for the community to survive. This tenuous relationship between an industry and the formation of community leaves residents vulnerable to instability, which was present in the establishment and evolution of both company towns and military bases. The last two chapters addressing Castle AFB will provide further insight into what happens to a community when a military base is closed.

Another relevant study was conducted by Carl Smith whose work studied a company town and focused the residents and growth of the Pullman neighborhood on the southside of Chicago, Illinois.[111] Smith's main arguments trace the links between the Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman, in order to demonstrate how they linked to city, disorder, and the social reality. He explores how these events influenced how Americans understood Chicago and modern urban life. George Pullman, known for his famous passenger railroad cars at the time, wanted to create a model town, which would serve as a community for his workers. The town was constructed in 1880 under the direction of Pullman and a team of advisors, with the goal of ensuring factory work efficiency and mitigated labor disputes.[112] Smith documents the ways that the town was created to house Pullman employees and their families; it offered greater amenities compared to the living conditions other workers struggled to find in the larger city. The town was private property, and it was owned and maintained by the Pullman company, with all the buildings and grounds being owned and maintained by the company.[113] The purpose of this, Smith argues, was to maximize the amount of control the company exerted over the infrastructure and landscape with little external interference. The site, located outside of the inner city, helped prevent labor organization and militancy, which would have prevented Pullman's goal of a productive and docile labor force. The town of Pullman was privately owned and run, just like military bases and defense installations, which were and are thoroughly controlled by the U.S. military.

The Pullman company closely monitored the living habits of residents, similar to the use of "spotters," to make sure employees followed the rules within the factory, which served as another form of quality control.[114] Additionally, George Pullman did not give his

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[110] Ibid., 2.

[111] Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[112] Ibid., 179.

[113] Ibid., 180-181.

[114] Ibid., 192.

tenants or operatives a voice or any other kind of ownership in his town or in his company.[115] Smith's work on this neighborhood demonstrates how a company or an institution can create a controlled space for their employees. Military bases were designed to regulate the behavior and work of their personnel while on private grounds. Smith's study also provides an insight into how space was controlled and how a company's control impacted workers' lives. Pullman employees were able to enjoy better living conditions outside of Chicago, but they were not given agency and were constantly monitored. Similarly, those residing in military bases although there were able to move freely there were restrictions to the areas within the base itself and their actions were also monitored due to the fact of working in a federally guarded and armed military institution.

The establishment of military bases contributed to the development of communities by prompting an increase in migration and providing a significant contribution to the local economy. Many military bases and defense installations eventually became a central part of the community. Furthermore, the similarities between civilian communities and military base life can be seen with Monica Perales' and Carl Smith's studies of company town establishments. Thinking about military bases through the prism of a company town prompts further research into different and useful questions, methods, and analytical possibilities. Perales' emphasis on the use of memory along with archival materials provides a useful approach to analyze community formation and survival. Her significance to this study on military bases is the inclusion of analysis on an ethnic community, which grew around a central source of labor. As this dissertation has argued, scholarship on military bases needs additional information about the impacts on ethnic communities. Carl Smith's work also provides insight on how control was asserted over a community in order to promote efficiency for a larger company. This is important for considering how military bases are structured around the need for efficiency and how this impacts the living conditions for base residents and the surrounding community. Overall, these methods of analysis provide a path for continued research into the exploration of the similarities and differences of base and civilian life, with the aim of finding new views of the relationship between military bases and local ethnic communities.

The creation of military bases within the Southwest was the result of multiple factors. The interconnectedness of these factors is analyzed alongside an exploration of each state's history, the federal investment that allowed for the creation of military bases, and the use of company towns as a means to further analysis the ways in neighboring communities are impacted. The states of California, New Mexico, and Colorado all share a common history of military tradition and military bases. These military bases prompted the creation of new job opportunities and economic boosts for local communities. However, long term consequences for the environment and the health of community residents were found to be negatively impacted from this federal investment into bases which became more prominent over time. The comparison of company towns with military bases provides insights into the commonalties they share in terms of the structure of labor and influence on the formation of nearby communities. In considering further of labor opportunities or lack thereof, the next chapter explores Mexican Americans and their communities in the struggles and challenges they faced prior to the U.S.'s entrance into WWII. Furthermore, this exploration will reveal the motivations held by the Mexican American servicemen and appeals of military service.

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[115] Ibid., 193.

Ch. 2: Mexican American Civilians: Before the Entrance Into WWII

Long before the U.S. entrance into WWII, Mexican American civilians faced overt racism, discrimination, segregation, and various forms of othering. Despite being natural born citizens, white racism prevented access to fair treatment in labor sectors, education, housing, and opportunities for social mobility to those with Mexican heritage. This chapter explores the challenges Mexican American communities faced and provides the context for the dissertation's inquiry of how Mexican Americans viewed military service as a means of escape from their lower economic and social status. Being a disenfranchised community, many Mexican Americans saw military service as a risk worth taking prior to the U.S.' official entrance into WWII. This chapter argues there is a direct link between the treatment of Mexican Americans and their pursuit of ways to help elevate their educational, labor, and social positions through military service. This was a lifelong struggle, which was hampered by limited opportunities and barriers that grew from racist serotypes, legislations, segregation, and anti-Mexican sentiments.

The following sections contextualize the specific challenges Mexican Americans faced and the limitations and consequences that hindered upward social and economic mobility. The first section focuses on how Mexican American identity has been shaped over time due to the influence of harmful stereotypes and the efforts to go against them. The next section addresses the challenges Mexican Americans faced within their own communities as a result of racism and discrimination. The final section explores the issues Mexican Americans faced in the labor sector within the Southwest, specifically the racial barriers that blocked access to better and unique opportunities during the Great Depression and one military run organization that was another influential factor for some Mexican Americans enlisting into military service when the U.S. entered into WWII. The topics explored in these sections are important for understanding why military service was seen as a viable option to gain opportunities by Mexican Americans when they could not find them in their own communities.

Mexican American Identity

The formation and evolution of the Mexican American identity has a long and contentious history. The question of whiteness, assimilation, physical appearance, and language were all factors in this identity-making process. This section argues these factors are directly linked to the exclusionary practices keeping Mexican Americans from opportunities in education, labor, and advances in social mobility. The question of whiteness in connection with Mexican American identity has been ongoing before the early twentieth century. In 1897, a federal district court declared the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and subsequent federal policies, conferred Mexican Americans' racial status as "white" for naturalization and classification purposes.[116] Given this new legal status, Mexican Americans in theory would have been able to claim certain privileges of whiteness. However, American society allowed few Mexicans any true semblance of "white" status, a social position that promised access to all the social, economic, and political rights and

[116] Angélica Agular Rodríguez, Julian Vasquez Heilig, and Allison Prochnow, "Higher Education, the GI Bill, and the Postwar Lives of Latino Veterans and Their Families" in *Latina/os and World War II,* 60.

privileges that the U.S. could afford.[117] Although a federal court granted a "white" status to Mexican Americans, the practice of the ruling in the day to day was abysmal.

Assimilation into American society, which emphasized speaking English and an adherence to middle-class Anglo American values and traditions, also impacted Mexican American identity. The desire to have all racially and ethnically different groups assimilate and "become American," is imbued with an underlying ideology of Anglo American superiority. The Spanish language and other Mexican cultural practices, particularly by Anglo American standards, were considered distinct and inferior to the English language and dominant U.S. values.[118] Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants faced pressures to assimilate into U.S. society whether they were born in the U.S. or immigrated into the country. There is, however, an important point to address to avoid over generalization in terms of assimilation. Although these "American" values were pushed onto Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, especially in early education, there were not embraced the same way. Up until the 1960s, there were many Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants who pursued these ideals in order to become more assimilated and create an American identity. Anglos, including Progressives and reformers, focused on "Americanization," which many scholars argued was a "segmented assimilation." However, this was not the case for every Mexican American community and this trend would shift with the U.S.'s entrance into the Vietnam War and the rise of the Chicano Movement.[119] This shift was Mexican Americans breaking away from this tradition of assimilating to the Anglo American values and embrace Mexican heritage, traditions, and culture. Moreover, a distinction among Mexican immigrants was established; those who had long term residency or were born in the U.S. and those who did not embrace or were familiar with dominant Anglo values and traditions were seen as culturally "backward" by the "Americanized" Chicanas/os.[120] This distinction and separation over values, national origin, generation, and views on the military within the Mexican American community will be explored further in the dissertation exploring Mexican American military service in Vietnam.

Although many of those who identified as Mexican American were imbued with a sense of pride and cultural community, which only grew with the Chicano generation, they faced harmful stereotypes and prejudices. Mexican Americans have a history of forced, exclusionary, and exploitative integration into the U.S., which is exemplified by their current social, economic, and political status in the country and by dominant perceptions that define Mexican descended peoples as foreigners.[121] For example, to be identified or labeled as a Mexican or Mexican American during the Great Depression and the 1930s was dangerous with the conducting of deportation raids.[122] This was fueled by the racist views of Anglo Americans who sought to exclude Mexican Americans from the limited work

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[117] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 75.

[118] Gilda L. Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community: Power, Conflict and Solidarity* (Austin, TX: University Press, 2004), 18-9.

[119] Noted works which address the topics of the development of a Mexican American community in relation to assimilation and non-assimilation includes George J. Sanchez's *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* and Matt Garcia's *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970.*

[120] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 42.

[121] Ibid., 27.

[122] Alicia M. Romero, "Portrait of a Barrio: Memory and Popular Culture in Barelas, NM, 1880-2000," eScholarship, PhD diss., (University of California, 2015), 79.

available and resulted in the perception that Mexican and Mexican-descent people were lazy, carefree, and culpable for job scarcity during hard economic times. The U.S. government organized a two-pronged effort-official and unofficial, brutal and traumatic-to remove and relocate individuals, families, and whole communities to areas throughout Mexico which was known as the repatriation movement.[123] This kind of treatment contributed towards Mexican Americans prompted many to hide or avoid being identified as such.

The appearance of skin color was inextricable from perceptions of race, ethnicity, and the formation of identity. Generally, lighter complexations were more desirable as it allowed one to pass as White, a concept held not just by Mexican Americans but other ethnic groups. This notion contributes to the ideas of who was deemed worthy to receive fair treatment and access to opportunities in the eyes of Anglo Americans; someone White or White looking was worthy of fair treatment in all sectors of life. However, there are other factors besides skin color that impact "passing" as explained by Kevin R. Johnson, a Professor of Law, whose work focuses on Mexicans and identity. Johnson asserts "race is a social construction [and] physical features, surname, language, [and] accent[s] make it difficult for some Latinos to pass as white."[124] Although the author uses the specific term Latino, the premise is the same for those who identify as Mexican American. A study of upper-class Hispano families in urban areas of New Mexico found that these family's skin color was considered to be an important feature for their status.[125] The connections between skin color and racial discrimination have been prominent in scholarship of Mexican/Mexican American communities. Historian Ramón Eduardo Ruiz Urueta argues the "favor [for] fair skins [is] a bigotry that pervades all classes, especially the well-off."[126] In further this argument, Historian Vicki Ruiz argues racial and gender prejudice and discrimination with their accompanying social, political, and economic segmentation have constrained aspirations, expectations, and decision-making within Mexican American communities.[127] As seen with this assessment of physical appearance and the positive or negative associations with skin color, there were a multitude of factors which contributed to the shaping of the Mexican American identity that provided accesses or created barriers.

Mexican American identity, how it fits into American society and how it can be categorized, has been debated among those of Mexican descent. Carlos E. Castañeda, a WWII veteran, librarian and professor at the University of Texas, has explored this debate and argues U.S. Mexicans occupied a "third" racial category, in his article "The Problem of the Mexican." His wartime work served to illuminate the third-space subjectivity of Mexican Americans as "impossible subjects."[128] Despite their status as citizens and differences in appearance and regional affiliation, most Mexican Americans were classified

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[123] Ibid., 115.

[124] Kevin R. Johnson, *How Did You Get to Be Mexican?: A White/Brown Man's Search for Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 6.

[125] Griswold del Castillo, *La Familia,* 106.

[126] Ramón Eduardo Ruiz Urueta, *Memories of a Hyphenated Man* (University of Arizona Press, 2011), 35.

[127] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 50.

[128] Marianne M. Bueno, "Intellectually He Was Courageous; in Public Action He War Cautious and Prudent": A Reassessment of Carlos E. Castañeda's Wartime Service" in *Latina/os and World War II,* 107. The term "impossible subjects" is coined by historian Mae M. Ngai in her book *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

as “Mexican” by the U.S. Census and by public opinion.[129] As members of an “in-between” racial population, Mexican Americans encountered numerous improvements in social status and race relations during WWII, but racial barriers did not disappear in any way.[130] Carlos E. Castañeda’s work references how a member of a Mexican American family recounts their family history and how the family’s mother was sent into town to run errands because she could pass as white.[131] This example demonstrates the negative treatment Mexican Americans of varied skin color endured and illuminates the freedoms for those who could pass as white. The importance of “whiteness” was so imbued into everyday life, it was protected through legislation. For example, Governor Coke Stevenson of Texas created and passed the “Caucasian Race Resolution” in 1943, which forbade discrimination against “Caucasians.”[132] This was established to prevent any attempts by ethnic communities, not considered “Caucasians,” and was a law to preserve white supremacy in the face of federal changes toward integration. This is just one example of the racial tensions that permeated daily life; the presence of ethnic groups who did not assimilate to Anglo American standards were threatening and laws were passed to protect Anglo American superiority.

Mexican Americans shaped their identity at the behest of outside influences including Anglo Americans, the U.S. government, and internal pressures to assimilate which were especially severe during wartime. Efforts to try to change or morph the identity of Mexican Americans were prevalent when the nation was at war. Recognizing these efforts, George I. Sánchez, argued, between WWI and WWII reformers established interwar Americanization programs explicitly to change the cultural values of Mexican women and their children, as they viewed Mexican traditions and customs as obstacles to their full integration into American life.[133] This view of Mexican American/Mexican culture and values as “other” or detrimental to American society was prominent in public settings. Signs in public establishments barred entry to specific ethnic groups. There were even restaurant signs proudly listing who was not allowed entrance: Mexicans, Blacks, and Dogs; people of color were seen as nothing more than animals (see Figure 4). The need to segregate even transcended into death; Mexican Americans were banned from many white cemeteries.[134]

[129] Richard Griswold Del Castillo, “The Paradox of War: Mexican American Patriotism, Racism, and Memory” in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero,* 11-12.

[130] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 152.

[131] Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II*, ed, (University of Texas Press, 2005), 42.

[132] Ibid., 43.

[133] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 46.

[134] Carlos Harrison, *The Ghosts of Hero Street: How One Small Mexican-American Community Gave So Much In World War II and Korea* (Berkeley Caliber, 2014), 8.

Figure 4. Alex Sánchez. "We will not sit idly by as Supreme Court rolls back progress." Voces Unidas, https://www.vocesunidas.org/post/we-will-not-sit-idly-by-as-supreme-court-rolls-back-progress.

The public display of racial discrimination against Mexicans/Mexican Americans negatively impacted how the youth and those in the armed forces viewed the society they lived in and how they viewed themselves. Mexican American WWII Air Force pilot Henry Cervantes recalled how in his youth he wanted to "escape the shame [he] felt for being Mexican, brown, and poor."[135] Cervantes sought to change his identity and wanted to be perceived as Spanish. Mexican children like himself learned early on that being Spanish was acceptable, and being Mexican was not, so he encouraged his classmates to think of him as Spanish. However, despite his efforts, Cervantes continued to endure racial slurs and harmful jokes about Mexicans.[136] Many Mexican American children in the 1940s encountered similar racial prejudice and desires to distance themselves from their indigenous and Mexican heritage by identifying as Spanish.[137] Attempts to hide their heritage were not always successful and often depended on the popular perceptions of Mexican heritage. Cervantes continued to be subjected to the views of Mexican heritage into his adult life. Even after his military accomplishments as a successful pilot, Cervantes was met with confusion and skepticism from fellow military personnel and civilians alike. He has been told, "But you don't look Mexican," which is meant to be a "compliment" but further solidifies others' views of Mexicans as inferior.[138] Throughout his life, and many other Mexican Americans growing up within American society, Cervantes has had to question his identity and has struggled with what to call himself. He often asked himself: "Who am I: Mexican, Mexican-American, or American?"[139] This question of self-identifying within American society was shared among those in the military, especially during the rise of the Civil Rights, Chicano Movement and the Vietnam War. This will be further discussed in the fourth chapter, with a focus on the shifts of self-identity and views on military service.

[135] Cervantes, *Piloto*, 10.
[136] Ibid., 40.
[137] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 57.
[138] Cervantes, *Piloto*, 145.
[139] Ibid., 150.

Although some were able to pass as white, discrimination and exclusion against those with Mexican heritage remained common. Mexican Americans sought to assimilate and distinguish themselves from those who were Mexican because of negative stereotypes associated with Mexican immigrants. However, over time the notion of appealing to American assimilation shifted with the rise of the Chicano Movement, which advocated for the embrace of Mexican culture and going against the old tradition of trying to fit into a constructed "American" identity based on Anglo American values. Mexican Americans, placed in such a limited and inferior position, desired to find ways to reach better opportunities. One prominent way, as this dissertation shows, was through the military. The following section highlights this and explores the various challenges Mexican Americans faced within their communities.

Challenges Faced by the Mexican American Community

The stereotypes and prejudice that defined the Mexican racial category resulted in numerous negative impacts on Mexican Americans, which affected their quality of life, accesses to resources, and means for social advancement. Mexican Americans, along with Mexican immigrants, navigated their daily lives while facing these harmful impacts. This section begins by highlighting the ways Mexican Americans experienced violence from groups like the Ku Klan Khan, vigilante mobs, and the Texas Rangers. Their histories, stories of their lives and experiences have been excluded and hidden. The section continues to explore these harmful impacts, specifically racial segregation, in public, in labor sectors, and in early education. Mexican Americans faced exclusion and cultural and historical repression in these areas and were denied opportunities to seek better employment and access to higher education, which prevented opportunities for social mobility. These limitations prompted Mexican American communities to find ways to elevate themselves within a society, which sought to marginalize and oppress them. Furthermore, this section considers the violence and hidden histories tied to these communities; how these communities continued to develop post-WWII, and examples of communities in Colorado and New Mexico who were directly impacted by military bases and installations.

Recovering those parts of history which have been hidden, omitted, or ignored is a crucial part of Mexican American or Chicanx history. The exclusions within the mainstream of Chicanx history are frequently the consequence of attempts to bury acts of racism, discrimination, violence, and injustice. Moreover, these exclusions represent a refusal to properly acknowledge Mexican American and Mexican communities in the larger context of the development of the Southwest. This history of racism and discrimination against communities of Mexican origin has involved violence and hate crimes, such as lynching and police brutality.[140] These violent acts have been carried out by individuals and groups. For example, Mexicans and Hispanos were the targets of the Ku Klan Khan within Colorado and the greater Southwest.[141] By 1924 KKK members were justices of the peace and district court justices; there is evidence that they were the largest, cohesive, and most efficiently organized political force in the Colorado at the time.[142]

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[140] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 33-4.
[141] Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities 1920-1960,* 52.
[142] Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice,* 4.

These violent acts of repression are not found in mainstream historical narratives nor are they reflected in public historical markers. Fortunately, there are scholars who have sought to bring forth those forgotten and ignored histories. Monica Muñoz Martinez, for example, focuses on these hidden violent histories in *The Injustice Never leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*. Martinez brings to light the violence and trauma inflicted on Mexican and Mexican American communities in Texas, in the name of "justice." These acts of violence included physical assaults and murder, which were conducted by vigilante mobs and the state backed Texas Rangers. These attacks were fueled by erroneous and racist views of all peoples of Mexican descent as foreigners and undeserving of the rights afforded to privileged White Americans. Martinez draws on institutional and private archives along with oral histories, but also references "vernacular history making," which helps explore and preserve the histories not found within official historical narratives.[143] This work also aids in memorialization efforts, which provides victims of this violence a means to redress, and a pathway to make their experiences, traumas, and memories known. Similarly, this dissertation explores how histories of Mexican Americans military service are remembered or memorialized. Martinez's book serves as an example of scholars' efforts to highlight the violent and hidden parts of Chicanx history, which as she argues, has a strong legacy very much in the present especially within the lives and memories of victims' families.

One of the most prominent challenges Mexican American communities faced was public segregation in residential areas and the use of public facilities and other services. This created clear borders between communities of color and Anglo American populations. On the eve of WWII, racial segregation was part of daily life in major cities and small towns, is the Southwest, as was in most parts of the U.S.[144] Just as African Americans faced a variety of Jim Crow laws and practices, people of Mexican origin faced similar restrictions; they faced the "Juan Crow Laws." These laws aimed to target people of Mexican descent, and created rules of segregation within the housing sector, public accommodations, public schools, churches, and restaurants and discouraged them from voting or serving on juries. The personal relationships between Anglo Americans and Mexican American communities were also targeted with the prohibition of interracial marriages.[145] These laws placed limitations on those of Mexican descent and restricted access to resources, places to live, relationships, and movement within public spaces.

In New Mexico, the aspect of regionality played an important role for identification and the development of Mexican American or Hispano communities. This also contributed to the levels of segregation within the state. In southern New Mexico, and especially in southeastern New Mexico, where White Texans migrated, segregation was more common. The presence of Mexican Braceros from 1942 to 1964 also a contributed to staunch racial discrimination and segregation. Although segregation was not as prominent compared to Texas, there was still instances of public racial segregation and discrimination in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, NM. Signs that read "No Spanish, No Mexicans" and "Anglos Only" were a common sight. Albuquerque attempted to combat this segregation by passing a

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[143] Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 27.

[144] Charlene Riggins and Miguel Garcia, *Forgotten Patriots: Voices of World War II Mexican American Veterans of Southern California* (Fullerton, Calif.: Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton, 2007), xviii.

[145] Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You*, 4, 16.

municipal order banning discrimination in public sites in 1952.[146] This legal attempt to end segregation and discrimination provided the Mexican/Mexican American community the means to challenge other instances of legally sanctioned segregation.[147] The social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, including Mexican American political activism, contributed to the fight to disrupt the Juan Crow laws of racial segregation that disenfranchised and segregated ethnic Mexicans.[148]

Racial segregation and discrimination permeated the labor sector and brought numerous challenges to ethnic laborers that included how and where they lived within labor camps and towns. In the state of Colorado, the beet sugar industry utilized Mexican laborers who tended the sugar beet fields and established Mexican colonies within sugar beet towns. Mexican American and Mexican laborers faced all levels of racial segregation while working and living within these towns in Colorado. In Brighton there were Anglo Americans who made their views clear on regulating their residency with how "lots shall not be sold to people of the colored race or to people we know as Mexicans."[149] Another well-known Mexican colony, in Fort Collins, featured separate neighborhoods and prominent "White Trade Only" signs. Residents also recalled those of Mexican descent were barred from sitting downstairs in theaters; they sat in the back of street cars and were barred with "White Only" signs.[150] Similar to how African Americans endured the Jim Crow laws Mexican American communities were subjected to everyday, racist limitations. One Fort Collins resident, Dan Martinez, recalled, "the Mexican American community understood their place."[151] These are just a few examples the ways racial segregation was sustained and how Mexican Americans were viewed and treated. Anglo Americans racialized Mexicans as second class citizens and made sure Mexican workers and residents "knew their place" within the social hierarchy.

In addition to racial segregation, Mexican Americans lacked opportunities to gain a proper education, which limited social and economic mobility in twentieth century American society. As the Mexican-origin population grew, school boards throughout the Southwest established segregated schools and classrooms that focused on teaching Mexican-origin students manual labor, hygiene, and the English language earlier.[152] Immigrant parents and those who had limited opportunities growing up, wanted their children to gain a sufficient education as they believed it would provide them with better economic prospects and a brighter future in the U.S. However, access to proper education for Mexican American children was difficult.

Within the Southwest U.S. school systems, teachers, principals, and school boards were generally racist and considered Mexican Americans students inferior to white students. They stereotyped Mexican American and Mexican students as dirty, troublemakers, lacking the intellectual compacity for education, and unable to learn and achieve proficiency in

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[146] Cynthia E. Orozco, "Regionalism, Politics, and Gender in Southwest History: The League of United Latin American Citizens' Expansion into New Mexico from Texas, 1929-1945," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1998): 479-480, https://doi.org/10.2307/970404.

[147] David Montehano, "The Beating of Private Aguirre: A Story about West Texas during World War II," in Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II* (University of Texas Press, 2005), 44.

[148] Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You,* 52.

[149] Donato, "Sugar Beets, Segregation, and Schools," 75.

[150] Ibid., 75-6.

[151] Ibid., 76.

[152] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 50.

English. These stereotypes and racist views prompted many students and families to leave schools and districts. In Colorado for example, racial discrimination and substandard schools pushed many minority students out.[153] Even school facilities and curriculum for these children were also poor and influenced the number of students dropping out. Unequal facilities and demeaning curricular practices of the era prompted Mexican American children to drop out of public school at an early age to work in factories and in the fields.[154] The highly racialized education contexts that denigrated the culture, heritage, and language of Mexican Americans were evident throughout the school systems in Texas, California, and other states where large concentrations of Mexican heritage peoples were living.[155] This is significant because it demonstrates the challenges in education and the limitations for economic and social advancement. This also contributes to the understanding of the challenges the Mexican American community faced prior to the U.S.'s entrance into WWII left with limited opportunity for growth outside of low level and manual jobs with limited education. This is why many Mexican Americans answered the call to military service: it was a viable outlet for many Mexican American youth living in a community with limited opportunities.

The limits in education, and the move towards the military, were due to staunch acts of racism and discrimination. There are numerous examples of young Mexican American students who faced racial discrimination and segregation in their early schooling days. As scholar Laurel Ashley recalls in her dissertation, "Self, Family, and Community: The Social Process of Aging Among Urban Mexican-American Women," her early school years were incredibly negative. She goes on to explain many educators were prejudiced, and the educational system mirrored those ideas.[156] Another example is Herminia Guerrero Cadena, of Falls City, TX, who recalled the frustration and belittlement he felt when teachers changed or Anglicized their names. He also recalled how he and his fellow Mexican American students were called "dirty Mexicans" and even their food was subject of ridicule.[157] For example, the debate of the use of metal lunch boxes vs. flat packets of bean tacos was detailed in the *La Opinion* newspaper showcasing the difference in class and economic status.[158] Mexican American students faced this type of harassment and prejudice, which was allowed was allowed by their teachers and the school districts.

The segregation of Mexican American students was common practice which limited their educational opportunities and reinforced negative and harmful views towards those of Mexican descent. They were placed in "Mexican classrooms" or "Mexican schools" where vocational education was emphasized.[159] Although Mexican Americans were legally characterized as white under the prevailing 'separate but equal' doctrine, "widespread Spanish monolingualism in many Mexican-American households led Anglo administrators

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[153] Vargas, "The Lie of "America's Greatest Generation," 218.

[154] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 14.

[155] Agular Rodríguez, Vasquez Heilig, and Prochnow, "Higher Education, the GI Bill, and the Postwar Lives of Latino Veterans and Their Families" in *Latina/os and World War II*, 60.

[156] Laurel Ashley, "Self, Family, and Community: The Social Process of Aging Among Urban Mexican-American Women*,"* dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985, 186.

[157] Joanne Rao Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II: From Familial Shelter to Expanding Horizons" in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero,* 70.

[158] Cervantes, *Piloto*, 6, 9.

[159] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 33.

to justify Mexican American-exclusion form education programs and facilities attended by white, English-speaking children."[160] This is significant because language was a common method to oppress the identities of Mexican American youth. Speaking Spanish was highly discouraged or forbade entirely. The restricted use of Spanish reflected a strong belief in Anglo conformity and negatively impacted the self-esteem of Mexican-American children.[161] The issue with education was not just in early schooling for these Mexican American or Chicano youths. Even when they were able to get into college their previous educational experiences did not fully prepare them to cope with the demands of the university in the same manner that Anglo students were more likely able to obtain.[162] This became a greater focus in the objection to segregated education, its consequences during the Civil Rights era and the organization and strategies to be developed to help change them.

Mexican Americans faced discrimination, segregation, and racial violence, which shaped their lives for the whole of the twentieth century. Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants lived their lives, worked, sent their children to school, and navigated U.S. citizenship all the while facing the struggles that came from racist practices. They were excluded from economic and social opportunities and denied access to proper and higher education. They were delegated to lower paying and dangerous jobs prior to WWII. However, at the end of the Great Depression and before the U.S.' entrance into WWII, there were opportunities provided by the military which piqued their interest in military service. This interest was especially focused on one military based program that actually prepared future Mexican American soldiers for life within military service.

Labor in the Southwest

Job opportunities for Mexican American communities before WWII were generally limited due to racial discrimination, prejudice, and other restrictions that pertain to citizenship, immigration status, education, labor skills, and skin color. Women of color were presented with even fewer options in the labor sector. The following chapter will further address gender and class when exploring who worked within the military institutions, sites, and bases, factories, and in the agricultural fields once warfare was conducted. This section will address the commonality of job exclusion Mexican Americans faced during the Great Depression and how an early military organization during this time was an influential factor for Mexican American youths enlisting into the military which lead up right before the U.S. officially entered into WWII.

During the Great Depression, Mexican Americans were especially hard-hit because they worked in rural, low-paying jobs without insurance or significant savings. This was also influenced in how Americanization or assimilation negatively impacted Mexican American and Mexican communities within the labor sector. In the 1930s and 1940s federal, state, and local governments increasingly pressured employers to hire only U.S. citizens, leaving Mexican-born immigrants with little to no job opportunities.[163] During this

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[160] Henry A.J. Ramos, *American GI Forum: In Pursuit of the Dream, 1946-1983*, (Arte Público Press, 1998), 52.

[161] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 53.

[162] United Mexican American Students, University of New Mexico, *The Chicano and UNM* (Albuquerque, 1969), 10.

[163] Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II,* 122.

significant period of history Anti-Mexican ideas also became more evident as jobs became scarce, further disadvantaged Mexican American job seekers.[164] To help combat unemployment the federal government put multiple measures into place to increase labor opportunities and put Americans back to work.

One measure was the implementation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which was established by President Roosevelt in 1933. The program was run by the U.S. Army and was mostly immune to local discriminatory practices found in other employment programs. Many young Mexican American seized the opportunity and joined with a number of members rising to staff positions.[165] The CCC provided opportunities for paid work and appointees for vocational training, but also provided an indirect benefit. Mexican American WWII veteran, Arnulfo "Arnif" Nerio, recalled how the militarized daily regimen of the CCC camp provided valuable experiences that aided him in the army after being drafted in WWII.[166] This example reveals the direct and indirect influences government legislation had for those who fought in the wars. The labor performed by Mexican Americans, mostly field work and hard, low paid labor, also indirectly prepared them for war and provided an advantage in basic training. WWII veteran Augustine Lucio, from San Marcos Texas, noted how his experience of hard work in agriculture eased the physical strain of the transition from civilian work to a military status. While the basic training was very difficult for some recruits it "was routine for [him]."[167] The introduction of the program provided not only work provided by the U.S. military but also introduced militarized regulations and organization for future Mexican American servicemen. There were many Mexican Americans who had already looked to the military for work and economic opportunity, but the CCC provided further justification to join the military; it provided the opportunities many sought.

The military was viewed as an opportunity for those who had little options for labor and economic mobility for stability and success and became more prevalent when military service was being advertised with the upcoming war. Mexican Americans faced racial discrimination, little to no job opportunities, and unequal access to proper education as seen in Colorado and in Texas. High school age Mexican Americans left school in large numbers to volunteer for military service prior to the national draft and thereafter made up a considerable number of the draftees from Colorado.[168] There were numerous factors, anti-Mexican sentiment, and a series of laws, policies, and practices by European Americans, that hindered Mexican Americans' social, economic, and labor opportunities in the U.S.

Prior to the U.S. entering WWII the Mexican American community faced racism, racial segregation, exclusion, and found limited opportunities in accessing resources to help them overcome the struggles they faced. There were constant reminders they were outsiders within the country they were born in; they were barred from the use of public services, their culture and history were excluded from their education, and they were pushed into manual, hard labor due their Mexican ethnicity. These types of discrimination took placed throughout the Southwest. There were few opportunities for Mexican Americans to

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[164] Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II*, 66-7.*

[165] Julie Leininger Pycior, *LBJ and Mexican Americans: The Paradox of Power* (University of Texas Press, 1997), 30.

[166] Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War,* 41.

[167] Dionicio Valdés, "Now Get Back To Work": Mexican Americans and the Agricultural "Migrant Stream" in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation,* 44.

[168] Vargas, "The Lie of "America's Greatest Generation," 218.

overcome these barriers, especially with legal discrimination in the form of anti-Mexican legislation, like the Juan Crow laws, and the racist ideologies of White society. However, opportunity came during wartime where military service and the establishment of military bases provided many benefits, which were out of reach for many in the Mexican American community. The next chapter focuses on the opportunities provided by the U.S. military and how it impacted the Mexican American community during the war and the decades after.

Ch. 3: Mexican Americans' Service in the Military: WWII Up to Vietnam

Military service in the U.S. has offered unique opportunities for those willing to risk their lives fighting for their country. For many Mexican Americans, military service offered a way to demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty to the U.S. and provided the opportunities that were previously out of their reach due to racial discrimination. Prior to WWII, racial discrimination and segregation curtailed labor opportunities and community development for ethnic minorities. However, during WWII, the federal government took a clear position in the attempt to move away from segregation and discrimination on the basis of race and ancestry for the sake of the war effort, as seen in defense labor. This is evident with President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, enacted in June of 1941, which banned discriminatory employment practices by federal agencies, all unions, and companies that engaged in war-related work. U.S. ethnic minorities, especially Mexican Americans, saw the unique opportunities tied to military service during and immediately after WWII, such as varied labor opportunities, upward social and economic mobility, and a space for civil rights activism. Existing scholarship argues the military offered unprecedented opportunities for Mexican Americans between WWII and Vietnam, suggesting they were consistent or a constant phenomenon over the course of the three the wars. This dissertation argues, however, that the socio-economic incentives for joining the military did not sustain its appeal over time due to economic and social transformations after WWII. These transformations included increased labor opportunities, community development, advocacy for civil rights, and the restructuring of the military itself.

This chapter explores the time period between WWII and the start of the Vietnam War and focuses on key themes directly related to Mexican American service in the military and the war effort on the home front. Analysis will demonstrate Mexican Americans had access to various opportunities not previously available in their home communities prior to their entrance into service; opportunities in skilled labor work, aid to obtain higher education, and the ability to acquire new housing outside of their community. However, my analysis also demonstrates that these incentive opportunities did not last sustain over time. The first section focuses on the motivations of Mexican Americans who enlisted or accepted their WWII draft notices. These motivations varied in terms of patriotic ideals and new opportunities previously unavailable in their own communities, which this section argues is a significant factor for enlistment. The second section addresses residential challenges Mexican American communities faced, which included racism, discrimination, segregation, limited economic opportunity, and social marginalization. This highlights how for Mexican American veterans, not all those promised benefits from military service were given or it was made difficult to obtain due to racial discrimination. The final section focuses on Mexican American women during WWII and explores their participation in defense labor, the breaking of gender traditions, and the development of a new social identity. This focus will demonstrate the kinds of opportunities and transformations the military created. The exploration of these topics will provide a deeper understanding of the motivations of, and opportunities created for Mexican Americans by military service and veterans' experiences when the U.S.' entered into WWII.

The chapter within this exploration traces the evolution of the idea and reality of military service for Mexican Americans between WWII and the Vietnam War, documenting the early enthusiasm for military service, which was fueled both by a desire among Mexican

American children of immigrant parents to prove their loyalty and value as U.S. citizens, and a belief that service would translate to economic opportunity and a clearer footing in the country's social landscape. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates that neither the Federal Government nor the U.S. military upheld their ends of the perceived bargain of military service in exchange for respect and fair treatment. As Mexican Americans continued to face racism, discrimination, and segregation, they began as individuals and communities to learn new approaches to gain their Civil Rights. This included fostering a growing critique of the notions of patriotism, the role of the U.S. in places like Vietnam, and of the value of military service. In exploring these changes over time, this chapter continuously engages with central elements in the existing scholarship on Mexican Americans and military service. Among the key themes is the missing voices of Mexican Americans and their participation in wartime, such as their experiences in training, combat, service, and post-war impacts on their lives. These experiences highlight the racism, discrimination, oppression, segregation, and lack of socio-economic mobility prior to military enlistment. This chapter also illuminates the consequences for ethnic communities and community development within the history of military service. Furthermore, the socio-economic benefits of military service, the consequences of service, and how the presence of the military impacted a community, needs to be explored further in order to develop a more expansive understanding of its impacts on American society.

Motivations For Enlisting

In order to fully understand the effects of the military and how it shaped the economic and social status of soldiers, the motivations for why Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals were willing to risk their lives overseas needs to be understood. Militarized citizenship is a concept that describes how societal expectations of being patriotic and supporting the U.S. influenced citizens or foreign nationals to serve in the military.[169] These motivations, however, were linked to the social and racial inequality and discrimination, which resulted in the lack of opportunities for social and economic advancement. Exploring these motivations will reveal why opportunities provided by the military were appealing and the racial issues Mexican Americans continued to face after their service.

At the outset of WWII, Mexican Americans generally viewed enlisting in the military as a way to show patriotism for one's country and offered many potential benefits. Many Mexican American veterans after WWII emphasized military service as the proper avenue to gain citizenship rights through a sincere demonstration of civic and masculine responsibility.[170] Military service also appealed to Mexican Americans because it emphasized merit and achievement rather than class or ethnicity; it also demonstrated their valor, masculinity, and instilled a sense of honor. Moreover, Catherine Sue Ramírez, a professor of Latin American and Latino Studies, asserts "the U.S. military has been lauded as a site of egalitarianism and meritocracy in which racial, ethnic, and class, differences

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[169] Jordan Beltrán Gonzales, "'Con dolor de corazón': Militarization and Transracial Recognition among Mexican Americans and Filipinos in the Bataan Death March" in *Latina/os and World War II,* 161, 166.

[170] Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War,* 206.

(more so than gender and sexual ones) supposedly matters little."[171] As this dissertation demonstrates, most Mexican Americans' experiences did not square with this egalitarian, antiracist ideals. Mexican American enlistees understood military duty as a means to demonstrate their patriotism, manhood, and equality with white soldiers. At the same time, service enabled a salient ethnic nationalism that was often predicated on hypermasculine performance and competition.[172] These opportunities for achievement and recognition were often not available in civilian life for many Mexican Americans prior to WWII. Additionally, military training and service taught attitudes and skills, such as discipline, leadership, and depending on the occupation during service, useful technical skills. These skills could have prepared barrio and *colonia* youth for successful engagement with the larger society to which they would return.[173] This is especially true with the many segregated barrios and colonias throughout the Southwest.

Mexican Americans' Communities: Discrimination and Racism

Military service after WWII brought some benefits for Mexican American veterans and their families, however, there were lingering notions and acts of racial discrimination, which prevented them from exercising their earned privileges. For example, the GI Bill granted military veterans a variety of benefits such as home loans, but Mexican American veterans faced challenges when they tried to use these benefits. Housing benefits were a significant perk of military service, which allowed Mexican Americans to move outside of their home communities into post-WWII suburbia. However, Mexican American families faced racial discrimination and racism when they tried to relocate. This section will highlight the continuation of racial segregation, even within military bases, and demonstrate how, despite being at war, racial barriers were still upheld. The experiences of Mexican American veterans from WWII and the Korean War will conclude this section along with an examination of how they and their home communities were or were not recognized after the wars.

An important part of ethnic minorities' experiences with the military resulted from federal government legislation and funding, which fueled international armed conflicts. For example the establishment of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, or GI Bill, enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944.[174] This legislation was intended to provide veterans with financial support, post-service opportunities, and programs that paid for higher education, medical treatment, home loans, and occupational training.[175] This kind of legislation was particularly appealing to ethnic groups, like Mexican Americans, who were in a lower economic classes prior to WWII; they either worked in agricultural or low paid unskilled jobs. Several works on Mexican American experiences prior to WWII reveal that few Mexican Americans had the financial means to afford a college education prior to

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[171] Catherine Sue Ramírez, *The Woman In the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, And the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 141.

[172] Luis Lavarez, "Transnational Latino Soldiering: Military Service and Ethnic Politics during World War II" in *Latina/os and World War II,* 85.

[173] Richard Griswold del Castillo, ed., *World War II And Mexican American Civil Rights* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 20.

[174] Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and B.V. Olguín, eds. *Latina/os and World War II: Mobility, Agency, and Ideology* (University of Texas Press, 2014), 60.

[175] Ibid., 38.

WWII because many families had minimal education due to poverty, loss of family members, segregated schools, and prejudices towards Mexicans.[176] This is significant because it contextualizes the socio-economic motivations of Mexican Americans who decided to join the military. This piece of legislation offered benefits, housing, medical, and educational opportunities, which were not easily assessable for Mexican American prior to their enlistments into the military.

Although the creation of GI Bill was seen as beneficial and helped veterans after the war, it was different for Mexican American veterans, who again despite their service, still faced the impacts of racism and discrimination. The bill's benefits for veterans included the opportunity to train in a profession, pay for a home, and go back to school.[177] While the legislation provided funding for education and medical treatment, there were accounts of discrimination and racism in trying to obtain those benefits. The aspect of regionality and racism also affected how Mexican Americans received these benefits, if at all.[178] The use of the bill was also seen as a potential pathway for better treatment. Historian Steven Rosales, whose work included analyzing the impacts of the bill for Mexican American veterans, argues the "matrix between military service, the GI Bill, and citizenship promoted a bridging process toward first-class citizenship and provided Mexican American veterans with a changed conceptualization of themselves, their culture, and their place in American society."[179] This is significant because it helps demonstrate that military service and legislation for veterans did have a direct impacts for Mexican Americans by providing new opportunities in education, training, and even citizenship. However, this section's argument highlights the challenges and struggles related to the racial discrimination that plagued Mexican Americans after the war, despite the promise of benefits that came with serving in the military. Although they finished their service, the military did not ensure their benefits would be obtained equally. There seemed to be no fulfilled benefits for Mexican American veterans who proved their loyalty through sacrifice and bloodshed. Although the benefits from the bill were hampered by racism and discrimination towards Mexican American veterans there was some opportunities for physical mobility.

Some Mexican Americans were able to take advantage of the rise of suburbanization during and after WWII and were able to move out of their home communities. Previously, Mexican American communities were predominantly a rural population, but according to the 1940 U.S. Census that was no longer the case.[180] This demonstrates how there was already a shift in the migration of the community, which increased post-WWII. Segregation and racism, however, did not cease and a de facto ceiling was imposed on the extent of their migration and social and economic transformations. Neighborhood segregation was prominent and marked the true divisions among ethnicities within a geographical area. Mexican American WWII and Korean war veterans explained how living in segregated

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[176] Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and U.S. Latino and Latina WWII Oral History Project, A *Legacy Greater Than Words: Stories of U.S. Latinos And Latinas of the WWII Generation* (Austin Tex.: U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project, 2006), xxvii-xxviii.

[177] Steven Rosales, "Fighting the Peace at Home: Mexican American Veterans and the 1944 GI Bill of Rights," Pacific Historical Review 80, no. 4 (2011): 603.

[178] Ibid., 602.

[179] Ibid., 627.

[180] David A. Sandoval, "Recruitment, Rejection, and Reaction: Colorado Chicanos in the Twentieth Century" in *Enduring Legacies : Ethnic Histories and Cultures of Colorado,* Arturo J. Aldama, editor, (Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 251.

neighborhoods did not provide opportunities for social mobility. This notion of living "on the other side of the tracks" carries a strong stigma and is associated with an area fraught with problems of poverty, lower socioeconomic statuses, and was seen an overall less desirable.[181] For example, obtaining new housing and moving from barrios and colonias was very limited and riddled with racial barriers. Postwar housing projects for White middle-class people included covenants that specifically excluded African Americans and sometimes Mexican Americans.[182] This section argues despite available housing benefits, acquiring new housing and establishing new communities, Mexican American veterans continued to face the long standing tradition of racism and racial discrimination.

Mexican American veterans post-WWII, sought to use their military benefits, when they could, to try to move out of their home communities, sometimes plagued with segregation and poverty. The end of WWII contributed to the rise of suburbanization, which Mexican American veterans and their families took part in. In California one area that experienced the migration of these Mexican Americans was the city of Los Angeles.[183] Many young, newly-married Mexican American couples found homes in the growing suburbs and were further acculturated to American life.[184] However, suburbia was not the only type of housing that existed in Los Angeles county. Prior to WWII Mexican American and Mexican working-class communities or colonias were established and reflected the communities throughout the Southwest. These colonias featured self-built houses or converted boxcars, lacked municipal services, and reflected the poverty and racial segregation for many working class Mexicans and Mexican Americans.[185] However, as mentioned previously, the establishment of the GI Bill and benefits of military service, provided Mexican Americans the opportunity to purchase homes and establish new communities, reinforcing and facilitating industrial suburbanization. The migration and formalization of Mexican American suburbanization after WWII was due in part to the GI Bill that aided veterans in purchasing homes with low-interest-rate loans.[186]

For some Mexican American veterans, joining the military offered economic opportunities, such as a higher paying job which allowed them to acquire better housing for their families back home. However, they could not avoid racial discriminatory challenges. For example, during WWII a young mejicano soldier sent money to his family to buy a home with more amenities in Center, a northern village in New Mexico. When the serviceman's father attempted to buy a vacant home outside of the neighborhood and in the more dominant Anglo side of town. However, the owners refused. Their reasoning was that they would not sell to him because he was "Mexican." Although not referring to themselves as such being labeled as Mexican was enough reasoning for denying housing with better conditions. Although for this city in the 1950s the strict housing segregation began to break down, mejicano veterans from the Korean War could not secure a VA loan, a mortgage guaranteed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to buy a home on the east side of

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[181] Morin, "Among the Valiant," 21.

[182] Fernlund, *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989,* 59.

[183] Jerry González, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills: Latino Suburbanization in Postwar Los Angeles* (Rutgers University Press, 2018).

[184] Rosales, *Testimonio,* 158.

[185] González, *In Search of the Mexican Beverly Hills*, 4.

[186] Ibid., 49.

Center. Even with having a veteran status and military benefits there was still the issue of housing discrimination in this and other towns within the Southwest.[187]

As demonstrated in Center, NM and Los Angeles, CA post-WWII, Mexican Americans who moved to suburban neighborhoods were met with resistance and discrimination. Citizenship status, military service, and economic status did not matter to those who did not want Mexican American neighbors. Views of Mexican Americans as uneducated, unclean, criminals, and foreigners still persisted in the minds of White Americans. In her work on urban Mexican American women, Professor Laurel Ashley recounts how in 1948 when her and her husband brought a home in Orange County there were women in her neighborhood that circulated a petition protesting her presences.[188] This is an example of the Anglo American community's wide efforts to deter Mexican American families from moving into spaces that were not available to them previously. As this section has demonstrated, the growth of suburbanization and the use of the GI Bill, provided some Mexican Americans the opportunity to purchase homes and build new communities. However, they encountered persistent racial barriers that impacted veterans and their families from establishing a new life and creating new communities. As these families were able to move into new housing and they started to gain more social influence, which prompted an increase in their political activities. In the city of Los Angeles, for example, new political opportunities for Mexican Americans rose in the 1950s and 1960s. The collective Mexican American community utilized these political opportunities as platforms for activism and to proclaim their demands for social and economic equalities.[189] This example of housing transformations in Los Angeles, the purchasing of new housing and the formation of new communities, demonstrates how military service provided disproportionate and sporadic benefits for some Mexican Americans. However, as this dissertation argues, these benefits were indeed sporadic and did not last over time.

Mexican Americans' reasons and motivations for enlisting in the armed forces was also a reflection of the exclusions and challenges they faced in their home communities as a direct consequence of racial discrimination and segregation. Enlisting was linked to the poverty, discrimination, cultural norms, lack of jobs, and perceptions of patriotism.[190] The segregated areas and barrios within the Southwest embodied the subordination of an ethnic group considered to be on the lower end of the social and economic hierarchies. This contributed to how Mexican Americans saw military service as a way to escape the conditions of poverty and discrimination when there were little alternatives available. However, Mexican Americans could not escape racial discrimination or segregation even within military bases.

Military bases within the U.S. were established on large swaths of land that were primarily located in areas occupied by people of color with limited socio-economic opportunities. The history of military bases has included instances of violence against people of color both domestically and abroad. One form of violence utilized by military bases was racial segregation. Racial segregation was practiced within military housing and other

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[187] Shelly Wittevrongel and Jennie Sanchez. *Center, Colorado: Su Voto Cuenta!* (Palm Springs, California: Old John Publishing, 2017), 33.

[188] Ashely, "Self, Family, and Community," 189.

[189] Ibid., 102.

[190] Some examples of scholars not already addressed in this chapter include Debra L. Fix, Dave Gutierrez, Charlene Riggins, Miguel Garcia, Kenneth D. Rose, and Juan Ramirez.

buildings at the base. Before the desegregation of the military, there was distinct segregation between Anglo and African Americans servicemen; there were different housing bunkers and their officers' quarters were separated. The segregation between White and Black did not necessarily apply to Mexican American servicemen; during WWII they were categorized as Anglo and did not have separate bunkers for buildings for Mexicans. However, that did not mean they did not face racism and discrimination as they still were of Mexican heritage.

Until the start of the Korean War in the 1950s, the U.S. military was segregated by populations, the separation of Anglos and African Americans being most prominent. This reflected and sustained the societal division along racial lines and created tensions among military personnel. Henry Cervantes, Mexican American WWII veteran, recalls a race riot that occurred at the former Lowry Army Air base in Denver, Colorado; it was a result of the racial segregation and racial tensions between African American and Anglo servicemembers.[191] Even Castle AFB also had some issues regarding the Black servicemen at the base. There was a meeting with the Second Air Force Commander, Lt. Gen. David C. Jones, in January 1971 to meet with the Black servicemen to discuss racial problems at the base. There was also an earlier incident where Merced County law officers were sent to the base following an alleged racial clash at the enlisted men's club.[192] However, the relations between military bases and people of color have transformed due to the desegregation of the military. Over time, there has been an increase in non-white populations within the military and surrounding military bases.[193] These examples demonstrate, in spite of their isolation from civilian populations, racism and racial tensions were very present in military bases. However, there were other aspects from these military bases which affected local communities, including communities of color.

Racial segregation was an everyday reality for many young Mexican Americans, however, the military seemed to have provided alternative pathways which contributed to their interests in serving. There was a sense of adventure, pride, manhood, family loyalty, duty, patriotism, and an opportunity to follow friends or relatives who had enlisted.[194] Young Mexican American men held onto the ideals of Machismo, which encapsulates an exaggerated form of masculine prowess and a search for a pathway into manhood; one such path was through military service.[195] The opportunities provided by the military between 1940 and 1975 reaffirm a connection between machismo and male sex role behaviors, including the pursuit of masculine honor through warfare.[196] These motivations or pulls into military service indeed worked and contributed to the enlistment of thousands of youths

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[191] Cervantes, *Piloto*, 119. Other air bases before the official desegregation of the military also followed this segregation of African American servicemen such as having their own service club being separate from the others and a segregated squadron of African American officers, as seen in LeMay, *Roswell*, 77, 79.

[192] Black Airmen, General Talk At Castle, Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), January 22, 1971: 1. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-149563AA95DAD996%402440974-14955CE69A0CA100%400-14955CE69A0CA100%40.

[193] July 26, 1948-Executive Order 9981=Desegregation of the Armed Forces. By President Harry S. Truman.

[194] Griswold del Castillo, *World War II And Mexican American Civil Rights*, 50.

[195] Steven Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War: Chicano Politics, Identity, and Masculinity in the U. S. Military from World War II to Vietnam* (University of Arizona Press, 2017), 4.

[196] Ibid., 9.

during wartime, which was also boosted with the draft. Their wartime experiences in WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War forever altered the lives of these Mexican Americans.

Mexican Americans who enlisted faced many challenges in the military and how they were categorized was just one. During WWII, in the beginning of the draft and recruitment process, there were issues between the categories of race and citizenship. Under the racial category the closest for those of Mexican-descent enlistees or inductees was just "Mexican." Historian Natalie Mendoza in her dissertation argues this was an issue especially for those who were born in the U.S. as many understood "Mexican" indicated Mexican origin of birth or citizenship. The linking of race to citizenship stripped Mexican Americans of an American identity and the legal rights and protections afforded under it.[197] This is an example of how Mexican Americans had to fight to prove they were indeed Americans and not "Mexican." The experiences of Mexican American veterans from WWII to the Korean War and the history of their military contributions are significant. However, their experiences and memories have not always been properly recognized.

Significant numbers of Mexican Americans were enlisted and were drafted into the military during WWII and the Korean War. Thousands of Mexican Americans fought overseas to take advantage of economic opportunities and to follow the previous generation. Another relevant historian to this exploration, Historian Steven Rosales, explains the pay and benefits from military service and the stories from WWII veterans, who were older brothers and other family members, motivated the younger generation to enlist in the military. Thus, service in Korea was built upon the sense of Americanness and the tradition of military service first established in WWII that promoted a Mexican American culture and identity willing to reaffirm its patriotism through dedicated military service.[198] Wartime memories conveyed by WWII and Korean War veterans to younger family memories also fostered a powerful sense of duty and desire for military service.[199] Similar to WWII, thousands of Mexican Americans volunteered for the armed services after the outbreak of the Korean War; at the end of the war there were eight who were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.[200] Mexican American veterans contributed greatly in both wars and their recognition should be acknowledged, however, their stories and accomplishments in military service have not always been properly recognized.

The study of these wars needs to recognize veterans' stories, their efforts and sacrifices, which allowed both the U.S. and the Mexican American community to thrive. However, there have been absences in the recognition of Mexican American veteran contributions to the wars. The absence within earlier renditions of the historical narrative derives from the lack of acknowledgment of ethnic voices. In order to helped rectify this, those forgotten stories, memories, and voices need to be put at the forefront. For example, Raul Morin, who was a Mexican-American historian, sought to bring the voices of Mexican Americans and Spanish Americans veterans, particularly from WWII and the Korean War, at the forefront in his book *Among the Valiant: Mexican-Americans In WWII And Korea.*[201]

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[197] Natalie Mendoza, "The Good Neighbor Comes Home: The State, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and Regional Consciousness in the US Southwest During World War II." eScholarship. PhD diss. University of California, 2016, 95.

[198] Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War,* 73.

[199] Ibid., 95.

[200] Griswold del Castillo and De León. *North to Aztlán,* 116.

[201] Raul Morin, *Among the Valiant: Mexican-Americans In WW II And Korea* (Los Angeles: Borden Pub. Co., 1963), 10.

Morin's work is useful for this section and dissertation, because it recognizes the missing parts in the historical narrative about the U.S.' participation in oversea wars. Specifically, the work recognizes ethnic communities that faced the same risks, sacrifices, accomplishments, and scars just like any other group who fought for their country in the military.

These absences not only leave out the voices of Mexican American veterans and their contribution to the wars, but also their communities. In conjunction with the analysis of absence, this dissertation explores the relationship between community and the military. Another relevant scholar in the fight against absence and the focus on community is Carlos Harrison. His research has conducted a study on a Mexican American community whose residents also served in both wars with a focus on a specific community in Silvis, Illinois as seen in his book *The Ghosts of Hero Street: How One Small Mexican-American Community Gave So Much In World War II and Korea*. Significantly, Harrison explores the connection between the continued discrimination and segregation against the Mexican American community in Silvis and lack of significant change after the war.[202] Despite the heroic efforts and sacrifices this community has made for the country, its residents continued to face issues related to racial discrimination. This community example contributes to the chapter's argument: despite serving in the military and fighting and sacrificing themselves during war, Mexican American communities were faced with disappointment with the lack of improvement and continued discrimination.

Despite the racial segregation and discrimination of Mexican American communities, the families of these communities and those who were sent overseas demonstrated how there was a strong bond which were able to be sustained cross great distances. Mexican American soldiers faced the varied realities of an overseas war; one significant reality was their distance from their families. Despite the physical separation, there were other ways for connection between soldiers and their communities back home, such as letter writing. These soldiers fought for months on end and had few opportunities to leave the battlefield. The separation from family, friends, and their community had direct negative impacts on the minds of soldiers, especially on those who dealt with the horrors of war. However, writing letters to family and loved ones helped establish a connection to their home. Sending mail and messages through war torn settings was a key aspect to sustain a sense of morale among fighting soldiers. Although there were large gaps between letters and not every piece of mail was delivered or received, they were still an important reminder of home.

The concept of letter writing provided connection to family separation due to migration between the U.S. and Mexico. During wartime, letter writing provided a significant emotional connection and acted as a substitute for physical contact between family members and loved ones. This notion is exemplified by Ritz Sanchez, a professor of Chicano Studies, in her essay "The Five Sanchez Brothers in World War II: Remembrance and Discovery." In her work she recounts how she communicated with her uncle through letter writing while he was fighting overseas. Sanchez further notes in how letters were a way for connecting servicemen and their families "these letters helped us remain a family, [we] shar[ed] our hopes and fears."[203] These letters provided an important boost to GI

[202] Harrison, *The Ghosts of Hero Street*, 7.

[203] Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican American & World War II,* 23.

morale within the experiences and horrors of war.[204] However, they also provided insight into the struggles and horrors those fighting overseas faced not knowing if they will be able to return home. There were times where written communication was not welcomed, since it brought both good and bad news. It was customary for the U.S. War Department to notify the next of kin when soldiers were either wounded or killed in action through a telegram.[205] In the reality of war, sacrifice was one of the requirements for those within the armed forces. In addition to letter writing, the reliance on religion was often used to create connection and mitigate the horrors of war. Religious services were held on the frontlines and chaplains provided a comforting religious presence. Many conducted self-prayers in hope of surviving until the war's end. Many soldiers believed that the prayers of family, friends, the community, and fellow soldiers enhanced their own supplications and were factors in their survival.[206] This demonstrates there was a sense of connection to their home community; even when physically apart and in the midst of life-threatening situations. As previously mentioned, this show of support and faith provided the motivation and hope to soldiers who needed to continue on and return home. This is significant as a sense of community and connection was sustained for Mexican American soldiers and their hometown, family, and friends. Despite the risks and distance from their families and communities, many Mexican Americans enlisted in the military to reap the potential economic opportunities and awards for being a veteran.

The U.S.' victory in WWII established the country as a dominant world power and marked the beginning of the shift in the perception of military service as beneficial and inclusive for Mexican Americans. However, these Mexican Americans and their communities faced racial discrimination and segregation within their own communities, the armed forces, and within the suburban landscape they moved into. There was legislation that provided benefits for veterans, but it did not always translate into equity, improved educational opportunities, better jobs, nor an end to racism and discrimination for Mexican American service members or their families. Moreover, many of the economic benefits promised through military service and for veterans were elusive, specifically for Mexican Americans. After helping the United States to victory in WWII, Mexican Americans continued faced racism at home. However, during wartime those separated from their home community still found ways to be connected; for many it helped them throughout the strains and horrors of war. The war effort on the home front was just as hard fought and it was not just the men who utilized their labor to support the U.S.

Mexican American Women and WWII

In further considering Mexican American's service in the military this section explores how Mexican American women in how they were impacted from the war and how they impacted the war effort at home and within the military itself. The war provided an opportunity for wartime industries to grow and participation in WWII saw substantial growth in U.S. industry. However, Mexican Americans were frequently turned down for defense jobs in the Southwest because of racial discrimination based on prejudice and

[204] Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II," 81.

[205] Gutierrez, *Patriots from the Barrio,* 117.

[206] Rea Ann Trotter, "God and War: The Impact of Combat upon Latino Soldiers' Religious Beliefs" in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation,* 134.

stereotypes towards Mexicans.[207] One government official explained how employers assumed Mexican Americans to be "incapable of doing [anything] other than manual, physical labor" and "unfit for the type of skilled labor required by industry and the crafts."[208] This was furthered with the, "prevalent belief among employers for the various industries, personnel managers, officials of military installations, and govt agencies in the Southwest is that the Mexican-American is incapable of doing other manual, physical labor; that he is unfit for the skilled labor required by industry and the crafts."[209] This mindset continued and was a challenge Mexican Americans had to overcome when it provided enough justification to deny them work and promotions. This section explores the new opportunities that were presented to women and Mexican American women in defense labor and within the military, how these opportunities broke gender and racial barriers, and the shaping of a new cultural identity for young Mexican American women.

There were major labor gaps left by able bodied Anglo-American men who enlisted and were drafted into the armed forces. This absence of able bodied men left industries to turn to men and women of color to fill jobs. However, labor demands were not enough to shift preestablished practices of racism and members of minority communities were still excluded from certain industries. In recognizing this loss of potential labor for contributing to the full production of these war industries by the U.S. government 1941 these industries were confronted with an executive order barring discrimination in companies that held government contracts and in the federal government itself.[210] Order 8802 and the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), which was designed as an oversight agency to investigate instances of discrimination in industry, were put into place. Despite the FEPC this is not put an end to the racial discrimination in labor. Mexican American politicians and civil rights activists tried to make the agency accountable for enforcing punishments when there were acts of discrimination, but the policy of excluding Mexicans from other than menial jobs in war industries continued during the war.[211] Mexican American women who entered wartime industries confronted the same racial issues, however, they also had the opportunity to break racial, gendered roles, and labor barriers.

Among the many consequences of WWII, gendered norms became less strict, which provided greater economic opportunities to women at the home front. The opportunities from wartime labor and military service had a greater impact for Mexican American women who faced greater oppressions. Mexican American women have received even less recognition during wartime, but there have been attempts to rectify this. The new opportunities created by the U.S.'s entrance into WWII and the need wartime labor contributed to Mexican Americans' independence and the formation of their unique identities. However, Mexican American women continued to face racial and gender discrimination in the workforce and in society. This resistance and discrimination were connected to larger perceptions of women as threats and as "dangerous." Even with

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[207] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 45.

[208] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 48.

[209] Carlos E. Castañeda "Testifies on Job Discrimination Against Mexican Americans in War Defense Industries, 1945," In *Major Problems in Mexican American History: Documents and Essays*, Zaragosa Vargas, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1999), 315.

[210] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 46.

[211] Rosales, *Testimonio,* 222.

legislation to prevent exclusionary practices in wartime industries, the racial and gender discrimination did not cease when greater numbers of Mexican American women joined.[212]

Women being placed in defense industries prompted the creation of new wartime propaganda that glorified and glamorized the roles of workingwomen in order to help convey traditional gendered norms. These images suggested a women's femininity need not be sacrificed.[213] Femininity was linked to white womanhood, which was to be preserved among the chaos of wartime. However, this kind of thinking did not acknowledge all workers who toiled in other industries, such as the rural workers. This was one of the main aspects portrayed in some propaganda posters, especially with the presence of women as seen in Figure 5. Although they are placed at the forefront in terms of the need for agricultural production, their image did not mean that women were considered to be the main focus. The use of their image was used as a kind of rhetorical strategy for industrial agricultural and business aligned with the government. Encouragement to increase food production was needed and the use of the images of women helped achieve this goal. This is significant as it shows how the government acknowledged women's labor and its necessity during the time of war. However, only certain elements, such as familiar and traditional roles or stereotypes, were promoted and did not openly portray the women of color were just as important to the war effort.

In addition to working in the fields and factories, Mexican American woman also served in other organizations which had direct connections to the military. One example was the U.S. Naval Reserve or WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). One Mexican American WWII veteran, Ramon, had a partner who went into training in New York City under this organization and was assigned at the naval air station in New Jersey where they rigged parachutes for the navy.[214] This is one of many examples of women who had partners, family, and loved ones who served overseas. Their loved one's service motivated women to work and contribute to the war effort. Another military based organization was the WASPs, Women Airforce Service Pilots. They occupied a male dominated sector and were integral to the war effort. These women pilots helped train fighter pilots who fought overseas. Many Mexican American women joined the workforce to help in wartime efforts. For example, women from Second Street or Hero Street, the Mexican American community in Silvis, Illinois who had residents fight during WWII and Korea, worked in the defense industry of assembling the parts for machine guns thus literally having a hand in the U.S. war machine.[215] Acknowledgment of these women's support for the war effort in a variety of fields, facilities, military facilities and bases is incredibly important.[216]

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[212] Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation*, edited by Emilio Zamora, (University of Texas Press, 2009), 65.

[213] Stacey Bredhoff, *Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II* (National Archives: Washington D.C., 1994), 13.

[214] Gutierrez, *Patriots from the Barrio,* 65.

[215] Harrison, *The Ghosts of Hero Street,* 53.

[216] An example of research related to Hispanic women in the service: Judith Bellafaire, "The Contributions of Hispanic Servicewomen" *Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.* https://womensmemorial.org/hispanic-servicewomen

Figure 5: WWII Women's Land Army (WLA) Recruiting Poster: "Pitch In and Help! Join the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps." This poster portrays women working in the agricultural sector. (https://www.womenofwwii.com/posters/pitch-in-and-help-wla-recruiting-poster/).

The number of women in the workforce provided relief to the labor gap, but it also elicited fears of the potential collapse of the American family and society. This stemmed from the threat against traditional gender norms, which were thrown out the window during WWII. During this time of war, women were provided economic and social opportunities that were not before available. However, this did not mean women were welcomed into the workforce with open arms. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at first even rejected the idea of the organization of a Women's Land Army of America (WWLA).[217] The shortage of manpower in crucial industries, however, made the recognition of women and their labor important. Women's labor was vital to keep wartime industries afloat and to help in the war effort. Women's presence in the workforce was jarring for some, since they have been previously secluded within their homes. Women working outside of the home challenged traditional gender norms, but it was necessary during a time of war. Propagandists tried to prove that women working where men used to be was as an acceptable change (Figure 6). There was still resistance to women working and some U.S. states even refused to use women organized labor forces because of the preconceived notions about women's place and the space in agriculture.[218] Thankfully, for the war effort, women did in fact aid in food production and these discriminatory notions did not totally prevent their work.

Mexican American women's experiences in particular and the obstacles they faced were unique in a war time context. Mexican American women especially, contended with

[217] Cecilia Gowdy-Wygant, *Cultivating Victory: The Women's Land Army and the Victory Garden Movement* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 115.

[218] Ibid., 125.

the change in gender roles and how it impacted their communities. Professor Laurel Ashley, whose research explores urban Mexican women, recognizes this shift going against the traditional roles that have been set for women. Dr. Ashley explains how women's role were socialized to perform within the Mexican American family structure and it requires one to be the social and emotional support for her husband and children.[219] Mexican American women were taught to subjugate their needs in favor of the needs of her family and to find solace and support for her own emotional needs from the available women in her immediate and extended family.[220] This is significant as it was the U.S.' entrance into war which contributed to the breaking of these traditional ideals and other changes in Mexican American women.

Scholars, most notably Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, have taken on the task to illuminate these experiences and challenges. In gathered oral histories of Mexican Americans and Latinos/as, which include the experiences of women during wartime she highlights how women faced resistance in the workplace and the armed forces due to the suspicions they were taking jobs away from the men and the belief a woman's place is in the home.[221] Once women entered the armed forces their physical strength and abilities were questioned. Further, their mental ability to withstand the systematic structure of the military, which differed greatly from civilian life, was scrutinized. Rivas-Rodriguez argues this was especially true for Mexican American women whose traditional home norms needed them to be supervised and was riddled with gendered discrimination.[222] Military women were given recognition of their service in the armed forces which included similar wages, benefits, and ranks offered to men in the military; however it was never quite equal.[223] Despite the lingering issues of inequity, Rivas-Rodriguez explains that Mexican American women, like their male compatriots, answered the call of service to protect and serve their country. By the end of WWII, many of the women in the military and workforce were released from their jobs and replaced with returning servicemen.

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[219] Ashley, "Self, Family and Community," 6.

[220] Ibid., 235.

[221] Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez: Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Associate Professor, Journalism, Center for Mexican American Studies; Director of the VOCES - Oral History Project, https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/ams/faculty/mrr8280. And Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, Mexican *Americans & World War II*, 246.

[222] Rivas-Rodríguez, Mexican *Americans & World War II*, 225.

[223] Rivas-Rodríguez, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero*, 83.

Figure 6. (Left) David Vergun. "Rosie the Riveter Inspired Women to Serve in World War II." https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/1791664/rosie-the-riveter-inspired-women-to-serve-in-world-war-ii/. (Right) United States Office Of War Information. Bureau Of Public Inquiries, Palmer, Alfred T, photographer. *The more women at work the sooner we win! Women are needed also as ... See your local U.S. Employment Service*. United States, 1943. [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office] Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/95504675/.

Mexican American women within military industries contributed to the war effort while breaking and challenging the barriers and prejudice views on women, especially women of color, in the workforce. These women challenged the sexual and racial divisions from the second-generation perspective of the American born children with immigrant parents. Their participation in wartime activities contributed to the demonstration of the Mexican American community's loyalty and commitment to their home country.[224] During the WWII era these women confronted the negative perceptions of Mexican Americans from the white, patriarchal social order.[225] New opportunities were created for Mexican Americans due to the military and the war effort, but they did not offset the long established history of racial exclusion and oppression.

Mexican American women during the WWII era, however, broke outside of traditional roles due to the establishment of military run industries. In addition to laboring in wartime industries, these women balanced the many complicated sectors of their lives. They balanced multiple facets of their identity, perception, and responsibilities, which included being mothers, caretakers, and providers. The dynamic nature of what these women experienced as a result of the military and wartime necessity reveals the kinds of opportunities that opened up to Mexican Americans. These women worked outside of their homes, to show their patriotism, and broke down the preconceived notions about women's ability in industry.

Mexican American women's contributions in defense work provided unique experiences, which contradicted their upbrings and positions within a white, patriarchal

[224] Elizabeth Escobedo, "Mexican American Home Front: The Politics of Gender, Culture, and Community in World War II Los Angeles," PhD diss., (University of Washington, 2004), 1.

[225] Rivas-Rodríguez, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero*, 1.

social order. Working in defense industries provided many opportunities for these women to embrace an "almost white" social status.[226] Working in skilled labor, being paid a mostly steady wage, and at times working alongside men. However, this social benefit was not fully developed and did not last into the postwar years. Language, specifically the use of Spanish, was another unique experience working women had in wartime industries. Many WWII era factory women workers spoke in Spanish whether or not employers permitted it. This decision to communicate in Spanish became a cultural transition that marked their mobility in other social and economic spheres.[227] This contrasted their upbringing where they were told not to speak Spanish and only speak English, but in this space and time it was used as the means for communicating under the context of war mobilization. This is evident as another example of the new opportunities created by the military and the fight against Mexican American cultural repression.

In conjunction with the transformations in labor there were other social and cultural transformations that took place during wartime which impacted young Mexican American women further challenging these traditional gendered norms. During the 1940s, some Mexican American women there was the creation of new identity with some women considering as themselves Pachucas; an identity braking traditional norms and earlier generational notions about young Mexican American women. The term Pachuca is defined as the "female counterparts of pachucos, who rejected both traditional Mexican and mainstream U.S. culture and rebelled against social conventions by donning modified versions of the zoot suit and accompanying male zoot suitors on city streets."[228] Pachucas were an essential part of the larger Zoot Suit culture which emerged to protest racism, discrimination, and marginalization. As historian Robin D.G. Kelly has argued, the zoot suiters, who he refers to as "race rebels," were "challenging middle-class ethnic and expectations, carving out a distinct generational and ethnic identity, and refusing to be good proletarians."[229] As D.G. Kelly described, these Pacuhcas challenged ethnic expectations and traditions for young Mexican American women, and it was in this WWII era where defense work was advertised to young women who then took on positions previously held by men. The participation in wartime efforts and industries contributed to the formation of this new Pachuca identity.

This focus on the identity of Pachucas radically complicates the perception and memory of Mexican Americans in WWII not only as loyal patriots whose service has too long been ignored and under-analyzed, but also as a vibrant part of larger movements against racism and inequality at home that were also tied to WWII. The development of the Pachuca, according to Catherine Sue Ramirez who has researched the lives and experiences of Mexican American female youths during WWII and within the Chicano Movement, argues how it was created from the opportunities and transformations WWII afforded, which allowed for Mexican American women to branch out from the home and shape their own identities.[230] The recognition of the Pachucas is significant because it demonstrates how the

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[226] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 101.

[227] Patricia Portales, "Tejanas on the Home Front: Women Bombs, and the (Re)Gendering of War in Mexican American World War II Literature" in *Latina/os and World War II,* 188.

[228] Ramírez, *The Woman In the Zoot Suit*, 6.

[229] Robin D.G. Kelly, "The Riddle of Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 163.

[230] Catherine Sue Ramírez's, *The Woman In the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, And the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). Another important argument and contribution made in

experiences from the war were instrumental in the creation of new gender and cultural formations.

As this section illustrated, the focus on Mexican American women's experiences at this crucial point in U.S. history, provides a voice to those frequently ignored or silenced. The wars and the military, overall, provided new freedoms and opportunities for women, especially Mexican American women, who were constrained from the traditional social and familiar gender norms within a repressed, male-dominated, patriarchal society.[231] This is significant when considering the impacts Mexican American women had on their communities, since women are the driving forces in community development especially during wartime periods. It is important to contextualize women within the home and within the labor sector, which is also crucial when analyzing women's impact on their community.[232] Mexican American women during wartime have occupied multiple spaces at home, in wartime industries, and within the military. Mexican American women sustained their communities and utilized the opportunities the war provided to help themselves, their families, and at times seeking activism for racial and gender equality in the workplace. Their experiences were brought back to their communities which contributed to future generations to seek better work opportunities and to further reshape and challenge traditional cultural norms, which originated from these wartime and military experiences.

This chapter has explored the motivations for military service, the industries for the war effort, and those Mexican American men and women who found new opportunities from the military during wartime. Many Mexican Americans during WWII viewed military service as a pathway to economic opportunities, for social mobility, and a way to demonstrate and prove their loyalty to the U.S. Mexican American women, who were able to work in the war industries, were able to achieve and break new boundaries and create new cultural phenomenon countering previous generations' views and principles for the Mexican American youth. Throughout the three wars Mexican Americans had proven their loyalty through military service, accomplishments, and sacrifice. Despite their wartime efforts, they were faced with racism and racial discrimination when they returned home. Mexican American veterans sought their benefits from military service; they wanted an education, better work opportunities, to start families, and to form new communities. The combination of poverty, segregation, poor educational opportunities, and the perceived need to prove one's loyalty and manliness motivated significant numbers of Mexican American youth to enlist or accept their draft notice for service in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.[233] The next chapter will explore the growing shifts in the perceptions of the military, which was seen as beneficial, with new opportunities for upward mobility, but it eventually became to viewed as a path filled with broken promises, trauma, lack of military services recognition, and continued racial discrimination. This shift occurred as a consequence of the experiences of Mexican American veterans after WWII, the Vietnam War, and the rise of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movement.

Ramírez's book on Pachucas is how they have been invisible in most narratives of twentieth century Mexican American and U.S. history and seeks to situate the Pachuca in a historical and cultural landscape (xiv).

[231] Recollection by Denise E. Cháves in Nasario García, *Pláticas: Conversations With Hispano Writers of New Mexico.* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2000), 46.

[232] Escobedo, "Mexican American Home Front," 5.

[233] Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War,* 4-5.

Ch. 4: Mexican American Veterans: The Shift in Military Service

After fighting for their families, home country, and ensuring a sense of patriotism, those Mexican American veterans who survived the brutality of WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, retuned home. However, once home, racial discrimination continued to plague these veterans and many suffered the consequences from its continued presence, such as, the withholding of benefits allotted to servicemembers because of their Mexican descent. Although the experiences of each veteran are unique, there are clear/discernable patterns of racial discrimination and social barriers that were specific to Mexican American veterans. This chapter will explore the experiences of these veterans from WWII and Vietnam by analyzing their shared commonalities, the opportunities and barriers they faced, and how their military service changed over time. There was a definite contrast to how WWII and Vietnam veterans were regarded when they returned home. WWII veterans were generally praised while Vietnam veterans experienced disdain. This contrast in experiences provides evidence to this chapter's argument that over time, there was a shift in how military service was viewed. The military provided many potential benefits to servicemembers at the start of WWII, but by the end of the Vietnam War, Mexican Americans no longer regarded military service with honor or esteem. This shift was due to the continued racial discrimination and lack of benefits Mexican American veterans experienced. The chapter will also address the ways military service did not diminish segregation, racism, and marginalization, or upkeep the upward economic mobility that was promised.

In this exploration it will reveal the shared experiences of Mexican American veterans, which included the physical tolls from warfare, the continued presence of racial discrimination creating barriers for upward mobility, and their shift in how they viewed military service. The first section will analyze the impacts of military service on Mexican American veterans, their physical and mental health, and how veterans were viewed once they returned home including the discriminatory actions against them. WWII and Vietnam veterans will be compared and contrasted to argue how military service no longer became viewed as a viable option of upwards mobility after the Vietnam War. Mexican Americans' intersecting experiences as soldiers and participants in the Chicano movement during the Vietnam era are a specific focus of the argument. The next section will continue the focus on these veterans and explore what happened to them when they returned home from the wars and what helped motivate them to spur activism to create change. The lack of improvements for Mexican Americans, despite their military service, contributed to the formation of Mexican American and Latin American based veteran organizations whose activism was supplemented by the Civil Rights and the Chicano Movements. Witnessing of the lack of improvement for veterans within their communities further altered how Mexican Americans viewed the military. The final section explores how the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements impacted the Mexican American community within the Southwest and how these movements shaped their views of the military along with the Anti-war Movement. This was evident from anti-war marches, the high casualties from the Vietnam War, and the activism which strived to make improvements for Mexican Americans outside of military service.

Mexican American Veterans from WWII

WWII veterans returned home and were regarded as defenders of democracy, victors over tyranny, and heroes who brought an end of one of the largest wars the world had witnessed. There were mass parades, continued excitement for returning husbands and brothers, and men returned to the workforce. These veterans were generally celebrated, and they reaped the benefits from serving in the military, however, despite mass celebration there were distinctive differences in the experiences of WWII veterans, particularly veterans who were Mexican American and those of Mexican-descent. Notably, many of these veterans suffered psychological trauma from war, now referred to as PTSD, which impacted veterans of Mexican-descent at higher rates. Moreover, these veterans continued to face every day racial discrimination and segregation, especially in public establishments and services.

Military service resulted in a variety of health problems that plagued veterans during combat and when they arrived home. Soldiers suffered from physical injuries and diseases from combat that resulted in disabilities and detrimental mental states. Psychological scars from war have many names: "shell shock" in WWI, "war neurosis" in WWII, "combat fatigue" in Korean War, PTSD following the Vietnam War and for the following wars.[234] Misunderstanding and a lack of information regarding the long term effects of war resulted in ill-preparation to deal with the ailments of PTSD. One method to mitigate PTSD symptoms, noted by some Latino veterans, was to get married, presumably because the warmth and intimacy of one's own home along with traditional care of dutiful wives would cure their problems.[235] Hispanic veterans had higher rates of PTSD and more distressing symptoms in various diagnostic domains than other ethnic minorities and Whites. Also, they had more problems with substance abuse and drug dependence and showed higher rates of generalized anxiety disorder than other veterans.[236] Mexican American WWII veteran pilot Henry Cervantes noted how years later a seemingly unrelated sight or sound will take him back in time and will flinch.[237] Other veterans have noted of different triggers to flashbacks to their service in the military with different levels of reactions to them. These Mexican American veterans, as with other war veterans, carried a tremendous burden from their service when they returned home, however, their bravery and sacrifices were not always recognized.

There were opportunities for these veterans to be recognized for their contributions during the war which took various forms, such as, the celebration of holidays and paying tribute to WWII military veterans. However, for some Mexican American veterans, despite proving themselves in combat and carrying the same trauma and scars from war, their celebration was tinged with racial bigotry. For example, the continued widespread acceptance of discrimination occurred in Denver 1957. During the Lincoln Day celebration the Daughters of the American Revolution [DAR] objected that organizers had selected a Mexican American to carry the American Flag. The DAR chairwoman explained the objection by saying, "I wouldn't want a Mexican to carry Old Glory, would you?" However, this statement did not go unnoticed. U.S. Senator Dennis Chavez (NM) challenged her; "576

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[234] Ricardo Ainslie and Daphny Domínguez, "Silent Wounds: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Latino World War II Veterans" in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero,* 144-5.

[235] Rivas-Rodríguez, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero*, 9.

[236] Ainslie and Domínguez, "Silent Wounds," 148.

[237] Cervantes, *Piloto,* 106.

Mexicans' were among those carrying the flag at Bataan in World War II: what makes you think they can't carry just as proudly in Colorado?"[238] This example is significant as it demonstrates how the American Flag was seen as an object only a specific person could carry, someone who was not Mexican American. Despite the thousands of Mexican American servicemen during the war this case reveals how the Mexican American community was not seen worthy nor had they earned the right to carry the nation's flag. However, what is also demonstrated is a defense of Mexican American veterans with the senator reminding the organization of their military service in a foreign land. Although this is a positive instance of remembering the contributions of Mexican American veterans, however, the need for such a reminder years later, highlights the prominence of discrimination against Mexican Americans. There are a multitude of other examples of these kind of acts in relation to military service and Mexican American veterans.

John S. Chavez of Fort Collins, CO, protested against the mistreatment and segregation of Mexican American veterans within the city. In a letter to the editor of the *Coloradoan*, Chavez described what he and other Hispanos had done, their service during the war, and his views on discrimination. In his words:

> "Many of us…have been called to the armed service of the United States, and have fought with gallantry…Many of these [Hispano] boys have given their lives for a cause which we have been told was to preserve our way of life. To save democracy, and to establish equality and freedom…This discrimination seems unfair. Unjust, and un-American, and contrary to all of the principles for which I have offered to give my life…We have lived in America for generations and we have done all that was required of us as citizens. As a veteran of war, I…protest this treatment in a small city which prides itself of being typically American." [239]

The motivation to write the letter was due to the fact that his sister and other members of his family had been barred from certain establishments in Fort Collins simply because of their racial/ethnic background.[240] This example shows how acts of discrimination were called to attention in hopes of creating change. These voices opposed to discriminatory acts against Mexican Americans and veterans continued to grow and contributed to overall increased call for change and activism within social movements.

WWII veterans received much praise after the war, however, for some Mexican American veterans and communities their contribution to the war effort did not translate to the end of discriminatory practices. The cost of fighting for the U.S. resulted in health issues including psychological trauma, which created harmful impacts for these veterans. Mexican Americans' place in American society was still called into question, such as if they could hold the American flag, and their treatment in public places was still dismal. After the Vietnam War there was a stark difference in how these veterans were viewed. Vietnam veterans' experiences provided a counter-current to the positive aspects WWII veterans received in terms of praise for their service and obtaining veteran benefits.

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[238] Wittevrongel and Sanchez. *Center, Colorado,* 42.

[239] "La Gente: The Hispanic people of Northern Colorado," Fort Collins, CO: Fort Collins Museum, Hispanic History Collection.

[240] Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities 1920-1960,* 69-60.

Mexican American Veterans from Vietnam

Vietnam soldiers were perceived as "defenders of freedom," at the start of the war but as the war continued, an increasingly negative light was casted upon them. They participated in a different kind of warfare compared to WWII but endured the same end results, the accumulation of both physical and psychological scars. What distinguished the war in Vietnam from previous wars was how Vietnam was fought during the rise of a broad national movement for civil rights. Moreover, it was fought during a moment when a more specific, intentional scrutiny of racial equity in military service was unfolding. Another significant distinction the Vietnam War had compared to previous wars, is how the war in Vietnam became unpopular as it was fought. As time went on a nationwide anti-war movement thrived and influenced the shaping of the general veteran experience. This section focuses on Vietnam veterans and highlights how soldiers, especially Chicano soldiers, were victims of economic exploitation and cultural suppression at home, which made the military seem like an avenue for opportunity and a chance to "prove" oneself, a reoccurring trope throughout the three wars.[241] The desire to prove oneself is a notion that has been in practice since WWII and had been a constant for Mexican Americans' motivation to enlist into military service. Mexican American soldiers repeatedly note a desire to prove themselves and to prove they are worthy of inclusion and U.S. citizenship through military service. The focus on Vietnam veterans will also reveal the consequences from fighting in Vietnam; the issues both Mexican American veterans and their communities faced.

As addressed in chapter three, there were various motivations for Mexican Americans to enlist into the armed forces, some which continued up to the U.S.' entrance into Vietnam. A significant motivator was the lack of opportunities within their home communities. Some Vietnam veterans, prior to enlisting, had worked in the agricultural fields with limited options for other types of employment. The lack of opportunities was a key motivation for those seeking a path to upward economic mobility. Berta Delgado Melgosa, whose work includes an examination of autobiographies written by Chicano Vietnam veterans, who reflect on their thoughts of the war and the conditions they endured, furthers the understanding of this motivation by stating, "their lives were, no doubt, really hard, but what attracts our attention is their background that forced them to fight a war. None of them had so many opportunities outside of the army."[242] Along with the motivation for employment, there were also cultural ideals held by many Mexican Americans that contributed to their enlistment. As seen with previous generations of Mexican Americans who fought in WWII and in the Korean War, the connection between patriotism, assimilation, and machismo motivated countless numbers of young Chicanos to enlist or accept their draft notice.[243] The issue of assimilation is one factor that complicates Mexican Americans' military service with promises of citizenship and the need to show their patriotism. The drive to assimilate through military service is exacerbated by the most pernicious legacies of Mexican culture: warrior patriotism.[244] This warrior patriotism feeds

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[241] Charley Trujillo, *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam* (Chusma House Publishing 1990), II.

[242] Berta Delgado Melgosa, "Memory and Trauma: Chicano Autobiographies and the Vietnam War," in Imelda Martín-Junquera, ed., *Landscapes of Writing in Chicano Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 101.

[243] Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War,* 116.

[244] Mariscal, *Aztlán and Viet Nam,* 27.

into the notion of needing to prove oneself which included being put through dangerous or even violent situations. The military has been seen as a viable link to help fulfill this desire. However, Mexican Americans were targeted for military service and were subjected to the horrors of war in Vietnam. Berta Delgado Melgosa furthers this notion by addressing there was a sense of patriotism, masculinity, and being part of a minority group, that contributed to a low social status and issues of racism and classism.[245] The military exploited these aspects, she argues, as a recruitment tool and promoted these ideals heavily within ethnic communities.

As seen in this example, the motivations for enlisting and being drafted into the military was tied to race, class, and gender. Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest faced issues of racial discrimination and segregation which limited opportunities for upward mobility in terms of education and labor. As a consequence, there were many who lived in impoverished conditions and occupied unskilled or menial labor. During the Vietnam War, class was an influential factor in military service as those of lower class were not able to easily avoid the draft. Thus, those with the fewest means had to serve in the military. Service was also tied to masculinity and proving oneself, which was shared among many young Mexican Americans and Chicanos. The high numbers of Mexican Americans or Chicanos drafted became an issue that was used to help spur people against the war.

As the Vietnam War progressed, it was discovered that statistically people of color were drafted at a higher rate, placed on the front lines more frequently, and given the most dangerous assignments. This was a result of a culmination of economic need pushing them into the military, and institutionalized racism barring them from college and draft deferments. Chicano draftees were often assigned to combat units and had the highest death rate of any ethnic group and twice that of White soldiers.[246] There are many statistics that support this phenomenon. In New Mexico, by U.S. Census count, Hispanics made up 27% of the population and in 1970 they made up 69% of those drafted and accounted for 44% of combat deaths.[247] Senator Joseph M. Montoya of New Mexico, found that "Defense Department figures show[ed] 44.6% of all New Mexican fighting men [were] killed in Vietnam between 1961 and 1967…Yet, about 30% of the population of New Mexico is Hispano-surnamed."[248] This statistic shows the high percentage of those dying and contributing to the loss of U.S. public support as the war continued. The country's most disenfranchised groups, more than any other, were burdened with dangerous frontline duty.[249] Mexican American Vietnam veterans faced multiple complications during and after this war. They endured the consequences of witnessing the horrors of war and the treatment of an American society that was enmeshed in the struggle over civil rights, equality, race, gender, the antiwar movement, and what it meant to be a minority in the U.S. Some veterans noted the brainwashing they experienced to justify their presence in a foreign country and their fight against those who threatened democracy. Tony, a Vietnam veteran and U.S. Army Specialist E4, stated "They did a real good job of brainwashing us and of having us all believe that we were there for our patriotic duty to defend democracy…It wasn't until I got

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[245] Imelda Martín-Junquera, ed., *Landscapes of Writing in Chicano Literature*, 101.

[246] Alaniz and Cornish, *Viva La Raza*, 188.

[247] Ruben Trevis, "Hispanics and the Vietnam War" in *Vietnam Reconsidered: Lessons From a War,* ed. Harrison E. Salisbry (HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 185.

[248] John C. Hammerback, José Angel Gutiérrez, and Richard J Jensen. *A War of Words: Chicano Protest In the 1960s And 1970s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 113.

[249] Fernlund, *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989,* 65.

out and I came back that I realized how I was used."[250] After years of fighting in an unofficial war many veterans became disillusioned from these justifications. This was heightened when they learned of the condemnation of their service and their labeling as murderers and agents of destruction.

As this chapter argues, Mexican American's perceptions of military service shifted during the Vietnam War due to the experiences of these veterans. For veterans returning from the war, it occurred during a time of domestic unrest, and emphasized the terrible treatment of veterans. There were and are Mexican Americans who are proud of their service in Vietnam but compared to the adulation and recognition WWII veterans received upon their homecoming, their valor and recognition for their service was dismal, in short, they did not receive a hero's welcome. The experiences of Mexican American soldiers and veterans provide evidence of why their views shifted; their treatment within the military during the war, their identification as Vietnam veterans, and the struggles with trauma negatively impacting their health, employment, and social lives. For example, Mexican American Vietnam War veteran Juan Ramirez reflects this in his autobiographical work, "I felt it was important that we Chicanos not be forgotten, that we be recognized for our sacrifices and contributions, particularly because Chicano and other Latino soldiers suffered the highest casualty rates per capita of any group. Why? Because we were given the most dangerous jobs. As a result, we also suffered higher rates of posttraumatic stress syndrome."[251] Ramirez provides another reminder in combating against forgetting the experiences of those of Mexican descent who served and how it impacted their bodies and minds.

The further study into these consequences has created a better understanding of the various effects under the scope referred to as PTSD. From all three wars many veterans recognized of the lingering effects from the wars which came out in a variety of forms both mental and physical. There was also the fact of surviving the war itself and being alive also was a mental toll for many veterans. Ramirez himself recalled from his post-war experiences a few times of feeling guilty of surviving while learning of and seeing those who have been killed-survivor's guilt.[252] The examples from his biography are noteworthy because he draws from his own military service and personal life conveying how he dealt with drug abuse, alcoholism, trouble finding work, criminality, ethnic relations in the military front and at home, and post-traumatic stress disorder. While seeking for his work to be a voice for himself and other Chicano soldiers who served Ramirez states he felt it was important Chicanos are not forgotten and to be recognized for their sacrifices and contributions, especially in how they faced the highest casualty rate per capita compared to every other group.[253] This example is significant because these experiences are shared among Chicano Vietnam veterans who fought for their county and continued to face difficult battles once they returned home.[254]

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[250] Lea Ybarra*, Vietnam Veteranos: Chicanos Recall the War* (University of Texas Press, March 6, 2009), 55.

[251] Juan Ramirez, *A Patriot After All: The Story of a Chicano Vietnam Vet* (Albuquerque, N.M: University of New Mexico Press, 1999)*,*112.

[252] Ibid., 86.

[253] Ibid., 1.

[254] Some additional selected works contributing to the important to the study of the Vietnam War and the military participation of Mexican Americans/Chicanos. Juan Ramirez, *A Patriot After All: The Story of a Chicano Vietnam Vet* (University of New Mexico Press, February 1, 1999). Juan David Coronado, *"I'm Not*

These Mexican American veterans faced the challenges of readjusting back into civilian life and the longstanding issues of racial discrimination. However, there were times where military bases and surrounding communities worked to help these veterans. One example of the interactions between communities and military bases across state lines occurred in Colorado Springs CO, at the U.S. Army base Fort Carson. The base interacted heavily with mejicanos from a nearby town called Center. A 1969 Army initiative designed a Domestic Action Program to address internal army problems at the height of the Vietnam conflict, including ethnic militancy and declining morale.[255] The program called for projects that served as training opportunities for soldiers in designated areas where military and civilians jointly developed projects, which did not require the expenditure of army funds and helped impoverished populations. Operating under these guidelines, the army base at Fort Carson involved its soldiers in a number of projects.

The commander at Fort Carson, Gen. John C. Bennett, selected Center as a major site for domestic action and became personally involved. With Army resources Center would be able to make infrastructure improvements for mejicano parts of town, addressing some of the negative physical consequences of their second class citizenship.[256] This example demonstrates how the presence of military bases have helped communities of color even outside of their own neighborhoods. Although this particular interaction can be seen as unique in how helpful the military was for the mejicanos in Center, it is founded on the issues for veterans developed from the horrors of Vietnam and the need for infrastructure for the residents of Center due to the history of racial discrimination with housing and infrastructure. Another significance is how this program had to exist is also a recognition of the ways that military service is corrosive of the human psyche and puts people who live near military communities at risk such as families, dating partners, etc. The fact that action had been taken is good, however, it also meant they recognized they created a problem that had to be addressed.

A clear distinction in the comparison between WWII and Vietnam War veteran was their reception when they returned home. Older WWII veterans experienced racism too, but their service was still overall appreciated when they returned home.[257] However, Vietnam veterans were viewed with contempt as a result of the consequences from the war that included anti-war movements and protests. Despite a great show of their loyalty and patriotism, Vietnam veterans were treated with disdain for their participation in an incredibly unpopular war. Many Americans viewed Vietnam veterans as responsible for the carnage and horror in Vietnam. Vietnam veterans expected to be treated with respect once in the military but were disappointed. They found that “ethnic tensions and racist feelings were as evident in the military as in the civilian world.” One veteran said, “We were proud Mexicans, We fought in the war to prove that. But we were still Mexicans in the service,

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*Gonna Die in This Damn Place": Manliness, Identity, and Survival of the Mexican American Vietnam Prisoners of War (*East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018). Lea Ybarra*, Vietnam Veteranos: Chicanos Recall the War* (University of Texas Press, March 6, 2009). Ralph Guzman, “Mexican American Casualties in Vietnam” (Merrill College, University of California Santa Cruz, 1970).

[255] Fort Carson also featured a similar program called “Project Transition” which was designed to help Vietnam veterans adjust to civilian life. Elizabeth Wallace, *Colorado Springs* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2003), 127.

[256] Wittevrongel and Sanchez, *Center, Colorado: Su Voto Cuenta!*, 114-5.

[257] Trejo, "The Vietnam War and its Detrimental Effects on Chicanos," 39.

looked down upon, they always treated you as if you weren't smart enough."[258] The following section will address and provide further evidence of the issues Mexican American veterans faced once they returned to their home communities and the continued struggles, they faced.

Mexican American Veterans Motivations For Activism

Mexican American veterans and their communities continued to face segregation, poverty, racism, discrimination, and prejudice throughout the Vietnam War. The promises of benefits and opportunities from military service did not always materialize for Mexican Americans. This section highlights the historical legacies of mistreatment that was built into the Vietnam experience, to show that there is a continuous experience of discrimination within the military and Mexican American bodies were treated as expendable during the war. The experiences of WWII veterans and the thread of how a military administration and a society that viewed Mexican American soldiers through a racial lens will be utilized in this exploration. Viewing Mexicans Americans through a racial lens led to their bodies being placed disproportionately in harms way, their bodies being disproportionately sacrificed, and their bodies being designated for extra pain and suffering. The following will highlight the issues Mexican American veterans faced during WWII and after the Vietnam War tracing a longer history of mistreatment upon their return from war that was radically amplified when soldiers returned from Vietnam. This includes the racial discrimination barring them from obtaining military benefits, no upward mobility in employment, and exclusion from public services, even when donning their military uniforms. This section argues how these issues helped paved the way for Mexican American veterans to mobilize and call for change through veteran based organizations during the rise of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movement.

Despite their military service Mexican American veterans were denied earned privileges and benefits. There were some veteran organizations, the majority being white, that viewed their Mexican heritage was unacceptable. For example, Mexican American veterans from Hero Street, Silvis, Illinois, were not allowed to join the local VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) because of their Mexican heritage; organizers claimed, "they weren't 'white enough' to join."[259] This is both ironic, and an example of the rampant racial discrimination, considering they were "white enough" to train, live, serve and die alongside White soldiers. This racial discrimination was not limited to veteran organizations. Mexican American veterans were barred from utilizing the benefits under the G.I. Bill, had limited transferable skills, and other logistical issues within Veterans Administration (VA) contributed to many Mexican Americans returning to unskilled manual labor or migrant farm work in the civilian sector.[260] Even acquiring medical care was a challenge for many veterans, which was a promised benefit from military service. There are numerous stories of veterans struggling to get proper treatment over long periods of time; some just gave up due to the red tape and treatment they received from healthcare staff.[261] With the lack of being provided many transferable skills and with the issues with utilizing the G.I. Bill benefits and

[258] Ybarra, *Vietnam Veteranos*, 9.
[259] Harrison, *The Ghosts of Hero Street,* 7.
[260] Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War,* 9.
[261] Ibid.*,* 163.

the VA many Mexican Americans returned to unskilled manual labor or migrant farm work in the civilian sector.[262]

Veterans also struggled to find employment to provide for themselves and their families due to racial discrimination. Many Mexican Americans remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid and they continued to work in low-paying jobs and live in substandard housing in barrios or colonias, throughout the Southwest and outside the borderlands.[263] Many Mexican Americans have been refused employment in clerical and office positions and they have been denied promotion and upgrading in private and by military installations.[264] Although there were new and even better labor opportunities Mexican Americans still had to deal with racial discrimination which was still prevalent in the Southwest.

For example, when veterans in Colorado returned home, they faced the same issues of racial discrimination and demanded equal and fair treatment. These war veterans demanded respect, employment opportunities, and the right to improve their lives.[265] Local newspapers emphasized Mexican and Hispano veterans' demands for better employment opportunities and wages equal to their Anglo-American peers due to their military service.[266] As expressed in one local newspaper, *Rocky Mountain News*, the "Spanish-speaking man believes that if they [were] good enough to fight for the U.S. in the army [they] ought to be entitled to a job in defense work at the wages paid others."[267] Hispanos and Mexicans were treated as second-class citizens despite fighting and dying for America. Researcher Earle Rugg and his team studied racial and ethnic relations in Greeley, Colorado. In their 1949 "Final Report," Rugg and his team found the sentiment that Mexican and Hispano war veterans were good enough to fight for America but were unworthy to hold any jobs in the community besides beet laborers.[268] This description derives from the results of the studies of the "Final Report" researching why Mexican and Hispano war veteran's difficulty finding employment in the Rocky Mountain, which was based on fears of customers' prejudice and racism towards Mexicans or Hispanos workers. Business owners and other community residents from the "Final Report" noted how they were "fearful that [their] costumers will object" if Mexicans or Hispanos were hired. Others expressed they "would not have a Mexican around because they are dishonest and not reliable."[269] This is not surprising since even during the war Mexican Americans had trouble finding jobs in defense industries. Colorado's Mexican Americans experienced considerable discrimination in obtaining defense work and once on the job were segregated from Anglos in low-wage, menial work. War industry managers passed up on Spanish-speaking workers, regardless of their

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[262] Steven Rosales, "The Right to Bear Arms: Enlisting Chicanos into the U.S. Military, 1940–1980." In *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Race and the American Military*, (Routledge, 2016), 225, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315794044-33.

[263] Griswold del Castillo and De León. *North to Aztlán,* 100.

[264] Castañeda "Testifies on Job Discrimination Against Mexican Americans in War Defense Industries, 1945," 315.

[265] Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities 1920-1960,* 122-3.

[266] Ibid.*,* 58.

[267] "Beet Workers 'Steal Show' At Industrial Conference: Fiery Latins Who Say They Are Not Mexicans, But Americans, Make Pleas for Living Wage," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 22, 1931, CMAH, 3/05.

[268] Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities 1920-1960,* 60-61.

[269] "Spanish-Americans Are Registered," *Brighton Blade,* August 26, 1930, p.1.

education and skill in favor of less qualified Anglos and upgraded Anglos while segregating Mexican Americans in the jobs with lower pay.[270]

Finding housing has also been a long standing struggle for Mexican American veterans. After WWII Mexican American veterans started families and needed to move into new communities, however, moving was not easy as many families faced racism and discrimination. The Federal Housing Authority consistently refused federal loans for neighborhoods where blacks, Mexicans, and Asians, constituted a "subversive racial influence," and real estate agents engaged in practices aimed at keeping certain neighborhoods "white."[271] For example, Carlos Mendoza a WWII Navy petty officer married and wanted to purchase a home outside of Puente's barrio, located in Los Angeles County. However, residential segregation made it nearly impossible to buy a home, and the newlyweds were forced to rely on the assistance of a third party. Even when they were able to buy, he was told he the area was downgraded. Many received hostile treatment from their neighbors who tried to actively kick out Mexican Americans with sayings like "Mexicans get out of here."[272]

Donning their military uniforms should have at least proven their service and loyalty to the U.S., however, this was not the case for Mexican American veterans. There were several cases of Mexican Americans wearing their uniforms and Medals of Honor, the highest honor to be bestowed from the military, and who experienced public discrimination particularly in restaurants. "We do not serve Mexican here;" "You will have to get out as no Mexicans are allowed;" "Your uniform and service ribbons mean nothing here. We still do not allow Mexicans." These are the words returning veterans heard when they returned.[273] Servicemen encountered discrimination despite enlisting in the armed forces and embracing an American identity. Another example occurred in New Mexico, where on at least two occasions several young airmen from the Roswell Army Flying School attempted to go swimming at the Roswell Municipal Pool but were denied entrance and were told the facility did not allow "Mexicans." The servicemen said the experiences were humiliating and demoralizing. One of the men stated, "[N]ot even our soldier's uniforms convinced that person that we are Americans."[274] Mexican Americans' active service did not protect them from the long established racial discrimination.

Mexican American veterans also faced criticism from within their own communities. Henry Cervantes, WWII veteran pilot, recounted of the interaction with old friends in his hometown who discouraged his new uniform and change. "After all I'd been through, their words hurt, and I thought, I don't belong anywhere. Mexicans put me down because I'm an officer and officers put me down because I'm Mexican."[275] WWII veteran Joel R. Hernandez, recalls being shunned by Mexican American civilians, who thought he was a traitor for joining the U.S. Army.[276] María Elisa Rodríguez from Waco, Texas worked as a civilian clerk for the army during the war and observed how "she felt the contradiction of the double identity; Mexican Americans were being called upon to be loyal Americans and

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[270] Vargas, "The Lie of "America's Greatest Generation," 218-9.

[271] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 133.

[272] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 56-7.

[273] "Editorial," LULAC News, Vol. 12 (October 1945), pp. 5-6.

[274] Mendoza, "The Good Neighbor Comes Home," 93.

[275] Cervantes, *Piloto,* 49.

[276] Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *A Legacy Greater Than Words: Stories of U.S. Latinos And Latinas of the WWII Generation* (Austin: U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project 2006), 65.

sacrifice for their country while they were facing discrimination at home." A common denominator of the experiences of veterans, was how they were aware of the contradiction of being treated as outcasts while being told that they were expected to be patriotic Americans.[277]

Racial discrimination permeated the military and military service throughout the three wars. There was a lack of minority representation within those who were drafted. During the WWII years Mexican Americans in Texas, Tejanos, according to Professor Zaragosa Vargas, "fell victim to the all-white local draft boards, microcosms of inordinate Anglo political power and authority, bigotry, and cultural customs."[278] In New Mexico draft boards had a widespread practice to induct large numbers of Spanish-speaking males into military service. Despite protests the local draft board officers defended this conception by claiming it was necessary to preserve the more valuable Anglo manpower because employers did not was to substitute Mexican for Anglo labor.[279]

In terms of identification within the military, Mexican Americans were considered "White" with the armed forces abandoning the use of category "Mexican" in 1949 in response to objections from Mexican American advocacy groups. Labeling Mexican Americans as white was also used in military records as death and casualty lists of U.S. servicemen in Southeast Asia had Mexican Americans as "Caucasian."[280] Once in the military, Mexican Americans were able to serve with white soldiers, unlike African Americans who served in segregated units. Some Mexican American veterans recalled how in the military they did not face as much racism compared to their communities back home. However, that did not mean they were not exposed to discriminatory practices. One veteran, part of Company E, recalled how at Camp Pendleton there was the persistence of discriminatory policies and the practices after WWII within the armed forces despite the passage of Executive Order 9981 in July 1948, which banned segregation in the military.[281] Despite there being legislation to end segregation it did not end the day to day practice of discrimination and prejudice behaviors within the military.

After WWII several Mexican American veterans became more politically aware and this was heightened with the experiences of veterans who fought in the Vietnam War. Although they had gone to Vietnam to fight for freedom, they realized very little had changed in the U.S. for Mexican Americans even with the great number of bodies were sacrificed for the sake the war. This political awareness and shift to activism were a consequence of witnessing the same issues Mexican American veterans and community continued to face despite their military contribution. For veterans there was the lack of proper recognition for their military service, continued discrimination in employment and within the military itself along with Mexican American communities were still facing segregation, police brutality, low-paying jobs, and lack of equality.[282] The next sections highlights how Mexican American veterans and civilians, armed with their military service and the awareness of the continued racial discrimination towards their home communities, expressed their digressions of the treatment from the U.S. military, the lack of change due to their military service, and

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[277] Griswold Del Castillo, "The Paradox of War," 20.

[278] Vargas, "The Lie of "America's Greatest Generation," 208.

[279] Ibid., 215.

[280] George Mariscal, ed. *Aztlán and Viet Nam: Chicano and Chicana Experiences of the War* (University of California Press, 1999), 4.

[281] Rosales, Steven. *Soldados Razos at War,* 85.

[282] Ybarra, *Vietnam Veteranos*, 215.

how the military was no longer viewed as a pathway for better opportunities in the midst of the rise of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movement.

Post WWII-Civil Rights and Chicano Movement

The rise of the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements provided Mexican Americans the opportunity to create mass and public addresses to the long-lasting issues of racism and discrimination, including the lack of improvement despite military service in Vietnam and the previous wars. This section will continue to explore the connections between the rise of the Civil Right and Chicano Movement by providing a brief overview of Mexican Americans in the fight for civil rights and a change of identity for many of the newer generation during the Chicano Movement. Key features, such as Mexican American and Latin based organizations aimed to help fight for better treatment and protect communities from the violence of racial discrimination, will also be highlighted. The section will conclude with an exploration of the anti-war movement, which involved Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest and nationwide protesting against the war and rising deaths of Mexican Americans and Chicanos. This will reveal the evolution of the growing negative views of military service that resulted in the military no longer being viewed in high regard.

After WWII Mexican American veterans fought and advocated for their civil rights, however, this fight had been going since the early twentieth century. As explained by historian Mario T. Garcia, Mexican American's struggle for Civil Rights intensified in the 1930s, as a number of organizations and individuals strove for equality, especially in the labor sector.[283] This is significant because the call and organization to battle against racism and racial discrimination had impacted Mexican American communities long before the time period of this dissertation. This movement was heightened and strengthened by returning veterans, who demanded equal rights in return for their military service in WWII. Many Mexican American veterans returned home to their communities and witnessed continued segregation, discrimination, prejudice, and faced treatment as second-class citizens despite having fought in a war and the amount of sacrifices they made for the country. Furthermore, the Chicano Movement brought together multiple Mexican American-led organizations, campaigns, and leaders advocating for national attention on critical issues Mexicans and Mexican Americans have long faced. [284] Most prominent within the Southwest, many youths who utilized the term "Chicano/a" to refer to their identity and unity and in the 1960s, many Mexican American leaders continued to seek equal treatment based upon their battlefield accomplishments in WWII, Korea, and now in Vietnam.[285]

Mexican Americans contributed greatly to social and political activism during the Civil Rights era, which helped form important connections across the Southwest and the country. By the 1940s and 1950s, Mexican Americans attempted to resolve problems

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[283] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1991).

[284] Prominent leaders include César Chávez, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, Reies Lopez Tijerina, and Angel Gutiérrez. Notable organizations include LULAC, GI Forum, MAYA, Crusade for Justice, National Farm Workers Association, and Alianza Federal de Mercedes.

[285] Lorena Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui: Chicanos Oppose the War in Vietnam," Dissertation. (Ph. D. Cornell University 1996), 306. Also see her book, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Viet Nam War Era* (University of California Press, 2005).

through electoral politics, litigation, obtaining an education, and claiming their rights as citizens. To be classified as White and aligning with Americanism was an essential goal for many Mexican American activists. One organization called the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which sought to promote Americanism and first-class citizenship among "Latin Americans." This organization was an example of a community with the purpose of Americanizing its members and constituents. This was accomplished by pursuing equality through public protest, litigation, and electoral campaigns.[286] By the 1940s, LULAC had become the most visible regional civil rights organization.[287] League membership was restricted to U.S. citizens because there was a need to separate their image from immigrants in order to safeguard the distinction of Mexican Americans as U.S. citizens.[288] LULAC members also distanced themselves from working-class, *mestizo* identities.[289] Its members were middle-class and promoted a class division among other organizations.[290] Although by the 1950s Mexican Americans abandoned the claim to a white ethnic identity, because this strategy was often used against them.[291] This prompted Mexican Americans and Mexicans to challenge racial segregation and discrimination. This also laid the basis for the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Chicano Movement, and the formation of organizations that sought to help the Mexican American community.

In the 1960s Mexican Americans made notable influences in politics and a class of new leadership formed from the ranks of the growing middle class. Significantly, leadership included WWII and Korean War veterans.[292] During the 1960s and 1970s Mexican American political activism sought to disrupt "Juan Crow" laws of racial segregation that disenfranchised and segregated ethnic Mexicans.[293] As scholars of Chicanx history have argued, military participation was one of the driving factors leading to the rise in activism for civil rights, which included advocating for the improvements of labor conditions, housing, education, and an end to racism and discrimination towards their communities. These issues emerged with the rise of the Chicano Movement, started in 1967, as Mexican Americans formed their own organizations.[294] In the late 1960s Mexican American high school and college students voiced their dissatisfaction with discrimination and inferior educations through student organizations that promoted Chicana/o self-determination, student protests, school strikes, and an adoption of a Chicana/o identity. The term "Chicano" was given political connotations by young activists who advocated self-determination, cultural pride, and ethnic solidarity.[295] Previously the term was used as a pejorative term that was applied to the working classes, however, during the rise of the movement, it became a term to be embraced by those who wanted to be identified as separate from previous

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[286] Ibid., 61.

[287] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 90.

[288] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 27.

[289] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 90.

[290] Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 51.

[291] Rosales, *Testimonio,* 157, 161.

[292] Edward Eric Telles and Vilma Ortiz. *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, And Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 239.

[293] Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You*, 51.

[294] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 102.

[295] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 35-6.

generations and who advocated for change.[296] This form of identity included an embrace of brownness and non-whiteness and earlier claims to equality and citizenship, based on whiteness, were abandoned. The Chicano Movement allowed for the cross country connection of various Mexican Americans and Mexican communities, which came together to advocate for change, the reshaping of identity, and the reexamination of their own cultures and ideals.

The Chicano movement had many connections to and was influenced by the military. For example, the Brown Berets was a prominent group that called for civil rights and an end to racial discrimination. The original chapter of this group was based in Los Angeles and had a reputation as Chicano militants whose rhetoric contained the threat of violence.[297] California Mexican Americans had a reputation for being more militant than other Mexican Americans groups throughout the Southwest.[298] Women in the Brown Berets, especially, were seen as contemporary *soldaderas.*[299] Chicano movement participants had goals that paralleled the civil rights agenda of their Mexican American predecessors, and were more willing to use public protest and separatist speech to achieve their goals of a more equitable American.[300] As argued by Mario T. Garcia in his article “La Frontera: The Border as Symbol and Reality in Mexican American Thought,” the movement was born from “a decade of social conflict,” influenced by-civil rights struggles, the Black Power Movement, anti-war protests, ethnic revivalism radical feminism, and youth alienation and rebellion.[301] Military rhetoric was used in the Chicano Movement as defense against prejudice, discrimination, and the military and military service itself, which was seen during the anti-war movement against the Vietnam War.

Mexican Americans’ fight for civil rights started before the rise of the Civil Rights and the Chicano Movement; however, it was greatly heightened from those Mexican American veterans who felt they had proven themselves through sacrifice and bloodshed to be treated as American citizens and be granted the benefits and opportunities for their service. However, the unfulfilled promises of the military served as ammunition to create civil rights organizations, to reshape their identity in American society, and to organize themselves and advocate for better treatment. Military service was further questioned and protested against with the anti-war movement against the Vietnam War, with some seeking to dispel the positive view of military service. It was no longer viable in the midst of continued racial discrimination and the rising death toll from an unpopular war.

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[296] Ibid., 84.

[297] Oropeza, “La Batalla Esta Aqui,” 215.

[298] Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy,* 100.

[299] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 115.

[300] Oropeza, “La Batalla Esta Aqui,” 203.

[301] Mario T. García, “La Frontera: The Border as Symbol and Reality in Mexican American Thought,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* (Summer 1985): 214. The Chicano Movement took some inspiration and tactics from the Black Civil Rights Movement as there were shared struggles in battle against racism and discrimination, however, they also carried distinctive identities, fights, and objectives. One book to read further into the relationship of African Americans and Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights era, Brain D. Behnken, editor, *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

The Anti-War Movement

Activists of the Chicano Movement addressed the U.S. military's involvement in Vietnam and conducted anti-war demonstrations. Chicano activists publicly criticized the war, citing the disproportionate number of Mexican American casualties in Vietnam and emphasizing their opposition to the draft of lower economic class minorities. These protests and anti-war sentiment contributed to drastically shifting the views of military service. Once a pathway to success and opportunity, the military and military service became known as a dangerous and disappointing choice that led to death, discrimination, and continued racism. Initially the movement did not fully declare opposition to war and avoided the war issue in part because the legacy of WWII was strong and they did not want to challenge it.[302] However, mounting racial discrimination issues and increased deaths in Vietnam prompted Chicanos to challenge long-established attitudes about the U.S., war, and society that Mexican Americans had held since at least WWII.[303]

As the war progressed in Vietnam and casualties rose, there was a significant question: why were Chicanos dying in Vietnam? The answer was the draft. There were many young Mexican American men who were not in college and were therefore draftable.[304] This emphasizes the limited opportunities for Mexican Americans to achieve higher education. Between 1961 and 1969, Mexican Americans in the Southwest represented 10 to 12 percent of the population but accounted for almost 20 percent of the causalities.[305] The mass drafting of Mexican Americans and other communities of color was linked to Project 100,000, a policy that lowered the standards of the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and allowed previous unfit peoples to be draft eligible. Vietnam veteran Sal Martínez personally observed how some were basically illiterate which would not have passed the exam under normal circumstances, but the majority were minorities and almost all of them went into the infantry.[306] For the Mexican American community, the intersection between class and race was such that the community's socioeconomic marginalization left young Chicanos with few alternative other than military service.[307]

Members of the Mexican American communities throughout the Southwest, those who did not serve in the military, proclaimed their dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War and the high death rates of their kin. They protested, marched, gathered, and the result was the Chicano anti-war movement. There were instances of violence against the Chicano activism, like in Los Angeles on August 29, 1970, during the National Chicano Moratorium. This moratorium brought together many participants who were student activists, members of UFW, and Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest.[308] The Moratorium was the greatest manifestation of minority anti-war sentiment in U.S. history and the largest demonstration organized by Chicano movement participants.[309] Unfortunately, this anti-war demonstration ended with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department attacking protestors

[302] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 9-10.
[303] Ibid., 259.
[304] Ibid., 12.
[305] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows,* 115.
[306] Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War,* 97.
[307] Ibid., 99-100.
[308] Ochoa, *Becoming Neighbors in a Mexican American Community,* 36.
[309] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 12.

resulting in injuries and deaths.[310] By criticizing the Vietnam War, the moratorium committee was rejecting the military as an avenue of social advancement and personal glory for Mexican American men.[311] No longer did the Mexican Americans see military service as honorable, and the rise of Mexican American/Chicano casualties fueled this disdain towards the military and military service. The change of the Mexican American mindset, from seeking recognition through military service to seeking a new Chicano identity, occurred because of the Vietnam War and the push for civil rights.

Furthermore, the relationship between Mexican Americans and the military, and the breaking of that connection, was also addressed by Chicano Civil Rights leader, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales from Colorado. Gonzalez noted children were advised by their schools to go into the military; fewer than half of Mexican Americans had gone past the eighth grade; one of three was living below the poverty level.[312] He acknowledged the low socioeconomic environment these children lived in and instead of seeing education as a pathway for social mobility, the school itself conveyed the military was the main option for them. He criticized the Vietnam War, stating it was a mechanism to provide profits to corporations that produced airplanes, ships, and weaponry, while poor and minority soldiers paid the price in blood and the Vietnamese landscape and people were laid waste. This, he felt, was a welfare state for war contractors and wealthy corporations.[313] In an interview with the FBI he emphasized his views on minorities in the war: "Mexican Americans and Negroes are drafted or volunteer for service because they are denied the advantages of the Anglo Americans in U.S. society." He also reaffirmed his view by charging that the U.S. was in the war because of the influence and profit for Anglo-controlled corporations.[314]

Gonzalez's criticism of the military and the Vietnam War, and his influence on young Mexican Americans and Chicanos, reflected the attempt to disrupt the views of the military as beneficial and honorable, like during WWII. This attempt was bolstered by the treatment of veterans and their communities who were denied their benefits based on racial discrimination. On a personal level, Mexican Americans and Chicanos questioned their own identity, the war, and the activism and critiques of the U.S. military. As argued, Professor of Chicanx Latinx Studies, Lorena Oropeza, Chicano veterans and people, "[called] themselves Chicanos and Chicanas, [and] they were no longer convinced that the route to equality, liberty, and freedom in the United States should rest on military service, unquestioning patriotism, and devotion to the nation. Instead, they began to argue the opposite."[315] This highlights the shift in the role military service played for Chicanos in granting equal treatment and better opportunities within American society. However, in reality, military service did not grant Mexican Americans and Chicanos these benefits, despite risking their lives and bearing the scars from a war that made them scapegoats.

The development of this shift of the perception of military service was a consequence of the Vietnam War, the treatment towards WWII and Vietnam veterans, and the same racist treatment of Mexican Americans and their communities. Vietnam veterans returned home psychologically broken and to a society enmeshed in a struggle over civil

[310] Ibid., 195.
[311] Oropeza, "La Batalla Esta Aqui," 263.
[312] Fernlund, *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989,* 158.
[313] Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice,* 51.
[314] Ibid.*,* 67.
[315] Rosales, *Soldados Razos at War,* 89.

rights that also failed to recognize their sacrifice. As veterans struggled to make sense of these realities, they undertook a radical shift towards criticism of the military and activism in the emergent Chicano movement. The U.S. tried to keep its place on the global stage during the Cold War, but its Mexican American veterans returned home disillusioned and determined to change their society from within. This is not to diminish the heroics and sacrifices made by these veterans, but to address how views of military service shifted over time, such that by the early 1970s they had undergone a sea of change.

As this chapter has demonstrated Mexican American veterans had proven their willingness to serve, sacrifice, and proudly aid their country when called upon to do so. The military was viewed as a reliable pathway for social mobility and opportunity, but by the end of the Vietnam War this view had shifted. When these veterans returned home their military service was upstaged by racism and discrimination against those of Mexican decent regardless of citizenship, class, or military awards. Many veterans did not receive proper recognition for their service, they faced barriers when obtaining the benefits and opportunities earned from their military service, they struggled with the consequences of the Vietnam War on their families and health and had to endure racial discrimination within their home communities. However, these veterans took the opportunity to advocate for change not only for themselves and their communities, but within American society. The Civil Rights and Chicano Movement became avenues for Mexican American leaders to establish organizations and create local and national protests. Although the movements and the shift in the views of military service did not completely eradicate racial discrimination towards Mexican Americans, it did bolster Mexican American veterans' activism. After addressing how the military initial provided benefits and there was a praising outlook on military service but over time these benefits of the views of the military no longer were held, the next chapter will explore the development of Mexican American communities and the establishment of the military bases, which provided initial positive impacts, but eventually also resulted in negative consequences overtime.

Ch. 5: The Influence of Military Bases on Mexican American Community Development

Mexican American communities in the Southwest developed their own culture, activism, and identity which evolved over time. This development was also influenced by the military and military bases. These communities endured racism and discrimination, which resulted in racially segregated neighborhoods, inaccessibility to proper living conditions, and pervasive issues of poverty. Despite these divisive and oppressive pressures, communities took root, evolved, and thrived. This dissertation chronicles the resilience, persistence, and innovation among Mexican Americans who navigated personal and structural racism to forge communities for themselves. Specifically, my research shows that, however fraught, that through a sustained engagement with the U.S. military, Mexican Americans continued to stake claims to citizenship and serve their country. The development of these communities within the Southwest has demonstrated their ability to endure and evolve through periods of oppression and segregation. This chapter focuses on the links and transformations of Mexican American communities' development from WWII and military expansion by exploring communities in New Mexico and Colorado that were directly affected by military bases and installations. The Castle AFB in Atwater, California will be explored to provide an in depth viewing of these kinds of impacts. This will reveal both the transformative impacts the establishment of military bases had on their surrounding areas and communities and how these local communities changed over time as well as facing the negative consequences from these bases which also developed over time.

This chapter will first explore these links between military bases and surrounding communities by examining the establishment of these bases and military expansion during WWII. The establishment of military bases and defense industries had a direct influence on Mexican American communities. Starting with Castle AFB and providing other examples of military bases in New Mexico and Colorado this section demonstrates the different transformations provided for the Mexican American communities. It is argued how these influences changed these communities in significant ways; there were changes in their labor sector, population, migration, and racial relationships. The chapter also be addresses of examples where the presence of military bases created negative impacts for local communities, such as, harmful environmental impacts. The second section will provide further evidence of these transformations with an in depth exploration of Castle AFB's impacts on its surrounding communities. Specifically, base community engagement, the negative consequences of the base's closure, and the aftermath of when it closed will be explored. Furthermore, analyzing the question if Castle was really a success story after its official closure. This will highlight the ways military bases influenced the development of surrounding communities and, as this chapter argues, creating their initial positive and eventual negative impacts on public health, the environment, and the economy of the surrounding communities.

Military Bases and Installations in the Southwest

The Southwest, as noted earlier in this dissertation, has been a prime location for military bases and installations for military training and weapon defense construction. California, Colorado, and New Mexico during the aforementioned three wars and the Cold War,

experienced the establishment of military sponsored facilities. The Korean War and the Cold War catalyzed the expansion of U.S. military installations starting in the 1950s. Military installations and bases provided surrounding cities and communities with different economic benefits and contributed to changes in population, city growth, and labor opportunities. This section will explore these changes Castle AFB and other military bases prompted within local, Mexican American, and Hispano communities.

Castle AFB's Historical Background

The base was established on the cusp of World War II and while at first the U.S. government attempted to avoid direct involvement in the war, they continued to develop their own military forces. Specifically, the U.S. desired to expand its aerial combat operations and there was a need for a school to train future pilots on the west coast of California. In 1941, Brigadier General Henry W. Harms was put in charge of the search for an ideal site for the desired pilot training school.[316] After scouting and reading environmental reports, the top locations were identified within the Central Valley. Among the choices one was a large piece of agricultural land within the city of Atwater. Once this location was selected, military officials, local city officials and community members, from the cities of Atwater and Merced, collaborated to create an official proposal.

The Merced City Council drafted the official proposal for the new military base, which contained philanthropic contributions and a lease agreement. Sixteen local business owners gave one thousand dollars each towards land development and the site was leased to the military for $1 a year. The impetus for this strong advocacy by community and civic leaders was the potential for economic opportunities that a military base brings to neighboring communities and businesses. On June 9, 1941 the Air Corps agreed to lease the property and made $4,060,024 available for the construction of the base in Atwater and near Merced.[317] After its initial completion, and until its closure, the base consisted of a total of 2,777 acres with the main base, which contained an airfield, aviation support buildings, warehouses, 1,707 dormitory beds, and a 52-bed hospital. There were also two housing areas, separated from the main base, which included 933 family housing units within the city of Atwater.[318]

During the base's construction, the nation experienced one of the worst attacks upon its soil. On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces unleashed a flurry of attacks on Pearl Harbor, a naval base in Hawaii. The attack and the reaction it sparked, spearheaded the U.S. to mobilize itself for war. As soon as news of the attack reached the Central Valley, the newly established Castle AFB was surrounded by armed guards. These guards had to be armed with weapons borrowed from private citizens of Merced, because the rifles and other necessary equipment had yet to arrive at the base.[319] The living quarters for the base was also not finished and consequently the first officers assigned to the base stayed in The Tioga Hotel, one of Merced's grandest lodgings.[320] The hotel catered to many notable guests and

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[316] Harold P. Myers, "Castle Air Force Base," *Aerospace Historian* Vol. 31, No.2, (1984, 107-120); 108.

[317] Ibid., 109.

[318] "Castle AFB" in United States Nuclear Forces, Global Security.org, https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/facility/castle.htm.

[319] "History of Merced Army Air Field," Unknown Newspaper from the Merced Court House Museum, 1.

[320] *History of Merced County,* from the Merced County Court House Museum.

now had become part of the larger U.S. war effort. Despite the initial limitations, military officials were not deterred, and they continued their contributions to help the U.S. in their role during WWII.

Construction of the base was completed on April 7, 1942 and the Merced Army Flying School opened. Major John Macready was assigned the responsibility to organize the army air base training activities and prepare the next generation of pilots. The first class contained ninety-four men, all under twenty-seven years of age and was put through a 10-week basic flying course. The base also hosted an eight-week aircraft mechanic's school.[321] This school trained hundreds of new pilots who served overseas and throughout the war. On November 27, 1943 the base also accommodated its own Women Army Service Pilots (WASPs). These female pilots transported planes and supplies, were test pilots, and conducted other tasks, which were normally conducted by men.[322] Although they would later be replaced by returning veterans, their service and skill were invaluable to the base and military.

Throughout its operation, the base continued to expand, acquire new aircrafts, and change its name to represent the focus on military achievements and honor. On May 8, 1943 the Merced Army Flying School became the Merced Army Airfield.[323] The base's name changed again to honor a well-known figure who made the ultimate sacrifice during his service. Brigadier General Fredrick W. Castle was the commander of a B-17 bombing crew and participated in bombing raids over Germany, on Christmas Eve 1944. During the Battle of the Bulge, his plane was severely damaged and started to plummet out of the sky towards the earth. Castle stayed at the controls, which allowed the rest of his aircrew to bail out of the falling aircraft before it crashed. Castle was awarded the U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor, and due to his sacrifice and heroism it was decided the air base to be named after him.[324] In January 1946, the War Department changed the name of the base to the Castle Army Air Field, and on January 13, 1948, along with the change of the military branch from the Army Air Corps to the Air Force, the air field was finally redesignated the Castle Air Force Base.[325]

Castle AFB's Labor Influences

During the 1940s the labor shortage due to men fighting in WWII resulted in the country needing more hands to tend to its industries. Laborers migrated to work in California's factories and farms, and many joined the armed forces.[326] For many, Castle AFB was a starting point to serve in the U.S. Air Force; for others joining the base was part of their military experience. Since the base needed military personnel and these personnel having familial connections, the migration of all these people to the base rapidly increased

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[321] Charles McCarthy, "Castle Celebrates 45th Anniversary," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), December 1, 1986: B1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE80AFA9F813C2.

[322] Myers, "Castle Air Force Base," 112-3.

[323] Justin Ruhge, "Merced Field" in Historic California Posts, Camps, Stations and Air fields, Militarymuseum.org, http://www.militarymuseum.org/CastleAFB.html.

[324] "Castle AFB-United State Nuclear Forces," Global Security.org.

[325] McCarthy, "Castle Celebrates 45th Anniversary," B1.

[326] Lim, "Museum Notes:," 02.

the Atwater's population.[327] This contributed to diversifying the city's demographics and boosted the surrounding area's economy. The city's population continued to increase well into the 1970s. In 1963, the mayor of Atwater recalled the agricultural community's population, twelve years prior, was about 2,800. By 1963, "the city number[ed] 8,000 and 'at least 5,000 of them are military people and their families."[328] This demonstrates the impacts of the base as the city was able to experience a three-fold increase in a little less than twenty years. This data suggests the new community of military families had outnumbered the existing residents two to one revealing a significant transformation due to the military base. Furthermore, the increase in population helped the area's economy by providing a wealth of employment opportunities. In 1971, within the nearby city of Merced for example, it was recorded that of the 3,514 people employed and 2,497 of those jobs were affiliated with the Castle AFB; 118 of these jobs were military and civilian.[329] The new population in Atwater and the Air Force base transformed the neighboring areas, and its legacy was contributed through their labor and military service.

The military base's uniqueness is supplemented with documented stories and opinions of those who had the opportunity to serve under its roof. These stories also underscore the importance of civilian jobs at the base. Billy Ray Morris, an airplane inspector, was transferred to the 93rd Bombardment Wing at Castle and noted Castle was in a "beautiful area," and a desired location for base-bomber pilots.[330] Charles Russell Spicher, who conducted security police assignments, had his first assignment at Castle serving the office in charge of the law enforcement section.[331] Elaine M. Gemma, who volunteered for the military to attend nursing school, had her first assignment at Castle where she was an operating room nurse during the Vietnam era.[332] Virgil C. Dockrey was at the base when it was known as the Merced Air Force Base and served as a flight instructor, training pilots and working on the B-29s.[333] Military service members are significant, but civilians were vital to perform the basic tasks, such as security, policing, medical operations and instructors, for the base and its inhabitants to function properly. These examples from those who worked at Castle AFB highlight the different positions available at the base and what the base provided for them.

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[327] "Bloss House In Atwater," *Merced Sun-Star* (Merced, California), April 9, 1984: 26, Readex: America's Historical Newspapers, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40EANX-150A69CD5449C633%402445800-15091A789CB4F9CD%4025-15091A789CB4F9CD%40.

[328] Ronald J. Ostrow, "End of the Bomber: Air Force Town Eyes the Future Air Force Town," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995), Jan 31, 1963, https://search.proquest.com/docview/168230939?accountid=14515.

[329] "Mercedians List Housing Top Priority," *Merced Sun-Star* (Merced, California), June 22, 1971: 1, Readex: America's Historical Newspapers, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40EANX-1495754F5D999BC5%402441125-14957447640DB36E%400-14957447640DB36E%40.

[330] Billy Ray Morris Collection, (AFC/2001/001/51725), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/loc.natlib.afc2001001.51725.

[331] Charles Russell Spicher Collection, (AFC/2001/001/56758), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/56758.

[332] Elaine M. Gemma Collection, (AFC/2001/001/67503), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/67503.

[333] Virgil C. Dockrey Collection, (AFC/2001/001/23776), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/23776.

Other Military Bases In the Southwest

Throughout the Southwest there were numerous military bases and wartime defense industries that shaped nearby communities. The U.S. tried to develop its military during WWII, and this was an opportunity to establish new bases for training and housing of military weapons and aircraft. Once these bases were established, they became part of the city, neighboring communities, and some even became an integral part of a city's identity. Some military bases from WWII and on, were able to continue their operation and were utilized throughout the Korean War and the Vietnam War and overseas conflicts during the Cold War. This section will explore different examples of bases and focus on their impacts including on Mexican American and Hispanos communities in terms of economic changes, migrations, and new demographics for these communities.

Military bases were significant within local communities; they transformed local economies and even became part of a city's identity. El Paso's Fort Bliss, for example, has always been an important military base and by the start of WWII it was the largest Army base in the country. In 1957 it became the U.S. Air Defense Center dedicated to antiaircraft artillery training and missile development. El Paso was also the home of Biggs Air Force Base (today Biggs Army Airfield) and the William Beaumont Army Medical Center. With the collection of these bases the city won the distinction of being "America's Number One Army Town." The post-WWII expansion not only made the military the city's largest employer (combining enlisted and civilian personnel), but it also injected millions of dollars into the local economy through salaries, local contrasts, and the purchasing power of active-duty and retired military personnel. This military buildup brought thousands of people to the border city, adding to the postwar population boom.[334] The presence of these military bases provided an economic boost and increased El Paso's population. These potential benefits provided a strong incentive to establish military bases throughout the Southwest as they increased populations, which provided more revenue for the local economies.

The establishment of military bases and wartime industries prompted mass migration into and throughout the Southwest. Hispanos in New Mexico faced pressure to leave their traditional rural villages to join the migrant labor pool or to move permanently to the big cities in Colorado, Washington, or California. As seen in the post-WWII era, better economic and job opportunities enticed people to move out of the rural regions and outside the bounds of the barrios.[335] During WWII, New Mexico saw thousands of young Hispanos leave the state in search of fortune in wartime industries. The city of Albuquerque was in a good position to become a major center for military training, wartime industries and weapons research, and later became one. One startling effect on the city, was a huge influx of government employees, servicemen, and scientists, which caused rapid population growth and caused a flurry of activity in the housing industry.[336] The war offered opportunities for many jobless men and women from La Plaza Vieja (Old Town Albuquerque) and those men who were not eligible for military service migrated to California and Colorado in search of industrial and military jobs in factories, often taking family members with them. Other "Old Towners" found steady and good paying jobs at Kirtland AFB and military laboratories in

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[334] Perales, *Smeltertown,* 229-330.
[335] Griswold del Castillo and De León. *North to Aztlán*, 100.
[336] Simmons, *Albuquerque,* 366.

Albuquerque.[337] Other rising urban centers which drew the villagers from New Mexico was Santa Fe, NM and Pueblo, CO.[338] In the postwar period, the regional community expanded yet again, with new ties of kin and economy linking Hispano New Mexicans with their kin in the booming urban centers like in California. Some of these emigrants, after they were able to obtain better work, returned to their home communities in New Mexico.[339] The frequent movement of Spanish-speaking families from all of New Mexico's counties took part in the exodus because they needed to find work in other in Southwestern states.[340]

The outward migration during the war resulted in the transformation of the demographics in Mexican American and Hispanic neighborhoods. During WWII in the city of Albuquerque and surrounding semirural areas Hispanic women also joined in the migration outward for the new labor opportunities showing how it was not just men. Several traveled to California to work in factories and offices with some living with relatives. Ida Gutiérrez, for example, who started work in Albuquerque moved out to California during the war due to number of jobs available and with her brother already in state and informing how he was working at a good job. She worked as a packer in a milk factory and noted that the state was good especially at the time in terms of labor.[341] This story is significant as it provides an example of the migration of men and women who left their home communities for defense work during the war. These women entered into new labor positions that were different from the ones they occupied at home. Supporting the war effort created new opportunities for Mexican Americans, but as a consequence, altered their home communities.

The development of military bases within New Mexico also brought new economic opportunities and transformations to their neighboring environment. The emergence of the western U.S. as a prime military industrial region fueled much of the economic growth. The city of Albuquerque was transformed into major metropolitan areas partly as a result of the federal spending sprees in the defense sector.[342] The state's natural resources and open spaces prompted the establishment of various military bases and installations for training and defense. For example, the Army took over Oxnard Field, a civilian airfield, in 1945, renamed it Kirtland Field and used it for dismantling old airplanes.[343] This site eventually turned into a bombardier training school for the USAAF because experts rated the city's weather ideal for flying during 97% of the year.[344] In 1940, the United States Army Air Corps designated the city a service station for military planes. The following year land adjacent to the municipal field was leased and the Air Corps Advance Flying School was

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[337] Benny J. Andrés Jr., "La Plaza Vieja (Old Town Albuquerque): The Transformation of A Hispano Village, 1880s-1950s," In *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*. Edited by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David Maciel. 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 248.

[338] Michael V. Miller, *Variations in Mexican-American Family Life: A Review Synthesis*. [Place of publication not identified] (Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1975), 12.

[339] Felipe Gonzales, ed. *Expressing New Mexico: Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual, And Memory* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 192, 195.

[340] Vargas, "The Lie of "America's Greatest Generation," 215.

[341] Nan Elsasser, *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community. Women's Lives/Women's Work Project* (The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1980), 51, 67-8.

[342] Martínez, *Mexican-Origin People in the United States,* 15.

[343] Rogers and Bartlit, *Silent Voices of World War II,* 274.

[344] Roger D. Walker, Monroe Lee Billington, and Gerald W. Thomas, *Victory In World War II: The New Mexico Story* (Las Cruces, N.M.: Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University Library, 1994), viii.

established to train Flying Fortress crews. The Air Force, and later the Atomic Energy Commission, also settled upon Albuquerque and deemed it the site for base installations.[345] The military bases also contributed to even the smaller businesses neighboring the base. One merchant in a small New Mexican town adjacent to the Kirtland AFB said, “A lot of our customers come from the base.”[346] For the Kirtland AFB and other military bases even in their early stages of development had brought much needed revenues to the larger regions of the Southern Valley’s economy.[347]

As demonstrated the history of New Mexico’s economic and labor development is inextricable from the military and wartime related infrastructures. As mentioned earlier, Los Alamos was the site for the creation of the atomic bomb, labeled as Site L and was in charge of the gadget design and assembly.[348] The labor for this creation included women who were employed there and in other facilities around the country that created the first nuclear bomb. Their work was secret however, and these women did not know what their labor contributed to until the bombs were dropped during the war.[349] The. U.S. government continued to provide a source of federal employment in the Los Alamos with a weapons research laboratory. This institution offered a variety of manual, clerical, technical, and professional jobs.[350]

The establishment of these different military bases and installations not only transformed local economies and labor but also contributed to demographic transformations within local communities. One example can be found in Barelas, a neighborhood within the city of Albuquerque. This neighborhood, a predominately Hispanic community, traces its roots from the early migrations of the mid-1800s. Over time the community continued to develop from the establishment of the railroad, highways, the New Deal, WWII, tourism, urban renewal, decline, and revitalization up to the 2000s.[351] What makes this neighborhood relevant to this study is how the residents of Barelas were directly impacted by WWII and the military development in the city of Albuquerque. In terms of labor, the railroad provided the main source for Barelas before and during WWII and at the war’s height the railroad transformed the Barelas community into a virtual company town within the city of Albuquerque.[352] The war itself contributed to movement outside of the neighborhood with the enlistment of young men who joined the armed forces and entire families who moved to the west coast to work in the wartime factories.[353] A former resident, Carmen R. Chávez, recalls how as families left Barelas during the war in search of jobs elsewhere other ethnic groups moved into the neighborhood resulting in a change to the demographics of the

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[345] Simmons, *Albuquerque*, 336, 302.

[346] David S. Sorenson, *Military Base Closure: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2007), 10-11. Other military bases in New Mexico: Cannon Air Force Base (Clovis), Holloman Air Force Base (Alamogordo), and White Sands Missile Range Army Base (30 miles north of Las Cruces).

[347] *Barelas*, 40.

[348] The “gadget” was a nickname for the atomic devise.

[349] For further reading, Denise Kiernan. *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women Who Helped Win World War II*. Simon & Schuster, 2013.

[350] Forrest, *The Preservation of the Village*, 176.

[351] *Barelas: A Través de Los Años: A Pictorial History of A Community.* Albuquerque, N.M: National Hispanic Cultural Center of New Mexico, 2000.

[352] Romero, “Portrait of a Barrio,” 137.

[353] *Barelas*, 39.

community.[354] The war separated families who had lived in Barelas for generations and for some they never returned, leaving additional gaps to the neighborhood. After the war there were many veterans from the city of Albuquerque with the G.I. bill and the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) providing low-interest, long-term loans to returning veterans and their families, did not want to live in the old neighborhood and there was a mass exodus other parts of the city, usually the Northeastern Heights.[355] The neighboring city of Santa Fe lost ten percent of the population by 1942 due to the draft and war industries outside of the state.[356] These examples further demonstrate the impacts from the wartime jobs created in different industries such as in war factories, plants, and the military bases and installations. The war itself impacted the community of Barelas, but the introduction of military bases further contributed to its transformations and development during WWII and beyond.

Between 1940 and 1950 military bases arrived in the city of Albuquerque, which established new sources of labor and prompted a population boom after WWII. The introduction of these military bases directly impacted the Barelas neighborhood. In the following decade the 1950s-1960s brought newcomers through the neighborhood which included scientists, soldiers, and students which spurred an increase in infrastructure as they needed housing.[357] Kirtland AFB, as previously mentioned, was one military base in particular that had a direct impact on the neighborhood due to it being "just a stone's throw away from Barelas." The impact of the base was felt immediately as there were suddenly hundreds of single servicemen within walking distance of Barelas. The introduction of servicemen disrupted the traditional demographics as well as the cultural and social life of the neighborhood. There was a tremendous influx of unmarried, Anglo men, and as a consequence many of these Kirtland soldiers married Hispanas from the Southern Valley and settled there after the war.[358] This demonstrates how the presence of a neighboring military base contributed to a rise of marriages between servicemen working and living at the base and the nearby Hispanic community. Military bases had the unique ability to bring different ethnicities into areas which did not have a diverse demographic previously. As seen with Barelas and Kirtland AFB, an increase in interracial marriages were a result of the proximity between a base and a nearby community.

The community in the neighborhood of Barelas provides a clear example of the transformations related to war and the establishment of labor for defense and military bases. The residents who had their main source of labor be the railroad, saw new opportunities open up for them during WWII. The establishment of defense work outside of their community resulted in them leaving their home. Residents who left and did not return changed the demographics of the neighborhood. The new military base, Kirtland AFB, brought new people with different education, job skills, and ethnicities which expanded the neighborhood's infrastructure. Moreover, Barelas is an important example of the different community transformations experienced over time when a military base is established.

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[354] Carmen R. Chávez, "Coming of Age During the War: Reminiscences of an Albuquerque Hispana," *New Mexico Historical Review* 70, no. 4 (October 1995) in Jorge Iber and Arnoldo De León, *Hispanics in the American West* (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 236.

[355] *Barelas*, 39.

[356] Andrew Leo Lovato, *Santa Fe Hispanic Culture: Preserving Identity in a Tourist Town* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 25.

[357] *Barelas,* 11.

[358] Ibid., 39.

Moreover, there was a significant cultural shift in New Mexico after WWII. In the 1950s there was a decline in village population but there was also a strong pressure to assimilate and Americanize. The post-war generation experienced a pronounced trend towards language loss and cultural devaluation. This transformation in migration, population, and source of labor as a result of the establishment of wartime industries created unintended consequences for those Mexican-descent communities. There was already cultural loss within earlier schooling and in the WWII era the search for better labor opportunities continued. However, there was a reclaiming of regional and ethnic prides with the social and political movement in the late 1960s and 1970s.[359]

The state of Colorado was an important and popular destination for those who migrated to work in war related industries and military bases. The García family, for example, whose family members migrated to Colorado from Omaha, Nebraska. The family's five sisters sought new wartime opportunities and a chance to demonstrate their patriotism by going to work in the Cobusco Defense Plant in Denver, Colorado.[360] During the Cold War, Colorado's Front Range mountains was the location for the Federal government assembling of plutonium triggers for its nuclear weapons arsenal.[361] Similar to the rest of the Southwest, the state's vast acres of land and mild climate attracted many military facilities to the area. For example, a $200 million Air Force Academy was established in 1958 and the U.S. Army established Fort Carson Military Reservation, both in El Paso County.[362]

Colorado also had unique cases regarding the establishment of military bases and installations. Initially the city of Colorado Springs had little hope of competing with Denver for defense dollars. At the beginning of WWII, it was considered a little city with a population of slightly under 37,000 in 1940. However, the city's businessmen lobbied to get a military post and bought land to donate to the army in hopes of acquiring a military base. The efforts paid off with the establishment of Camp Carson. The military presence led to a nearly 10% increase in population during the war causing the city's population to rise to more than 40,000. The establishment of the base also brought employment to the city. For example, the now named Fort Carson had employed thousands of military personnel and civilians. With 24,700 people on the payroll, Ft. Carson alone increased the population roughly 2/3 from 1940 with 1,700 civilians and nearly 23,000 soldiers with a total payroll of $37 million.[363] Colorado Springs also won two additional air bases-Peterson and Ent.[364] The Peterson Air Force Base was originally called the Colorado Springs Army Air Base which was established on May 6, 1942 at the Colorado Springs Municipal Airport. The air base became deactivated on December 31, 1945 and the property was turned over to the City of Colorado Springs. The base was then reactivated in 1951 and it was eventually named the Peterson AFB.[365] Lobbying from the city citizens and having available land, contributed to Colorado Springs being a recipient of military bases and reap the benefits they provided.

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[359] Enrique R. Lamadrid, "Nuevo Mexicanos of the Upper Rio Grande: Culture, History, and Society." *Folklife Center News*, 1999, 3.

[360] Coronado, Juan David. *"I'm Not Gonna Die in This Damn Place,"* 47.

[361] Fernlund, *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989,* 9.

[362] Ibid., 17.

[363] Abbott, Leonard, and Noel, *Colorado,* 319.

[364] Ibid., 307.

[365] Harold A. Skaarup, *Colorado Warbird Survivors: A Handbook on Where to Find Them* (iUniverse, 2002), 163-4.

Military bases and defense facilities within the Southwest, as explored so far, provided significant transformations to their local communities and cities in terms of labor, economy, and population growth or loss. This increasing of job opportunities and economic boosts were beneficial, however, military bases also created detrimental impacts. The presence of these bases resulted in the rise of housing prices, the cost of living, and traffic congestion along with the increased stress on public services and resources, which are detrimental consequences for local communities. However, the most significant consequences were the environmental impacts, such as air, soil, and water pollution, which plagued surrounding communities during a base's operation and even when it closed. Military bases for their military operations utilized numerous chemicals for cleaning and weapons testing, which were not always contained or disposed of properly. These environmental hazards had lasting impacts and required additional investment for clean-up operations.

One example is the Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque, NM which is still in operation to this day, but in 1999 Kirtland officials acknowledged a fuel spill that had been ongoing since 1953 when modernized fuel storage facilities were constructed. As of 2015 the Air Force and New Mexican Environmental Department have been conducting a remediation plan to keep the underground fuel plume which last estimated was at 24 million gallons. The aim is trying to keep it from contaminating several drinking water wells in Northeastern Albuquerque.[366] This demonstrates how neighboring residents' health is directly affected from the presence of the base in the community. Although efforts have been made to rectify this unintended consequence, it reveals the environment and community residents can face long term environmental consequences.

The effects of military bases and operations on the environment and health in New Mexico are also noted with the result of testing the atomic bomb during WWII. The Manhattan Project in particular was seen at first as a benefit by the residents of Los Alamos, NM. The project brought more jobs and boosted the local economy, however, there were other consequences. Herman Agoyo, who was a Pueblo Indian government official, a cultural activist, and studied the Manhattan Project, explains when the Manhattan project first arrived on the Pajarito Plateau many at the Pueblo thought it was a "blessing," one that ensured jobs, education, and security, but Agoyo asserts that Los Alamos's fifty-year legacy is one of "ashes."[367] The Manhattan Project created a robust economy in the 1940s, but the long term consequences included the spread of destructive nuclear radiation, hollowed out landscapes due to mining, and numerous health problems for community residents.[368] This example provides additional insight to the impacts from federal investment into military development, which included constructing military bases and facilities and even weapon testing. In the case with New Mexico and its residents neighboring the Manhattan project there were benefits from job opportunities and an economic boost. However, the presence of the military in the community impacted their health and has lasting environmental harm.

Over time, some military bases were discovered to have leaked toxic chemicals, nuclear radiation, and harmful pollution into the ground, air, and water. Military base operations, regardless of the military branch, utilize chemicals for weapon development and testing, and to sustain military vehicles and aircraft. As a result, toxic waste is made, like

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[366] Joseph T. Page, *Kirtland Air Force Base* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2018).
[367] Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands*, 101-2.
[368] Ibid., 118.

nuclear radiation, which pollutes the environment and has devasting consequences, however, here were attempts to contain the toxic waste. Again in New Mexico, the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP), is a geological repository for radioactive waste, was established during the Cold War.[369] These attempts were not always successful and had many leaking issues. In New Mexico especially, the testing and development of military weapons, forever changed its natural landscape by making it radioactive. Both the military personnel and local community residents have been inflicted with health issues from working or living next to the development of nuclear weapon manufacturing. As this chapter addresses these military bases created negative consequences as well to the local communities and their residents' health should be considered too in evaluating the true impacts from these bases.

Military bases did bring in millions of dollars in government funding to surrounding cities and new economies and customers for local establishments. Moreover, more jobs were available for local populations and provided ethnic communities opportunities for economic and social mobility. However, these benefits did not outweigh the harmful and long lasting consequences of a military bases. Environmental hazards and pollution posed dangerous health risks for neighboring communities. Although there have been attempts to help rectify these environmental issues, it stands as one of the significant consequences from the construction and presences of military bases.

As this section has demonstrated, military bases impacted neighboring communities with various influences, notably Mexican American communities, which transformed their development over time. During wartime the need to support the military prompted the establishment of defense labor and an increase in new defense jobs. This resulted in many Mexican American and Hispano residents from communities throughout the Southwest left their home communities for new job opportunities. Many who left never returned to their communities and many formed new communities after the war. The establishment of military bases impacted local communities; the provided new labor opportunities, changed their demographics, and boosted their economies. There were many benefits to military installments, but there also detrimental consequences, which came in the form of environmental impacts which also effected the health of the local communities. The next section will explore Castle AFB in these kinds of transformations and impacts.

An In Depth Look Into Castle AFB

As this is chapter has demonstrated with the previous section, the establishment of military bases had significant impacts on surrounding communities. Ranging from economic and population boosts to prompting migrations and transforming the demographics of a community. Although there are similarities in the impacts from bases, each case is unique. This section will explore the Castle AFB and the different ways it impacted the surrounding communities of Atwater and beyond. The exploration of Castle AFB will demonstrate many positive and some negative consequences on its surrounding communities, but also its uniqueness in its overall community connection that has lasted into the present.

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[369] Fernlun, *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989*, 14.

Base Community Engagement

The Castle AFB was central to the culture and economy of Atwater and other local cities and communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley. During its life the base and its military personnel and employees engaged with Atwater's community through the organization of annual and public events and activities. Despite its relatively recent establishment and its connection to a distant federal bureaucracy, these events of community engagement rewrote the Atwater's community's sense of place and past. This section will explore the ways in which such rituals worked to establish Castle AFB as the community's centerpiece from its engagement with the community. Despite being a military base, an isolated entity to ensure the protection of what was inside, Castle AFB, was able to find ways to incorporate itself into the surrounding community. Although the base's purpose was to train pilots and safeguard military planes and equipment, it became a location for community gatherings. From a variety events, base openings, and other means of community connections, for example, many area residents remembered swimming in the field pool of Castle which was opened to everyone on hot days and how local schoolboys were often given tours of the field.[370] This is significant in this section, and for this dissertation, in demonstrating how the relationship between the civilian community and the military base were sustained over time.

One base event, which showcased the military's technology and created a connection with the local community, was public air shows. This type of festivity was held at the base and public and other local communities throughout the Central Valley were invited to come to the base and enjoy military aircraft. Other public community events included the base open house and Armed Forces Day, which is a day geared towards acknowledging and commemorating the armed forces at home and overseas including the people in service or have served in them.[371] This day is celebrated on the third Saturday in May and there is an observation of all active duty service members. First announced on August 31, 1949 inaugurated on May 20, 1950, the event honored Americans serving within the five U.S. military branches following the consolidation of the military services in the U.S. Department of Defense. This day replaced the separate Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Days.

Armed Forces Day was established by President Harry S. Truman to have a single holiday for citizens to come together and thank military members for their patriotic service in support of the country. On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of Armed Forces Day.[372] In an excerpt from the Presidential Proclamation of February 27, 1950, Truman stated, "Armed Forces Day, Saturday, May 20, 1950, marks the first combined demonstration by America's defense team of its progress, under the National Security Act, toward the goal of readiness for any eventuality. It is the first parade of preparedness by the unified forces of our land, sea, and air defense."[373] The first Armed Forces Day was celebrated with parades, military base open houses, receptions,

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[370] Delores J. Cabezut-Ortiz, *Merced County: The Golden Harvest: An Illustrated History*, 1st ed. (Northridge, Calif: Windsor Publications, 1987), 91.

[371] "Armed Forces Day," Armed Forces Day Military.com, https://www.military.com/military-appreciation-month/history-of-armed-forces-day.html

[372] "Armed Forces Day" https://afd.defense.gov.

[373] "Armed Forces Day," Military.com https://www.military.com/military-appreciation-month/history-of-armed-forces-day.html

and air shows.[374] In 1961, John F. Kennedy declared Armed Forces Day a national holiday.[375] The day also featured a specific theme, which encapsulated the celebration of the armed forces. Some examples of previous themes include Appreciation of a Nation, Dedication and Devotion, Freedom Through Unity, Liberty, Patriotism, Power for Peace, Prepared to Meet the Challenge, Security, Special Opportunity for Thanks, and Teamed for Defense.[376]

Armed Forces Day at the base featured some of the earliest air shows and closely involved Atwater's community. According to Helen McCarthy, the former community coordinator for Castle, "[Armed Forces Day] was held the third Saturday in May at all the bases. It was fabulous and quite elaborate in the '50s and '60s, up until the mid-70's."[377] The newest aircraft were sometimes displayed during these days, such as a new KC-135 jet.[378] Other activities included displays of various types of aircraft and equipment, fly-overs by B-47 bombers and jet fighter planes, demonstrations by the Sentry Dogs of the 193rd Air Police Squadron, and special movies shown free of charge in the base theater, which brought viewers up-to-date on recent advancements in Air Force developments.[379] Visitors sometimes were able to view the 75mm Skysweeper anti-aircraft gun in action, they were able to attend specially conducted tours of the base, and see the decorated Base Chapel.[380]

Armed Forces Day was celebrated on and off the base in surrounding cities and communities. Store windows in Merced and other local communities were decorated with displays of the theme for Armed Forces Day. Parades were also enjoyed and were a joint effort by local communities along with the establishment of civilian planning with the military personnel.[381] Armed Forces Day parades featured bands and marching units from schools throughout the valley who competed for "outstanding band" trophies.[382] The colorful array of musical bands, exhibits, static displays of aircraft, and marching units drew large crowds to the base with records revealing more than 25,000 people attending any of the days. The invitation for enjoying the festivities at the base was offered to all throughout the valley.[383] Overall during each Armed Forces Day "active and reserve components of the U.S. armed forces joined with civil authorities and community leaders to give citizens the opportunity to become better acquainted with the military aspects."[384]

The celebration of this day aids in the understanding of the different ways military bases positively impacted their neighboring communities. The connection between Castle AFB and the surrounding communities was fostered over time through celebrations and

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[374] Ibid,.

[375] "Military Benefits," https://militarybenefits.info/armed-forces-day/

[376] "Armed Forces Day in the United States" https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/armed-forces-day.

[377] Reiter, "The last air show."

[378] "Tanker To Be On Display," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Volume 101, Number 113, 13 May 1957, Monday, page 1.

[379] "Film Star Gene Raymond To Highlight Open House," *Madrea Tribune* Volume 64, Number 7, 20 May 1955, page 5.

[380] "Giant Merced Global Jet Bomber Base To Be Open To Public This Saturday," *Madera Tribune,* Volume 64, Number 5, 18 May 1955, page 1.

[381] "Exhibit Planned at Fair: Castle Air Base To Carry Armed Forces Day Theme To Chowchilla," *Madera Tribune*, Volume 59, Number 32, 6 May 1950.

[382] "Castle Afb Plans Big Day For Visitors," *Madera Tribune*, Volume 72, Number 3, 16 May 1963.

[383] "Castle AFB Armed Forces Day Planned," *Madera Tribune*, Volume 71, Number 249, 2 May 1963.

[384] "'Forces Day' May 21 At AFB: Castle Air Force Base," *Madera Tribune*, Volume 238, Number 240, 18 April 1960.

public events, which allowed the military and civilian populations to bond. As described previously, Armed Forces Day was meant to be joyous and neighboring communities were invited to come to the base and take part in celebrating the U.S. military. These types of events provide evidence of how interconnected the civilian community and the base became and how this relationship was sustained.

Before the establishment of Armed Forces Day, the base also celebrated the separate Army Air Force Day. Similar to Armed Forces Day, the base held an open house, which drew crowds "from almost every San Joaquin Valley community between Fresno and Modesto."[385] Similar activities were available for enjoyment such as base tours, displays of airplanes, parachute jumps and the base's fire crew demonstrations.[386] An example of the other kinds of open houses was the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Strategic Air Command in 1957, which featured a parade for the surrounding communities and an open house at the base.[387] One of the earliest open houses conducted at the base occurred when it was still called the Merced Army Air Field. An open house held on July 4, 1943 was geared toward young men between the ages of 16 and 26, and their respective families to celebrate with the men of the Air Force. Tours were given by officers and cadet officers to show the phases of cadet training. Activities included an air show, music, baseball, a drill demonstration, and the Independence Day Retreat Parade.[388] Since the earliest open house, attendance and openness expanded at the base, as seen in the 1958 record indicating the celebration drew a crowd of 20,000 visitors to the base. According to base historian Staff Sgt. William Redilla, "They started out as open houses and went to demonstrations to let the public come on the base and see what it was doing. These open houses of the base allowed the public to "receive a 'firsthand' account on what is being done to protect our national security."[389] These different events were held since the establishment of the military base and continued until the base closed in 1995; the base and surrounding communities had a strong connection, which lasted nearly fifty years.

Alongside the open houses was the Castle Air Show, which featured a variety of sky-high entertainment for the spectators below. One of the most anticipated parts of the air shows was viewing the U.S. Air Force Demonstration Squadron known as the Thunderbirds. They were a precision squadron of six planes, which performed various air maneuvers in their red, white, and blue F-16 jets flying in close proximity to one another. Both former and current military aircraft were also featured for visitors to enjoy.[390] These shows were

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[385] "Large Crowd Seen At Merced AAF Day," *Madera Tribune*, Volume LIV, Number 126, 27 July 1946, 3.

[386] "Castle Field Fetes Air Day," *Madera Tribune*, Volume LV, Number 122, 25 July 1947, page 6.

[387] Atwater Historical Society, *Images of America: Atwater*, Arcadia Publishing, 2005, https://lrho.alexanderstreet.com/view/73852891, 128.

[388] "Open House Merced Army AirField**:** Big Air Show Will Be Presented Sunday For Visitors at Field," Madera Tribune, Volume LI, Number 104, 30 June 1943, page 3.

[389] "Castle Field Plans Open House On Armed Forces Day**,"** *Madera Tribune*, Volume 63, Number 335, 12 May 1955. On a related note, the Open Houses and the celebration of Armed Forces Day were shared among other Air Force bases such as Kirtland AFB, Holloman AFB, and Walker AFB in New Mexico, see Joseph T. Page, *Kirtland Air Force Base.* Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2018. Joseph T. Page, *Holloman Air Force Base*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012. Ruby E. Yantis. "The Impact of Walker Air Force Base on Roswell, New Mexico, 1941–1945." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1953.

[390] Fred Schwartz, "Fun Weekend: Air Show, Military Vehicles, Bullfight , Festival," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, April 27, 1989: C-1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1CFEB10780AD4B.

inclusive to everyone, for example handicapped visitors and their families, who may have had trouble with large crowds, were provided with a "sneak preview" into the festivities during one of the days known as the "Special Day for Special People." These air shows were also free to the public and parking, which contributed to the mass amounts of people who visited Castle.[391] The air shows have been noted as being "the biggest public attractions in the San Joaquin Valley;" one air show in 1987 had an estimated 100,000 visitors entering through Castle's gates.[392] These air shows continued up to about the base's closure with the final one being in 1993.[393] As stated by Helen McCarthy, "The air show envelops just about every facet of the base" and how it was "Castle's prime opportunity to welcome its neighbors from the San Joaquin Valley, and even beyond that."[394]

Although the base did not provide direct financial support to the city of Atwater, its presence contributed to the city's development and growth. The base's events drew people from around the county, state, nation, and even from around the world. These events reportedly brought in thousands of people which contributed to the local economy. Visitors would stay at local hotels, dine at local restaurants, and spend money in the local stores.[395] This kind of economic opportunity would not have been possible solely by the city itself. These base events provided entertainment and helped forged a connection with the local community. For the city of Atwater, the base became a part of its identity with its unofficial slogan being the "Home of Castle Air Force Base."[396]

The relationship formed between Castle AFB and neighboring communities was established since the base opened and was sustained through the base's impact on local economies and how the public interacted with the base itself. There was no direct funding from the base itself, but the base provided military personnel who spent their paychecks in local stores and on entertainment in the cities of Atwater and Merced. These new customers also helped the housing market with military families who lived outside of the base and looked for places to live in the community. Open community events allowed for the base to be a central place for entertainment, displays, and appreciation for the men and women operating Castle AFB. The surrounding community itself became a military community with increased presence of servicemen and their families living and traveling among civilians.

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[391] "Looking For Lift? Atwater Airshow This Weekend," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, April 28, 1989: F6, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE839EE37C4C07.

[392] Charles McCarthy, "Record 100,000 Jam Castle Air Show Precision Flyers Prove A Big Hit," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, June 29, 1987: B1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE813F0E07B7BD.

[393] "Air Base Hosts Last Military Show," *San Jose Mercury News (CA)*, October 26, 1993: 2B, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EB71BFFA040C68E.

[394] Cheri Matthews, "Castle Offers Last Air Show," Modesto Bee, The (CA), October 21, 1993: F-1, *NewsBank: Access World News,* https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/documentview?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D4EB8BAD7E6FC.

[395] Bob White, "Sky Over Castle Airport Will Be Abuzz With Activity," *Modesto Bee*, The (CA), September 16, 1998: 2, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D58208F98B78A.

[396] Elisa Rocha, "Atwater's New Slogan Captures Town's Spirit," *Modesto Bee*, The (CA), March 28, 1992: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D0C5C566C912F.

This base impacted the surrounding communities in many positive ways, however, its environmental impacts and eventual closure caused long standing problems.

Negative Consequences From the Base

The operations and closure of Castle AFB in 1995 brought negative long-term impacts to the city of Atwater and surrounding communities. These problems were the result of the consequences of the expansion of the base and the base's use of toxic chemicals for planes, which prompted environmental problems. This section will address these consequences, how they effected surrounding communities, and the attempts to help rectify them. The exploration of these issues will support the argument that military bases had both positive and negative impacts on their surrounding communities. These problems and environment hazards were long lasting and drastically effected the surrounding areas and the residents who lived near the base.

As the base continued to expand, it attracted more military personnel and their families, which impacted the infrastructure and services of surrounding communities. The increase in population put incredible strain on local schools, which had to accommodate children from Air Force personnel working at the base and civilian children who were gradually moving into the growing city; this later became a concern with the base's closure.[397] Being an Air Force base and featuring one of the longest runways in the state during its operation allowed for the use of some of the largest aircraft in the Air Force's disposal.[398] Castle was also used as a refueling station for large aircraft, which required constant training of air crews at the base. The large presence of aircraft resulted in thunderous noise pollution due to aircraft taking off, flying, and landing at the base. Those who lived nearby found the noise inconvenient at times, however, as seen with Monica Perales' *Smeltertown*, residents eventually got used to the new normal.[399] As Perales conveyed, the Mexican community tied to the smelter was able to make peace with the environmental elements of their life even when outsiders deemed their conditions as "bad" and unpleasant.[400] For the residents of Atwater, the noise pollution from passing aircraft were reminders of the city's identity as being the home of an U.S. Air Force base.

In addition to noise pollution, chemicals from the base contaminated the local groundwater and exposed people to harmful asbestos within its structures, which became a larger issue with the closure of the base. [401] Chemicals used to clean aircraft and other equipment were stored in underground containers, but they eventually leaked polluting the

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[397] United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare, and Related Agencies. *Departments of Labor And Health, Education, And Welfare And Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1980: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee On Appropriations, United States Senate, Ninety-sixth Congress, First Session*. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1979, p. 873.

[398] "Our View The opinion of the Merced Sun-Star: Castle: A defining symbol of aviation," *Merced Sun-Star*, The (CA), April 26, 2004: B03, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/10317FFEE6B24F90.

[399] "SACtown USA," *Skyline*, North American Aviation: Los Angeles, Calif., 49, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015018396427

[400] Perales, *Smeltertown*, 246.

[401] "Court Imposes $1.8M Restitution Order Against Three Defendants In Merced County Unlawful Asbestos Abatement Case," *US Fed News* (USA), February 26, 2015, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/153BC6E8FA5D19E0.

ground water system.[402] The contaminated ground water was first discovered in 1979 with the presence of a toxic solvent.[403] The water tested high levels of trichloroethylene, also known as TCE. This chemical compound was used commonly in air force bases to help clean aircraft engines. Other chemicals were found from the ground disposal of solvents, oils, fuels, and sludges which were used from the mid-1940s and ended in 1977.[404] Although the use of this chemical stopped, it eventually seeped into the ground water. This chemical is considered to be one of the probable cancer-causing agents which prompted the need for the cleanup.

This base has dealt with contaminated ground water for decades and has received mass funding to try and remove the harmful contaminates. However, as a consequence, neighboring residents' water became polluted. There were times when they could not use the water in their homes. While the water was being drained and tested local residents had to be given bottled water to drink and for personal and cooking uses due to the toxicity of the ground water.[405] Although there were attempts to fix the issue, residents expressed concern and frustration that this incident would negatively affect their property values until the water issue was fixed.[406] This ordeal impacted on housing prices, their physical health, and financial stability. Nearby communities, including a few off-base wells, had contaminated water as well, which caused many problems.[407] The Air Force has taken responsibility and have provided cleanup efforts to remove the chemicals from the water. While the Air Force was cleaning the contamination, residents in the nearby mobile home housing were given bottled water.[408] In addition to health concerns, residents reported of the depreciation in the value of their homes due to this pollution.[409]

There was also an added fear of nuclear radiation from areas that held nuclear weapons and radiated cleaning materials. There was the discovery of a leak of nuclear radiation from the base's underground tanks.[410] Small nuclear arms were part of the arsenal at the base, along with the large B-52s which carried them. Former base personnel were

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[402] Lizanne Avon and John D. Bredehoeft, "An Analysis of Trichloroethylene Movement in Groundwater At Castle Air Force Base, California" *Journal of Hydrology*, 110 (1989) 23-50.

[403] Joe Thome, "No-Pollution Guarantee Requested Commission Favors Permit For UT Plant," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), May 28, 1987: C1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE812A72827C88.

[404] Lori A., "Air Base Ordered To Pursue Clean Up: Castle Air Force Base Continues To Clean Up Its Contamination, But Federal Funding May Soon End," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, July 17, 1992: B1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE85F8E1E87E5D.

[405] Pablo Lopez and Joe Thome, "Castle Water Cleanup Could Take Until 2017," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), April 21, 1991: B1, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE8511C239543B.

[406] Ibid,.

[407] "Castle On EPA Cleanup List," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), May 30, 1989: A8, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE83ACF56CB61C.

[408] Nanette Asimov, "A Town Called 'Bad Water' For many, the tap is off limits," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 22, 1987: 20, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EB4EF3601A939EF.

[409] Ibid., 20.

[410] "Atwater: Search for Toxic Waste at Prison Intensifies" *Los Angeles Times* (1996-current); Sep 3, 2003; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. VYB8, https://search.proquest.com/docview/2159638377?accountid=14515.

interviewed along with the analyzing of past Castle records to try and locate the supposed nuclear sites on the former base beginning in 1987.[411] This was a prominent issue since one of the potential sites was under a prison, which was built on base grounds as part of the base reuse plans established after the base closed. After months of tests, it was revealed there were no harmful radiation levels on the surface that would have affected the prisoners or staff.[412] Although these leaks were deemed too minimal to cause harm, their presence was indicative of the aftermath of the federal investment in the establishment of the military base. This incident also reveals the different kinds of attention given to the base and the environment. People did not approach potential environmental hazards this way in the 1950s, but as the base grew and became the center of public and civic life, its environmental impacts became a point of contention as the base began to slowly poison successive generations.

The final environmental impact the base created was the creation of air pollution which came from the emissions from the engines and fuels coming from the planes that were stationed and landing at the base. Although this was an inevitable issue with all air bases, what made this a greater issue is due to the location of the base being within the Central Valley. As explained by Dimitry Stanich of the California Air Resources Board, "the Central Valley is surrounded on three sides by mountain ranges, and it acts as a pool for pollutants produced by the region's roughly 3.5 million residents, its industry and its large agricultural community. These emissions get trapped in the valley by an inversion layer of warm air."[413] The resulting emissions from the base throughout its life contributed to the buildup of this pollution in the air. These environmental consequences demonstrate the kinds of impacts the base had on nearby residents and future residents of the base.

The environmental issues prompted by Castle's establishment were a consequence of operating an Air Force base for military use during and outside of wartime for nearly fifty years. The nearby community also had to deal with noise, air, chemical, and water pollution and contamination. Unfortunately, these issues were left to nearby residents being affected until they were resolve or continue to be. There were still environmental clean-up operations to be conducted even after the base has closed. The study of Castle AFB has revealed the negative impacts military bases had on neighboring communities, however, there were actions conducted by the military to launch projects to help with the contamination and hazardous leaks. This is a testament to the longstanding impacts of the military on a city; the city of Atwater still had a military presence after its base closed.

Base Closure and Its Aftermath

During its lifetime, Castle AFB trained, employed, housed and accommodated hundreds of successful pilots, engineers, doctors, nurses, and civilians, however, Atwater's military base did close. Although an important base, there were three specific instances,

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[411] "Answers needed to Castle dilemma," *Merced Sun-Star*, The (CA), June 7, 2003, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/102445D29A2F444E.

[412] Mike Conway, "Castle Tests Ok For Radiation Technicians Check Area Around Prison, Find Nothing 'Significant, '" *Modesto Bee*, The (CA), June 13, 2003: B1, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0FBAAF9C56D6D8A8.

[413] Nate Berg, "Why Does California's Central Valley Have Such Bad Air Pollution?", City Lab.com, Sept 28, 2011, https://www.citylab.com/environment/2011/09/behind-pollution-californias-central-valley/207/.

which threatened its closure. In the threat of closure there was also the actions by the local community who tried demonstrating the importance of the base to Merced County. The end of WWII in 1946 initially reduced the training programs at the base before they ceased altogether. In November of that same year, the base was placed under "caretaker status," which meant the base had limited personnel and was not operating at full capacity.[414] The base was in danger of closing but was saved when it became the new headquarters for the 93rd Bombardment Wing on March 31, 1946.[415] However, this was not the only time as the lull between the active conflicts in Korea and Vietnam fostered a desire to close bases and redistribute spending to missile-based nuclear defense strategies, intelligence, and other non-infrastructure expenditures.[416] During the 1960s there was the closing of many bases around the U.S. because the Defense Department was struggling to pay the expenses of the Vietnam War due to the budgetary limits set by Congress.[417]

The second threat of closure for the Castle AFB came when military bases around the nation began closing by 1988.[418] Maintaining vast installations throughout the county was politically popular because of the jobs and revenue the military spread throughout communities, but it was no longer a strategic priority because of the diminished military threat.[419] This was due to the changing of the political climate of the world with the ending of the Cold War. Seeking to reshape the military, the U.S. government sought ways to cut the nation's budget. One of the areas considered was the cutting of military costs which included viewing which bases throughout the nation could be demilitarized.[420] This directly impacted the state of California because by the 1980s it had accumulated numerous military bases, which differed from service branch, size, and location. In the first round of base closure recommendations, Castle AFB was rumored to be placed on the list. However, once word of the potential placing was learned, political representatives of the city and county of Merced advocated for the necessity of the base and worked to make sure it stayed off the list; the advocates of the base succeeded.[421]

The third and final issue of closure arose in 1990 with the establishment of an independent committee called the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) which was specifically tasked to select military bases for closure. California lost twenty seven large faculties under BRAC which is more than three times as many as any other state.[422] Again, there were rumors of Castle AFB being placed on the list, and it was officially announced to be on the list for closure on April 13, 1991.[423] The news came as a

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[414] A History of Castle Air Force Base: 1941-1995, 29:09, https://youtu.be/QQzMF54ncY8.

[415] "93rd Bombardment Wing," Strategic-Air-Command.com, http://www.strategic-air-command.com/wings/0093bw.htm.

[416] Michael Touchton and Amanda J. Ashley, *Salvaging Community: How American Cities Rebuild Closed Military Bases* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 24.

[417] This was the reason for the closure of the Roswell, NM air base to be closed in 1967. LeMay, *Roswell*, 117.

[418] Michael Doyle, "Some Military Bases In Valley May Fall To Ax," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), December 18, 1988: A1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE8306D6C1C63B.

[419] Touchton, Amanda, and Ashley, *Salvaging Community*, 3.

[420] Paul Houston, "House Assures Closing of 34 Military Bases," *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Jul 31, 1991; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. SDA.

[421] "93rd Bombardment Wing."

[422] Touchton and Ashley, *Salvaging Community,* 10.

[423] Mark Thompson, "Closing 43 Bases With 190,000 Jobs Urged By Cheney," *Akron Beacon*

shock to the residents of Atwater and Merced, but soon after community members and political representatives went to work on trying to once again remove Castle from the list. The team on the political front was known as Task Force 2000, which sought to use all arguments and base advantages to help persuade the committee to reconsider.[424] Despite their efforts, the base list was approved, and Castle AFB was officially closed in 1995. After fifty-fours years of service Atwater's beloved air base was taken away.

The final and most significant impact of the Castle AFB's presence in the city of Atwater was its closure in 1995. The base allowed for a robust population in Atwater and Merced County, provided entertainment for families, and became a significant part of the city, which can be seen in the city's unofficial slogan the "Home of the Castle Air Force Base."[425] Despite local and political actions to try to overturn the decision, Castle AFB was scheduled to be demilitarized and it no longer functioned as a military base. The announcement of its closure caused immediate anxiety and uncertainty over the financial state of the city of Atwater. The closing of the base meant Air Force personnel were transferred to other locations, homes within the neighboring cities became vacant, and businesses, which depended on the consumerism of military personnel, lost revenue. There was mass migration out of Atwater right before and shortly after the base closed, which resulted in a decline in the housing market with a record amount of vacant housing.[426]

The base's closure also worried neighboring communities, base employees, base families occupying military and city housing, and local businesses, which relied on the business of Air Force personnel. There were many fears about the ramifications of the base closure; some assumed Atwater would become a ghost town.[427] These concerns were heightened as the closure contributed to the economic recession, which was already under way in the 1990s, and added to the high unemployment within the city and county.[428] In 1991, Defense Department officials had estimated the base closure would cause the loss of, both directly and indirectly, 9,000 jobs and the migration of about 16,000 people out of Merced County.[429] In 1991 Merced county had an estimate 186,091 population and

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Journal (OH), April 13, 1991: A10, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EB62C9EAA40B427.

[424] Elisa Rocha, "Agency Plans For Life After Castle," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, August 8, 1991: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/documentview?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D047CE9A08F20.

[425] Elisa Rocha, "Atwater's New Slogan Captures Town's Spirt," *Modesto Bee*, The (CA), March 28, 1992: 1, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D0C5C566C912F.

[426] Joe Thome, "Building Activity In Atwater 'Crashed': City Official Says The Recession Is More To Blame For Housing Slump Than Announcement That Castle Air Force Base Will Close," *Fresno Bee*, The (CA), February 20, 1992: B3, *NewsBank: Access World* News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE85AC705300EF.

[427] Matthew Yi, "Closure Of Military Base Brings Good Times To Town," *The Seattle Times*, November 28, 1997: C13, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EB539088A28D630.

[428] "Base Closings Not So Bad As Communities First Fear," *New Hampshire Union Leader* (Manchester, NH), September 20, 1993: 8, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F54504C27A65D2B.

[429] Michael Doyle, "Ex-Castle Pilot Helped Target Base For Possible Closure: Air Force Officials Point To Aging Facilities And The Incompatible Growth Of Merced County," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, April 14, 1991: A1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE850E664E050D.

employment with a height of 71,251.[430] There were reports of Merced County residents who were forced to move far from the valley after Castle AFB closed. Thousands lost their jobs or were transferred to bases around the country. Due to domestic migration, Merced lost more than 10,000 people between 1990 and 1998."[431]

Other consequences of the base's closure included the impacts to the economy and population of the local community. Local businesses, which were in close proximity to the base struggled and some closed. The city's population decreased, due to the migration of military families, which also decreased local school enrollment numbers. This was an issue because school districts relied on enrollment for state funding and there was even extra funding for accommodating military families.[432] School funding was significantly cut, which resulted in the laying off of staff and teachers.

After the closure in 1995, nearly all military personnel, units, airplanes, and families had moved and transferred to different locations. The closure and its immediate aftermath have been documented through various local newspapers, which highlighted the profound effects on businesses, housing, population, schools, and residents. Even before the official closure announcement was made, residents and military families sold their homes and ended their rental leases in the anticipation of the closure.[433] In the few years after the base closed, the housing market declined with a record amount of vacant housing.[434] With the loss of families, neighborhoods also suffered. The neighborhood of Loughborough in Merced for example, once held many military families when the base was in operation, was left almost empty. Once hailed as an almost perfect area, the neighborhood eventually became known for its high crime rate.[435] Residents noted property owners tried to fill their vacancies quickly and did not keep up their properties. Although the closure of the base was not the only reason for the neighborhood's issues, it was a contributing factor. However, since then the city of Merced has made efforts to improve their neighborhoods and revamp their city.[436]

What the base initially provided; it took away when it closed. Aside from the museum, which was one of the features of the base, what was left were empty hangers,

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[430] For population: USA Facts, "Our Changing Population: Merced County, California," https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/california/county/merced-county/?endDate=1992-01-01&startDate=1991-01-01. For employment: ALFRED Archival Economic Data, Employed Persons in Merced County, CA," https://alfred.stlouisfed.org/series?seid=LAUCN060470000000005&utm_source=series_page&utm_medium=related_content&utm_term=related_resources&utm_campaign=alfred.

[431] J.N. Sbranti, "Moving Through The '90s," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, September 12, 1999: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D5936CD8AFA5C.

[432] Alvie Lindsay, "Schools In Trouble Coming And Going," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, January 15, 1993: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D4D4D0BD8752F.

[433] Thome, "Building Activity In Atwater 'Crashed': City Official Says The Recession Is More To Blame For Housing Slump Than Announcement That Castle Air Force Base Will Close."

[434] David Chircop, "Merced Realtors: Bubble won't burst-County association suggests market may merely cool off," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA)*, August 11, 2005: B01, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/documentview?p=AWNB&docref=news/10C01ED39B72E6B8.

[435] Ameera Butt, "Loughborough residents cope with crime as violence plagues neighborhood," *Merced Sun-Star, The: Web Edition Articles (CA)*, December 28, 2010, *NewsBank: Access World News* https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/158ADF3B6E9848A0.

[436] Lauten-Scrivner, "Merced's Loughborough area getting new attention from city, after years of violent crime."

storage houses, dormitories, and the airstrips no longer serving their military purposes. This exploration of Castle AFB prompts questions about what happens to a community when its foundation is taken away; what groups were impacted the most and what was the overall impact on the community as a whole? The following will further address these questions along with an analysis of the distinction between the immediate aftermath of the base closing and the long-term consequences for people community, economy, and environment. The base's closure and its impacts had a direct impact on employment, housing, and domestic migration for the surrounding communities of Atwater and Merced.

There have been some scholars who looked into the study of the impacts of military base closures and a few who have included Castle AFB. Ted Bradshaw, a former UC Davis professor of community development among his work had cited the base in relation to military base closures. Bradshaw analyzes the local impacts of the base in his article "Which Impact? The Local Impact of Base Closure Needs Closer Examination." Bradshaw demonstrates how base closures dampened immediate effects on the local community and over time the reuse of a closed base and abandoned facilities provides an unprecedented opportunity.[437] Through an analysis of how economic, migration, and labor factors in the cities of Atwater and Merced changed, he argues the closure of military bases were not as catastrophic to local areas.[438] There is an initial negative impact to local areas, but these could be rectified over time. His work in the assessment of the long-term impact of Castle AFB's closure proves less conclusive than expected by those who lived through it immediately. Bradshaw argues the closure was not totally detrimental nor negative, despite it being economically devastating to families who faced the greatest hardship when the base closed and the lost their sources of work and income. This in contrast to the military servicemembers and their families who were transferred to other military bases and continued their careers in the military or used their experiences and skills in related civilian jobs. Bradshaw's study including Castle AFB's closure does provide some insight views on the immediate impacts of the closure of military bases, however, there is more to consider in looking into the lasting impacts the base created onto the surrounding community in which this dissertation considers.

A related publication *The Effects of Military Base Closures on Local Communities: A Short-Term Perspective* provides a comparison of three base closures, including the closure of the Castle AFB, and explores the factors which contributed to the growing concern amongst local residents about base closures. The study attempts to fill the gap in base closure studies by measuring the effects of base closure into three general categories: declines in population, employment, and housing demand.[439] This work argues the effects of base closures are highly localized; the size of the base influences the size of the effects, and the influence of underlying economic factors, such as population and economic growth, influence the overall impact of base closures on surrounding communities.[440] This work also

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[437] Ted K. Bradshaw, "Which Impact? The Local Impact of Base Closure Needs Closer Examination." University of California at Berkeley Institute of Urban and Regional Development, 1.

[438] Ibid., 14.

[439] Michael Dardia, K. F. McCarthy, J. D. Malkin, and G. Vernez. 1996. *The Effects of Military Base Closures on Local Communities: A Short-Term Perspective*: RAND Corporation, 4, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1820675310.

[440] Ibid., 44.

argues, like Bradshaw, the actual effects of base closures appear substantially more benign than those projected in the local impact studies done prior to the closures.[441]

Bradshaw's work and *The Effects of Military Base Closures on Local Communities* offer useful strategies to analyze the effects of base closures, such as focusing on labor and economic figures. However, this dissertation's study on Castle AFB's closure takes a different path and focuses on what happened to the communities in Atwater before and after the base closed. Specifically, how the closure effected employment, how the base was transformed or reused, and the lives of veterans who lived nearby the base. It has been argued that the effects from the closure were minimal, however, how the city and community were able to continue on when one of their major sources of labor and identity left needs to be considered.

One of the biggest concerns once Castle closed was the employment for the city and the need to replace the loss of jobs. One solution was for the now demilitarized base to play host to several private companies in the late 1990s, as they had made its buildings available for lease. The presence of private and local businesses was made possible by the civic organization called Castle Joint Powers Authority (JPA) formed by representatives of Atwater, Merced, and Merced County working to advertise the base as an ideal location for major companies.[442] These companies brought some jobs back to the community and helped infuse Atwater's population. One of the largest and most significant, was the construction of a federal prison and prison camp.[443] The base was also used for storage, mini warehouses, and other construction projects. As a former air force base, Castle AFB was also considered to be the site of a major airline maintenance company. According to Congressional reports, the increase in population and the presence of businesses and jobs in Atwater, the former military base was considered to be a base reuse success story.[444] According to a study of the civilian jobs lost and created at major BRAC locations as of Oct 21, 2003 Castle AFB in 1991 lost an estimated 1,149 jobs but created an estimated 2,183 jobs, which makes it a recovery of 190%.[445] Over time a sense of recovery was felt due to an increase in employment for the base.

There were other ways in which the former base was able to contribute to the city and its residents. One has been the repurposing of its structures; some have become home to health services, which serve the civilian population.[446] The base has also acted as a place holder for the University of California, Merced, which used its space for administration planning and research labs for students while the current campus was under construction.[447] Castle AFB's closure was not as severe as initially feared, and although the base closure did not bring an end to the city or local communities, it did significantly impact its economy,

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[441] Ibid,.

[442] Bob White, "Castle Perks Up For Civilian Use," *Modesto Bee,* The (CA), October 6, 1996: 1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F1D5304ADF7592F.

[443] Mike Conway, "After Much Delay, Atwater Prison To Open Jan. 14," *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, December 29, 2001: A1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F0BD0A3A9CBEE0F.

[444] Michael Doyle, "Audit sees base closure as plus-But Merced County officials say area was hurt when Castle closed," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, April 9, 2002: A9, NewsBank: Access World News, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0F2D0B86F18820D3.

[445] Sorenson, *Military Base Closure,* Appendix V: Civilian Jobs Impact of Four BRAC Rounds, 190.

[446] Castle Family Health Center, http://cfhc.care/?q=node/1.

[447] Jason Alvarez, "Our First Campus Was a Castle," *Merced Monthly*, Sept 6, 2017.

employment opportunities, and civic planning when federal investment was no longer there. New businesses were established to help with the job loss, and it seemed the city of Atwater was able to recover from the loss of its military base. However, this dissertation seeks to further consider the lasting impacts of a military base on surrounding communities. The Castle AFB, how it is remembered by local communities, veterans, and how it is currently regarded, will be explored in the next chapter. The base will be examined through the lens of social memory providing different outlooks into the memory and closure of the base, which cut it from the local community. The following section provides an additional analysis of the long-lasting effects and a closer examination of the claim that Castle AFB was a reuse success story.

Castle AFB A "Success Story?"

Although the city of Atwater and the neighboring city of Merced experienced some success from the former base being reused with some established businesses, it can be argued that this "success story" did not last. Over the years the city of Atwater and the larger Merced county has experienced fluctuations of economic hardships in terms of having usually higher unemployment and another big recession in 2008-9.[448] The former Air Force base, later named Castle Commerce Center for being the home and open to new businesses, would accumulate some big-name companies like Google who is using the base to test self-driving cars.[449] However, it has yet to capture a company to provide a mass amount of jobs and to be able to stay like when the military was present. Through the Castle Commerce Center's history there have been some proposals that would have created many jobs for the local communities but did not go through due to those businesses finding more suitable locations elsewhere or the continued need to clean up at the base. This clean-up includes tearing down buildings deemed too old, damaged, and contains harmful materials like asbestos.

The contaminated ground water also still needed to be cleaned up and the Air Force was still in charge of the cleanup and throughout the journey it was filled with continued testing, pumping and treating water, funding issues, and the process overall taking more time and money than first projected. As of 2017 the Air Force has spent $180 million and still needs to spend about $67 million more to complete the environment restoration.[450] Design and construction contracts were also awarded to the base which went up to even $3,455,968.[451] However, it would seem the environmental issues of the base have not been completely eradicated yet. In 2005 it was discovered of another water related contamination,

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[448] "As Bad As Jobless Rate Is, Expect Worse-11.2% State Rate, 20.4% In Merced County Lags Behind Other Econimic Indicators," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA),* April 21, 2009: A7, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/127BA5FFA5118468.

[449] Matt O'Brien, "As Google deploys new robot cars on city streets, DMV scrambles to finish self-driving rulebook," *Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, CA)*, May 15, 2015, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1555F7CE83511B18.

[450] "Ecological Monitoring No Longer Needed at Castle," *Targeted News Service* (USA), April 8, 2017, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/163A24C33A70D890.

[451] "Let Castle Contract," Merced Sun-Star (Merced, California), March 17, 1973: 1. NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40WHNPX-14B3CE39E50481B6%402441759-14B3CB7AE2FBAB67%400-14B3CB7AE2FBAB67%40.

but this was found in the wastewater. The chemical was dioxin, one of the toxic elements that can be found in Agent Orange, and it was believed to be coming from the base after it was closed.[452] Although this was not considered as concerning as the contamination in the groundwater, it was something that needed to be brought to the public's attention and requested for the Air Force to also handle. This however would not be the end as in a recent development the Air Force on January 28, 2020 released an action memorandum of the discovery made by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of the presence of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in one private drinking water well near the former air force base. Steps are being taken to plan to eliminate the risk of exposure of the chemicals in the drinking water. Like before, the plans include providing bottled water and installing a whole-home water treatment system.[453]

Another consequence from the base closure which had a direct effect on veterans was the uses of the base's services. One of them was the commissary and exchange stores within the base which provided goods for servicemembers and veterans which were usually at lower rates compared to the stores outside of the base.[454] This service came to an end when the base was closed. Another base service was the base hospital. When the base was still open, the hospital provided medical services for active service personnel and was available for veterans. The presence of the base and these kinds of services was ideal for many retirees who decided to make Atwater or Merced their permanent homes. After the base closed veterans had to either travel to the nearest military base which was a longer trip or to pay more for local goods and civilian medical coverage. For some the need to travel further and higher costs were an issue due to being on fixed incomes and being used to having these services nearby.[455] These issues are significant because they highlight how there is more to the story of Castle. However, these do not solely define Castle AFB's legacy, as the city and is residents was able to continue forward and experience some growth.

Despite initial fears about the closing of the base, the city of Atwater did not become a ghost town and other local communities did not cease activity when the base closed. Over time into the early 2000s, housing, population, and job opportunities would return to the levels when the base was open. The closure of the base was used as an opportunity for

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[452] Leslie Albrecht, "Atwater gets a dioxin update–County reports some progress in finding source of poison in city's wastewater," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA*), April 25, 2006: A01, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1113794729CEB688. And Agent Orange was a tactical herbicide the U.S. military used to clear leaves and vegetation for military operations mainly during the Vietnam War. Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange could have developed illnesses as a result. https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/.

[453] "Public Notice Former Castle Air Force Base Action Memorandum Issued," *Merced Sun-Star, The (CA)* (Merced, California), January 28, 2020: 6. *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=image/v2%3A16D864AC885773C8%40AWNB-178BDED5F07F8CC7%402458877-178BE086588E2C73%405.

[454] Charles McCarthy, "'Markets' Are Open To Guard Base Commissary Use Is Expanded," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, March 30, 1987: B2, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE810A660976D8.

[455] Charles McCarthy, "Retirees Big Losers Without Castle Aid: Air Force Pensioners And Their Spouses Will Find Access To Hospital And Commissary Benefits Limited With The Air Force Base Gone," *Fresno Bee, The (CA)*, July 2, 1991: A1, *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EAE85336EA629ED.

commercial businesses and large corporations to use its abundant land, space, and leftover structures. The absence of the military base created initial setbacks but over time the city and neighboring communities did show some recovery. Although the base is currently accommodating several small businesses, it is argued that Atwater has yet to fully recover from the loss of the base. No large companies, which would provide job opportunities and a boost in the economy, have yet to make the former Castle AFB their headquarters.[456] Currently, the Castle Commerce Center has forty businesses leasing building spaces and land, but civic leaders are still seeking a major company, like Amazon or Apple, which would provide a significant number of jobs for the city and help it continue to recover from the loss of its Air Force Base. The ultimate goal is to turn the center into a successful industrial park. Additionally, the former base needs substantial environmental and debris clean up and updates to its structures. Only time will reveal if Atwater can fully recover with the establishment of new industries that could provide additional jobs for residents. This former military base has demonstrated the absence of federal investment creates long standing detrimental effects, as seen in its deterioration and minimal business occupancy.

Throughout its history, the Castle AFB transformed the city of Atwater, Merced County and the Central Valley. The base contributed to the migration of military personnel and families into the cities of Atwater and Merced. The base played a significant role in the minds and hearts of the surrounding community. Its unparalleled influence can be seen in the city of Atwater itself, with its unofficial city motto "The Home of the Castle Air Force Base." Residents and veterans look upon the base with fondness. Colonel John Fowler, a former Castle member and the 93rd Combat Support Group Commander, stated "Castle has been a good neighbor to Atwater for nearly 50 years."[457] The study of the base can be utilized to explore the economic, social, and communal impacts of the establishment of military bases and institutions on local communities. The base grew from a community effort, and it became part of the city's identity; many residents referred to the base as a good neighbor. Castle AFB not only served to protect the nation, but it also made time to hold county wide events to showcase the advancement of the military and provide family friendly activities.

For the cities of Atwater and Merced, and other communities throughout the valley, the military base was not just a military installation, and its closure was a significant loss. Although the base is no longer a military installation and the Air Force's aircraft no longer fly, its service, its part in the nation's defense, and its place in Atwater's community is not forgotten. The base's connection to the community of Atwater included its open houses, celebration days, and military demonstrations, which allowed for the creation of a special bond that spanned over fifty years. As this study has shown, the impacts from a military installation within a community goes beyond its economic benefits and the physical remnants it leaves behind. Military bases have and do help forge city, regional, and community identities and solidarity. This exploration of Castle AFB has demonstrated both the immediate and lasting impacts of the presence of a military base on the surrounding

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[456] Ramona Giwargis, "*Castle Air Force Base: The Future*," *Merced Sun-Star*, https://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/article22186791.html#storylink=cpy

[457] "Castle plans to be a good neighbor," *Merced Sun-Star* (Merced, California), January 27, 1990: 1, Readex: America's Historical Newspapers, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1492C347D3088F77%40EANX-151BDC0D391432E3%402447919-151B829863F218DA%400-151B829863F218DA%40.

community. Castle AFB provided jobs, boosted local economies, and organized community wide events. The base also left gaps in the labor and housing markets, left pollution in the ground and water, and drained the lifeblood from the city when it closed. However, there were efforts to help make use of what was left of the base and its memory, along with those who served and worked in the base, are preserved.

This chapter has demonstrated how military bases and defense installations provided initial benefits, but also having adversely impacted local communities. The introduction of bases and defense installations provided new job opportunities. They also decreased community populations with residents seeking better employment opportunities as seen with the Mexican American and Hispanic communities' examples. There were also the negatively impacted local economies when military bases closed as well as creating long-lasting environment hazards. This is exemplified in the study of the former Castle Air Force Base, where the significant influences of the base onto local communities can be clearly seen. This exploration of the impacts of military bases on local communities, including ethnic communities, will benefit future scholarship in studies on the relationships between the U.S. military, military bases and local ethnic communities. In considering these relationships further, the next chapter will explore how WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Mexican American veterans, Castle AFB, and their legacies are remembered.

Ch. 6: How Is Mexican American Military Service Is Remembered

Mexican Americans have served in WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and have simultaneously utilized their experiences to fight for recognition of their identity, civil rights, and their place within American society. In what ways, however, are Mexican American veterans' contributions to the armed forces and to the nation, between WWII and the Vietnam war, remembered and recognized? This inquiry is significant to this dissertation's arguments because mainstream scholarship regarding military service and veterans of WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War have at times excluded Mexican Americans. This was also seen when these veterans returned home and did not receive proper recognition for their military service in person. There are ways to help rectify the gaps however, which is crucial to address their contributions through the military. Of equal importance, is the exploration of the remembrance of Mexican American contributions to the wars within the broader landscape of social memory. This chapter seeks to explore acts of remembrance, how these acts of remembrance are conveyed, and what messages are disseminated to the public. This exploration will utilize a theoretical lens of social and collective memory to understand how memory is created, forgotten, and how does is apply when considering the three wars and the Mexican American participation within them being both recognized and not.

Memory is created through the experiences of Mexican American veterans and the preservation of their voices within the historical narrative and for future generations. However, when their voices can be absent their contributions are ultimately forgotten. There are ways to combat this absence and to preserve the contributions of the veterans and the impacts they had on the wars. Written text is important to this process, but the construction of memorable structures and entities are more accessible and visible to the public. This notion is explored in this chapter's three sections. The first section provides an overview of social and collective memory to demonstrate the memories and experiences of Mexican American veterans should be remembered through a wholistic approach that incorporates community studies and focuses on their unique and complex relationship with the U.S. military. The second section addresses the absence of Mexican American veteran contributions in the historical narrative and ways to combat this absence. The notion of forgetting and how it has affected the public's memory about the wars, particularly with the Korean War, will also be explored. The final section highlights how these wars and Mexican American veterans are remembered through memorials, physical acts of remembrance, and sites of remembrance. The messages of these sites, memorials and acts of remembrance are analyzed to understand what is conveyed to the public.

Social and Collective Memory for Military Service Remembrance

The social and collective memories of WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War have been popularized within American history. The remembrance of Mexican American veterans adds to their unique and complex relationship with the U.S. military. Moreover, social and collective memory should be utilized as guiding tools of analysis when considering how Mexican American veterans and their communities are remembered. Historian David Blight addresses the difference between memory and history arguing "memory often coalesces in objects, sites, and monuments; history seeks to understand

contexts in all their complexity."[458] The use of objects, sites, and monuments have been utilized to remember the military's past and those who served during the wars. In considering the aspects of social and collective memory, understanding how memory is formed and how it can be forgotten is useful to understand how Mexican American veterans' histories have been remembered and forgotten. This type of research and analysis can re-narrate the histories of U.S. military service and the Mexican American community emphasizing how military service is not an exception or an outlier, but central to the growth and development of their communities.

Social memory is an important underlying theme in this dissertation in how there is remembrance, forgetting, and exclusion of the three wars and the war veterans who served in them. Social memory is an expression of collective experiences that identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future.[459] Collective memory is socially constructed and refers to how groups remember their past.[460] French socialist Maurice Halbwachs in his exploration of the "social framework of memory" argued that memories are constructed by social groups, individuals remember in the literal physical sense, however, it is social groups which determine what is memorable and also how it will be remembered.[461] These concepts are useful for exploring the remembrance of veterans because it demonstrates memory does not come from a single source; it emerges from restricted structures. Both social and collective memory are socially constructed and the experiences of a collective directly contributes to the formation of memory, which is how a warfare narrative is formed. The content of this narrative is filled with veteran experiences and memories from wartime. Even though collective memory conveys how a group remembers, these memories are not static and can change over time. And, indeed, groups can also forget. This next section's analysis covers the development of social and collective memories of Mexican American military service, and a specific history of forgetting. Overall, these concepts are important to understand how memory is a vital aspect in the scholarship on the wars, activism, and military impacts on the Mexican American community.

Absence In Historical Narrative

Mexican American contributions within the military have been absent from mainstream, public-facing scholarship. This absence prompts a few questions: What are the legacies of Mexican American veterans' military service? How are these legacies disseminated in U.S. history? Oral histories or testimonios are important resources in the examination of veterans' experiences during their service and provide valuable insight into

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[458] David W. Blight, "Historians and 'Memory,'" *Common Placed: The Journal of Early American Life*, https://commonplace.online/article/historians-and-memory/.

[459] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (ACLS History E-Book Project, 1992), 26. Also see Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in Memory: History, Culture, and the Mind, ed. Thomas Butler (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 97–113.

[460] Maurice Halbwachs, considered the first theorist for "collective memory", argued all memory is structured by group identities so group memories, individual memories product of the intersection of groups (referenced in *Social Memory* ix). See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.

[461] Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in *Memory: History, Culture, and the Mind*, ed. Thomas Butler (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 98.

how these experiences shaped memory. Oral histories and testimonios also provide a platform for Mexican American voices to be heard and become part of the mainstream historical narrative. However, their voices have largely been excluded from earlier histographies of the U.S. military and their undeniable contributions have been stifled. Mario T. García, a professor of history and Chicano/a studies, argues oral history has been key in recovering, recreating, and redefining history for Mexican Americans; it has helped fill in significant gaps in known histories.[462] The use of oral histories, collected from Mexican American civilians and veterans, further our understanding of the impacts of the military on Mexican American communities. For example, the increased use of oral narratives from Vietnam veterans have been instrumental in providing them with a voice to share their experiences.[463] Together, the use of oral histories and the analysis of both social and collective memory provides a better view of the history of Mexican Americans' connection with the military. These histories and tools of analysis are also important to explain how and why certain narratives and stories are popularized and forgotten.

Through the exploration of memory, this section argues Mexican American veterans and their communities, from WWII on, should be acknowledged and remembered. These communities shared the same sense of patriotism, supported the war effort, and bared the loss of its residents. In *The Ghosts of Hero Street,* Carlos Harrison brings to light of the stories of Mexican American veterans and brought forth the voices and collective memories of their communities. Furthermore, Harrison demonstrates how these veterans, and their community are remembered. The community's Second Street was renamed Hero Street, U.S.A. and was not only a way to honor the men who served in WWII and the Korean War but was an attempt to preserve the memory of their community members as honorable Americans who sacrificed for their country. This is an example of how public memory of military service can be formed and preserved.

However, this act of preserving public memory is complicated when the predominantly Mexican and Mexican American community is considered. The renaming of a street to recognize the veterans who served did not result in improvements for the community itself, which was impoverished and segregated from the city's white residents. Some in the community residents even lived in boxcars.[464] The remembrance of veterans' service through public displays of communal memory, such as the establishment of Hero Street U.S.A., is meant to illicit feelings of pride, but their physical place within an impoverished community did nothing to promote improvement of their infrastructure and overall health. Although the naming of this street is a remembrance of the patriotism and sacrifice of these men, the physical site itself, the community, does not evoke this ideal due to how the people living there are impoverished and lack of significant improvement. The Mexican American community is recognized, but it does not fully benefit from military service, which is reflected by the conditions of their community. This example demonstrates the significance in the recognition of Mexican American military service and the careful

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[462] In furthering this point Mario T. García states, "Oral history has been particularly important because Mexican-Americans and other racial minorities in the United States have generally been poor, working people who historically have not produced a vast array of documents or other written matter. This is not to say that archival sources documenting the minority experience are not available to historians but only to suggest that such sources have been limited." See *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 20-21.

[463] Teresa Moren Jimenez, "The Mexican American Vietnam War Serviceman," 9.

[464] Harrison, *The Ghosts of Hero Street*, 4.

consideration of the community veterans came from. This community in Illinois despite the recognition struggled with racial segregation and limited upward resources, which had long plagued Mexican American communities. Acts of remembrance and recognition are beneficial, but there are also widespread instances of forgetting.

The concept of forgetting is closely tied to how the wars are remembered and what information is disseminated in the mainstream historical narrative. Popular historical war narratives have forgotten or excluded aspects of Mexican American service. Forgetting and the failure to recall memory is often times purposeful. Scholar Paul Connerton, a British social anthropologist, explains "forgetting is not always the failure against which recall is to be preferred;" certain memories are chosen to be forgotten.[465] Forgetting has been prominent even within the histories of war. Compared to WWII and the Vietnam War, the Korean War has been mostly overshadowed. For returning Korean war veterans, military historian Max Hastings notes, "the war seemed an unsatisfactory, inglorious, and thus unwelcome memory." There was also a sense of "bitterness among Korean veterans in the U.S. [because] their memories and sacrifices seem[ed] so much less worthy of attention than those of Vietnam veterans."[466] This was especially prevalent in the war's initial postwar years in part due to high numbers of casualties during the war and questioning of "what was really achieved" in the end. He further addresses how "Many Westerners were happy to forget Korea for a generation after the war ended, soured by the taste of costly stalemate, robbed of any hint of glory."[467] Despite the brutality of the war and the cost of American lives, there was a general agreement to forgot about the war once it ended.

After its conclusion, the Korean War became invisible in America's public memory. This is evident when it took four decades after the war to obtain a national war monument.[468] The collective forgetting of wartime ignores those who served, which included Mexican Americans. While those veterans from WWII received praise and adoration, Korean War veterans did not, especially prisoners of war. The overall perception of the war, foreign policy, and competing international ideologies contributed to their invisibility. There are important aspects to consider in the evaluation of national war memory, which is constantly forged in a complex process shaped by competing constituencies such as individual, families, veterans, victims as agencies of the state.[469] This ideal applied not to just Mexican American Korean war veterans, but to all those who fought and were absent in the larger historical narrative.

The rhetorical approach in highlighting the absence of memory around a specific war is mirrored by the same absence felt by Mexican American veterans. These veterans have to be acknowledged in the retelling of these great conflicts, because their absence from popular historical narratives perpetuates a partial story. Their military service, contributions, sacrifices, and community transformations have not been properly acknowledged and thus are forgotten. This failure to remember is not simply just forgetting to include them in a history textbook or documentary, which has often happened. Forgetting silences these

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[465] Judith Keene, "Lost to Public Commemoration: American Veterans of the "Forgotten" Korean War," Journal of Social History 44, no. 4 (2011): 1096. Also see Connerton's *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory, and the Body.* Paul James Connerton was a British social anthropologist best known for his work on social and body memory.

[466] Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987), 330-1.

[467] Ibid., 10.

[468] Keene "Lost to Public Commemoration," 1106.

[469] Ibid., 1097.

veterans and diminishes their experiences during war, the sacrifices they made, and the horrible treatment they endured when they returned home. They faced racism, discrimination, and barriers to better labor, education, and social mobility opportunities. The failure to remember continues the tradition of exclusion even in memory. There have been various publications who have brought Mexican American military experiences into the forefront; however, additional studies can be conducted to reveal how military service and wartime shaped Mexican American communities. Mexicans Americans were the largest ethnic minority group that served in WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. To have the stories and experiences of these veterans to be relegated to a footnote, omitted, or silenced is a travesty. As Haitian American academic and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues, "silencing is an erasure more effective than the absence or failure of memory, whether faked or genuine."[470] Significantly, silencing their history and service in the military contributes to the harmful perception of Mexican Americans as foreigners and outsiders. Moreover, it also inhibits and limits opportunities to understand them as domestic patriots. The Mexican American men and women who served in the military and labored in war industries were U.S. soldiers and loyal supporters who worked, fought, and died for a country, which did not fully recognize their efforts.

The use of social and collective memory is a useful method to understand how memory is formed, developed, sustained over time and forgotten in connection to community and this study of Mexican American military service. As previously mentioned in connection with company towns, Professor Monica Perales' book *Smeltertown* utilizes this method to reconstructs the history of a Mexican/Mexican American community that developed around a smelter company in El Paso, Texas. The collective memories of former residents provide an insight into the daily lives of these community residents, the roles of women and families, and how they formed their own ethnic and regional identities- Esmeltianos.[471] Similar to the Esmeltianos within the smelter community, the residents of Atwater with Castle AFB embraced being a part of a community that was home to a military base.

Utilizing memory as an analytical lens not only inspires the search for lost or absent voices, but also provides the means to help correct or undo forgetting and its consequences. The use of oral histories, testimonies, written accounts such as biographies, and community memorials are significant resources to use to reconstitute the past and create new social memories for current and future generations. These resources fill in the gaps of the histories and experiences of Mexican Americans and their communities. Upkeeping memory and combating against forgetting allows for these veterans to be properly acknowledged for their military service. The following section will provide examples both physical and non-physical in how this can be conducted.

Memorials and Other Acts of Remembrance

The act of preserving memories and stories is a strategy of resistance against historical inaccuracies and social amnesias. Moreover, preservation and remembrance help combat the harmful impacts of forgetting. Benedict Anderson, political scientist and

[470] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 2015), 60.

[471] Perales, *Smeltertown,* 3.

historian, in his chapter "Memory and Forgetting" from *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, discusses how death, and its perception, contributes to the structure of the nation's biography. Death in the nation's biography, especially from war, "…serve[s] the narrative purpose; these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as 'our own.'"[472] Regarding Mexican American veterans and communities, this section argues their contributions should be remembered and not forgotten. The establishment and preservation of physical, public memorials is just one way to remember Mexican American veterans.

Examples of these memorials can be found at the former military base, Castle AFB. The former base holds two memorials within its grounds. The Memorial Parade Ground was dedicated in 1980 to all Air Force personal who were assigned to CAFB and who gave their lives in support of the Air Force mission (Figure 7). The grounds are encircled by the flags of the fifty states. Additionally, the Linebacker Center, which was a flight simulator building, was dedicated on September 28, 1981 to Air Force personnel who took part in Operation Linebacker; there is a memorial plaque as well.[473]

Within the base grounds there is also The Castle Air Museum Memorial Brick Park which is located next to the museum building on the base itself. This park has flags of the U.S. and military branches and a rock memorial to Helen McCarthy who helped run community base relations for Castle AFB.[474] Additionally, the park has small walls made up of red bricks, some containing white writing. These bricks are the museum's way to provide a sense of remembrance for those able to purchase a brick. Individual bricks contain inscriptions with a variety of information; names of men and women, servicemen and military wives, founding museum members, military branches, wars veterans served in, military ranks and occupations, and dates of service and life and death. Some of these brinks include the names of those who served at Castle AFB during their military service. The bricks are available for those who want someone to be remembered and placed within the grounds of the former military base, one ideal location for military veterans. The local and larger military community are literally building a way to preserve the memory of their veterans. Within the museum grounds, where the airplanes are displayed, there are a few plaques memorializing individuals and military groups like the Thunderbirds, who took part in the Castle air shows held at the base.[475] There are also memorial benches that can be purchased; just another opportunity for someone to be memorialized.[476]

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[472] Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 206.

[473] Plaque reads: Linebacker Center; Proudly dedicated to those who participated in Operation Linebacker 18-29 December 1972. The high-altitude strategic B-52 bombing raids against North Vietnam ports were carried out against some of the most heavily defended targets in the history of aerial warfare. The heroic and valiant effort of SAC air and ground crew members in Operation Linebacker severely hampered North Vietnam's capabilities in waging war and led to the eventual release of U.S. Prisoners of War.

[474] Plaque description: Helen L. McCarthy, Castle Air Force Base, Community Coordinator, 1956-1995, "The First Lady of Castle."

[475] Plaque description: In honor of all past, present, and future outstanding men and women of the U.S.A.F. *Thunderbirds* Aerial Demonstration Squadron, this aircraft is proudly dedicated."

[476] Heritage Park Memorial Brick Campaign, Castle Air Museum, https://castleairmuseum.org/heritage-park-memorial-brick-campaign/.

Figure 7. (Left) The Castle Memorial Parade Ground Dedication Plaque. Photo taken by the author. (Right) 93D Bombardment Wing. Castle Air Force Base, Atwater, CA. Photo taken by the author.

The Castle Museum has a small indoor museum exhibit which features artifacts related to the history of military aviation from WWII to Vietnam, past veterans' memorabilia, and other reminders for those who have served and sacrificed during their military service. There are also items that remember and acknowledge Castle AFB veterans who lost their lives while serving at the base. These items include a poem for those who died in a crash, newspaper articles of the surrounding communities' reactions to the loss of lives from Castle AFB, and a list dedicated to all the airmen from Castle AFB, their names, when they died, the aircraft they were flying, the location of the incidents, and their ranks. Additionally, there is a table set for Prisoners Of Wars (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIAs) with items each with a specific meaning aimed to recognize and remember them.[477] The museum within the former military base has provided various forms of remembrance through plaques, bricks, an indoor exhibit, and memorial benches. The tourism brought to the museum also helps ensure these veterans are seen and acknowledged. These memorials can be viewed by the public and the exhibit can be seen with the purchase of a ticket to access the museum which helps fund the museum itself to help maintain these displays. These memorials contribute to Castle's military veterans, their families, and those who have helped established and maintained the museum for future generations.

Although the former base no longer serves its primary purpose, the memories are still present. For Castle AFB its memories are held by former base residents, the Atwater community, and the old buildings, which still stand. Buildings like the museum hold pieces of the bases' and Air Force's history along with the open house days where those from the community and veterans who served return to talk about the base and the planes with new generations. And so that memory is maintained and passed on in a new annual ritual.[478] The memory of the base's history and its service to the county is embedded within the landscape, is celebrated in its museum, and in the placement of several memorials and plaques at the base. The physical structure of the base still exists, along with the museum, which is dedicated to the history of the base and the U.S. military and Air Force. The former base's

[477] The set up involves a table, usually set off to the side, with a single chair. The table is set with a white tablecloth, a single candle, a book of faith (optional), an inverted glass, and a single red rose in a vase, around which is tied a red or yellow ribbon. Each item and how it is displayed carries its own symbolic meaning in remembering those who have served.

[478] As seen in Perales' work on memory, both Smeltertown and Castle AFB no longer serve their primary purpose, but their memories are still present. For Smeltertown, memories are held by former residents as the town is no longer physically there.

memory is preserved in the memories of residents and the experiences of tourists. Tourism contributes to the knowledge and appreciation for the Air Force, the accomplishments of the base, and its central role in the community while in operation and after it closed.

There are other examples of memorials that capture and recognize those who served and sacrificed between WWII and the Vietnam War throughout the Southwest. These memorials vary in how and who they memorialize, and there were some that include Mexican American and Hispanic war veterans. For example, in 1948 a war memorial was erected in front of Lanier High School on the West side of San Antonio, Texas. Complete with the "Honor Roll" of forty-four Spanish surnames, the memorial celebrated the students who served and gave their lives in WWII. On the back there is an extension of another thirty names of students who served and died in the Korean War, Vietnam war, and in Desert Storm.[479] In addition to physical memorials, streets and buildings have been named after prominent veterans. For example, after WWII the residents of Smeltertown changed the names of the streets to honor the local men who had died in the war. All became memorialized where they had lived with their families.[480] The former New Mexican state capital building, in Santa Fe, was named the Bataan Memorial Building in honor of the New Mexicans who fought in the Philippines during WWII. An eternal flame burns outside the building in memory of those who did not return. The Bataan Museum is housed in the former National Guard Armory in Santa Fe, where all New Mexicans from Santa Fe took their physical exams and where weekly drills were conducted. April 9th, the surrender date on Bataan, was designated as "Bataan Day" in 1947 and is celebrated each year with a National guard band, speeches, and a reception.[481]

In California there is the Mexican-American Memorial which directly recognizes Mexican American veterans also known as El Soldado. This memorial is dedicated to war veterans in Sacramento's Capital Park and throughout the U.S. The memorial features a statue that was established and funded by the "La Sociedad de Madres" (Society of Mothers), a group made up of the mothers and wives of California's Mexican-American soldiers who had fallen during WWII. The "La Sociedad de Madres" wanted a monument dedicated to their sons and husbands and to ensure they would not be forgotten. It was erected in 1951 and was moved to its current location facing the State's Capital in 1990.[482] The memorial has served as a prime location to honor veterans and is the only military memorial in the U.S. that nationally recognizes and is dedicated to Mexican American veterans.[483] The names of more than 60 Mexican-Americans are listed on the base of the statue dating back to the Civil War; all had received the Medal of Honor.[484] Despite its

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[479] Rivas-Rodríguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II,* 68, 89.

[480] Perales, *Smeltertown,* 71.

[481] Rogers and Bartlit, *Silent Voices of World War II,* 80-3.

[482] "Minority Veterans Memorial History and Status," https://www.calvet.ca.gov/MinorityVets/Pages/MAVMC-History.aspx?TSPD_101_R0=081848704bab20007642c0046b324157f3758724d7fad3b8f4f68527818d734a021e334b768f1b7408c34d62d51430003e7546211a85938101acacca556a3a91d44dc73e1ca4f9d816a184d0b92e870e46d3fed1734993f0653e0eea830d0a24.

[483] California Capitol only place with memorial honoring Mexican-American veterans, ABC10 video, Nov 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYF2ylb3uCE.

[484] Alexeo Koseff, "It took nine years, but California's 'El Soldado Memorial finally got fixed," *The Sacramento Bee*, Oct 11, 2017, https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article178179646.html.

name, the memorial also honors the memory of all servicemembers of Latino/Hispanic descent servicemembers.[485]

In the state of Colorado there are numerous memorials commemorating those who had fought in the wars and even local ones to specific honor those from that hometown. For the city of Colorado Springs one such example is the Memorial Park east of downtown of the city. Within the park there is the Korean Memorial with an inscription which reads, “33,651 Americans died, 103,284 were wounded, 8,177 disappeared and 7,140 more Americans were held as prisoners of war.”[486] This provides viewers the sheer number of those who served and were the casualties of war overseas. Although how the war ended continues to be debated and divided, what is without question is the cost of the war to the American people. This inscription and the park are just a few examples of the ways to keep their sacrifices and the costs of war to be remembered and not forgotten.

There are also the establishment of local community memorials for those residents who had died serving their county as seen with the previously mention Hispanic community Barelas, NM. Resident Pedro “Pete” Padilla lived in South Barelas and a few years after his high school graduation he joined the Marines and was deployed to Vietnam. He was killed in the Quang Ngai province on March 28, 1966 being twenty-five years old. After learning of his death, the South Barelas community decide to commemorate the nearby park in his honor. In March 1968 a request was made for a name change and in early April it was approved making it officially Pete Padilla Park. The park stood as the only area commemorating the life of an individual member of the community that everyone could access at any given time.[487] This shows how there can be a direct tie in remembering those who served and the connection to the community over time.

For the cities of Atwater and neighboring Merced, there are a couple of memorials for the veterans who served both from the community and throughout the nation. In Atwater there is the Veterans Memorial Park which serves as a location for community gatherings for fun along with featuring a standing memorial recognizing the wars in which the U.S. and its citizens had fought in. There is also the Veterans Memorial Building which is operated by a Veteran of Foreign War (VFW) post which serves local community events. In front there is a standing memorial which reads, “Dedicated to the Men and Women of the Atwater area who served in the United States armed forces.” In Merced there is the Merced County Veterans Memorial next to the Merced Court House museum. This memorial has multiple markers with four listing the servicemen who had died in the conflicts of WWI, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. There is also one for the one who served in the more recent conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan from different local communities in the area. Next to the flagpole next to the markers there is a plaque which reads, “In Memory of Those Merced County Women Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Defense of the United States of America.” There is also a Veteran Memorial Building and in the downtown area of Merced there are street names of veterans who had served throughout the wars from the city of Merced. In another public facing act of remembrance during Veterans Day there is an event held at Merced College with the planting of U.S. flags on the grounds to honor those who have served

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[485] “El Soldado Memorial History and Status”, CalVet, CA.Gov.

[486] Matt Steiner, “In Colorado Springs, Korean War sacrifices are remembered,” https://gazette.com/military/in-colorado-springs-korean-war-sacrifices-are-remembered/article_06a66414-9a4f-5f86-a55e-4e8c87b8e71a.html

[487] Romero, “Portrait of a Barrio,” 300.

known as the Field of Honor. These different kinds of memorials serve as a way to remember those who had served both at the local and national level.

These war memorials act as public reminders to prevent historical the forgetting of significant chapters of U.S. history. These examples acknowledge the veterans from all three southwestern states. Memorials have a variety of different forms; some are statues, plaques with descriptions, community events, and sites named after veterans. Although Mexican American veterans' stories have been excluded from the larger historical narrative, they have been recognized and remembered in public. These memorials help celebrate their memories and preserve their military service for future generations.

Other than physical memorials there are also marches, parades, community events and other festivities organized to remember and celebrate veterans and their families. The Bataan Memorial March, for example, is held at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. This march commemorates the Bataan Death March, which occurred in Bataan, a province on the Philippine island of Luzon, during WWII. Men of the New Mexican National Guard, with units from the 200th and 515th Coast Artillery, many of them Mexican Americans, were forced to march, which resulted in numerous lives lost and survivors being held captive until the end of the war.[488] The event involves people running either a 15-mile or 26.2 mile course. To pay homage to veterans, some carry thirty-five-pound backpacks and active members run in full uniforms and boots. Descendants often carry photographs or wear T-shirts with images of those who were in the Bataan Death March.[489] Veterans and families gather to celebrate those who survived and remember those who had died in the Bataan Death March. This event is officially sponsored by the U.S. Army and VFW and commemorates New Mexico's past and present.

Visual media, such as documentaries, are also helpful tools to remember veterans. However, Mexican American veterans have been left out of significant documentaries. A well-known documentary, Ken Burns' *The War* (2007), was a funded PBS series about the contributions and experiences of military personnel and defense workers. The work and experiences of Mexican Americans, however, was absent from this film.[490] This noticeable absence was pointed out by the Mexican American community, particularly by veterans and academic organizations.[491] Eventually supplementary episodes about Mexican American soldiers were added, but this is an example of the lack of consideration and attention given to Mexican American veterans.

There are numerous sites that hold veteran and military memories and one such site are cemeteries, which act as the final resting place for veterans. Cemeteries are spaces that can act as central locations for remembrance; memorial headstones, mausoleums, and full statues celebrate those who have passed. During my travels throughout the Southwest, I visited different cemeteries, which included graves of veterans who were born, lived, or wanted to be buried in their local communities. The spaces of buried veterans are identified by their headstones which are distinctly white and rounded. These headstones have the name of the veteran, the branch of service they served in, their occupation in the military, their

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[488] Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* Greenwood Press, 1990), 259.

[489] Gonzales, "'Con Dolr de corazón'," 173.

[490] Elizabeth, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits,* 149.

[491] Manuel G. Gonzales, "The Second World War and its Aftermath: 1940–1965" in *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press, 2019), 211.

highest rank, the war or wars they served in, and the dates of their birth and death. There are also Veteran National cemeteries that are exclusively for servicemembers who have passed. These national cemeteries are open to all members of the armed forces who served the minimum active duty service requirement and who were discharged honorably. Veterans partners and families could also be eligible for burial under certain conditions.[492] In Colorado Springs, Colorado there is the Pikes Peak National Cemetery. The closest one to Albuquerque, New Mexico is in the northeastern city of Santa Fe; the Santa Fe National Cemetery. Both national cemeteries are filled with rows of white headstones of those who served in wars as early as the American Civil War to the most recent oversea conflicts. The city of Atwater, CA does not have a cemetery within the city itself, but there is one in the neighboring city of Winton and a few in the city of Merced. These cemeteries have veteran graves scattered among civilian graves that can be easily identified.

The explored cemeteries throughout the Southwest share many similarities. They share the same purpose and contain open spaces for visitors to remember, mourn, celebrate, learn about the past, and explore their environment. During my visits to various cemeteries in California, New Mexico and Colorado, I observed the layout of the cemeteries, memorials, and military headstones while other visitors looked for specific spots or stood and sat at a found grave. On Memorial and Veterans Day some people will make sure veteran graves feature a small American flag. Even if there is no blood or familial connection, they want to make sure a veteran has proper recognition. Furthermore, these cemeteries have a memorial dedicated to veterans. These memorials vary in design, plagues, statues, and location, but they all remember wars and the sacrifices made by veterans who died fighting in them. These memorials and gravesites act as important sites of memory that allow loved ones and friends to come to pay their respects and reflect on past memories. Despite facing racial discrimination and segregation within the military, Mexican American veterans share the same burial space with all other veterans. Although, this does not erase their experiences or make up for the racism they faced fighting in the wars and continuation of segregation and subjugation based on their Mexican descent there is the need to continue to make sure they are recognized now and for future generations.

The analysis of cemeteries as sites of memory and memorials has also been researched by various scholars. Notably Jennifer K. Ladino in her research on memorials has stated, "military cemeteries are places where visitors should respect the sacrifice, the "ultimate price," these citizens made for us. Sacrifice can feel like a necessary part of being a good citizen—even, or maybe especially, when we are grieving others who've died for our country."[493] Ladino's view on military cemeteries is interesting as she uses the term citizens in describing those who made the sacrifices for their country. However, for many Mexican American veterans, despite serving in the military, being born in the U.S., and being awarded military honors for their heroism, they were treated as second-class citizens or foreigners when they returned from the overseas conflicts. Military bases also hold their own histories and the aspect of having their memories to be preserved in various ways. Scholars Michael Touchton and Amanda J. Ashley further the exploration of memories and sites in their work *Salvaging Community,* which addresses the history and memory of military bases. Preserving historic memory is a laudable goal for many in the community,

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[492] "Eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery," va.gov, https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/.

[493] Ladino, Jennifer K. *Memorials Matter,* 190.

but it can put residents promoting redevelopment at odds with former service members who hold different collective memories that they believe are worth preserving.[494] These authors address another key aspect in which it takes a collective in forming these memories as well as seeking to preserve them. On a final note, in terms of the usages of preserving and the shaping of memory Historian Peter Burke in his work "History as Social Memory" addresses how the use of "[i]mages-material images have long been constructed in order to assist the retention and transmission of memories-"memorials" such as tombstones, statues, and medals, and "souvenirs" of various kinds. Historians interest in public monuments because these monuments both expressed and shaped the national memory."[495] Dr. Burke highlights in some of the ways in which memory is retained, transmitted, and contributes to the shaping of memory and for this study it is the three wars and the Mexican Americans who fought and sacrificed within them for their home country. These ideas about memory and preservation are significant for understanding the ways Mexican American veterans' service is remembered in public. Memorials are a key tool to help preserve the memories of a specific location, what is displayed, and what information is displayed at these memorials. Moreover, they help shape how military service is remembered for future generations.

In concluding this exploration about memory, forgetting and memorializing there is an important cautionary note by Monica Martinez, a professor of Mexican American history which is significant. She asserts that "in recognizing the strong impulse to remember the dead, we should also be cautious of unintended consequences of efforts to memorialize."[496] The memorials explored in this chapter provide a space to remember the wars and those who fought in them. There is even a memorial dedicated specifically to Mexican American veterans, which further recognizes the Mexican American community. Attempts to memorialize veterans and a community comes with lingering issues. Notably, the previously mentioned Hero Street, sought to memorialize Mexican American veterans and the community they came from, but the lack of proper improvements to the community itself revealed how military service did not automatically mean an improvement for the Mexican American community. Hero Street was created to remember veterans but also demonstrated how Mexican American communities were viewed and forgotten. This cautionary note should be strongly considered with the continued analysis of how Mexican Americans and their communities have been memorialized in relation to military service.

This chapter's exploration of Mexican American military service reveals how their military contributions, the socio-economic factors that contributed to their enlistment, the transformations of their communities due to war, and how their contributions are remembered can be assessed through social and collective memory. This exploration has included methods for localized community research, the use of oral histories and understanding how memory can be formed and forgotten as contributed to further analyzed how their military service is considered in the public. The creation of public memorials is a way to help correct omitted or silenced voices and highlight the contributions by the Mexican American community during these war periods. The locations of spaces also act as sites of remembrance, as seen with memorials placed in military bases, and in cemeteries. These cemeteries are special places of remembrance since they are the final resting place for veterans who risked and gave their lives for their home communities and country.

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[494] Touchton and Ashley, *Salvaging Community,* 145-6.
[495] Burke, "History as Social Memory," 100-1.
[496] Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You,* 296.

Epilogue

The U.S. military has been a cornerstone within the history of the U.S. and has allowed the country to become a world power within the twentieth century. The might of the military has allowed the nation to become a police force against oppressive forces, and an organization to showcase patriotism. As a result, new jobs and industries have been created to conduct military operations. The creation of new jobs provided new opportunities for communities of color who faced racial discrimination in the majority of civilian labor. Military service and military-related jobs provided higher paid positions, skills, benefits, and in some cases the opportunity to make a career. The call for serving in the armed forces is very much advertised on television, in commercials, on billboards, through recruiters visiting schools, and in offices dedicated for informing and enlisting those willing to volunteer. The continued call for joining the military is still prevalent and is what this Epilogue explores, while considering a contemporary example of how war is remembered. The reflections of a Korean War veteran decades after the war ended will be utilized, along with highlighting of the impacts continued to be made from selected military bases in the Southwest, views on military service, and the remembrance of selected Mexican American/Hispanic communities in the Southwest.

Remembering Decades Later

WWII, the Korean War, and Vietnam War have had significant impacts on the U.S. and its veterans. The war themselves, their impacts, and the memories from them are preserved within written texts, the landscape, cemeteries, memorials and by the veterans who fought in them. How these wars are remembered varies and this is seen the experiences of veterans who survived these conflicts. For example, on the 60th anniversary of the ending of the Korean War a few veterans in Colorado Springs, CO were asked for their reflections on the war. Bob Beham recalled of the fighting conducted during the war and noting of the questioning of the U.S.' involvement as over time the enthusiasm in America wanned, "When I lost my buddies, I thought it was all for nothing." Within the *Gazette* article he noted how, "sixty years later the Americans who fought in Korea are still trying to figure out what the conflict meant," in part referring to how the conclusion of the war was not a direct victory. The article ends with Beham providing an important point about not only the Korean War but the other wars which have been fought, "Beham said the best way to mark the 60th anniversary is to consider its cost. 'You think about the friends you lost.'"[497] This reflection by a Korean War veteran demonstrates how the scars and loss from the war even decades later are still present and there can be continued questioning about the motivations and evaluating if the cost in fighting the war, and the others, was truly worth it.

Military Bases in the Southwest

Notably, New Mexico is still utilizing its military bases both for defense and for economic and labor opportunities. According to an evaluation by the Bureau of Economic

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[497] Tom Roeder, "60 years later, veterans in Colorado Springs area mull meaning of Korean war," *Gazette,* July 28, 2013, https://gazette.com/news/60-years-later-veterans-in-colorado-springs-area-mull-meaning-of-korean-war/article_1bba5b74-101b-5e3f-a334-1c73da0a4cd2.html.

Analysis of the economic impacts of military installations on the State of New Mexico studied in 2020, the military is the 17th largest employer in the state. The eighteen thousand active-duty jobs filled by this industry account for 8 percent of the total State jobs.[498] Not only do bases and military installations themselves create jobs, but they also impact other industries by increasing revenue and creating new jobs. Restaurants, hospitals, health care services, retail merchandise, real estate, and individual and family services are just a few sectors that have been impacted.[499] In reviewing the selected military bases and installations the total impacts record 52,268 jobs, $2.8 billion in labor income, and more than $14 billion in industrial output. The number of jobs generated equal to roughly double of that of mining, quarrying, and oil & gas jobs in the state during 2020.[500] As these figures have shown the presence of the military is very much a part of the economy of the state and providing jobs for the state as a whole and for the local communities the bases and installations reside in.

Military bases provide economic and employment support for surrounding communities, but sometimes their operations do come to an end. Although the Castle AFB is no longer functioning as a military base, its foundation serves a purpose in neighboring communities by hosting community events and preserving the history of military aircraft through its museum. Military bases and installations in New Mexico and Colorado have faced the challenges associated with potential closures and fought to prove their bases' usefulness to local communities and the nation. For example, Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, CO, despite having contributed to all three wars, had to be protected from budget and personnel cuts in 2015. The base faced potential cuts as many as 16,000 of its 24,000 soldiers. The community publicly protested to the Pentagon and the U.S. Army base only saw a reduction of fewer than 400 soldiers. This is one instance of success in saving the military base, but over time, residents will need to continue to advocate in order to save their military base from more cuts and even closure.

Views on Military Service

Since the war in Vietnam the U.S. has been involved in various military conflicts overseas and has continued to use Mexican Americans servicemembers. Since WWII, the military has undergone many changes, but some elements are still the same. One key question this research has considered regarding Mexican Americans veterans, is how the military was perceived as a way out of poverty and a way to gain new opportunities for social mobility and better employment. As this dissertation has demonstrated the military provided potential opportunities and social mobility that were not present in Mexican American communities. However, as this dissertation argues, these benefits did not manifest during or after the wars for all Mexican American veterans. As a result, military service was no longer viewed as viable path towards upward mobility. However, this change of view did not deter the enlistment of new members into the armed forces.

After the Vietnam War, new questions arose regarding military service and the benefits or deals the military can provide. Such as, is joining the military still the best way "out" of an environment that otherwise does not provide these opportunities? Racism and

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[498] Omar Solis, "Economic Impact of Military Installations in New Mexico on the State," Bureau of Business & Economic Research UNM, 4.

[499] Ibid., 27.

[500] Ibid., 27-28.

discrimination in job opportunities, education, and housing still plagued Mexican Americans and their families. The military was seen as a source that alleviated the burdens of this issue. Military service is a paid occupation; servicemembers were given financial aid for school and were provided base housing when available. During WWII and the Vietnam War these resources were available, but they were not equally allocated to soldiers and veterans and many opportunities for economic and social mobility was out of reach for ethnic groups. Moreover, veterans had to live with the mental and physical consequences of war. Many experienced PTSD symptoms and physical disabilities. Depending on the individual and their family, the military could be seen as viable option, however, it is no longer viewed as the primary source for social mobility and employment.

Regarding the legacies of Mexican American veterans: what did of the children of veterans do? Did they follow the familial tradition of joining the military, go to school, or did they have the ability to look towards other pursuits? There are interviews with several veterans who served at Castle AFB that mention their children. For some veterans they were able to provide for their children and pursued other careers or achieved a higher education after their service. This sometimes prompted their children to join the military because they saw the good it did for their families. Other children enlisted because they had families in the military or were veterans and wanted to continue the military tradition.[501] The tradition of new generations following the old has been seen throughout the three wars and demonstrates a continued legacy found in many military families.

Remembrance of the Mexican American/Hispanic Communities in the Southwest

The remembrance of Mexican American veterans is beneficial, but the Mexican American, Hispanic, or Latino communities impacted by the establishment of military bases and installations, should also be remembered. Over time some of these communities that were impacted from the wars and neighboring military bases within the Southwest could be lost or removed by the cities they resided in. For example, in the early 1970s in Denver, Colorado, the Denver Urban Renewal Authority cleared twenty-two blocks for the Auraria Higher Education Center, housing Denver Community College, Metropolitan State College, and the University of Colorado at Denver. However, this resulted in Hispanic residents who resided in that area being torn from a neighborhood that had been their home for decades and the St. Cajetan's parish community-a hub of Hispanic activity since the mid-1920s-was forced to relocate.[502] Denver was a large recipient of federal defense funding for the establishment of military bases and installations during WWII which resulted in jobs and population increases. However, this did not save neighborhoods and their residents from destruction for new infrastructure, including Hispanics.

Another example of this occurrence was with the small Hispanic neighborhood, Conejos, in Colorado Springs, CO. The neighborhood came to an end in the early 1990s with Colorado Springs adopting the "Downtown Action Plan" which included the creation of the America the Beautiful Park. The park ordered by the local municipality was to be

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[501] For example: Charles Russell Spicher https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/56758, Betzaida Arroyo https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/64562, Ronald Herbert Luebke https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/72336, Lenore Marguerite Krussel https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/43322.

[502] Abbott, Leonard, and Noel, *Colorado,* 327.

built to the south of the city center which was precisely where the Conejos neighborhood was located. This neighborhood was four blocks located south of Colorado Avenue, north of the Martin drake Power Plant, east of Monument Creek, and west of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad tracks.[503] Decades before there was "a small and vibrant working-class ethnic community known as the Conejos Neighborhood." Leach Davis Witherow, historian and curator of history at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, stated the people of the neighborhood contributed to the building of Colorado Springs, "they ran the trains, they worked on the tracks, they built the buildings, they hailed the trash." In the 1920s and 30s the neighborhood became home to a largely Hispanic population from Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. Davis Witherow also addressed how the neighborhood was a victim of decades of deliberate neglect from city leadership contributing to the ethnic displacement with the gentrification of urban areas. Further stating how, "because [the neighborhood being] largely of the working class, Hispanic and black populations here, they are not top of mind for the movers and shakers-the decision makers in Colorado Springs. Over time, the neighborhood became blighted."[504] Compared to the rest of the city the area did in fact face neglect, which was obvious in its infrastructure. Sidewalks, paved streets, streetlights, for example, became damaged and contributed to the blight of the neighborhood in the latter part of the twentieth century.[505]

During the process of creating the new park authorities had expropriated the homes of sixteen Hispanic families that resided in the neighborhood and the buildings were then demolished. Josephine "Jossie" Ontiveros, a born and raised resident of the Conejos neighborhood states, "Before we knew it the entire neighborhood had disappeared and was never mentioned again." The park opened on September 30, 2015 and Davis Witherow adds how "few, perhaps no one, in Colorado Springs knew that there used to be a Hispanic neighborhood there."[506] To further this sense of erasure the names of the streets the previously defined the limits of the neighborhood were changed and were no longer in Spanish. However, the story and history of the neighborhood was not chosen to be forgotten.

Preservation efforts have been conducted to make sure the memories of this neighborhood and its residents are remembered. Former members of the community sought to rescue the history of the neighborhood to pay homage to the work of the families who "helped build Colorado Springs." Over a two-year effort, with help from the Pioneer Museum of Colorado Springs, former residents and the museum were able to present an exhibition called "Una Familia Grande" which presented photographs, objects, and narratives presenting the history of the Conejos neighborhood to which Davis Witherow commented, "so that it will never be forgotten again." Today from the Conejos neighborhood except for the church that was spared there is only a small plaque in the park

[503] Leach Davis Witherow, "Una Familia Grande: The Conejos Neighborhood Project," https://www.cspm.org/articles/conejos/.

[504] Dan Boyce, "America The Beautiful Park In Colorado Springs Was Once Home To Dozens of Families. Here's Their Story," CPR News, Sep. 17, 2021, https://www.cpr.org/2021/09/17/america-the-beautiful-park-in-colorado-springs-was-once-home-to-dozens-of-families-heres-their-story/.

[505] Colorado Jill, "The Conjeco Neighborhood Is Gone but Not Forgotten," Newsbreak, Oct 6, 22, https://original.newsbreak.com/@colorado-jill-1589787/2775562211973-the-conejos-neighborhood-is-gone-but-not-forgotten.

[506] Efe Agency, "Vecinos rescatan del olvido barrio hispano de ciudad del sur de Colorado," QuéPasa Media Network, https://quepasamedia-com.translate.goog/noticias/inmigracion/vecinos-rescatan-del-olvido-barrio-hispano-de-ciudad-del-sur-de/?_x_tr_sl=es&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=…

that mentioned the neighborhood. However, Davis Witherow comments how this is not enough to remember who were and are important to the history and community nor does it tell younger generations and those who don't live in Colorado Springs their importance.[507] In a final note Davis Witherow concludes with thoughts on the establishment of the permanent exbibit at the museum, "I want everyone to be reminded that everyone's history matters. Their history should not be overlooked."[508]

Another example in preserving the Hispanic neighborhood's memory was the creation of a 320-foot mural created to celebrate the history of the Conejos neighborhood. The mural was painted along the Colorado Avenue underpass at I-25. The artist of the project, Mauricio Ramirez, in a unique way for creating community involvement in this project of remembering the community, allowed the Colorado Springs community to literally come together and help paint the mural. One side of the mural depicts black-and-white portraits of previous Conejos residents and other features full-color images representing the contemporary Hispanic community of Colorado Springs.[509] This is an example of the attempts to combat the physical erasure of the neighborhood. The preservation of memories from a global conflict all the way to a small neighborhood requires the efforts of various people, from one scholar to a whole community.

A very similar approach was taken in order to help bring to light the history of a local Mexican American community in Merced County, California. In 2014, the Merced County Courthouse Museum, in the city of Merced, held "Our Stories: Mexican American Experiences in Merced County" an event which included locals who were willing to research and tell the stories of their families and experiences growing up in Merced. Museum Director Sarah Lim said, "It was important to enlist local families to share their histories rather than curate the entire exhibit on her own, 'I want them to tell their stories.'" Along with storytelling the event had cultural music, dance, and poetry readings, which allowed for other cultural aspects of the community to be brought forth and celebrated. Birdi Olivarez-Kidwell, who was born and raised in Merced, said that her family has been in the U.S. for five generations on one side and three on the other, but she can recall being treated like an outsider.[510] As this dissertation has addressed this was not new or surprising for many other Mexican Americans. The telling of these stories helps keep the memories of those who reside in the communities and large cities both in the past and in present alive. The use of museums can be a vital strategy to help preserve and allow the voices of Mexican Americans to be heard.

The treatment Mexican American residents faced in their communities should not be allowed to disappear from history. One example of this preservation effort was conducted by

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[507] Ibid,.

[508] Amanda Hancock, New exhibit remembers small Hispanic neighborhood in Colorado Springs; 'We were forgotten,'" *The Gazette*, Feb 20, 2020, https://gazette.com/arts-entertainment/new-exhibit-remembers-small-hispanic-neighborhood-in-colorado-springs-we-were-forgotten/article_365361c0-4c67-11ea-829b-e742b8ba7d3b.html.

[509] Jon McMichael, "Massive 320-foot mural celebrates history of Conejos neighborhood," Aug 29, 2020, KOAA News5 Southern Colorado, https://www.koaa.com/news/digital-original/massive-320-foot-mural-celebrates-history-of-conejos-neighborhood.

[510] Miller Thaddeus, "Museum turn the spotlight on county's Mexican American," *Merced Sun Star, The (CA)*, October 11, 2014: 1A. *NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current*. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/150F764BDE6C1DD0.

a group of Mexican American women from Fort Collins, CO. These women came together and made a documentary about their experiences and after five years of work they produced *Mi Gente (My People): The Fort Collins Story*. This documentary aired in the Denver metropolitan area in 1998 and was an important piece. As one Mexican American Collins resident stated, “we wanted to let them know what we went through.” *Mi Gente* told a story about social segregation, employment stratification, and Mexican Americans surviving in a community which despised them. Fort Collins and what Mexican Americans felt in the town can be seen as a reflection of the Mexican American experience in the Southwest.[511] How people of Mexican decent were treated in the U.S. should not be forgotten, nor should their experiences of great change, violence, trauma, modernization, migration, and political activism.

This dissertation has demonstrated, from WWII to the Vietnam War, the connections formed between the U.S. military and Mexican American communities, in regard to military bases and military service, resulted initial benefits and eventual negative impacts. As stated by Monica Perales in her book *Smeltertown*, “history is more than the recording of events past. It helps define a community, and it transmits the culture and identity of the community to future generations.”[512] As this dissertation has demonstrated military bases do significantly impact the shaping of their local communities by changing their economies, creating more labor opportunities, prompting the shape of different identities, changing the environment and providing a place for community gathering. These impacts created lasting memories, which are held by the local community and preserved for future generations. In considering further research in related fields, this research can be utilized to consider the other kinds of connections and questions between military service, military bases and infrastructures, the development of communities and ethnic communities, and memory.

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[511] Rubén Donato, “Sugar Beets, Segregation, and Schools,” 76.

[512] Perales, *Smeltertown,* 276.

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