CHAPTER 1

Diversification and Differentiation in the History of the Mexican-Origin Community in Houston

This chapter will provide a brief history of the Mexican-origin community in Houston prior to the Chicano movement era of the 1960s. Mexicans originally arrived in Houston in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but they did not become a significant ethnic minority group until the twentieth century.

The historical experiences of Mexicans in Houston during this century were extremely diverse and both different from and similar to the urban experiences of Mexican-origin individuals in other parts of the United States.[1] The diversity of experiences is reflected in their social development, occupational structure, ethnic identity, and political behavior. This chapter describes, in broad strokes, social and occupational developments in the history of this group during the years from 1900 to 1960. Chapters 2 and 3 will focus on education and on political activism and identity, respectively.

TOWARD SOCIAL DIVERSIFICATION

The Mexican-origin community increased in size over time and became a significant ethnic minority group by the second decade of the twentieth century. Mexicans settled in compact residential neighborhoods separated

from each other by a variety of obstacles and established distinct barrios that were differentially affected by mainstream and ethnic institutions.

Prior to 1880 there was no significant Mexican presence in Houston.[2] This changed by the latter part of the nineteenth century. Between 1880 and 1930 the Mexican-origin population increased from around seventy-five to fifteen thousand. During the next three decades it grew by an additional sixty thousand.[3] With the exception of one decade from 1930 to 1940, the history of the Mexican-origin population has been one of explosive growth. Despite this growth, these people continued to constitute a small minority of the total population group. Mexican-origin individuals constituted only 2 percent of the total population in 1910; 5 percent in 1930; and slightly over 10 percent in 1960.[4]

Immigration from Mexico accounted for most of the population increase, since during the first several decades of this century the Houston economy attracted the vast majority of them to the city. The railroads and urban development between 1890 and 1910, the opening of the ship channel, the discovery of oil in the early decades of the twentieth century, and post–World War II economic expansion created an increased need for cheap labor. This labor force was provided by Mexican immigrants who were pushed out of Mexico by social, economic, and political developments. Primary among these were land displacement policies caused by Porfirio Díaz's economic policies in the latter part of the nineteenth century, political conflicts associated with the Mexican Revolution, and religious conflict during the Cristero Rebellions of the 1920s. Thus, between 1880 and 1930 large numbers of landless peasants, political exiles, and religious exiles left Mexico in search of better opportunities. After 1940 poverty and dire economic conditions encouraged Mexicans to leave their country, and many of them immigrated to Houston.[5]

Mexican-origin individuals residing in rural communities throughout Texas also moved to the city.[6] They were part of a larger urbanization process that began in the early decades of the twentieth century and increased after World War II.[7]

Immigration was the result of a process of chain migration in which individual immigrants encouraged family members or friends to leave Mexico and then helped them resettle in Houston by finding them housing and jobs through immigrant networks. This process facilitated immigration and contributed to the strengthening of family and kinship networks in the barrios of Houston.[8] The examples of Petra Guillén and Mary Villagómez, both lifelong residents of Houston, are illustrative of this impor-

tant process. Guillén's family was brought to the barrio in the 1910s by an uncle who had preceded them. Villagómez, on the other hand, came to Houston as part of an eleven-member extended family migration. Both of these families were encouraged to leave Mexico or other parts of Texas and settle in Houston by a host of relatives and extended family members.[9] Their journey to Houston thus was not as disrupting of family and cultural traditions as is commonly believed to be the case for many Mexican Americans.

Prior to 1910 Mexican-origin individuals settled in various parts of the city. As Arnoldo De León notes, there were no "ethnic enclaves" in Houston during these years.[10] After 1910 barrios began to appear, and the reasons for settling in these barrios were varied. Racist real estate and bank policies undoubtedly played a key role in the formation of barrios. Security, cultural cohesion, sense of community, proximity to work, and affordable housing also helped the neighborhood take shape.

The first Mexican-origin neighborhoods in the early part of the twentieth century were El Segundo barrio in the Second Ward and El Crisol in Denver Harbor. El Crisol was close to the Southern Pacific Railroad yards. Its name was derived from the Spanish term describing the pungent chemicals used to preserve railroad ties—creosote.[11] El Segundo barrio was located along Buffalo Bayou a few blocks from the center of town. As early as 1908 a significant number of Mexican-origin individuals began to settle there, and by the 1920s its population became predominantly Mexican American.[12]

Three additional barrios took shape during the second decade of the twentieth century—the Northside, the Heights, and Magnolia Park. This latter barrio, southeast of the Second Ward, was located along the ship channel and became a Mexican neighborhood by the middle of the second decade.[13] By 1930 Magnolia Park became the city's largest barrio.[14] The Heights was an area to the north of the downtown district that had a sizable Mexican-origin community by 1920. In the next two decades all of these barrios expanded as a result of the continuing influx of Mexican-origin individuals.[15]

During the post–World War II period the barrios expanded further. El Segundo barrio pushed southwest of Commerce Street and extended into the area known as the old Third Ward. Magnolia Park likewise grew and eventually merged with El Segundo barrio. The merged communities came to be recognized as part of the East End barrio.[16]

In the late 1940s Mexicans settled and formed new barrios in areas away

from the pre–World War II communities. New ethnic communities were established in Port Houston, southwest Houston, the Hobby Airport area, and the Bellaire subdivision. Mexican families likewise settled in the suburbs. By 1960 barrios could be found in suburbs such as South Houston, Pasadena, and Galena Park.[17]

With the formation of the barrios came the establishment of ethnic organizations, businesses, cultural institutions, and newspapers that helped to meet the varied social, cultural, economic, and political needs of the community. Ethnic organizations provided mutual aid, defense of democratic rights, fraternal companionship, entertainment, and cultural reinforcement. The first Mexican-origin organization, a patriotic group called La Junta Patriótica, was founded in Houston in 1907. The following year a lodge, a chapter of the Woodmen of the World (Los Leñadores del Mundo, or Haceros), was founded. During the next several decades a host of mutual aid associations, political clubs, civic groups, and recreational organizations were established. Organizations such as Cruz Azul, Comisión Honorífico, and Club Cultural Recreativo "México Bello" became important sources of community pride and unity.

Most of these organizations during the early part of the century overwhelmingly stressed "lo mexicano" or, as will be illustrated in chapter 3, reflected a "Mexicanist" identity. This consciousness was part of immigrants' experiences and part of their adjustment to life in the United States. Two examples of community organizations with a Mexicanist orientation and aimed at maintaining lo mexicano in the United States were the Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana Benito Juarez and the Club Cultural Recreativo "México Bello." The former, established in 1919, was a mutual aid society that emphasized caring for its members and making life more tolerable for them in the United States. It carried the name of an indigenous Mexican hero and utilized Spanish to conduct business. Similar to others founded during this period, this organization was not aimed at assimilation. It did not, as historian Arnoldo De León notes, "display an incipient Americanization." Its stress instead was "on Mexican ideals and values."[18]

The second organization, Club Cultural Recreativo "México Bello," commonly known as simply México Bello, was one of many cultural and recreational clubs that stressed Mexican ideals and values. It was also the most prominent and successful of these types of organizations during the 1920s and 1930s. Founded in 1924, México Bello tried to fill a void arising from "nostalgia for their native country." The central goal of this

group was to preserve and uphold Mexican traditions in the United States through the presentation of Mexican dramas, picnics, leisure activities, and dances. "Raza, Patria, e Idioma" (Race, Country, and Language) was its motto, and green, red, and white were its colors.[19]

The number of social organizations grew in the post–World War II period. Unlike immigrant-based groups of the pre-Depression years, the majority of these post-1930 organizations gave themselves English names, utilized English as the medium of communication, and geared their activities toward interacting with U.S. citizens or becoming part of the mainstream. The baseball team called the Mexican Eagles and social clubs such as the Merry Makers or the Rolling Steppers are examples of these new types of organizations. During the 1920s the Mexican Eagles played Anglo-American teams from across the city and won most of their games. The Rolling Steppers was a dance club begun by a group of young men who sponsored citywide dances on a regular basis. It was based out of the Rusk Settlement House.[20]

In the 1930s other organizations that reflected the new biculturation emerged. One of these was El Club Femenino Chapultepec. This organization, founded in 1931, was made up of young Mexican women from the several Houston barrios who were born or raised in the United States. Most of the club's members were high school graduates, spoke English, and worked in the Houston Anglo business community. Its purpose was to promote pride in Mexican culture and in American citizenship. While the organization participated in various traditional Mexican activities such as the fiestas patrias, it also participated in more mainstream activities. Members, for instance, sold government bonds during World War II, helped the community to distribute sugar stamps, and assisted in other activities to help the war effort. In the late 1930s it conducted a study on the status of the Mexican-origin community in Houston and indicted Anglo society for deplorably mistreating this population.[21] Another important organization reflective of the new biculturation in the 1930s was La Federación de Sociedades Mexicanas y Latino Americanas (FSMLA). FSMLA was a civic organization comprised of both Mexican immigrant and Mexican American individuals. Its goals were diverse and aimed at the following: to promote loyalty to the United States, to defend the political and cultural interests of Mexicans living in this country, and to struggle for better wages and end employment discrimination against Mexican workers. Although it was an important organization, it lasted only for several years.[22]

Table 1. Selective List of Ethnic Organizations in the Houston Barrios, 1908–50

Name	*Date*	*Source*
I. MUTUAL AID ORGANIZATIONS		
1. Campo Laurel No. 2333	1908	p. 32, 68
2. Agrupación Protectora Mexicana	1911	p. 13
3. La Sociedad Mexicana "Vigilancia"	1915	p. 14
4. Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana Benito Juárez	1919	p. 32
5. Comite Pro-Repatriación	1930	p. 47
6. El Campamento Navidad No. 3698	1932	p. 68
7. Sociedad Mutualista Obrera Mexicana	1930	p. 69
8. Sociedad Mutualista Obrera Mexicana Women's Auxiliary	1936	p. 69
9. Sociedad "Unión Fraternal"	1940	p. 69
10. El Campo Roble No. 6	1920	p. 32
II. SOCIAL/CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS		
1. Orden Hijos de América	1921	p. 81
2. LULAC, Council #60	1934	p. 82
3. Latin American Club	1935–39	p. 85
4. Ladies LULAC Council No. 14	1935	p. 84
5. Texas American Citizens	1938	p. 90
6. Latin Sons of Texas	1939	p. 90
7. Junior LULACERs	1948	p. 111
8. Pan American Political Council	1948	p. 112
9. Club Familias Unidas	1948	p. 112
10. Ladies LULAC Council #22	1948	p. 129

One of the most important organizations founded during the 1930s was the League of United Latin American Citizens, LULAC.[23] This organization best represented the emerging Mexican Americanist identity in Houston. It articulated the new ideas about being Mexican in the United States and sought to integrate the population into this country's mainstream institutions. It was loyal to U.S. ideals and sought to eliminate racial prejudice against Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans. LULAC also struggled for legal equality, equal educational opportunities, and adequate political representation. Furthermore, it supported the biculturation of the Mexican-origin population. It sought to mold a syncretic culture based on the fusion of two cultural heritages and two distinct world-

Table 1. (*continued*)

Name	*Date*	*Source*
11. Pan American Club	1940	p. 90
12. Cooperative Club of Latin American Citizens	1940	p. 90
III. CULTURAL/RECREATIVE		
1. Club Cultural Recreativo "México Bello"	1924	pp. 33, 67
2. Club Deportivo Azteca	1920s	p. 34
3. Club Recreativo Internacional	1935	p. 67
4. Club Recreativo Anáhuac	late 1930s	p. 67
5. Club Recreativo Xochimilco	late 1930s	p. 67
6. Club Terpsicord	late 1930s	p. 67
7. El Círculo Cultural Mexicano	1930	p. 68
8. Los Amigos Glee Club	1930s	p. 68
9. El Club Orquidea	1930s	p. 70
10. Club Masculino Faro	1930s	p. 70
11. Club Femenino Dalia	1930s	p. 70
12. Sociedad Latino Americano	1930s	p. 70
13. Club Pan Americano of YWCA	1930s	p. 70
14. Club Moderno y Recreativo	1930s	p. 70
15. Club Femenino Chapultepec	1931	p. 70
16. La Federación de Sociedades Mexicanas y Latino Americos	1938	p. 72
17. Club Recreativo Tenochtitlán	1935	p. 86

Source: De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt.*

views—the Mexican and the American. LULAC's intent was to incorporate the American identity into the existing Mexican one. "Mexicans," notes De León, "would adopt Americanism albeit they would retain their parents' cultural life.[24]

Further evidence of a Mexican presence in Houston was seen in patriotic celebrations. Two of the most popular were El Diez y Seis de Septiembre (September 16) and El Cinco de Mayo (May 5). The first celebrates the day in 1810 in which Father Miguel Hidalgo issued his cry for independence from Spain. The second commemorates the defeat of French intervention forces by the Mexican general Ignacio Zaragosa at Puebla in 1862.[25] As early as 1907 the Mexican-origin community commemorated the Mexican national holiday of El Diez y Seis de Septiembre. With several excep-

tions, this became an annual event that was celebrated every year, even during the Great Depression.[26] In the 1930s community groups also began to celebrate El Cinco de Mayo.[27]

In addition to social organizations and Mexican celebrations, community members also established a variety of businesses, cultural institutions, and newspapers. All of these played important roles in establishing a Mexican presence in Houston. Beginning in the 1920s a few businesses geared toward meeting the needs of the Mexican-origin community—e.g., *tienditas* (small stores), barbershops, restaurants, and cantinas—were established in the downtown area. Other barrios soon had their own budding business districts. During the 1930s and 1940s the Magnolia Park barrio had the most Mexican businesses in the area.[28]

The first newspaper founded in the Mexican community in the early 1920s was *La Gaceta Mexicana.*[29] By the end of that decade at least five newspapers reportedly served the colonia.[30] The most prominent of these was the semiweekly *El Tecolote,* edited by Rodolfo Ávia de la Vega.[31] Most of these newspapers had short histories due to lack of resources.

Cultural institutions such as theaters and musical groups were also established in the Mexican barrios. Commercial theaters showed a variety of Mexican and American films and showcased a large number of Mexican theatrical performers and artists. The first one in existence was El Teatro Azteca, founded in 1920. In the late 1930s El Nuevo Palacio Theater competed with El Teatro Azteca for clients. In the Magnolia Park barrio, community members established El Teatro Juarez in the mid-1940s.[32] La Sociedad Benito Juarez, which served the working class more than any other group, built a hall in 1928 to accommodate its activities that included dances, cultural performances, and fiestas patrias proceedings. EL Club México Bello produced Spanish-language plays in 1924 and utilized amateur actors from the community. Occasionally a group such as the Orquesta Típica of Miguel Lerdo de Tejada performed in Houston. His musical group played popular Mexican music.[33]

These organizations, newspapers, and cultural institutions not only met the varied needs of those it served, but they also counteracted the assimilative influences of the mainstream institutions and promoted either Mexicanization or selective acculturation. They maintained the spirit of lo mexicano in the community and encouraged the development of a dual identity that was neither American nor Mexican but a synthesis of both. These institutions thus became important instruments of change and continuity in the Mexican community.

Not all the institutions in the barrios were established by Mexicans. Anglos founded a variety of them. These individuals established churches, schools, and social welfare agencies, in many cases as a result of the Mexican community's desires or initiatives.

The establishment of mainstream institutions in the barrios began as early as 1912 with the founding of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in El Segundo barrio. This church was founded as a result of the Mexican-origin community's desires to maintain its spiritual faith in an alien environment. Unwanted by established Anglo churches, Mexican immigrants maintained their faith through a variety of community and home activities. Some gathered in homes to pray the Rosary or to reenact Catholic rituals such as the *pastorelas* (a Christmas nativity play) or the *via crusis* (Way of the Cross ritual that commemorates the crucifixion of Christ during Easter). Many families likewise worshipped at their personal *altarcitos* (home altars) because of the lack of a church during the early years of the 1900s.[34]

These initiatives as well as the growth of the Mexican-origin population convinced the Catholic church leaders in the Galveston Diocese to establish a church for them in 1912. A dozen years later another Catholic church in Magnolia—Immaculate Heart of Mary—began to serve the Mexican population.[35] In the mid-1930s Our Lady of Sorrows Church was established in the Denver Harbor area.[36] This church was founded after several families from the barrios of El Crisol and Las Lechusas approached the oblate fathers at Our Lady of Guadalupe and petitioned them to send a priest to help them with their spiritual needs.[37] The nearest parish to these barrios was Our Lady of Guadalupe, but it was about two miles away. Lack of transportation forced many believers of the faith to walk this distance, and those unwilling to do so did not attend church services. The meeting between the oblate fathers and Mexican families eventually led to the establishment of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in that area.[38]

Not all of these churches were Catholic. A significant number of them were established by Presbyterians or Baptists. In the early 1920s, for instance, at least five Protestant churches were established in several barrios.[39] The number of Protestant churches continued to grow in the 1930s with the addition of three more.[40] By 1940 there were more Protestant churches in the barrios than Catholic ones; at least ten were serving the Mexican-origin population.

The number of Catholic and Protestant churches or the services they provided for Mexican-origin children and adults increased during the pe-

riod after World War II. The Catholic Church, for example, expanded its parochial schools for Mexican children and sponsored a variety of cultural and religious activities aimed at strengthening the Catholic faith.[41]

Public schools also were established in the barrios, usually at the request of the community or in response to their desires. The earliest school to serve Mexican-origin children was Rusk Elementary. This school, located in El Segundo barrio, originally was an Anglo school, but by 1910 it served a predominantly Mexican student population. A separate school for Mexican children, named Lorenzo De Zavala, was constructed in the Magnolia Park barrio in the summer of 1920.[42] In the 1920s at least three, and possibly four, additional schools were established for Mexican children in several barrios: Hawthorne Elementary, Dow Elementary, Elysian Street School, Jones Elementary, and Lubbock School.[43] By 1940 almost thirty-six hundred Mexican-origin children were enrolled in these schools.[44]

Although local officials provided Mexican-origin children with access to public education during the first four decades of the twentieth century, it was limited to the elementary grades. Few Mexican-origin students attended secondary schools because of poverty, a history of failure in the lower grades, and/or exclusion from the higher grades. Mexican secondary school enrollment, for the most part, was a post–World War II phenomenon. The increasing enrollment can be observed through high school annuals. For instance, at Jefferson Davis High School, located in the Northside, few, if any children attended prior to the 1940s. By 1945, however, there were 13 Mexican-origin children attending. Six years later this number increased to 216. At John H. Reagan High, located in the Heights, Mexican children did not begin to attend this school until the late 1940s. In 1951 a few Mexican students began to enroll at Reagan. By 1956 approximately 65 out of 1,800 were Mexican students. At Milby High, located in Magnolia Park, Mexican students began to enroll in the late 1930s and showed a gradual increase over time. Between 1939 and 1942 a handful of students attended Milby.[45] This number increased to 18 by 1948 and to 49 by 1960.[46] The increasing presence of Mexican-origin children in the secondary grades testifies to their desire for education and self-improvement. But failure by local officials to increase greater access to educational opportunities at these levels ensured the continued subordinate status of this population group at midcentury.

Despite the presence of a rich communal life, barrios were still plagued by a multitude of problems. They generally were characterized by high rates of substandard homes, unemployment, poverty, crime, illiteracy, and

ill health. Observers described them as "among the worst to be seen in any major city." In El Segundo barrio, for instance, some of the residents lived without privacy and proper sanitary conditions in homes that had been converted into boardinghouse arrangements or in makeshift homes erected along the banks of the Buffalo Bayou. In Magnolia Park barrio the streets were dusty and unpaved and Mexican-origin individuals lived in crowded substandard dwelling units that lacked furniture or indoor bathrooms.[47]

By the late 1930s social conditions in the barrios appeared to have worsened. A 1939 study conducted by the Works Progress Administration and sponsored by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) indicates the deplorable condition of the barrios. The report showed that while Mexicans comprised about 5 percent of the total population, over 11 percent of them were living in dwellings classed as substandard, i.e., houses that lacked running water, proper ventilation and space, inside toilets, baths, and electricity. Barrio residents also earned less than six hundred dollars per year. The HHA proposed slum clearance and the development of new housing projects. Little, however, was done.[48]

A 1944 report found similar living conditions in the barrios in the vicinity of Canal and Navigation Streets in the East End barrio. Not only were there poor living conditions and deplorable health conditions, there were also "no recreation facilities, no playgrounds, no parks, no Boy's Clubs, nothing." Only rampant juvenile delinquency could be found in this barrio.[49]

Several studies showed that conditions continued to be appalling during the late 1940s and into the 1950s.[50] A 1958 report noted little improvement in the barrios. Diseases such as tuberculosis lingered there, and health services were grossly inadequate.[51] Although a low-cost housing development for Mexican-origin individuals was constructed in the early 1950s—the Susan V. Clayton Homes—it failed to significantly impact more than a few hundred people.[52]

Less dramatic than the social conditions in the barrio but more significant in the long run was the pattern of institutional discrimination that emerged during these years. Because of their immigrant or relatively powerless status as well as their racial and cultural characteristics, Mexican-origin individuals were treated as a subordinate group and discriminated against by public officials, religious authorities, and private agencies and individuals. This treatment was quite apparent during the 1930s when public officials, for instance, denied government assistance to Mexican-origin

individuals in search of jobs by arguing that job relief applied only to "white Americans." Local relief agencies in the city refused to provide assistance to Mexican and African Americans when they ran out of funds in 1932. Local officials rounded up and jailed by the hundreds those Mexican individuals who did not carry proper documents. The federal government assisted local officials and deported many Mexican-origin people during the Depression years.[53]

Discrimination was quite common in public schools and in the churches. Public school and church officials, for instance, excluded or discouraged Mexican participation in these institutions and limited the children's entry to them or failed to meet their needs adequately. In most cases these religious and educational institutions were controlled and administered by Anglos. Those in charge did not hire Mexican-origin individuals as teachers or administrators until after 1960, thus ensuring their exclusion from the structures of governance or administration. Likewise, no Mexican-origin individuals were selected as priests or pastors for most of the churches in the barrios.

Those in charge did not respect or utilize the Spanish language in their daily operations. The Parent Teacher Association meetings as well as parochial school instruction, for instance, were all conducted in English. Similarly, no genuine effort was made to communicate with the parents of Spanish-speaking children in their own language. The primary purpose of these institutions was to Americanize or to teach the dominant culture to Mexican children. At times these institutions went beyond Americanization and sought to stamp out the children's linguistic and cultural heritage.[54]

Mexican-origin organizations usually and vigorously protested these varied forms of institutional discrimination and mistreatment. Their responses to institutional discrimination and mistreatment will be discussed in chapter 3.

Despite the presence of discrimination, a few individuals managed to take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded by the churches, schools, and other institutions. They advanced through the grades or assumed some minor leadership positions in these institutions. For them these institutions were instruments of opportunity. But for the most part churches, schools, and other institutions were instruments of subordination and assimilation, not tools of opportunity or biculturalism.[55]

The Mexican-origin community thus not only increased in size over

time but became a significant ethnic minority group in the twentieth century. It also became more socially diverse as a result of different waves of immigration, settlement in distinct barrios, varying degrees of acculturation, and dissimilar treatment by mainstream institutions.

OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL CLASS DIFFERENTIATION

The occupational and social-class structure of the Mexican-origin community became moderately differentiated over the years.[56] In the early twentieth century the social class structure was relatively stable. The vast majority of the Mexican-origin population was part of the working class and employed primarily in unskilled manual labor jobs. A small but influential number of these individuals, probably less than 5 percent, were members of the fledging middle class and employed in white-collar jobs. Most of these individuals were employed in the professions or were owners of small business establishments engaged in trade or commerce. The Mexican businesses were located in the old downtown business district between 1900 and 1930 or in new commercial areas in the various barrios after the Depression.[57]

Despite the lack of class differentiation in the early decades of the twentieth century, Mexicans were employed in a large number of occupations. At the turn of the century Mexicans worked as bookkeepers, railroad workers, tailors, clerks, carriage drivers, barbers, iron molders, and common laborers.[58] During the first decade of the twentieth century, some held jobs as tradesmen or as laborers in the railroad yards. Others were recruited to work in agricultural jobs in outlying areas. Still others, especially those who were underemployed, resorted to peddling, selling tamales, and operating chili stands on Houston's back streets. A few individuals had small businesses that served the Mexican community.[59]

Between 1910 and 1930 Mexican-origin individuals continued to be employed in a variety of jobs. In the early 1910s they worked as common laborers in the sewage business and in the railroad yards.[60] During the 1920s Mexican men found jobs as cooks, busboys, dishwashers, and waiters in Houston hotels, restaurants, and cafés; as bakers and butchers in small businesses; and as custodians, store clerks, and salespeople in retail, trade, and service industries. Others worked in large-scale industry jobs in construction or in the compresses as well as in smaller businesses such as cleaning plants, bakeries, and piecework manufacturing. A few women

found jobs outside the home in small-scale, piecework manufacturing industries near their places of residence.[61]

Mexican-origin individuals during the 1910s and 1920s also held white-collar jobs. In addition to businessmen, some were entertainers, teachers, doctors, artists, and photographers. Among some of the medical doctors in the community by the late 1920s were Jesús Lozano, Ángel Leyva, A. G. González, and Luís Venzor. At least two individuals, P. L. Niño and Francisco Chairez, earned degrees as engineers from Rice Institute in 1928. Although relatively small, there was a vigorous middle class in the barrios of Houston.[62]

In the period after World War II the process of class and occupational differentiation increased. Social classes became more diverse as a result of the expansion of the middle class and of skilled employment within the working class. Male and female employment in middle-class or white-collar jobs increased significantly from 1930 to 1960. Male employment in white-collar work increased from 6.5 percent in 1930 to 19 percent in 1960. The increase for women was higher, going from 9.7 percent to 42 percent.[63]

The size of the working class likewise decreased during these years. In 1930 approximately 76.2 percent of men and 84 percent of women were employed in skilled or unskilled labor, the two broad categories comprising the working class. By 1960 the proportion of men and women employed in working-class occupations decreased. For males it was a moderate decrease of approximately 4 percent, whereas for females it was significant; only 42 percent of all employed females were working in skilled or unskilled work by 1960.

The working-class population within the Mexican-origin community became more skilled over time. This is especially true among males. The proportion of males employed in skilled employment increased from 13.9 percent in 1930 to 44.1 percent in 1960, whereas those employed in unskilled work decreased from 62.3 percent to 28.1 percent.[64] Unlike males, females experienced a general decrease in the proportion of those employed in both skilled and unskilled labor. The former decreased from 30.6 percent in 1930 to 21.8 percent in 1960. The figures for unskilled labor were 53.4 percent and 19.9 percent, respectively. Increased educational opportunities as well as structural changes in the labor market account for the increasing differentiation of the occupational and social class structure in the barrios.[65]

Despite the increasing class differentiation, the vast majority of the Mexican-origin population continued to be found in low-paying jobs. They were employed in the railroads and in city jobs such as sewage, ditch digging, construction, and other unskilled manual labor categories.

The concentration of Mexicans in low-paying working-class jobs meant that there was much suffering. The population continued to have higher rates of poverty and fewer opportunities than the general population. They also continued to be victims of discrimination by employers and private industries. As late as 1958 a series of articles on the Mexican-origin community indicated the extent of discrimination against this population in the area of employment and real estate. In that year the Mexican population was estimated to be over fifty thousand. Despite these numbers, it only comprised 5 percent of the total population of one million. This group, according to an investigative reporter named Marie Dauplaise, experienced subtle and overt discrimination. For the most part, Mexican-origin individuals were not hired in important positions. Although there were exceptions, she noted, the unwritten policy among the vast majority of the large corporations was not to hire people of Mexican origin with dark complexions and "a Spanish accent." These individuals could find white-collar or middle-class employment in retail stores, finance companies, or import-export firms, but even then they earned less than Anglos doing the same work.[66]

Real estate agents were reluctant to sell homes to Mexican-origin individuals in the "better" subdivisions of the southwestern and northern sides of town. However, homes in areas already designated as barrios by the real estate industry were affordable for these individuals.[67] This evidence indicates that while some Mexicans were making progress most were being denied equal opportunities. They were confined to nondynamic sectors of the economy and provided only with minimal employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In the twentieth century, then, the Mexican-origin community grew in absolute and relative terms, but it was still a relatively small part of the total population. Members of this population settled in various parts of the city and established a variety of institutions and organizations to meet their diverse needs. Although relatively small, this population became in-

creasingly heterogeneous over time as a result of different settlement patterns, varying degrees of acculturation and immigration, and diverse forms of institutional treatment.

The community's occupational and social class structure also became more differentiated over time. Those employed in professional, white-collar, and skilled occupations gradually increased over time, especially after World War II. The majority, however, continued to be employed in a diverse number of unskilled and low-paying jobs. The majority of the Mexican-origin population also resided in barrios or segregated residential neighborhoods characterized by a high degree of poverty and institutional discrimination.

An important element in the social, political, and cultural development of the Mexican-origin population in the United States was education. Increased access to private and public forms of education not only contributed to the heterogeneity of this group but also strengthened its ethnic identity as a bilingual and bicultural population. The following chapter focuses on the extent and character of educational opportunities provided for Mexican-origin children during the twentieth century.