

**MARIACHI MUSIC IN SAN ANTONIO: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL AND  
ETHNIC IDENTITY IN A HYBRIDIZED CITY**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

*This study is dedicated to those with a passion for art, and all the local San Antonio art scenes that make this city a unique and beautiful place.*

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The intent of this research is to reveal and understand the symbolic meanings of cultural and ethnic identity that cultural creators and receivers perceive through their involvement in mariachi. This study's shows the way those involved in mariachi perceive their cultural and ethnic identity while living in a city that infuses Mexican and Texan cultural sensibilities. A mixed-method approach was taken between in-depth qualitative interviews and participant observation. Participant observation was utilized as a means to build a stratified snowball sample of the various cultural producers and receivers of mariachi. The cultivation of this sample was guided by Griswold's cultural diamond framework. Reliance on semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary research method of inquiry illuminated the various horizons of meaning that mariachi performers, instructors, gatekeepers, and aficionados held in regards to their efforts to preserve a long standing cultural musical art form in San Antonio, Texas. Some findings include various stories and perspectives on cultural and ethnic identity in mariachi, varying strategies undertaken to preserve mariachi music in the twenty-first century through technology, its institutionalization into a public-education setting, the varying gender dynamics among mariachi performers, the question of authenticity and hybridization in mariachi music, and cultural politics in the mariachi music scene.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2014, mariachi music was unexpectedly inserted into the national discourse through the twenty-four-hour news cycle of the United States. The National Basketball Association's championship finals between the San Antonio Spurs and the Miami Heat was underway. During a San Antonio home game, the San Antonio Spurs organization decided to feature an eleven-year-old local boy by the name of Sebastien de la Cruz to perform the national anthem.

Sebastien was not just a talented young boy; Sebastien was a mariachi singer, and when he appeared before the crowd to perform the national anthem he was dressed in full mariachi attire. Immediately after Sebastien's performance, many people on various social media outlets proceeded to berate his character due to the way he was dressed, while he performed. Many people on Twitter launched racist tweets that questioned his immigration status despite the fact that Sebastien was a native-born citizen of San Antonio, Texas (Taylor 2013).

The particular backlash over Sebastien's performance demonstrates that distinct musical traditions are an important aspect of culture that cannot be overlooked. Wolff (1984) emphasized that culture and art can arise from alternative ideologies that are not prevalent within the dominant ideology of society. The cultural identity politics that arose during the 1960s is emblematic of the utilization of cultural art forms to present and preserve the ethnic identity of minority groups. During the height of the *Chicano* movement, in the 1960s and 1970s, mariachi music was an aspect of Mexican culture that was pushed into public educational settings in order to preserve a musical aspect of Mexican cultural identity (Clark 2005). This was accomplished over time, as mariachi has presently emerged as a viable music program in many schools throughout the Southwestern region of the United States (Clark 2005; Sheehy 2006).

Considering what took place after Sebastien performed on national television, and the historical importance that mariachi has served for the cultural and ethnic identity of Mexican-origin communities in the United States, a study of mariachi in San Antonio, Texas is necessary. San Antonio, Texas is a minority-majority city, with 63% Latino population (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011), that has a long history associated with Mexican culture. The restaurants, music, and Spanish missions all over the city indicate a unique cultural disposition that has hybridized aspects of Mexican and Texan culture. Additionally, unbeknownst to many, mariachi music's integration into public schools began in San Antonio (Sheehy 2006).

San Antonio's unique history with varying cultural legacies leads to questions over how mariachi contributes to the cultural and ethnic construction of identity. Nagel (1994) describes the negotiation of ethnic identity as a dialectical conversation between those of the particular ethnicity in question and the way outsiders and the social world relate to each other to create these boundaries. This negotiation of ethnic and cultural boundaries, while ever changing, can highlight these symbolic ascriptions that insiders and outsiders of a particular ethnic background negotiate.

The focus of this research succinctly leans on several questions in regards to mariachi and its current manifestation in San Antonio. Considering the dynamic reality of cultural and ethnic identity, what are the perceived symbolic meanings that cultural producers and receivers of mariachi have toward the musical form, and do these symbolic meanings shape their perception of cultural and ethnic identity? How does mariachi preserve ethnic identity and how is it utilized as a form of cultural resistance? How do cultural producers and receivers perceive hybridization within mariachi, and do they perceive this to be a reflection of a symbolic change in their cultural and ethnic identity? Finally, what motivates cultural producers and receivers to involve

themselves in mariachi music? The In-depth interview, the method that is leaned on heavily for this study, reveals the motivations, standpoints, and stories that illuminate the dynamics of social interaction within mariachi in San Antonio. This study aims to add depth to the body of sociological knowledge on the persistence of cultural traditions that gives meaning to people's lives.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Review of Empirical Literature*

Much of the literature on mariachi music is primarily focused on some of the historical, political, educational, and anthropological issues involving mariachi. Some of this literature is directly about mariachi as an iconic cultural phenomenon, while different literature focuses on other musical and artistic traditions with similar vestiges of Mexican culture. Much of the literature that focused on other musical traditions notes how musical styles such as *conjunto* is utilized as an act of cultural resistance pitted in an alternative ideology in reaction toward the dominant culture of the United States (Peña 1985; Valdez and Halley 1993).

Much of the literature on mariachi music identified is historically and regionally tied to Mexico (Sheehy 2006; Jáuregui 2007; Mulholland 2007; Mulholland 2013). According to Sheehy (2006), some historical accounts trace mariachi's inception as far back as the 1500s though this is merely the first recorded historical account of mariachi music. Much of the literature on mariachi additionally focuses on Jalisco, Mexico, as the associated birth site of the nascent mariachi musical form (Jáuregui 2007; Mulholland 2007; Mulholland 2013). Jáuregui (2007) identifies that mariachi's foundation is inextricably tied to the rural areas of Mexico where many poor indigenous Mexicans lived. Over time, however, mariachi grew in popularity after the Mexican Revolutionary war when mariachi music was established as an important symbol in the new national identity that began to celebrate more cultivated grassroots culture (Sheehy 2006).

The birth of post-colonial Mexico led to the dissemination of the mariachi sound along with other Mexican based musical and artistic styles due to their value as a new and popular national, cultural symbol for the young nation (Jáuregui 2007; Montfort 2007; Henriques 2011;

Mulholland 2013). In Mexico, many record companies, in the early years of the country, recorded mariachi groups and introduced mariachi into the public marketplace for mass-consumption (Jáuregui 2007). *Corridos*, a musical style that is prevalent in most popular Mexican music today, was proliferated throughout the musical scene in post-revolutionary Mexico (Montfort 2007) and often featured the mariachi *charro* singer (Alvarado 2007). Mexican cinema and transnational radio networks began to utilize mariachi music as an ideal aesthetic that eventually spread throughout Mexico and the United States due to new technological advancements (Henriques 2011).

While much of the literature is focused on the historical proliferation of mariachi, most of the cultural anthropological literature is focused on some of the specific national symbols tied to mariachi and its intersection with gender. Nájera-Ramírez (1994) focuses on how the *charro*, the common outfit that mariachi currently wear, operates as an engendered national symbol that represents masculine traits that are desirable for Mexicans in both Mexico and the United States. The *charro* as a desired national symbol is a rather new phenomenon in the history of mariachi. Alvarado (2007) identifies that historically, the mariachi *charro* outfit was originally an identifying marker that separated mariachi performers from the higher-class Mexican patrons who hired them. Eventually, mariachi musicians swapped their original indigenous or working-class outfits for the *charro* outfit that high-class Mexican patrons wore at that time (Jáuregui 2007; Mulholland 2007).

Mulholland (2007) also focused on gender in mariachi music, and identified that mariachi is an overwhelmingly male-dominated music genre, though there is a growing movement in mariachi that features all-female or mixed male-female groups. Other studies have focused on the lack of females in other culturally Mexican musical genres. Valdez and Halley (2001)

researched the lack of women instrumentalists in *conjunto* music, and note that this is primarily due to the informal acquisition of knowledge in the instruments along with the disruptive nature that “gigs” can have on family life. The difference between *conjunto* and mariachi is primarily rooted in the acquisition of knowledge; mariachi music has established centers of instruction, such as public education music programs, while *conjunto* music lacks formal education centers in public schools. (Valdez and Halley 2001; Mulholland 2013).

The reason for mariachi’s presence in education in the United States is largely due to the cultural political movements from the 1960s and 1970s (Sheehy 2006). The *Chicano* movement was instrumental in identifying and utilizing mariachi music as an important way to retain the Mexican ethnic tradition, while slowly transitioning into American life (Clark 2005). This movement strived to desegregate and introduce bilingual education into schools, which led to the first mariachi ensemble to be established in a high school located in San Antonio, Texas (Ballard and Benavidez 2002). Valdez and Halley (1993) also identify how *conjunto* music was also popularized during the Chicano movement era as a musical embodiment of ethnic identity and cultural resistance.

Due to the current ethnic and racial diversity that has increased in the United States over time, there is other literature that identifies mariachi as an important contemporary educational tool (Ballard and Benavidez 2002; Clark 2005; Sheehy 2006; Howard, Swanson, and Campbell 2013). Ballard and Benavidez (2002) demonstrate this through their cohesive guide that allows music educators to properly implement and establish a mariachi music program. Clark (2005) outlines the various levels of mariachi programs that range from elementary to the university level as an indicator that this ethnic musical tradition is increasingly more pervasive in the United States. The value of a particular ethnic musical tradition, like mariachi, is recognized by

the way that musical educators have utilized mariachi education programs in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Seattle to connect with the Mexican American communities in these cities (Clark 2005; Sheehy 2006; Howard et al. 2013).

### *Theoretical Framework*

There are various theoretical perspectives that served as interpretive guides for this study. In order to understand the way individuals involved in mariachi interpret their involvement in the production and reception of this musical form, the cultural diamond perspective serves as a framework to interpret the interviews conducted. The cultural diamond framework guides the interpretation of data collected from mariachi performers, instructors, gatekeepers, and aficionados. Limitations stemming from this framework are addressed by other various perspectives presented.

Griswold's analytical framework, the cultural diamond, is a conceptual tool that allows for the analysis of the relationship between cultural producers and receivers in a way that was never utilized for mariachi. Griswold describes a cultural object as a feature of culture that, "Tells a story, and that story may be sung, told, set in stone, enacted, or painted on the body" (2012:25). For the purposes of this research, this sets mariachi as the cultural object, which tells a story when it is enacted by the various individuals involved in the production of mariachi.

In Figure 1, the cultural diamond is presented with modifications for this research. The cultural producers in the diamond are those who produce mariachi music in San Antonio. Mariachi performers, instructors, and gatekeepers encompass this category. Examining the insights that performers, instructors, and gatekeepers have on mariachi allows for a unique perspective on what mariachi means for the local community.

This cultural diamond framework was useful in recruiting individuals based on these various categories, however, its limitation stems from its analytical rigidity. To aid this framework, other theoretical perspectives were utilized in order to add nuance and depth of theoretical analysis. For example, justification for interviewing cultural producers comes from the fact that cultural producers often function as organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals specialize in constructing the narrative and ideological perspective rooted in what benefits the community and how to strengthen community solidarity (Valdez and Halley 1993).

On the cultural receiver end, aficionados of mariachi occupy this category. Perspectives on cultural reception existed prior to Griswold's analytical framework. In terms of reception, Jauss's (2008) work on aesthetic response strengthens the rationale behind the examination of cultural receivers involved with mariachi. Although Jauss was largely concerned with works of literature specifically, Jauss noted that cultural works often take on different meanings for cultural receivers based on the history of the cultural work and its confluence with the personal history or narrative of experience in the cultural receiver's life (Jauss 2008). This dynamic hermeneutic perspective gives a nuanced understanding of mariachi music's importance for Mexican Americans and Mexican-origin people.

Every line in the cultural diamond denotes the six links that tie the four main points of the cultural object together. All of these points of intersection represent a form of interaction, which leads to relevant questions such as how do producers and receivers view themselves in relation to each other, mariachi, and the various social worlds they occupy? What motivates cultural producers to perform or instruct mariachi in the San Antonio community, and are these motivations translating effectively onto those who are receiving the cultural object of mariachi?



These important questions are not easily addressed by the cultural diamond framework. It identifies that the social world is a relevant consideration for a cultural object, but fails to identify any rationale for keeping the social world within its analysis. In terms of the social world, additional critical theoretical perspectives aid the understanding of mariachi's contextual reality in San Antonio. These examinations on power are relevant in order to understand the pervading ideologies perpetuated around mariachi and the San Antonio community. Halley's work on cultural resistance and ideology are utilized as additional theoretical lenses in which to understand the social world that mariachi music presently finds itself in.

An examination of mariachi's cultural rationalization can address mariachi's growth in the educational system. According to Sheehy (2006), mariachi's integration into public schools was a phenomenon that was considered an affirmation of Mexican identity for many *Chicano* activists of the 1970s. While the rationalization of mariachi music in education seems acceptable in order to preserve mariachi as a cultural tradition, it is important to analyze this phenomenon with an understanding that the rationalization of culture is often perpetuated by the dominant class in society through the active production of ideology in American culture (Halley 1981).

It is unrealistic to think that working-class individuals do not resist the pervasive attempts to dominant culture. Halley's (1981) development of the theoretical notion of resistance toward the dominant ideology manifests itself through an example where immigrants refashion cultural and ethnic traditions in order to carve their own place in dominant culture. In addition, a Foucauldian view of power is utilized in order to interpret how these different power dynamics interact. Foucault's (1982) view on power highlights the complex and multifaceted power relations that exist between forms of domination, the power relations that individuals are subjected to, and the forms of resistance that individuals take against these forms of domination.

The notion of resistance and power dynamics in mariachi music provides a perspective uniquely suited for the ethnic struggle of Mexican Americans in the United States. The individuals that are interviewed are able to present moments where they may have resisted aspects of power that was subjected upon them. In that sense, this also serves as an example of how Mexican American people hold onto the cultural upbringing and sensibilities that they identify with, while simultaneously becoming successful cultural contributors in the United States.

Finally, other forms of rationalization exist on a technological level. To buttress Halley's perspective on the rationalization of culture Marcuse's concept on technological rationalization was utilized. Marcuse (2013) posited that technological rationalization has the potential to impose the dominant ideology's social system onto various aspects of society. Does technology serve as a way to rationalize mariachi music and preserve it, or is technology utilized in ways that resist certain aspects of cultural rationalization? With technology's advancements, it is important to examine mariachi's contemporary place in it, and how technology changed the San Antonio mariachi community.

These theoretical perspectives were infused in conjunction with the six dynamic points of interaction laid out by the cultural diamond. These interactions allow individuals to interpret the social world around them, and to eventually modify their perspective on mariachi over time. Utilizing this framework allows for this research to take a hermeneutic understanding of how cultural creators and receivers interpret their cultural and ethnic identity in the context of mariachi in San Antonio, the broader social world, and how their perspectives on these identity constructs may have changed over time.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

### *Description and Justification of the Method*

In order to properly investigate the perceptions of how mariachi music shapes the complicated and nuanced perceptions of cultural identity that individuals involved in this musical scene embody, a mixed methodological approach was utilized. Primary data was collected in order to investigate the complex relationship between current individuals involved in mariachi along with the cultural production of this musical scene. The primary data collection relies heavily on semi-structured in-depth interviews, while utilizing some participant observation techniques in order to delineate who was selected as an interview participant for this study.

### *Participant Observation.*

For this study, participant observation was utilized specifically with the intent to recruit individuals for in-depth interviews. Participant observation was conducted in two regionally distinct restaurants that hosted mariachi music on occasion. One restaurant was located in the heart of downtown San Antonio, while the other was located in the Northwest side of San Antonio. The rationale behind these two distinct locations was to ensure that there were diverse sample populations to recruit for interviews.

The downtown restaurant was selected because of its notoriety and reputation as a harbinger for mariachi music. The bar area at this restaurant is specifically designated for mariachi performances, and often had mariachi musicians present on weekends. The restaurant located on the Northwest side of San Antonio was selected after interviewing some mariachi performers who indicated that it would be another good place to recruit individuals for an interview.

Before participant observational techniques were undertaken, a phone call was made in order to gain entrée within the two restaurants. This was done with the intent to build rapport with the managerial staff, and to explain the intent of the researcher's presence. Both restaurants took no issue with the researcher's presence, and were kind enough to share the various days and hours that mariachi performers were likely to perform at their respective establishments.

The rationale behind participant observational techniques were ultimately two-fold. The first reason that participant observation was utilized was to recruit individuals who were available for an interview. The second aim was to record supplemental data on the two settings that were selected, and the social interactions among cultural producers and receivers. These social interactions were a rich data source, but because this study was primarily interested in the perceptions that these individuals held in regards to their ethnic and cultural identity the emphasis was placed in recruiting individuals for interview.

#### *In-depth Interviews.*

In-depth interviews were utilized to understand the particular perspectives that individuals in the mariachi community held toward their craft, their motivations for being involved in mariachi, and finally in-depth interviews allowed individuals to share meaningful memories of their involvement in the cultural creation and reception of mariachi. Heyink and Tymstra (1993) highlighted interviews as a great way to investigate the way respondents feel about topics of interest, along with motivations for their behavior. Attitudes, beliefs, and motivations were identified through interview techniques.

There are additional reasons why the qualitative interview was the best approach for this study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed for a complex and nuanced understanding of

what mariachi as a cultural practice means for the individuals involved. These interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions in order to allow flexibility in conversation, which arose when respondents explained their own perceptions of mariachi from their unique vantage point. Hsiung (2008) indicates that flexibility in the structure of in-depth interviews and active listening is ideal, as it can allow for a co-construction of narratives between the interviewer and the respondent. In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in order to build rapport with respondents, which was vital to the process of recording the interviews. Generally, in-depth interviews are essential for sociological research that is meant to highlight the motivations, meaningful experiences, and the world view that individuals in the mariachi musical scene encompass.

This raw data collected from interviews allowed the interviewer to engage in a phenomenological process that reflected on the data delivered by the respondent. This data was also investigated through the lenses of various sociological concepts in order to highlight the significance of experiences for those involved within the mariachi community. The hermeneutic nature of the in-depth interview process allowed the researcher to highlight the richness of the experiences that are not obvious to those unfamiliar with mariachi. The transcription process developed various thematic patterns from the variety of interviews conducted.

Further justification of interview techniques lies in what separated the design for this study in comparison with previous studies focused on mariachi. Previous studies on mariachi do not focus on the interaction between cultural creators, receivers, mariachi, and the social worlds involved in mariachi. Much of the contemporary research tied to mariachi focused on its use-value for educational settings (Ballard and Benavidez 2002; Clark 2005; Sheehy 2006; Howard, Swanson, and Campbell 2013), while on the anthropological end much of the literature is heavily

focused on theoretical and historical analyses of mariachi (Nájera-Ramírez 1994; Jáuregui 2007; Mulholland 2007). Finally, in terms of research method, ethnography was primarily utilized by Mulholland (2013) in her research on the dynamic between femininity and mariachi as a cultural symbol in Mexico.

Additionally, no sociological research was conducted on mariachi that primarily found its setting in San Antonio, Texas. This setting is interesting in that it is considered an important site where mariachi is cultivated (Sheehy 2006), while it is also an area that has a very unique tourist industry with a claim on a hybridized culture known as “Tex-Mex.” In other words, San Antonio is regionally positioned as a unique metropolitan area that takes pride in its mixing of culture that is both Texan and Mexican. This juxtaposition adds a dynamic quality that may not be present in other settings where mariachi is culturally produced like California or Mexico. So, although mariachi has been primarily identified as an important ethnic and cultural symbol for Mexico historically (Sheehy 2006; Jáuregui 2007), the geographic and cultural positions of this research give it a value that is set apart from previous research.

Aside from the unique geographic setting, the dynamic between creators of the cultural object, mariachi, and cultural receivers had not been previously explored with the method of semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, which added to this study’s unique interpretive frame. This also sets this research apart from previous literature that has studied mariachi specifically, and other music’s role in identity. The framework that primarily guided the sampling method of this study, Griswold’s cultural object and cultural diamond, frames this study in a way that adds a nuanced and complex understanding of how the social relationships between cultural creators and receivers interact to shape the ethnic and cultural identity of ethnic Mexican individuals involved in mariachi.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

A purposive theoretical sampling method was utilized in order to select individuals involved in the mariachi community. This sampling method was necessary in order to select and identify individuals entrenched within various aspects of the mariachi music scene. Griswold's (2012) cultural diamond perspective was the guide for the rationale behind this theoretical sampling method. This perspective was important in that it allowed a stratified and nuanced approach toward understanding the mariachi community of San Antonio by relating the dynamic interactions between producers, receivers, mariachi, and the social worlds they encompass.

Individuals who were interviewed were stratified by mariachi performers, instructors, aficionados, and gatekeepers. The original aim was to acquire an equal number of individuals interviewed between cultural producers and receivers of mariachi. A minimum of fifteen aficionados was sufficient for the cultural receiver perspective, while a mixture of musicians, producers, and gatekeepers would total the same amount of fifteen respondents on the cultural producer side. In total, thirty interview respondents was the stated goal for this study.

For clarity, it is important to note who performers, aficionados, instructors, and gatekeepers were within this sample. Performers are the singers and musicians who regularly perform at various venues such as restaurants and bars. Some of these individuals may be instructors as well. Overlap would be expected if these performers dedicated a large amount of time toward the production of their craft and expertise. Instructors are individuals that teach mariachi privately, at music academies, cultural art centers, and public schools throughout San Antonio. Gatekeepers are individuals who make decisions over who can perform at their respective establishments or events, who is ultimately played on local radio stations, or an

individual who makes decisions about which mariachi groups or singers get signed to a record label. Finally, aficionados can generally be described as individuals who are fervent listeners, followers, or supporters of the local mariachi music scene in San Antonio, Texas.

Along with the theoretical sampling method described earlier, snowball sampling played a role in the process of identifying relevant performers, instructors, gatekeepers, and aficionados. While observation was conducted at two different restaurants, individuals who fell within the cultural producer or receiver category were recruited to participate for an interview. An information sheet, that was I.R.B. (Institutional Review Board) approved, was provided prior to the interview to clearly explain the purpose of the study. Immediate requirements for participation were as follows: the ability to communicate in English or Spanish, over the age of 18, of Mexican decent, and consent to participate in the interview. At the end of each interview, these individuals were asked whether they knew of any individuals who might be relevant informants for this study in order to cultivate a snowball sample.

The interview lasted anywhere from thirty to ninety minutes. While the interview was conducted, the names of the respondents were not intentionally mentioned as an exercise in confidentiality. However, if a participant's name was mentioned, they were not transcribed. It was important to keep a level of confidentiality and comfort for those who agreed to participate in this study. For reasons of comfort, interviews were conducted in a space that was ideal for the individuals who agreed to participate. For the assurance of confidentiality, the information sheet provided prior to the interview clearly highlighted that participation in the interview was voluntary, that the participant could ask any relevant questions before deciding whether or not they'd like to participate, that the participant could freely choose to decide not to participate at



any point in time, that there were no expected risks associated with the interview, and why they had been selected as an interview participant.

The interview instrument that was used as a guide for semi-structured in-depth interviews are provided in appendices A and B. As mentioned earlier, part of the interview qualifications was that individuals who participated were able to speak either English or Spanish. Both interview instruments are detailed in English and Spanish in the appendices. All the questions in both languages are the same, and served as a general guide for the researcher's data collection for all four sample populations: performers, instructors, aficionados, and gatekeepers. The rationale behind using one interview guide was to ensure that there was a systemic way to compare the various horizons of interpretation revealed through the various roles that performers, instructors, gatekeepers, and aficionados held. Since all of these roles play different parts in the process of cultural production and reception, collecting data from the same set of questions was ideal for the similarities and contrasting perspectives that were expected to come up throughout the interview process.

#### *Data Management and Analysis Procedures*

Data was managed in very careful and specific ways. During the semi-structured in-depth interviews, an audio recording device was utilized in order to record the interview for accuracy. A notepad was also available during the interview in order to ensure that quick notes were taken, if needed. Individuals who agreed to an interview were treated with the upmost respect to ensure a quality interview gave way to rich raw data.

During the interview process, some field notes were taken before and after the interview. This was the primary reason for the presence of a notepad during the interview process. This was

utilized in order to pick up varying descriptive characteristics that could not be captured by an audio recording. Examples of this would be the way the respondent is dressed, mannerisms, the setting, and the context of the interview. These were all important factors that led to quality descriptive data that addressed what the eye sees, and what an audio recording device cannot capture. Any notes taken after the interview were converted into field notes as soon as the interview was over.

After recording the interview, transcription of the interview was necessary. The transcription process consisted of listening to the recorded interview and typing the entire conversation verbatim in an adequate word processor. Emic and etic themes were notated throughout the transcription process, and further coding of themes occurred after the transcripts were completed. Interview data were read multiple times to ensure that the transcripts were accurate and relevant themes were not overlooked. Emic themes are emergent themes that came up throughout the interviews with the individuals who are immersed in the mariachi musical scene, and etic themes are those that were provided through sensitizing concepts that come from the sociological background of the researcher.

The literature along with the theoretical perspectives identified earlier lead to various expected themes throughout the interviews. Some of the sensitizing concepts listed below lead to various overarching themes:

- aspects of ethnic and cultural identity
- strategies of the creation of mariachi as a cultural object
- the motivations of the various cultural creators and receivers

- how cultural creators and receivers perceive mariachi in the context of their social world
- rationalization and resistance in mariachi music
- mariachi and its historical ties with Mexico
- gender
- notions of hybridization or the way that the music has changed over time
- cultural politics
- music as a cultural education tool

Other themes arose throughout the research process. Thorough examination of the data along with open coding of the various transcripts brought these themes to light, and allowed for a nuanced and complex understanding of the state of mariachi music as a traditional cultural art form in contemporary times.

In regards to the actual rudimentary strategies for analysis of the transcripts, the transcripts were typed verbatim in Microsoft Word. Afterwards, open coding methods were utilized. Open coding is essentially the process of highlighting different sequences throughout the transcript with comments. If a particular theme or observation was observed within the transcript, a comment was added. Additional notes and memos were added in order to build upon the various sensitizing concepts and themes that were present within the transcribed interviews. There are programs that are often utilized by qualitative researchers to sort and organize various thematic concepts that arise within interview transcripts, however, no programs were utilized for this research due to unfamiliarity and time constraints.

Finally, all the raw data that was collected was saved in various storage devices. All interviews, field notes, transcriptions, and other relevant materials were saved onto a laptop that requires a password. These potential data sources were concurrently saved on a USB-flash drive, and an external hard drive that is password encrypted. This along with the application of pseudonyms (false names) to all informants, restaurants, and potential educational institutions ensured the confidentiality and anonymity required for the safety of everyone involved in this research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

For this study, the original aim was to interview thirty respondents. Half of respondents were to fall under the cultural production side of mariachi, while the other half would fall under the cultural receiver side of mariachi. Cultural producers were further broken down as gatekeepers, instructors, and performers in the mariachi world, and cultural receivers were identified as aficionados and parents of children involved in mariachi music programs.

Table 1: Breakdown of Cultural Producers and Cultural Receivers

	Gender		Age			Total (28)
	M	F	18-30	31-45	46+	
Cultural Producers	10	6	4	8	4	16
Instructor	5	2	1	4	0	7
Performer	3	3	3	2	3	6
Gatekeeper	2	1	0	2	1	3
Cultural Receivers	7	5	2	7	3	12
Aficionado	3	1	0	2	2	4
Parent	4	4	2	5	1	8

As shown in Table 1, sixteen cultural producers and twelve cultural receivers were successfully interviewed for this study. In total, twenty-eight individuals participated in an interview. Despite not reaching the intended goal of thirty participants, plenty of rich data was collected. Many of the individuals interviewed were willing to share their experiences within the local mariachi community.

The respondent categories stated earlier (instructor, performer, gatekeeper and aficionado) proved more dynamic than expected. For example, many of the performers interviewed taught mariachi at some capacity during their career, but for clarity those listed as instructors taught mariachi at the moment they were interviewed. Seven mariachi instructors, six mariachi performers, and three gatekeepers were successfully interviewed for a total number of sixteen cultural producers. The twelve remaining interview participants were categorized as cultural receivers. Within this category, four of them were aficionados, while the other eight participants were parents involved with a local mariachi academy. These individuals were interviewed at the recommendation of one of the instructors in order to add another dimension to this research.

The dynamic qualities of the roles in the mariachi social world is important to further explain. There were moments throughout these interviews where individuals identified as cultural producers was suspect during certain parts of their interview. The reality is that mariachi performers, instructors, and gatekeepers are cultural receivers as well. This is not a limitation. In fact, it strengthens this study in that it identifies some of the limitation that an analytical tool, such as the cultural diamond framework, has with people actively engaged in the cultural art form. Although there is a limited number of participants on the cultural receiver end, in reality, this is not the case after conducting these interviews.

The age and gender of the various participants was recorded in Table 1 in order to highlight the variety of perspective within this research. This variety brought insight regarding gender dynamics, and different perspectives on the state of mariachi music in San Antonio from individuals involved in mariachi for decades and individuals just starting out in their musical

career. The number of women that participated in this interview, eleven in total, provided an important perspective that spoke to the growing participation of women in mariachi.

Many themes were identified throughout the analysis of the twenty-eight transcriptions. The data that followed from the analyzation of these transcriptions added a depth to many of the themes encountered. Themes were condensed into a series of six overarching sections in order to cohesively present the data collected. Sensitizing concepts that developed from previous literature along with the theoretical perspectives utilized guided the overall analysis contained within six thematic sections. The six thematic categories are as follows:

- cultural and ethnic identity
- mariachi in public schools
- gender and the rise of women in mariachi
- technology as a preservation strategy
- authenticity and hybridization in mariachi music
- cultural politics in mariachi

Within these thematic breaks there is a depth and specificity within the data that gives these findings value along with unexpected emic and etic themes that speak to the depth of information that many of the participants provided. The breakdown in sections were merely utilized in order to allow for a clear and cohesive narrative.

## CULTURAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN MARIACHI

Although cultural and ethnic identity are often difficult concepts to undertake, with mariachi, it is an important through-line identified by the stories and perspectives on what mariachi music means to the individuals that enjoy and participate in the production of mariachi. What is paramount to understand is that mariachi music is often present for special life events for Mexican American families. Mariachi is found in spaces as diverse as Sunday Catholic mass, funerals, birthdays, and wedding anniversaries. What was immediately apparent was that mariachi music served as a symbol of Mexican identity through its use for celebration and tragedy in everyday life.

The field observation undertaken reveals mariachi music's symbol as a uniquely cultural and ethnic marker. An excerpt of field observation illustrates the function that mariachi serves for Mexican-origin families and communities:

*It was the middle of the afternoon, and I found myself sitting in the bar area of a Mexican restaurant, patiently waiting for my food to arrive. I noticed that the music playing in the speakers throughout the restaurant came to a conclusive halt. I immediately turned around and noticed that the hallway entrance was filled with twelve mariachi musicians. They were speaking with the host towards the front of the restaurant area, and the guitarrón player was standing directly in front of me. He was tuning his instrument, while the group walked briskly toward the client that hired them for their dinner. The trumpets began to roar with the introduction for Las Mañanitas, a Mexican traditional song meant to usher in another birthday for whomever it is sung, while two mariachis began singing the introduction to the song for the patron's son. As they were singing Las Mañanitas for the boy, the mother presented a birthday cake. You could see*



*joy in the faces of everyone present. The young boy, his parents, grandparents, and everyone in close proximity to the mariachi group were elated at the lively mariachi instrumentation that everyone witnessed. At the close of their first song, the boy promptly blew out the candles from his cake, and everyone wished him a happy birthday.*

The mariachi group played about three or four songs, wished the young boy a happy birthday, and were on their way. Aside from bringing joy and entertainment through music, mariachi musicians often serve as a cultural marker that represents the cultural history of the individuals that hired them, the Spanish language, along with the *traje de charro* outfit in full display for everyone in proximity. Mariachi music also provides a service that many Mexican-origin individuals can utilize to usher in special events in their lives. Many mariachi performers were aware of this fact, and were honored that they were specifically chosen for these special events.

Anairis Hinojosa, a mariachi performer for an all-female mariachi group, stated her elation with the opportunity to aid in celebration of these important life events for the patrons that hired her mariachi group. Anairis stated that:

[I]t's just so satisfying to be able to see how the singers or us as musicians move people to tears or laughter. They cry and we feel what they feel. It is nice to see how we connect that way. We communicate with them without even talking. It's really nice to see that. Help them get over something. Help them get stronger. Welcome them to the new phase like *quinceañeras*<sup>1</sup> or weddings. It's pretty remarkable being able to share those moments.

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<sup>1</sup> A *quinceañera* is a coming of age celebration of 15 years of age for many girls with a Hispanic background.

Interestingly enough, for Anairis, there is no direct communication that has to occur between her and her audience. This social interaction, from Anairis's perspective, is an interpretive process that occurs due to the ascribed meaning that individuals place on this particular interaction (Blumer 1969). In this particular quote, we find that Anairis is able to embody a symbol that is specific for the individuals that hire mariachi musicians, and gives her clientele a culturally tangible moment. Mariachi musicians are able to embody the cultural and ethnic sensibilities that are specific to Mexican-origin individuals.

Another great example of mariachi music's utility for special occasions arose during an interview with Nico who detailed a visceral moment he had during a recent performance for a client. Nico mentioned that he performed for a fiftieth wedding anniversary, but noticed that only the wife was present for their performance in their backyard celebration. The woman approached Nico with a special request:

She says, 'Can we play something for my husband? He's inside. Is that possible?' I say, 'Okay. That's not the first time we've done that.' There was five of us, and we were tearing up because we go to the bedroom. He's lying there. He's got a king-sized bed, and all his grandchildren are all around him and he looks happy. His body doesn't look great, but he's happy. They're lying around him. We're at the foot of his bed playing. I'm tearing up just telling this story. You know? The family goes in. They're just taking pictures, and the kids are just comfortable. It felt like heaven...

Mariachi music was so culturally relevant for this man and his family that they requested that Nico and the rest of his mariachi group perform for them in a fragile, tenuous moment. Nico and his mariachi group became a part of the family's history in that moment. A moment the family and Nico will never forget, and may influence their perspective on what mariachi means in their lives. The aesthetic response of their life history along with the cultural history of the music is what Jauss's perspective identified as an important aspect for the reception of cultural art.

In all aspects of life, there is a symbolic relevance ascribed to mariachi music. Many Mexican American families are socialized with a deep understanding of mariachi music's importance in their lives. Another mariachi performer described in detail how certain songs are important to particular Mexican American families, due to the symbolic and familial meaning ascribed to a particular song. Ricardo mentioned the following in regards to mariachi songs and their connection to his family:

To tie that back to your heritage, to your family tree, some of it ties back to a particular song. For us it is *Puño de Tierra*. That song was written by a gentleman from *Piedras Negras*. Then made popular by Antonio Aguilar and Ramon Ayala. At our funeral, that's always a song that plays, because of what the lyrics talk about...

The history of Ricardo's family is brought to light by this particular mariachi song. His family can trace their roots to *Piedras Negras*, a city in Mexico, which gives this particular song relevance to his family's history and experience. Jauss's (2008) theory of aesthetic response clearly reveals itself in this particular situation. The meaning that is ascribed to this song is of particular importance for Ricardo and his family. The song's cultural tie to his family is so important that it is played every time a family member passes away due to Ricardo's family history.

The construction of cultural and ethnic identity reveals itself through the request of mariachi music's presence in meaningful situations in life. These mariachi performers are able to embody these identities for Mexican-origin individuals, and are ascribed symbolic meaning for cultural receivers and producers in the varying social worlds in which they occupy. For some individuals, it reminds them of their particular family history, it ushers the celebration of another year of life at birthday celebrations, and the death of loved ones. Mariachi musicians and the

music they play are instantly recognizable for individuals who have grown up with a socialized understanding of mariachi as a part of their culture.

### *The Traje de Charro: Embodied Identity and Professional Attire*

The most noticeable symbolic marker of ethnic and cultural identity in mariachi is the traditional uniform that mariachi individuals adorn when they perform. The *traje de charro* was cited by several participants as an overt representation of Mexican history and culture. Some performers brought up how much of an honor it was to wear the *traje* due to its cultural significance; however, for others interviewed it was merely a suit that aesthetically made them feel and look sharp and professional. Others identified the overt and conscious effort to represent themselves in a way that was not stereotypical for mariachi musicians and mentioned their attempts to manage these impressions they made during public performances. This interesting contrast was discussed by many of the individuals interviewed. The varying perspectives are emblematic of the complicated nuances that ethnic and cultural identity can often contain, while simultaneously holding particular identifiable patterns.

In regards to its cultural significance Ashley's insight came from the way in which she was able to track the history of Mexican-origin peoples through the *traje*'s symbolic representation for herself and the mariachi community:

It's pride. I think it's progress. I think it's culture. *El traje del charro* started with musicians playing in *charreadas* in Jalisco. So, the owners of *charreadas* were wealthy, so the *charros* in these rodeos wore *traje de charro*... I feel like anywhere you go, if you're walking in that uniform, someone is going to throw a *grito* [yell]. It's not, it doesn't, it's not even just the adults it's the kids too. It's a lot of pride and culture, so that's why I say culture cause a lot of kids say, 'I like mariachi, but I don't speak Spanish.' Well, that's fine. You don't have to speak Spanish. 'But I love it.' Well, it's

part of your culture. It's in your blood. You like it. So that's why I say culture, progress, and pride.

Without implicitly stating the common history of Mexican-origin people's progression as a minority group in the United States, Ashley identified the history of the *traje* in a way that represents the storied immigrant legacy that is a familiar narrative for many Mexican Americans.

Ashley's perspective on the cultural relevance of the *traje* is evident by the revelation that even Mexican American children who have lost a vital aspect of mariachi, the Spanish language, can partake and enjoy mariachi music. Mariachi music as a cultural object is continually passed down from generation to generation despite any limitations in language proficiency. In a way, this is a great example of the acculturation process for Mexican-origin individuals as it shows that some aspects of their cultural identity, such as language, is lost over time (Alba and Nee 2003). Ashley's appears to indicate that despite the loss of Spanish language proficiency among some of the younger Mexican American generation there is still a common cultural connection to mariachi music.

Further evidence of this acculturation theme is apparent due to some of the younger mariachi individual's perspective on the *traje*. Norberto is in his mid-twenties, and when the subject of the *traje* came up he stated that:

Those suits are pretty sharp, well that does play into it. But it's a sense of pride, and the reason why I say you look good is because you want to look good. People are going to see you. Whenever you're done with a show people want to take pictures with you whether you sang good, or kids liked watching you play, or just hey, 'He looks good!' Just those three taken into consideration with that suit on... I wish I could give you a deeper meaning.

For Norberto, his concern is in presenting the best version of himself, so perhaps the meaning of the *traje* does not hold as much cultural weight for him personally. However, the *traje* makes him feel and look good. Despite Norberto's relative lack of concern for the symbolic cultural importance of the way he is dressed he is concerned with the self-presentation of himself as a professional mariachi musician.

Goffman's perspective on impression management seems to reveal itself as another theme for Norberto and other mariachi performers. Essentially, in this particular instance, there is a conscious presentation of self that occurs in social situations in order to ensure that other individuals have a positive perception and outlook of the person (Goffman 1959). In most cases, mariachi musicians were aware of the cultural importance that they embodied, which facilitated a drive to present themselves in a manner that was appropriate. Although there is a common perception that mariachi musicians drink while performing (Mulholland 2007) there is a current effort by mariachi performers to present themselves in a way that goes against this stereotype. Even with the case of Norberto, he is concerned with his self-presentation even if he does not attach a deeper cultural meaning behind his effort to look good. For others, there is a cultural pride that many individuals feel when they wear their *traje*, and that cultural pride encourages them to try and maintain a level of professionalism.

The pride that mariachi musicians have in their suit is multifaceted, and many were aware of how they present themselves when they wear the *traje de charro*. Many mariachi musicians mentioned that they felt guilty for disrespecting the *traje* by wearing it while consuming alcohol. Ricardo mentions in detail his perspective on mariachi performers who disrespect the *traje de charro*:

The most stereotypical outlook of a mariachi is *gordo feo y borracho* [fat, ugly, and drunk]. That kind of thing, and it is so true. Is it wrong? Only if you don't do that, but many in the system do. So, you go somewhere and you see them drinking heavily and it looks completely wrong. It is a disrespect and I've been guilty of it in the past. Now I'd rather just change, but if I stay in my *traje* I might have one or two but I'm not going to make a fool out of myself. Cause it is a representation of what my heritage and culture is.

Interestingly enough, the old notion that mariachi is simply *cantina* music is slowly changing.

No matter the venue, representing the culture in a professional manner is important for many of the performers in this study. In the past, when Ricardo was younger, he may not have worried about the way presented himself, but as he has become more aware of his place in the culture he is more careful so as not to appear unprofessional.

What these varying viewpoints identify is that the cultural meaning behind the *traje* has changed for some individuals involved in the local mariachi scene. There is no mistake that it is an overtly Mexican symbol in music; however, for some mariachi performers to merely identify with this perspective would be a simplistic rendering of the reality for these individuals. At the very least, the identity with the *traje* as a cultural symbol may lay more concern with personal appearance and professionalism, which speaks to the ways that mariachi music has changed with its emergence in the United States.

### *Conclusion*

This overall thematic section presented several notions regarding mariachi and its current symbolic nature in regards to cultural and ethnic identity. Mariachi's presence in various life events of Mexican Americans and Mexican-origin individuals speaks to its revered importance for these communities. Many mariachi performers presented various performative events, which highlighted this notion. Although mariachi is utilized for events that may occur in the presence of

alcohol, many performers were cognizant of the mariachi stereotype of drinking too much, and this notion was actively dispelled in order to respect their role as representatives of Mexican culture. A concerted effort to not consume alcohol while wearing the *traje* was cited as a strategy to appear professional to their audience, and was also cited as a poor way to represent their cultural heritage.

## MARIACHI EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: INSITUATIONALIZING CULTURE

Many individuals who were interviewed cited mariachi in public schools as an important factor for mariachi's growth in San Antonio. Mariachi music's lasting presence is indebted to the fact that mariachi music programs are flourishing in some of the various public school districts in San Antonio. Many of the instructors and performers who were interviewed mentioned that Belle Ortiz is responsible for this growth. In the late nineteen-sixties, Belle Ortiz was responsible for the start of the first mariachi program at the elementary level within the San Antonio Independent School District (Sheehy 2006). This started a lasting movement to include a culturally relevant musical art form in the public education circuit throughout the southwestern United States.

In many ways, this move was in direct opposition toward the common social world in which mariachi was expected to encompass. The mariachi stereotype was that it was a musical style that was often found in bars or *cantinas* in undesirable places for younger people (Clark 2005). This perception is still a commonly held one, and it was notably pervasive throughout many of the interviews with many cultural producers and cultural receivers. In fact, some performers and instructors were initially hesitant to continue their pursuit into a music career in



mariachi. During Mateo Gaspar's interview, a private mariachi instructor and performer, this stereotypical view of mariachi was evident when he described his aversion to become involved in mariachi music, initially:

My perception of mariachi music was these big fat drunks singing in *cantinas*. I was born on the Westside... which was known for prostitution, drugs, and you know, *cantinas*. So, we'd hear that music all the time, but I was misguided. I didn't realize what mariachi music was. I thought I did, but I didn't.

It is important to highlight these perspectives as it creates a complicated dialectical narrative into what mariachi music is often perceived to represent. On the one hand, mariachi music can represent celebratory times that requires its involvement in spaces where alcohol is involved, while on the other, cultural producers have made an explicit move to take mariachi music into other spaces that it had not traditionally encompassed before.

For mariachi instructors involved in its inception into the education system, the stereotype that mariachi music was *cantina* music was an enduring reason why they decided to ensure that mariachi music was not cast into this singular narrative. Rhona Garza explained this strategic motivation as a mariachi educator:

I stereotyped it. That's *cantina* music, that's for old people. Through the mariachi educational system, as a teacher, you can truly educate the children on how it should truly be portrayed. So, one thing I used to really push with my students is when we perform you are representing your school, your instructors, your family and most importantly your culture. Remember that.

A motivation for Rhona when she taught mariachi was specifically calling attention to the fact that mariachi music is more than just music that you could listen to while drinking. It is an essential representation of Mexican culture, and should be treated in that manner.

Part of this strategy was also educating the public about an important cultural object like mariachi. Rhona makes this point when explaining why it is important to educate the youth to respect the cultivation of their mariachi craft:

So, through the schools as instructors you can educate them [students]. You say, ‘This is something to be respected. You don’t ever see the President of the United States in this country with his tie off, do you?’ And in turn, educating them will educate the public. It will help them to see our music in a totally different light. That way more doors can open. That’s the reason why, once it came to the educational system, that’s probably why it began to be much more accepted in the general public... there’s so much more to it, so I think that as mariachi musicians we need to set the example for the youth. For the public, for the culture, for ourselves.

This shows that part of the strategy of pushing for mariachi music in educational spaces is motivated by an initiative to reframe stereotypical perspectives that some people tie to mariachi. Perspectives that some of these instructors may have had before their involvement in mariachi. Much focus on this thematic section will identify what the push for mariachi music in education means for mariachi music, the individuals actively involved in its production and reception, strategies that producers have in regards to mariachi music’s production, and how part of this strategy requires mariachi music’s rationalization.

### *Mariachi Programs in Public Schools: Rationalization of a Cultural Tradition*

Mariachi music’s progress and growth in the United States has relied on the eventual rationalization of the musical form into educational institutions, especially in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley (Clark 2005). As shown earlier, Rhona Garza identified that part of mariachi’s integration into the education system was to “educate the public” as to what mariachi

can provide to the educational social world. The move into public schools provides an arena where mariachi music slowly becomes standardized as a form of cultural preservation.

Mariachi music's entrance into various public school districts in the San Antonio area, owes much of its legacy to various instructors who strived to establish these programs as musical educators. It required much effort to establish these programs. Some instructors went into great detail in regards to the amount of time and effort that had to be invested in order to start these mariachi programs. Ashley Campos exhibited this when she mentioned trying to establish a mariachi program during her tenure as an orchestra teacher at a northern San Antonio school district:

I started working at this school district, and actually I started teaching at the middle school I went to school at. So, I taught them for five years, and I had started the mariachi program after school. After the third year I said, 'We have to make this a class. I have 250 orchestra students and I have 100 after school mariachi students, so it needs to be a class and I need some help.'

Interest in establishing mariachi programs were high enough that a small after-school program eventually ballooned into a program that transformed into a legitimate extra-curricular activity with an additional instructor.

On the higher education circuit, one of the instructors who was interviewed was responsible for establishing a mariachi program in a central Texas university. Daniel Salinas, a mariachi performer and instructor, highlighted how a mariachi student organization eventually became a full-fledged part of the university's music program:

I felt that need to do something with mariachi. I found other people... I got a faculty advisor. We started doing a little club type of thing. There was a dean—golly—I don't remember what department he's in... [h]e made me sit down and write down everything,

‘What do you need? What do you need from the university? What could you do for the city?’ He put me down in front of the board of regents. ‘Sit down. Why does the university need a mariachi class?’ I just started vomiting out all the info. I started calling out percentages of Hispanics that were enrolling and currently enrolled. Next thing you know it is in the registration book. You can sign up for mariachi ensemble. It started off small. By the time I left, you had to register for it, it was an ensemble, and you got a grade.

What this did was service individuals interested in mariachi to have an avenue to perform it at the college level, and potentially establishing a navigable route into teaching mariachi music, furthering the effort to standardize and institutionalize mariachi music.

Over time, this has led toward a push for standardization within mariachi programs, especially in Texas. Now, the state’s University Interscholastic League<sup>2</sup> held a pilot competition in 2016. Daniel Salinas brought to light why this is significant for mariachi music programs within public schools throughout Texas:

...this is going to be the second year where we’re going to be recognized for University Interscholastic League, it’s UIL. In the state of Texas, we’ve always had it for band, choir, orchestra, we’ve had it now for jazz bands... [n]ow they’re saying we notice that those mariachis have been around for a long-time... [i]t’s in the schools. It’s in enough schools. It’s in enough districts. Enough of your directors are certified, I think we need to start putting our foot down and start to see that there’s some sort of assessment of what everyone is doing. Welcome to UIL, mariachi... [i]t was eye opening because we literally had to let go. All the mariachi gurus, I was always a judge, I was always planning, I had to literally step back and let go. Let these guys from Austin, Texas of UIL, take care. They knew what they were doing, and we just sat back and watched the show...

This perfectly illustrates the trajectory of mariachi music within the education system. Gone are the days where mariachi is strictly defined as *cantina* music. State officials that are not directly

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<sup>2</sup> University Interscholastic League (UIL) is a large inter-school organization designed to facilitate athletic, academic, and musical competitions in the state of Texas. (University Interscholastic League 2017)

associated with mariachi music have now begun recognizing its place in the institutional fabric in the state of Texas.

The move to push mariachi music to where it presently finds itself in public schools bodes well for the lasting presence of this cultural music form. What this move accomplishes is in fact two-fold. One, it allows mariachi music instruction within a public-school setting where Mexican American children can participate in a musical tradition that is immediately relatable to their parents and grandparents. It also exposes other ethnic groups to a different cultural art form with origins that are not rooted in the United States.

*What About Northern San Antonio? The Limitations of Mariachi's Institutionalization.*

As mariachi music slowly becomes institutionalized, there are many ways in which mariachi's inclusion is limited. That is not to say that progress has not been made. Its inclusion into state competitions, and the growing amount of district programs signal that mariachi music is going to continue to encompass a new space within Mexican American culture. However, impediments such as funding and professionalization of mariachi teaching requirements serve as huge impediments that could undercut progress made in the effort to educate and preserve mariachi music. Many mariachi instructors called attention to these institutional impediments that limited or altered their strategies toward their effort to cultivate a strong mariachi community in the San Antonio area.

In regards to funding, this issue often arose throughout interviews with mariachi educators. Extra-curricular activities, especially music programs, are typically under threat due to funding issues and budget cuts (Slaton 2012). Mariachi programs are no exception. Roberto San

Diego mentioned how funding issues were often a topic of discussion among him and other mariachi educators:

We used to go to competition, and I came from a district that—they still—it was great on paper but to really execute and appropriate the right amount of funds to go there to the right places, there was always a battle. So, we would go to competition, and I would be talking to other directors. They would tell me, ‘What’s your budget?’ And I would say... ‘[W]e have 300 and something [students], but I only have a few thousand-dollar budget’ ...So there’s a disparity within, of course, you know every district. How willing are they to support it?

It’s important to note that according to Roberto, budgeting was incredibly low for his program, and this was at a school district that is known throughout San Antonio for its mariachi music programs at various school campuses.

This lack of funding often led to mariachi programs with a limited staff. Ashley Castro pointed this out in detail:

[T]he issue right now as far as what I see in this district is the staffing. I have had over 200 kids for over 3 years, and I am still the only teacher which tends to be my ongoing problem! Cause it was my problem in a different district and it is the same problem here. We’re getting there slowly, because it is not as developed as band, orchestra, art, or theater.

In addition to restriction in available staff for mariachi programs, Ashley also identified issues within mariachi programs that seem to stem from the lack of resources such as textbooks. Ashley mentioned that, “There is no textbook, state adopted textbooks... coming from the orchestra world to the mariachi world the big thing was like, where are the resources at?” Her previous experience as an orchestra instructor, allowed her to identify the stark differences that existed between that program and a typical mariachi program. Feay-Shaw’s (2002) research revealed the

lack of Mexican music book materials throughout many decades, which validates Ashley's overall experience.

Finally, evidence over the lack of funding was also identified through the amount of pay that many mariachi instructors receive, though none of the instructors mentioned exact numbers. What some of these instructors did provide were the occupational delineations that many school districts have for mariachi instructors. Cipriano outlined the occupational statuses that mariachi instructors were designated in various districts throughout San Antonio:

For many years, the district did not hire certified teachers. It was more a teacher aid, paraprofessional position, so I had a hard time with [the school district I work for] letting them know, 'Hey, I'm a certified teacher. Can you guys pay me like a certified teacher?' So, it was about a year or two of constant bugging, nagging with my principal. So that was one thing that I think has changed the future of mariachi education as far as [my school district]. I know [other school districts do] not offer that, [one of the northern school districts] does but it's also paraprofessional positions.

The push to be paid the same as any other certified teacher was successful in the particular district Cipriano currently teaches in, but according to him this is not the case for other districts. The motivation to push for this payment increase was as follows, "I think it opens doors, windows of opportunity for students who want to teach mariachi... they know they can go teach without feeling like, 'okay, you can't hire me because I don't have a [teaching] certification.'"

Obviously, lack of funding spurns the growth of mariachi in various ways, and it is difficult to tell whether school districts designate paraprofessional positions due to budget constrictions or for other implicit circumstances. However, instructors with familiarity on the situation like Cipriano noted that, "Band, orchestra programs in my school district is pretty weak. I know in other school districts they're strong.... that's an issue. The equity of mariachi and fine

arts within itself.” Depending on the district it may prove difficult to launch a new mariachi program especially if mariachi is not perceived as valuable or relevant to that particular district.

### *A Mariachi Instructor’s Resistance and Critique Through Education*

The struggle to standardize and institutionalize mariachi music is one tactic utilized in order to preserve mariachi music, and ensure its lasting presence. As mariachi catalyzes its presence in the education system there are examples of resistance that are used in order to have mariachi’s presence known, while simultaneously spreading its influence throughout San Antonio. Halley’s concept of resistance presents the idea that individuals have agency and can actively react toward rationalization in ways that allow for critique and often times lies in contradiction (1981).

Some examples of resistance come from the establishment of San Antonio instructional spaces near districts that do not have a strong mariachi program, and inserting mariachi students in competitions where they were not expected. During Roberto San Diego’s interview, he explained early in his teaching career he made a habit of registering his violin students in orchestra competitions. Whether these critiques were conscious or unconscious is not necessarily the most important factor to keep in mind. What is important is to acknowledge that this sort of agency exists (Halley 1981). Presenting the various strategies that cultural producers of mariachi music utilize is vital to the presentation of mariachi as a cultural object that is dynamic and continually undergoing change.

Roberto San Diego is responsible for his school district’s growth as a harbinger of mariachi education programs. At the onset of his teaching career he explained that while their school had a newly established mariachi program it did not have an orchestra program; however,



this did not stop Roberto from registering his mariachi violinists in a regional orchestra competition. He had his mariachi violinists compete in their mariachi uniform. Roberto explained the reasoning for his decision:

Some orchestra teachers were insecure and have trouble identifying with mariachi music. So, I would look at them and say, 'Look. These mariachi students coming in? There's no two ways about it. He's a mariachi student. If you have any issues—he's going to play for you. You judge him.' We came out with twenty-five ones. I mean, we took twenty-five students, and we took twenty-five first divisions.

In Roberto's own way, he challenged the status quo with the cultural tools that mariachi provided for him. This example of resistance was explicit and deliberate. His effort to normalize mariachi in the music educational system, back at a time when it was still rare, was additionally an effort to show his students and educational administrators in other music programs that mariachi musicians could become proficient musicians. Students wearing their *traje* could play mariachi and orchestra music.

Another example of resistance to rationalization of mariachi music also comes in other less explicit forms. Within the Northside areas of San Antonio, there are less opportunities for students to participate in mariachi programs. This sparked the establishment of a private academy on the Northwest side of San Antonio. Cipriano and Ashley Castro decided that establishing a private academy would provide an avenue of mariachi education outside of the public education system.

This move to establish a private academy was initially a decision that rested upon the effort to provide a music education for population areas in San Antonio that did not have immediate access to it. Cipriano explains their motivations for establishing their private mariachi academy:

[W]e kind of catered to those students who don't have the opportunity like [the southern San Antonio school districts]. We feel like we've made a big difference in those family's lives, because they are being exposed, maybe some of them, to a new culture. For some of them to their parent's, their grandparent's culture.

The opportunity to expand mariachi music's numbers was largely not available for Cipriano and Ashley Castro in terms of public schools in the Northern area of San Antonio, so they decided to take initiative and establish a private academy. Perhaps public school districts in that region of San Antonio may not value exposing their students to mariachi music; however, it seems obvious that there is a market for it. The chance to teach children about the culture of their grandparents also presents the opportunity to transmit cultural history through education.

A similar effort to provide music education outside of the public-school arena was mentioned in an interview with Nico Ramirez. Nico teaches mariachi at a cultural arts center, but was also recently hired to start mariachi programs in some San Antonio charter schools. Nico detailed his efforts and current experience with the charter school program:

I just started a program. It is an after-school program. Now it is going to be during the day, but it is one day a week and two hours out of their schedule. I'm there two hours every Wednesday. I started another program, which is 1 hour every day. I was offered a certain amount, and it wasn't the amount that worried me. It was the time. I can't do much with an hour especially if they're all beginners.

Obviously, there was an issue with the amount of time that was available to him with his student, but the effort to spread mariachi into other avenues is currently taking place in the San Antonio area. The start can be tracked through the growth that many of these instructors cultivated at the public-school level, at various levels with higher education opportunities available.

### *Mariachi Music's Utility as a Spanish Language Educational Tool*

Many interviews with instructors and parents of students involved in mariachi music revealed an interesting and unique aspect to mariachi music's presence in the education system. In the past, many Mexican American students were not allowed to speak Spanish in a classroom setting (Ballón 2015). In contemporary public school, there are now Spanish language courses and mariachi education programs in many schools throughout Texas.

Various mariachi instructors presented the value that mariachi music brings through its use of Spanish language. Ashley Castro recalled the experiences of her grandmother in school, and the ramifications of the restriction of the use of their native Spanish language in school:

[I]t wasn't accepted back then, for example my grandma when she went to school she only went till the sixth grade. So, they were punished when they'd speak Spanish, so she didn't teach my mom Spanish. She learned later. So in essence my mom didn't teach me, so I didn't learn until I was older. So now we're going backwards, because a lot of people knew Spanish and now they're like, 'No, you need to know Spanish.' So, it's kind of going backwards, but we do teach through the lyrics and we'll talk about the meanings.

For some mariachi instructors, there is an opportunity to use the Spanish language in a classroom setting, which was not the general experience of many elder Mexican American generations (Ballón 2015). Mariachi instructors do not have to be explicit in their instruction of the Spanish language, but in many ways mariachi's presence in an educational setting is reclaiming a part of culture and reversing the infringement and prejudice that was experienced by some of these instructors and their families.

For instructors like Ashley Castro, there's an awareness that a lesson in cultural immersion for her students is important. One of her tactics is to instruct in Spanish. Ashley mentions that, "Sometimes I'll be crazy and just do the whole lesson in Spanish. Some kids will

be like, 'I only understood like every tenth word.' I'm like, 'Great!'" At the very least, it normalizes the expectation that the Spanish language can be an active part of their educational lesson.

Whether these efforts are seemingly effective in preserving the Spanish language in younger Mexican American generations is questionable. Some informants on the cultural receiver side seemed to reflect this particular sentiment. Fernando, a parent of a student in a mariachi program, mentioned that:

People can sing in Spanish and don't know what they're singing, like Selena! Yeah, that's the way I look at it, because nowadays most of these kids don't know Spanish. The way they were brought up you know? When I hear people singing I don't know what they're saying, but I can feel it.

Here Fernando shows that perhaps mariachi music does not transmit knowledge of the Spanish language in an efficient manner.

However, another cultural receiver had a different perspective. This cultural receiver is a mother of current mariachi students. Victoria mentioned that some of these young children are interested in knowing what it is that they are singing about when they sing in Spanish. Victoria, a mariachi aficionado and parent of a mariachi student mentioned that:

One time, I was getting after her for being on the phone, and it turned out that she was looking up the lyrics to one of the songs that she learned, recently. 'I sing them, but I'm reading them so I know what the words are.'

For some students, there is enough interest in mariachi music that part of the music lesson is learning exactly what they are saying when they sing and perform songs in their repertoire. The various narratives that stem from these two cultural receivers presents the complexities that exist

in regards to their history growing up with or without the ability to speak Spanish, and whether their children are able to learn as much of their native tongue as possible.

It's important to remember that these students, parents, and instructors all have agency. These are individuals who have varying levels of interest in ensuring that the struggles that they experienced in the past for speaking a different language than English. What can be said is that as mariachi music becomes more rationalized in the educational system, there is an opportunity to ensure that Mexican culture and the Spanish language have a space to flourish.

### *Mariachi's Cultural History in the Classroom*

Currently, there is flexibility in how mariachi classes are conducted. Since there is no set curriculum, there is agency endowed upon the various instructors when they decide how to conduct their classes. On a base level, was expected that many instructors would focus on the technical aspects of instrumentation and choral singing for most classes. However, some instructors emphasized that over time they have often included historical lessons of important mariachi groups or singers.

A mariachi history lesson enables an orientation in regards to the significance of mariachi and where it came from. Roberto San Diego succinctly explains his reasoning in regards to teaching the historical progression of mariachi instead of merely focusing on just technical literacy of mariachi instruments and vocalization:

Well, of course, as an instructor, some feel it is important some people feel it is not important. I'm more geared to be well rounded so we talked the history of the groups and the progression. Where it started from, and where we are today. We talked—we also let them know the struggles and how they are benefiting from people before them who have gone through—who fought the good fight.

When Roberto used to teach mariachi music in public schools he was teaching cultural history as well as music along with the individuals that made mariachi available for students today.

In some programs, it can prove difficult to teach an aspect of mariachi's cultural history due to time restrictions, and former mariachi instructors believe that this aspect of mariachi education needs more emphasis. Rhona Garza mentions this when she discussed ways to improve mariachi education:

It's very important to know why they're playing the music that they're playing. Where did it come from? You know? It would be like us teaching about our country, but not teaching about who our fore-fathers were... [c]an it be improved? The mariachi educational system? I think that should be a prerequisite. The historical. [W]here it all comes from, because it makes sense. You have to know where you come from to know where you're going to go. I think it is very, very important to teach the kids that.

Teaching the historical aspects of mariachi is teaching where the culture was, how it started, and how it arrived at its current state. It can be difficult to think of any musical genre as an ever-changing cultural object, but teaching the history of a particular musical style can facilitate this kind of thought.

Perhaps a standard curriculum would allow for this type of education to become a part of mariachi instruction. Certainly, the push for rationalization and standardization of mariachi music in school systems would allow for this notion to eventually take place. In either case, many of the former and present mariachi instructors felt that part of their strategy in educating their students is to specifically expose them to mariachi memories of the past. Nico Ramirez states that, "It is just a service to the students to open up that realm to give them a portal to the past. You don't have to a part of the Smithsonian or work for a museum." This builds a cultural knowledge that may not have been widely available were mariachi music still relegated to

previous mode of knowledge transmission, which essentially boiled down informal instruction from experienced mariachi musicians.

### *Conclusion*

This section on mariachi's emergence in the public-school system was instructive in identifying the many strengths and limitations that come with the growing move to institutionalize mariachi music. Some of the varying struggles described by instructors explicates the issues that come with funding, and the motivations that many of these instructors have to preserve mariachi music. The motivation to change the general perception of mariachi music as *cantina* music has created a new space for mariachi music to thrive. Additionally, some of these instructors identified new avenues where mariachi is growing such as charter schools, and private academies for regions where San Antonio school districts have not moved to offer mariachi music.

### THE RISE OF WOMEN IN THE SAN ANTONIO MARIACHI SCENE

The representation of gender within mariachi music is an important topic of discussion as it highlights the changes that musical communities undergo over time as society and social norms change. Throughout most of the interviews conducted with individuals involved in the mariachi community in San Antonio, gender inevitably came up as an important topic of discussion. Specifically, discussion usually veered towards mix-gendered mariachi groups, all-female mariachi groups, and the perceived increase of women involvement in the local San Antonio mariachi community and what it means for mariachi music overall.

Table 2: Gender Breakdown of Cultural Producers and Receivers

Gender	Cultural Producers	Cultural Receivers	Total (28)
Male	10	7	17
Female	6	5	11

To demonstrate that women are actively involved in the local mariachi music scene of San Antonio, eleven of the twenty-seven individuals interviewed for this study thus far were women. Table 2 breaks down the particular gender totals between cultural producers and receivers. Between cultural producers and receivers, there was an equal amount of female representation for both categories. In total, there were ten women involved in this study. Five of them were cultural producers, and the other five were categorized as cultural receivers.

There were varying standpoints that men and women within the local mariachi community provided in regard to the phenomenon of women in mariachi. Considering this, it was necessary to discuss some of the standpoints that men and women had on the topic of gender in mariachi, along with some of the narratives and perspectives that were prevalent. The added dynamic of how cultural receivers felt in regards to women's involvement in mariachi was also an added nuanced quality that was important as well.

In many ways, the theoretical perspective of doing gender breaks down much of the analyzed themes surrounding the data. West and Zimmerman (1987) presented the theoretical concept of doing gender as a concept in which gender differences are constructed and created between women and men, while social stages allow for the expression of what is deemed a perceived essential nature of a particular gender. This theoretical perspective overtly translates



some of the common dynamics expressed in these interviews between women and men in mariachi groups.

As an example, the *charro* outfit, the typical suit that mariachi wear, has operated as a masculine symbol for Mexican-origin individuals (Najera-Ramirez 1994). Additionally, some individuals have expressed that men are the only individuals that truly capture the true spirit of mariachi music (Mulholland 2007). This shows that in many ways, women's involvement in mariachi groups is a traditional break for many individuals. Mariachi music holds particular gendered notions for many individuals, which presents challenges for some of the early women who are considered pioneers in the mariachi community of San Antonio.

It is important to note that despite this general masculine notion present in mariachi, women's involvement in mariachi is not a new phenomenon. Mulholland (2013), identified how women have a storied history as mariachi singers in early Mexican cinema, though it was still a rarity for women to participate in mariachi groups as instrumentalists. In some ways, the notion of women instrumentalists in mariachi groups was not a gendered norm. During this time, it was normal for them to sing, but a rare sight to witness a woman performing as an instrumentalist. Similarly, Valdez and Halley (1996) identified finding formalized instruction as one of the difficulties that women faced in *conjunto* music as most *conjunto* music is learned through informal instruction.

However, in the nineteen-seventies, notable women like Rebecca Gonzales and Laura Sobrino became a part of the mariachi music scene in Los Angeles, which signaled that women were actively seeking participation, although, not without tension among some of the older men already involved (Sheehy 2006). Now in contemporary times, the participation of women in mariachi is a more common occurrence especially in the local San Antonio music scene. There is

a myriad of reasons attributed for the increase of women's participation in mariachi, which prompts discussion for some of these contributing factors that came up throughout many of the various interviews.

One of the main factors that many cultural producers identified for the increase in female participation in mariachi music was directly tied to the implementation of mariachi music as a viable extracurricular school activity. Freddie Riojas, who currently teaches music in a public school, casually brought this notion up and mentioned that, "Yeah, girls can be in mariachi. It being in schools made it easier." This is important to note as it distinctly separates itself in comparison to other local musical styles such as *conjunto*. *Conjunto* music has not had the benefit of entrenching itself within the educational system at the scale that mariachi presently finds itself in. Valdez and Halley (2001) have extensively shown that the conditions in which *conjunto* music is performed and how it is often informally taught contributes to this difference.

While there is more access for women to participate in mariachi due to the educational conditions that allow for this change to take place, many interview respondents felt it was necessary to identify the women who came before mariachi's implementation into educational settings as an integral reason for the increasing involvement of women in mariachi. For example, Roberto, a current mariachi performer and recently retired mariachi teacher, noted that *Mariachi Los Camperos* was an important mariachi in his view for, "The fact being, they were the first to have a female professional in there." In addition, Arturo Gonzalez mentioned that female performers in mariachi was not a new occurrence, but made the distinction that, "In Mexico there were girl groups for a lot of years, and in Los Angeles too, in the sixties. Then all of the sudden, you didn't see any. They finally came back because of the schools." So according to Arturo,

females in mariachi made a comeback due to the proliferation of mariachi music in the public education system though it was not something completely new to mariachi.

In this thematic section, the disruption of typical gender roles and the difficulties of entering a gendered arena dominated by men will be evident. To analyze these thematic occurrences in detail, focus was paid toward a particular informant's experience in a male-dominated mariachi group, many of the male's perspective on women's emergence in the mariachi music scene, experiences of women in all-female mariachi groups, and finally the nuanced perspective of women's presence in mariachi from cultural receivers.

#### *A Woman's Persistence to Thrive in the San Antonio Mariachi Music Scene*

One can only imagine the difficulty for women in an overwhelmingly male dominated music genre. Fortunately, during this research, one of the individuals that agreed to an interview is a great example of the challenges that a lone woman may face when involved in a mariachi group that is predominantly male. Rhona Garza was the first professional female member for two different mariachi groups that presently have regional acclaim and notoriety in the San Antonio area. When trying out for the first mariachi group that she eventually became a part of she noted that:

It was difficult cause there had been another female that had tried, and was not accepted. Didn't make it. I guess I was very self-driven. I was eighteen, you know? I really wanted to do this. I had a lot of things against me, so when I came here I guess they kind of saw it—not just the directors—more of the members didn't take it seriously. Like, 'she's probably not going to last.'

Rhona had to have strong will and determination in order to become a part of the first mariachi group that she was involved in. Without that, she could have faced the same fate as the previous female that had tried to become a part of that group.

The reality of the barriers that women faced in a largely male dominated music genre is further illuminated by Rhona's experience when auditioning for the first professional group for which she eventually became a member. She explains that she was told during her first audition process in a professional mariachi group that, "If you're going to be here you're going to have to a.) play better than all the guys, just as good if not better, b.) sing just as good or if not better, and c.) you can't play the viola." Rhona had to go above and beyond to make sure that she was more than capable, and deserved her spot in this mariachi group as opposed to another male occupying that spot. She had to be an exceptional member in the group, she had to be able to exhibit that she deserved her place in this mariachi group by being able to surpass the ability of her male counterparts, while simultaneously learning how to play violin since viola isn't a typical instrument that mariachi groups utilize.

Another participant, Nayelee Montalvo also discussed the difficulty of joining a predominantly male mariachi group when her previous involvement in mariachi came up in her respective interview. Nayelee noted that:

When I think of an all-female group, I automatically think back to when that first lady started playing in all-guy groups. You know? They're really tough. They won't let you play with them unless you're a top-notch musician... it was more of, 'Can you play your instrument? Can you sing?'

Both these women, Nayelee and Rhona, were able to represent their gender in mariachi groups that at one point did not have any female mariachi members. These women, along with many

others, had a hand in slowly normalizing the presence of women in some of the local mariachi groups in San Antonio.

Some of Rhona's experiences described in further detail explicates the issues that some of the early female mariachis had to face as the sole female mariachi in a mariachi group due to mariachi sensibilities and stereotypes. When speaking about her first experiences joining the first mariachi group she was a part of she noted that, "Mexican tradition was women should not be playing and performing this type of music. Especially because mariachi was at that point seen a lot in the *cantinas*... it just wasn't a place for a woman to be, I guess." Initially, this was the normalized understanding of the space in which mariachi largely performed, which made it difficult for individuals in the mariachi community to accept that women could be a part of the San Antonio mariachi community.

Similarly, Valdez and Halley (2001) revealed similar gender obstacles that existed in the *conjunto* music scene and the Mexican American music world in general. This is important to note as it identifies the obstacles that women face in these male dominated music genres. As an example, some logistical issues often occurred for Rhona as the only female mariachi in her group. Often times, this had to do with instances such as performing out of town. Rhona describes in detail:

We would travel out of town, on tour, and there would be one dressing room. So, I'd be like, 'Well, I'm going to go find a dressing room somewhere.' One time, I'll never forget. We performed in Dallas... it had only one tiny trailer. All the guys had to pile in there. We got there so late, so we had to hurry up to get dressed. There's no place for me to change... so I had to run across the street to Wal-Mart, find a restroom and change, you know?

On its face, this inconvenience may seem insignificant, but this along with the expectations that these mariachi groups had for the first woman involved in mariachi compounds the typical hurdles that existed for women that were breaking barriers within the social world of mariachi music.

In other situations, being the only woman in a mariachi group, on the surface, sounded like a benefit. However, there were consequences for these perceived benefits, which shows how complicated it is to traverse the personal presentation of one's self along with the various relationships that must be maintained in order to continue being a part of a mariachi group. The next two examples from Rhona's interview provide this notion in detail:

...people started raising their eyebrows like, 'Oh, there's a female here.' So, it became the attraction at one point. So, when they'd be doing interviews the first person they'd come to was myself or the director, but everyone had the same question, 'How does it feel? How does it feel, you're breaking barriers? How does it feel you're the only female here?' So there, you know, a little bit of jealousy...

Members in her group were not happy with the amount of attention that she received for being the only woman in this respective mariachi group. So, while the benefit of standing out propelled her into a point of interest with media outlets it did not sit well with some of her fellow band members.

Another example of similar tension was brought up by Rhona when she began explaining the various issues that travel arrangements presented for the band. Rhona said:

We would travel and stay in hotels and the guys would share 3 or 4 guys to a room. I always had my own room, so that started creating a little bit of animosity between— 'Well, why does she get the special treatment?' I would just smile and say, 'Sorry! Hey, I'm a girl...' It was tough. It took a lot for me to have to prove myself to them.

On the one hand, Rhona was able to have a hotel room to herself, however, this benefit resulted in resentment and animosity from some of the male members of the mariachi group. There was a cost for this perceived benefit. The male-dominated arena of mariachi and the music business in general can be difficult to navigate for a woman. There were moments of tension between Rhona and her mariachi group members.

These examples exhibit various power dynamics where a Foucauldian analysis of power is instructive. Rhona's presence as a singular woman in a mariachi group can simultaneously have benefits and limitations in regards to power. Rhona experienced positive benefits as the only woman in a predominately male mariachi group through perks like a personal hotel room, and recognition from media organizations for her unique position. However, she simultaneously was critiqued for these benefits and may have suffered for these perceived benefits. Foucault's (1982) power perspective is important in that it allows for the identification of this nuanced and complex reality that exists in power relationships.

### *The Male Perspective on Women in Mariachi*

To better understand how the increasing presence of women in mariachi was received by the mariachi community in San Antonio, it is important to flesh out the various perspectives that resulted from their male counterparts throughout these interviews. There was an interesting and complicated distinction between the way male cultural producers felt about all-female mariachi groups and the general increase of women's involvement in mariachi. For clarity, some male cultural producers were supportive of all-female mariachi groups, however, these male cultural producers also had particular views that showed that this acceptance is complex.

Norberto, a mariachi performer in his mid-twenties, acknowledged that the emergence of all-female mariachi groups developed as a reaction toward the *machismo* that is pervasive in mariachi music, "...The guys? You keep your thing 'all *macho*.' We'll start our own thing." Cipriano, a musical director for an all-female mariachi group in the San Antonio area, had much to say when female participation in mariachi came up during our interview, he stated that, "It's great! I think it's—I don't think it should be male dominated. It's music... everybody has a chance." Certainly, Cipriano serves as an example of someone who has done his part to make sure that these types of groups are able to thrive and keep the mariachi community large and expansive.

Despite some of the noted support that some male performers and instructors have for females in mariachi, other male mariachi performers and instructors took issue with aspects of all-female mariachi groups in particular. For example, Mateo Gaspar, a private mariachi instructor and performer, mentioned the following in regards to his feelings over the emergence of all-female mariachi groups when they perform:

You hear the voices and you hear the thickness of the male voice, and when you put a female voice in there it doesn't really... maybe if she sings by herself it is different. If you put a whole group of female's singing mariachi songs, I really don't like it. I know there are some really good mariachi musicians, but as good as they can be I still don't like it, you know? When they sing, [sigh] I don't know.

The distinction in preference was intriguing, for the confusion it often created during the process of the interview. When further pressed on this particularity Mateo again mentioned that, "You know, I don't know. It just doesn't sit well. It's not what I'm used to listening to."

This distinction may stem from the historical nature of typical mariachi music. Many mariachi songs have choruses in which the whole group sings in unison. Several male cultural



producers did not take issue with the lone female solo singer, but a chorus of female singers was largely considered unsatisfactory. Arturo described a chorus of female mariachi singers by saying, “If there’s a lot of girls? Here in San Antonio? Any mariachi girl that you hear singing is screeching.” Mateo also mentioned a similar sentiment when trying to identify his discomfort with a chorus of female mariachi performers that he directed at a mariachi conference, “You hear the *coros* [chorus] and it doesn’t have that [punches his hand] punch, you know? Because of the voices, you know? The color of their voices just doesn’t go... they played incredible, sang in tune, but it doesn’t have that punch.”

Despite this stated problem with the all-female chorus, most of these male cultural producers were able to separate this critique and state their praise for the lone female mariachi singer. Mateo further mentioned that, “You’re not used to listening to that timbre of voice. Unless it is a female singer by herself. My favorite *ranchera* singer, female, Lucha Villa... individual singers, *si me gusta*.” The rise of women in mariachi music is an adjustment for some of the male mariachi performers and instructors for the reason that it is still new and for some, unfamiliar. Many of these individuals grew up listening to old traditional mariachi groups such as *Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán*<sup>3</sup>, which have never had a female in their mariachi group despite their long and storied career.

There is tension that many of these men mentioned due to typical gender roles that were perpetuated in the traditional form of mariachi music. In many ways, a mariachi containing no female performers or a single woman in a mariachi group was the common gendered norm for mariachi music. Pérez (2002) mentioned how other renowned mariachi groups such as *Mariachi*

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<sup>3</sup> *Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán* is one of the oldest mariachi groups still in existence (Jáuregui 2007). They were also mentioned by many respondents as the premier group that is true to the traditional mariachi sound.

*Los Camperos* and *Mariachi Sol de México*<sup>4</sup> had single female positions in their mariachi groups as gendered token positions in response to the growing demand for the female voice in mariachi.

Whatever the case is this certainly explains the rationale that Mateo has over his acceptance for the lone female singer versus an entire all-female mariachi group. Aside from the traditional nature of mariachi music as a masculine endeavor, the unfamiliar territory of many women encompassing most of a mariachi group can leave older mariachi performers in an uncomfortable position. Over time, the eventual pervasiveness of mariachi music into the public education system in San Antonio has steered mariachi in a new direction. A direction toward the normalization of women in mariachi groups and slowly changing typical gender roles that are pervasive in mariachi music. Resistance toward prototypical gender norms has emerged in the form of women instrumentalists, all-female mariachi groups, and mixed-gendered mariachi groups.

#### *All-Female Mariachi Groups in San Antonio: Rewriting Mariachi Traditions and Gender Roles*

Most female mariachi performers that participated in an interview for this study participated in an all-female mariachi group to some capacity at some point in their career. In the interest of understanding the motivations and standpoints that these performers had in participating in an all-female mariachi group it is necessary to thoroughly discuss the particular experiences that these women elaborated on, at length. Highlighting these experiences may serve as vital lessons on the experiences that many women have when they participate in any cultural art form that is dominated by men.

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<sup>4</sup> *Mariachi Los Camperos* and *Mariachi Sol de México* were groups that were formulated in California, and are headed by important musical directors in the mariachi music scene. (Sheehy 2006).

First, many women specifically designated all-female mariachi groups as groups that have a unique comfort that is often not found in a mixed-gender group. When speaking on all-female mariachi groups, Nayelle noted that, “There’s a little bit of an ‘our house’ feeling.” Anairis, a current member of an all-female mariachi group in her early twenties, had a similar sentiment, and noted that, “It seems more at home... you feel the love; you feel the care.”

For these women, it seemed obvious that all-female mariachi groups have grown in the local San Antonio area. Ashley mentioned that, “It’s grown a lot since the seventies and eighties, since I’ve started playing, just in San Antonio alone, there have been about ten female groups that have been created.” Despite the high amount of all-female mariachi groups just in the San Antonio area, Ashley also mentioned that, “They haven’t lasted very long there are only a few that have lasted.”

The growth of all-female mariachi groups stems from a notion of women empowerment that is reflective of the shift in opinion over what women are capable of in contemporary society. Anairis, a current member of an all-female mariachi group, eloquently details this shift:

We’re out here to prove that we can do it. Just because we’re of a different sex doesn’t mean that we’re strangers to the music, strangers to the notes. We can do that. I feel that the empowerment that women have, and the empowerment movement that’s been going on definitely helped others to see the importance of women as musicians.

This mindset is reflective on what all-female mariachis mean for women and the mariachi community at large. Other individuals have written in regards to the transformative power that mariachi can have for women as it is a non-traditional gendered role for Mexican American women (Pérez 2002). In many ways, all-female mariachi groups are providing a sound that was not an original aesthetic, while simultaneously giving the genre of mariachi more depth and

inclusion. The general perspective that mariachi music is a symbol of masculinity is slowly being turned on its head over time.

All-female mariachi groups have effectively entered a masculine gendered arena and effectively constructed a space where they are able to embody traditional Mexican music despite criticisms from their male counterparts. Some women in all-female mariachi groups have noted that despite the criticism that they receive, women have made strides in representing themselves in a relatively new gender arena. Some of the criticism all-female mariachi groups face in this gendered music genre was evident when Anairis mentioned that:

Rhona Garza was actually one of my mentors and teachers when I was very young. She definitely inspired me because she was a female in a very predominantly male society... even in mariachi there's a lot of *machismo*, and we still get that nowadays. It's twenty-seventeen, but we still get that. 'Oh, you guys are women? That's not mariachi music,' you know?

For Anairis, Rhona's career has served as an example that mariachi music can incorporate women despite the masculine overtones that bubble to the surface of discussion in regards to what is or is not mariachi music in regards to the gendered sensibilities that are evident in the mariachi music form.

*All-Female Mariachi Groups: Doing Gender in Traditional Mariachi Songs.*

As all-female mariachi groups make their presence known in mariachi music, there are notable differences identified throughout several interviews. The entrance into the traditionally masculine arena of mariachi has brought plenty of criticism—as noted earlier in the discussion from the male cultural producer perspective. It is important to note some of the differences that come with the formulation of all-female mariachi groups. There are certain strategies that are

undertaken by members of all-female mariachi groups in order to perform, and elements of their performance make it a unique endeavor that is worth identifying and discussing.

For all-female mariachi groups, a notable difference in performance stems from the fact that on a technical and rudimentary level, all-female mariachi groups have to adjust key signatures for the fact that most women tend to sing in a higher register than men. Often times, this leads to a difference in the sound of songs that are typically performed, so some mariachi groups have to rewrite compositions in ways that allow for a song to flourish with the aesthetic sensibilities of an all-female mariachi group. Cipriano Castro<sup>5</sup>, a male music director for an all-female mariachi group, identifies this strategy further:

[M]ost directors what they do, or some directors, they kinda just take what's written and transcribe it and transpose it. It's the same arrangement, but just in a different key for a female voice. Well, what happens to that is that it begins to change the way the music sounds. Even though it is the same notes it just doesn't sound the same to the ear anymore, and the song loses its value as far as the musicality a little bit. Because it was originally written for that key.

This shows that there are different strategies that must be undertaken for a quality presentation of mariachi as a cultural object with an all-female mariachi group.

Cipriano further details the extra labor that he must engage in due to the difference in vocal range that women have:

So, what I have to do is completely take off the music, keep the chord structure. And the arrangement's fills and all that? Completely new ones. So now it fits the voice of

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<sup>5</sup> Cipriano is a male musical director for an all-female mariachi group. I decided to utilize his commentary due to his experience as someone who has worked with an all-female mariachi group, and a mixed-gender mariachi group. While this may seem problematic, I found his unique input vital to the discussion of the compositional dynamics required for an all-female mariachi group.

vocalists and the music lends itself to the parts that I choose or that I rewrite lends itself to the whole structure of the song. So, and that's—there is no—there's not a lot... there's hardly any literature as far as for female vocalists. So that's every time we get a song, we have to rewrite it for the female voice.

Here, Cipriano mentions a detail in passing that is notable. Most mariachi literature, lyrics, are often written with the expectation that men will sing the particular arranged melodic content. Due to this implicit expectation, Cipriano has to go to great lengths to ensure that the music that the all-female group that he is the musical director for has an aesthetic quality that has a reverence to the expectations of mariachi cultural producers.

The lack of lyrical content from a woman's perspective was identified as something that is slowly changing as more women are involved in mariachi. Alvarado's (2007) work identifies how many songs sung in mariachi are full of *machismo* along with the male exploits achieved in revolutionary Mexico. In regards to classic mariachi songs, Anairis stated what she has seen members in her all-female mariachi group typically do when singing songs that were not written from a female perspective:

We don't really decide what we do or don't do. It just kind of comes naturally. I know for example, if a girl is singing by herself she'll sing it in the female version of the song. Instead of *el* it will be *ella*. If it was in a duet another male singing with her they would stick with the male. Other than that, it's just how the singer wants to sing it.

The particular mariachi group that Anairis is a part of does not necessarily get together and negotiate how a singer should sing a particular song, but instead allows for agency in interpretation for a woman singing solo. The way gender is presented lyrically when sung seems a negotiated aspect for the singer from Anairis's experience.

Other mariachi women have engaged in this lyrical agency as well. Rhona mentions how many female mariachi singers change the lyrical content of mariachi songs, and had music written from their perspective in order to rectify the overwhelming male perspective in mariachi.

Rhona mentions that:

Almost all the lyrics, the women have to sing as if they're speaking from the man's perspective. However, there are groups now, all-female groups in Mexico... certain artists were able to open the doors for people such as myself and other females. They would sing a lot of the male-dominated songs—the male songs—but they started to change the lyrics. Either change the lyrics or have songs written for them, for the woman.

Rhona also mentioned that a lot of the inclusivity of women in mariachi was sustained due to the integration of mariachi in public schools throughout the United States.

It is not hard to imagine how strange it might feel to sing lyrics that are overtly masculine like the song *El Rey* [the king], which is considered a staple of mariachi music. Here are some of the lyrics originally written by José Alfredo Jiménez (1971), “*No tengo trono ni reina, ni nadie que me comprenda, pero sigo siendo El rey* [I have no thrown nor queen, nor anyone who understands me, but I'm still the king].” Considering these lyrics, it is not hard to imagine why some women might favor songs tailored to their perspective or changed during performances.

Over time, the changing embodiment of who can become a mariachi performer changes the way many of these songs are interpreted. So, while women may not have been a part of the original sound of mariachi their presence serves as a critique of what was once an uncontested gender arena. Now that mariachi music is more accessible, there's an opportunity for women to influence and promulgate the culture that they grew up with. The additional presence of mariachi in public education guarantees continued influence that women can have on the future direction of mariachi music.

### *Cultural Receivers on the Rise of Female Mariachis*

The relative prominence of women in mariachi also came up for various aficionados. Their perspective was unique on the matter enough to focus on what the increase of women in mariachi means for them. Some of their perspective stemmed from a place where equality was an accepted, while others related it toward taste and preference. There were differing perspectives, but anytime the topic of gender arose for some of the various cultural receivers they often revealed revelatory nuanced responses. Interestingly enough, there were certain songs that seemed relevant for some cultural receivers in terms of gender appropriate music.

An example of someone who was completely accepting of women in mariachi was Orfelinda Sanchez, a mother of mariachi students and aficionado of mariachi music. Orfelinda espouses on her perspective further:

Females being involved in mariachi? I think it's great. I like to see a mixed-mariachi. Not just an all-female or an all-male mariachi because I'll enjoy it much more when the male sings *El Rey* [the king] or when the female sings *Volver* or she's grasping at my own heart as a female. When a guy is singing to my *reyna* [queen] over here, in that sense I really am all for it. Yay, for it happening!

Interestingly enough, she seemed to prefer a mixed-mariachi because she preferred the fulfillment of gendered archetypes when she listens to a particular mariachi song. On a conscious level, there are gendered expectations that Orfelinda has when she listens to mariachi music, and perhaps her personal history may play a role as to this particular preference to maintain a male singer for a song like *El Rey* [the king].

Another aficionado by the name of Katherine Treviño has a particularly interesting observation on what signaled the growth of women in mariachi. She relates to what women do in



mariachi now versus her upbringing in Mexico, and her experience witnessing women in Mexican cinema:

They were always singing between the movies, in the chapters of the movies they were singing. I remember that they were always the boyfriend and the girlfriend. The boyfriend was singing to the girlfriend, but then the girlfriend would answer back and sing to the boyfriend. I think it's always been where the female singers are singing with the mariachi, but now it is more—you can see more where the mariachi ladies are playing [instruments] also. Not only singing.

Here Katherine reveals how her history with mariachi has guided her present observation on the expectations when women are involved in mariachi music. The gendered expectations of mariachi in cinema was to portray the prototypical call and response between a romantic couple where they express their feelings to each other through song; however, Katherine is keen enough to recognize that this dynamic is no longer the only space for women in the mariachi world.

Katherine identifies that women in contemporary times can play instruments. No longer is the expectation restricted to women singing as she remembers in early Mexican cinema. Gender roles in mariachi music are largely becoming contested, and this contestation is noticed by cultural receivers with varying degrees of acceptance. Another cultural receiver, Samuel, has noticed this change over time, since his daughter is currently involved in a local all-female mariachi group. Samuel mentions the following in regards to the growing acceptance of females in mariachi:

It's growing... [w]hen I was younger? Not many. Not many mariachi girls. Only a few but not many. Now I see more everywhere. I see it in different cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, here in San Antonio, in Mexico, even overseas. There's a female mariachi so it's growing. I guess now the people are more open minded now. Because the beginning it was hard for the girls. To be hand-in-hand with male mariachis? It was not accepted in the past.

This further speaks to the notion that, although mariachi music was traditionally seen as a masculine gender arena, that is slowly changing. The various factors that stem from this change stem from multiple sources: the determination of mariachi trailblazers in the San Antonio scene, the education system, and overall changing sensibilities in society.

### *Conclusion*

This thematic section identified the various changes occurring within mariachi music in San Antonio. The increased participation of women in mariachi has created many differing and nuanced perspectives. It appears that many of the individuals that take issue with the increasing presence of women in mariachi are men who also participate in mariachi groups. These differing perspectives are important to highlight as they identify the struggle that women have to go through in order to participate in mariachi, and it also shows that women have successfully carved their own presence in the local mariachi music scene.

### HOW TECHNOLOGY PRESERVES THE MARIACHI TRADITION

Technology has enabled new and innovative ways to easily share information and musical knowledge between people involved in mariachi music today. Technology has allowed mariachi groups and aficionados the ability to access old songs easier, preserve and notate mariachi music, and share information in regards to upcoming musical releases or performances on social media. All of these strategies are rooted in preserving and expanding the mariachi tradition as it allows various ways for the local mariachi community to grow. Throughout the

interview process, it became apparent that the expansion of technological innovation allowed for mariachi to become more accessible. The local mariachi scene of San Antonio has undertaken various strategies to ensure that the mariachi tradition does not erode, and that it becomes further entrenched in the local community.

### *How Do You Play That? Repertoire and Cultural Knowledge Expansion*

Various mariachi performers identified the internet as an invaluable tool to learn compositions that older mariachi groups. Mariachi has existed long enough where some of the performers and instructors were able to identify a time where it was difficult to attain recordings in order to learn songs. Mateo Gaspar identified this difficulty when he was a young man versus the availability of music today:

You don't know a song? You look it up on Google or YouTube. Song lyrics. I remember growing up in the mid-eighties and learning mariachi music. Trying to learn a song you'd have to find an old cassette, listen to it, I'd have to look for it at the flea market or the store, they don't have it? The lady would say, 'Oh, I know what cassette you're talking about, but we don't have it but I can order it for you. It'll be five, six dollars for a cassette, but it'll be in fifteen days.'

The delay for particular songs proved frustrating for Mateo, but now there is an immediate bank of mariachi songs available thanks to search engines that instantly provide a way to learn music quickly.

Mateo expands on what technological innovation like the internet provides for so many mariachi musicians when he explains that:

[N]owadays it is at the tip of your fingers. Everything and anything that you can think of. *Sones*, *guapangos*, old songs, old recordings, and things I used to die for. You know? To

have a collection. Some of the old *Mariachi Vargas* recordings. Now everything is on YouTube. You'll find it... sharing music, sharing arrangements. You know, it is opportunities for mariachi musicians to elevate their game to another level. Learning more songs more *repertorio* [repertoire].

This expansion of repertoire also allows for the recorded history of mariachi music to be readily accessible for individuals involved in mariachi today.

A great example of this is the way Norberto describes expanding his repertoire when he decided he wanted to start taking mariachi music seriously as a career.

I remember when I first started. One summer... I would type in mariachi and all these videos would come up, and I would just sort of play along... YouTube is something. Everyone talks about, 'We didn't have YouTube back then.' So yeah, it's been helpful. Even today you can look up old videos of *Mariachi Vargas*, Jose Alfredo. 'How does this song go? It goes like this, like this. Check the recording.' So that's your reference. It's been a real big help... There's karaoke videos so you can practice the singing.

Norberto's entrance into mariachi music was later than some of the individuals interviewed. He started playing mariachi music regularly once he was studying music at the university level. The access to music through the internet was unheard of during Mateo's entrance into mariachi music. The generational contrast over access to mariachi content allows for mariachi music to continue its evolutionary foray for years to come.

Norberto's experience learning mariachi music due to access on the internet also speaks to the ingenuity that mariachi performers now have access to. The use of karaoke videos in order to learn how to sing a particular mariachi song was a particular strategy that did not seem obvious, however, it makes sense because of the way that mariachi music is often performed. Typically, mariachi musicians do not have lyrics in front of them. Memorization is important, and the access to karaoke renditions of particular mariachi songs should allow for repetitious

practice that older mariachi generations did not have access to during their initial foray into their mariachi careers.

### *Write it Down! Mariachi Transcription as a Means of Preservation*

Technology has also allowed for mariachi composers and performers to readily share compositions of mariachi songs. Before, it would've proven more difficult to have access to mariachi music without the advent of mariachi's introduction into traditional music notation.

Cipriano Castro identifies this change when he states that:

[B]efore everything was handwritten... fifteen years ago they started offering the music in print. Like using music writing software. That's really helped the conferences, and it's also helped the top mariachi groups like *Sol De Mexico* get the music out there faster so that we can use as educators. So, we can use as professional musicians ourselves, whereas before everything was just handwritten. So, it was harder for us to get. You know, the email is outstanding for us to communicate and interact with each other. So, I think it's a big part of mariachi now.

This move to notate mariachi music also allows for mariachi groups to share music with anyone that may need the written notation of a musical number they may rehearse or add to their repertoire.

Nayele Montalvo described how the combination of mariachi music notation and the internet allowed her to access music from a mariachi group she was a part of:

[T]here was a folder that said the group's name. I clicked it and all the music was on there, and they said, 'Okay, this is what we're rehearsing.' So, I just printed it out, practiced it, and I didn't have to call anyone and say, 'Hey, do you have the music,' I didn't have to pick it up.

This convenience was not available to mariachi performers in the past. In Halley's (1981) work on culture in late capitalism, it was important to identify that technological advancements could provide moments of revolution. For mariachi music, this is provided through the internet and other technological advancements that have made mariachi music more easily accessible.

Perhaps Marcuse's (2013) perspective on technological rationalization did not foresee the way technology's utility would provide for the preservation of cultural art forms. These examples of technology's utility toward the expansion of mariachi musical repertoire and preservation provides revolutionary praxis for mariachi musicians. Technological innovation has provided opportunities to record their cultural history on their terms.

Music transcription software that streamlines mariachi arrangements for those involved in mariachi composition and recording is an additional way that mariachi musicians can contribute to their cultural preservation. Rhona Garza notes that:

[T]hey've actually integrated mariachi instrumentation into the *Finale* program. Before it was very generic sounding instruments, now there's actually a *vihuela*, *guitarrón*, sound that you hear in there. It is so cool. Now instead of having to transcribe everything by hand, they can actually transcribe it into the computer. Because of that it is widely available to everyone around the world, so now if go online on Google there's a lot of websites where you can purchase mariachi music. Because these people have taken the initiative to write out the music, even write out original arrangements, or create arrangements for artists or groups and sell them.

Efforts to record and transcribe mariachi music is a new practical norm for individuals involved in the music genre. This is due to innovations in technology, and the ability for individuals in the mariachi community to access this technology.

*You Can Find us on Facebook: Social Media's Utility for Mariachi Groups*

Social media has extended the reach that mariachi performers and instructors have in San Antonio. Some performers mentioned that having a social media presence is important, because it allows aficionados to know where they perform. Additionally, this general exposure allows for easy access that leads to booking paid performances. Norberto details the utility that social media has for mariachi:

It has been good for marketing, networking. It's the new way. Even now I see the groups like the big groups like *Vargas* are starting to post on Facebook. It's just like, 'What?' You would never think that. I'm sure they have someone do it, but now they're getting into it. Sometimes you get a message like, 'How much do you charge?'

Social media provides mariachi groups with the opportunity to engage their fans and gives their fans the opportunity to reach out and have a direct avenue to engage with each other.

Cipriano Castro also mentioned the utility of social media for the private mariachi academy that he presently runs with his wife. Cipriano explains how he uses social media to gain new students into his private academy:

We use that. I know we use it for the academy a lot. We have a San Antonio academy page. It's one of those things that pops up on your page, and someone might not be exposed to it or could care less for it. They see it more and it just becomes second nature.

For many performers and instructors, social media is free advertising. Several cultural receivers mentioned how social media connected them to Cipriano's mariachi academy.

Orfelinda Sanchez mentioned how she did not find an appropriate mariachi program for her son until Cipriano started his academy, and began promoting it on social media:

I would here and there would google mariachi schools, mariachi lessons for kids, and I never found anything. Then on Facebook, I believe, the academy showed up. They were just opening up. It said go to our website to learn more, I looked up Mr. and Mrs. Castro, their background. Cause I wanted not just someone to teach it, but to know it.

The reach that instructors and performers have with social media has certainly changed the game for the mariachi scene in San Antonio. It is an inexpensive and innovative way to expand the reach of mariachi music.

### *Conclusion*

The strategy to preserve mariachi music with technology has provided important information on an aspect of the mariachi community that was not obvious at the beginning of this research. However, the data provided by these interviews shows that it is a contemporary aspect of mariachi that requires more attention. Mariachi cultural producers are working to preserve their music in ways that guarantee that their imprint on mariachi culture is lasting. In this sense, technology has provided an avenue where mariachi is more accessible, and demanded that this research address this phenomenon.

### HYBRIDIZATION AND AUTHENTICITY IN MARIACHI MUSIC

The question of authenticity in mariachi garnered interesting perspectives and stories from individuals who were interviewed. In many ways, the question of authenticity is a complex and nuanced topic for individuals involved in any artistic endeavor, mariachi being no exception. Overall, those involved in the local mariachi music scene of San Antonio showed that the line of authenticity varies depending on how one views authentic, traditional mariachi. Some link



authenticity as a call toward a traditional mariachi sound, some revealed that certain instruments are vital for an authentic mariachi sound, and still others refer to authentic mariachi music as music that aspires to be authentic.

The difficulty with pinpointing an authentic representation of mariachi music primarily stems from the notion of hybridization. Néstor García Canclini (1995) posits that Latin American cultures are primarily hybridized through the mixing of European and indigenous cultural proclivities. Mariachi music is no different as instruments such as the guitar, violin, and trumpet are examples of this particular hybridization as these instruments are not native to Mexico (Sheehy 2006). As another example, mariachi music, owes much of its stylistic roots to its conception in Mexico, yet mariachi has appeared in other musical genres such as country and *Tejano* music<sup>6</sup>.

Ultimately, music changes over time, and there is no way to satisfy the rigid expectation that a musical genre have a rigidly set stasis in its sonic qualities and embodied realities. Technology, access to new instruments, and the maturation of a musical form into a globally recognized art form has led to differences of opinion on what is a valid representation or what is an authentic expression of mariachi music. The analysis of this notion shows that mariachi is a living, breathing organism that is constantly changing based on the mariachi's audience and those involved in its cultivation.

*Hey, That Doesn't Go There! Non-Traditional Instruments in Mariachi*

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<sup>6</sup> Prime examples of mariachi's hybridization through genre mixing can be heard with George Strait's rendition of *El Rey* (Strait 2009) and Selena's *No Me Queda Más* (Quintanilla-Pérez 1994).

Mariachi music typically encompasses a variety of instrumentation such as trumpet, guitar, *vihuela*, *guitarrón*, violin, and harp. Most of these instruments were not originally a part of mariachi music, but over time mariachi evolved to include these instruments in a typical mariachi ensemble. Interestingly enough, some individuals that were interviewed expressed how they have gone out of their way to borrow from other musical styles, and have included atypical instrumentation in recordings and performances.

A particular mariachi group, whose members participated in several interviews, is known for navigating the line of what is considered a conventional approach to mariachi music. This particular mariachi group has existed for several decades, and over time were designated as innovators of the mariachi form. This was due to particular musical decisions, but especially through the utilization of non-traditional mariachi instruments. Roberto San Diego, a current member of this particular mariachi group, gave specific examples where they went outside the conventional mariachi instrumentation:

If you want to talk about authenticity, you have to go back to two violins, you got the *guitarra de golpe*, and a harp. Everyone after that? We just took music someplace it hadn't been... it was very controversial what we did. We had the first drummer that we added to—and when we had weddings and stuff he'd play congas and when we did concerts he'd do a trap set.

The line of acceptable instrumentation is a tumultuous one to draw within a music style that has existed for many years. Mariachi music is considered a traditional musical form from Mexico, but it has spread throughout Mexican American populations in the United States. Further hybridization of the musical form has come due to varying influences that many mariachi groups have all around their musical social world. With this understanding in mind, the group that

Roberto is involved with has resisted the idea of traditional mariachi with an understanding that mariachi is more amorphous than people realize.

Roberto demonstrates this notion by questioning what people mean when they draw upon the notion of authenticity. He mentions that authentic mariachi, by some definition, is not variably represented by the typical mariachi ensemble of today. Additionally, traditional instrumentation is further usurped in contemporary recording studios. In recordings, this San Antonio based mariachi group blended other instrumentation largely because they had heard other influential mariachi groups do the same thing in the recording studio. Daniel Salinas mentions that while in the studio, their mariachi group allowed creativity to take them as far as they could go, when he mentions that:

We've heard some horns, flugel horns, French horns, in old *Vargas* stuff? Let's put a full-time trombone player in the group. You know? You've heard some old Vicente stuff where you would hear a saxophone playing some *norteño* type of thing? I'll play saxophone, let's do it! No trumpets. I'll play everything on tenor sax. Just like that, oh wow, blasphemy! You can't be doing that. I go, no. It's been done since the dawn of time! It's evolution!

In the studio, the accessibility to new sounds outside of the traditional mariachi world allowed for the opportunity to hybridize the mariachi form by utilizing instruments typically used in other musical genres.

Ricardo Garcia confirms the sentiment that the recording studio allows mariachi to evolve through his experience as a mariachi performer, and as someone who works for a major label that primarily services a Latino market. What Ricardo had to say about the evolution of acceptable instrumentation in the mariachi form is as follows:

I've incorporated the mariachi style in demos for songwriters, but they wanted it to sound a little country. So, I added some steel guitar, but when you bring in the right player who understands that and how to mix it in then it's going to work... 'Oh, you're doing this with the keyboard and accordion.' Now a lot of recordings in Mexico has a lot of trumpet and accordion stuff like that. Everybody's experimenting in the attempt to make a dollar.

Ricardo's background as a gatekeeper for a major label, while also maintaining his musical identity as a member of a mariachi group informs his perspective that mariachi's convergence with other instruments is informed through his experiences.

Ricardo Garcia also spent plenty of time elaborating how his start into music was through accordion in a *Tejano* band. When he joined a mariachi group interested in blurring the lines of traditional instrumentation, he appeared to be the perfect fit as someone that could add different Latino music elements that are otherwise atypical in mariachi music. Largely, this hybridization makes sense considering the regional local of mariachi music in San Antonio. Throughout Texas, *Tejano* music is a homegrown Mexican American folk music style that has a home in San Antonio.

### *Is That a Pop Song? Inauthentic Repertoire or Strategic Ingenuity?*

Mariachi versions of popular music was presented as non-traditional repertoire in several interviews. For some individuals, this was seen as a tactic utilized to engage potential clientele and audiences that does not listen to mariachi music on a regular basis. This was a phenomenon that various cultural producers identified as a tactic that could eventually lead to a more engaged audience, and ultimately potential future clientele.

Cipriano Castro thought it was an important tactic in order to show that the genre of mariachi music is versatile. Despite the general drive to deliver an authentic product, part of mariachi's legacy is that it is often utilized in a hybridized fashion. Cipriano mentions:

I think it is important and the reason is because you attract different crowds sometimes. Then for example, you can play Glenn Miller or something from Texas. An old folk song from Texas, and attract people. Different types of audiences maybe the type of person who had no care for mariachi, but they like that one tune... [t]hat one song attracted them and brought them to your venue, and now got exposed to ten other beautiful mariachi songs.

Playing an old folk song from Texas is not a typical conception of traditional mariachi music; however, it is something that most mariachi groups utilize in order to garner a following.

In this way, hybridization is a natural strategy that ensures that a mariachi group is able to garner the most out of their audience, while avoiding any limitation on the potential growth of their audience. The line of authenticity is one mired in opinion and perspective, especially in the world of mariachi (Sheehy 2006). For example, while playing an old folk song was seen as an acceptable tactic, Cipriano and the group he is involved in does not mix mariachi with certain genres. Cipriano mentions that, "As far as hip-hop and things like that, I know there are other groups that do that and specialize with that. We kind of leave it up to them." This is not to say that Cipriano is right or wrong on what is authentic traditional mariachi music, rather, this is meant to demonstrate that there are no clear lines on what is considered authentic or traditional.

Cipriano's comment on the hybridization of hip-hop and mariachi together is not overtly negative. However, there were other mariachi performers that explained that hip-hop was a clear line of inauthentic mariachi music. Arturo stated the following in regards to hip-hop and mariachi music:

Authentic? Well, the *sones*, you know? A lot of kids' groups they love to learn or try to play hip-hop with the mariachi, you know? Everyone says, 'Well, it's good. Something different.' How come they don't go into that? Hip-hop. Right? If they're good at it then

form a hip-hop group! Play me a *son* or something! Why do you put that suit at all? You see?

Arturo would rather listen to a mariachi play a traditional *son jalisciense*<sup>7</sup> than listen to a mariachi version of a hip-hop song. A traditional mariachi song may be more authentic than a mariachi rendition of a particular hip-hop song, but this is an example where a melding of cultural music forms may be unappealing for some mariachi performers.

There seems to be a particular effort to maintain a semblance to the history of mariachi music, while simultaneously allowing for change in order to appeal to a particular crowd and era. For some, it is important to hold an awareness of how a mariachi group presents themselves to the public and the rest of the mariachi community. In that effort, Goffman's theory of impression management explains the self-awareness over the debate over what is and is not authentic in mariachi music.

#### *Aspirational Authenticity: Respecting the Past while Innovating the Present*

With the understanding that many mariachi performers vary on the question of authenticity, it is important to reveal some of the perspectives that people in the mariachi community had on what is respectable mariachi music. Many acknowledged that purity in traditional mariachi music is not a tenable goal; however, a reverence for the past and a repertoire that reflected this reverence was mentioned as a way to achieve an authentic mariachi performance.

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<sup>7</sup> A *son jalisciense* is an old rhythmic song that's origin can be traced to various *mestizo* and indigenous groups in Mexico, and is considered one of the oldest traditional mariachi song styles (Sheehy 2006).

Norberto Castillo regularly plays mariachi music as a freelancing musician, and is in his mid-twenties. Norberto went at great lengths to ensure that he had an extensive repertoire that reflected that he was a legitimate mariachi musician. He discussed at length how critical older mariachi musicians are on younger players who try to become a part of the local mariachi community. Norberto shows how these older musicians largely judge whether younger musicians are acceptable based on their knowledge of traditional mariachi songs:

[I]t is important to have that experience because not a lot of people know songs. They play in these big groups, but they don't know a song. 'What song is that?' It's a standard. You get a young guy and he knows all the show tunes. *Cascabel*. All the *sones*. All the songs that everybody does, but I didn't want that to happen to me. So, I did my homework. I had to do my homework... you want to have a balance. '*Tu nomas sabes los canciones del show!*' [You only know show tunes!] So, they don't call you for gigs because you don't know anything.

When Norberto references show tunes, he's speaking in regards to common songs that groups play for big performances. For smaller gigs at restaurants and bars there is more repertoire knowledge required due to the general atmosphere where someone might request a particular song.

Another young mariachi musician seems to corroborate Norberto's perspective on authentic mariachi music. When the topic of authenticity came up for Anairis she stated that:

I'd venture to say that authentic music is what the greats wrote, what our parents grew up with. Jose Alfredo Jimenez. Stuff that Vicente Fernandez would interpret. That's authentic. I think the push for mariachi music to be something different like do different pop songs? That loses its authenticity...

Norberto and Anairis both show a respect for the history of mariachi in the way that they approach their performance repertoire. While they are both in their twenties, they have spent enough time in the mariachi community to understand that the effort to stay true to the mariachi style is an endeavor that is worth confronting.

Arturo Gonzales also elaborates on how authentic mariachi comes from a reverence and an understanding of where mariachi music comes from. Arturo states that:

There's a lot of difference between singing a song and interpreting a song. That comes with experience... [t]he *corazon* [heart] it comes with years, and young kids they don't understand that. They see that they [older mariachis] are passionate. They lived it. It's not something they made up. It is how do you call it? Tradition. In the blood. I get pretty close to it, because my mentor was Victor Cardenas he's considered one of the world's best *vihuela* players.

A reverence for the traditional mariachi form along with the intention to recognize where mariachi was and where it is now is important for many individuals among the San Antonio mariachi community.

### *Conclusion*

This section demonstrates the various ways that mariachi music is hybridized music. Mariachi music continues to change, and constantly finds itself borrowing from various cultural music forms. While mariachi music continually changes, there is an emphasis within the local San Antonio mariachi community to actively discuss how authentic mariachi music should sound. The examples of nontraditional repertoire and instrumentation identifies ways that mariachi music continues to become hybridized.



## THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF MARIACHI MUSIC: RESPONDING TO PREJUDICE

Cultural politics emerged as a relevant theme throughout many interviews, especially during discussion of Sebastien de la Cruz. It was expected that cultural politics would arise in regards to mariachi music and its connection with its move into public education; however, this theme emerged within discussion of Sebastien, instead. Every individual that spoke at length in regards to the controversy sparked by Sebastien's performance said something to the effect that an apolitical act became political for some people on social media.

These people, according to many individuals interviewed, lacked an oriented framework for mariachi music in the United States. While there was plenty of media coverage and interviews with Sebastien de la Cruz, it is important to illuminate the perspectives that members of the mariachi community had on the actual event. Some people interviewed mentioned that they knew Sebastien personally, and described how they found the controversy ironic.

The irony behind the situation stems from the fact that the game before Sebastien's performance, an entire mariachi group performed the national anthem with no issue at all. In fact, according to members from this particular mariachi group, they have had the opportunity to perform the national anthem at Spurs games for years. Ricardo, a member of this particular group, detailed the irony over the social media outrage that occurred over Sebastien's national anthem performance in his interview:

We played the game before, we performed the national anthem. I don't know if Roberto told you this story, but we had been doing the national anthem for the Spurs for years. Supposedly, we were supposed to do the game after. So, when all that happened, 'Uh, we gotta bump you guys.' Put him [Sebastien] back on with the coaches and everything. It worked perfectly for him, you know?

Ricardo and his mariachi group did not perform after Sebastien's fateful performance although they were originally selected to perform after the apparent controversy.

Roberto San Diego said that the original response from the Spurs organization was to book an entire mariachi group as a direct form of protest from the general misplaced prejudice directed at Sebastien de la Cruz. Roberto states that:

[T]his is attributed maybe to where we are in society. Maybe, it is just a testimony as to who the Spurs are. So, no one knows this, but... [w]hen all the stuff happened, the Spurs called us the next day. They said, 'Get ready. You're doing the national anthem the next morning.' So, the Spurs were saying, 'You—you're making fun of a little Mexican boy? Basically, here's fourteen mariachis next time!'

The original move never came to fruition, because according to Roberto, "There was a big radio push, and because of the push, everybody was like, 'Let him sing again!'" However, this story is indicative as to where mariachi music stands within the city of San Antonio. The Spurs as an organization were ready to defy the prejudice that was leveled at Sebastien by bringing an entire mariachi group to perform the national anthem.

Here is where Halley's conception of a resistance to dominant ideology is useful for deconstruction of this situation. Total domination is not something that can realistically be achieved, and subordinate, minority groups can resist this domination through the reliance of their ethnic and cultural intuitions (Halley 1981). The perceived notion that Sebastien de la Cruz was from Mexico arose because he wore the *traje de charro*. However, several people interviewed for this study were clear in mentioning that, although the *traje* is clearly a symbol of Mexico, it is simultaneously a symbol of cultural identity for Mexican Americans in the United States. For Mexican Americans, there is nothing more American than performing the national

anthem in an embodied symbol that represents the complicated history that Mexican Americans have in the United States.

To have this representation present in front of a national audience speaks to the desire to show American society know that Mexican Americans are a part of the American cultural tapestry. Rhona Garza speaks to this notion when Sebastien de la Cruz's performance was mentioned in her interview:

I think it was something that had to be done, because the United States is so diverse. Especially, with the Hispanic community. I thought it was a beautiful representation of fusing the two cultures, because there's so much—like in San Antonio. Everything is Tex-Mex. The language, the food, it's like its own culture. It's so heavy here in San Antonio that I think him taking it out there and singing the national anthem in his *traje* represents who we are. Represented the fusion of the two cultures. I thought that was the best thing he could have done.

The interesting notion of cultural hybridization from Rhona explicitly shows that for her, Sebastien represented this complicated fusion of cultural worlds for the mariachi community and Mexican Americans in the United States.

Sebastien de la Cruz is a huge part of this counter-ideology that allows for Mexican Americans to hold onto their history, identity, and tradition. When looking at this moment, Halley's notion of resistance comes to mind. According to Halley (1981), minority groups in society are able to resist the dominant ideology that society deems acceptable, and these minority groups have agency to utilize their culture in order to express their American experience that speaks to them.

*The Boy in the Traje is American*

Part of the discussion of Sebastien de la Cruz's experience was the fact that many individuals in the mariachi community could relate to his experience. Perhaps not in the way he was treated by individuals over social media, a nascent medium of communication, but rather what he represents in the Mexican American community. According to several interview participants, the notion that he was not from this country was absurd because he was born in San Antonio, but aside from that fact, they had experienced similar situations where they had to dispel the notion that they may not be from the United States. Daniel Salinas mentioned that he could relate to Sebastien's plight because:

It was just people ignorant about it. They hear mariachi, they think mariachi, they think that everybody is from Mexico. It's like, man, we were born here. We were born here. You know? If I'm in a polka band it doesn't mean I'm from Germany. That's just the music I'm playing. The music I'm playing. It was tough, and the thing is what amazed me more wasn't his voice, but his maturity to handle it. You know? The way he spoke.

So, although mariachi has grown enough in Texas and the Southwest United States, there are still people that do not know that there are well established centers of mariachi music outside of Mexico. This may have led to the confusion that some people had when Sebastien performed during the NBA Finals.

Still other respondents brought up the fact that Sebastien de la Cruz shares the experience that many Mexican American children, particularly second and third generation children have in their experience in the United States. Their citizenship status is quickly called into question, and from time to time are labeled as someone from another country. Rhona Garza spoke to this experience when she detailed that:

[I]t was funny how closed minded people were and how quickly they were to judge and give their opinion without really knowing his [Sebastien's] background. I think that happens to a lot of us, you know? I myself am not from Mexico. My mom they're not from Mexico. My great-grandparents they're from Mexico, and my grandfather is from Mexico. So, you know, I'm of Mexican decent, but the same happens to me all the time. 'Oh, you're Mexican,' or 'You're from Mexico. How did you learn English?' No. I was born in the States, you know? My father was in the army. I am American but I'm Mexican American, you know? I have to explain that to people.

In other words, the question of someone's origin was not unfamiliar for Rhona. She is acquainted with the misunderstandings directed at Mexican Americans and individuals like Sebastien in the United States.

Rhona further explained that Mexican Americans are often left feeling they are not Mexican or American enough by associating this experience with a scene from the movie *Selena*.

Rhona states that:

I don't know if you've seen the movie *Selena*? That one scene where Edward James Olmos talks about not being Mexican enough when you go to Mexico and when you're here you're not American enough. It's like we're stuck in the middle, and I think that's where Sebastien's portrayal of it was. It's kind of like in the middle.

This interesting phenomenon is something that was a familiar feeling for many interviewed throughout. It's not hard to imagine that individuals involved in the mariachi community have to go through these situations more often due to their involvement in mariachi music.

#### *Normalizing Mexican American Faces in Mainstream Media Through Sebastien*

The response toward Sebastien de la Cruz's performance was not completely negative. Aside from the San Antonio Spurs' request to have Sebastien perform a second time, some of the individuals that were interviewed depicted ways in which the Mexican American community

rallied around Sebastien in order to push back on the negative outpour on social media. Some of this was through the promotion of Sebastien to a level where he had more exposure and opportunity to work his way into other forms of media.

Lydia Muniz is a member of the mariachi community that helped revitalize one of the biggest mariachi festivals, the *Mariachi Extravaganza*, in San Antonio. When speaking in regards to the opportunities that Sebastien de la Cruz gained after his initial Spurs game performance, Lydia mentioned that:

Eva Longoria works with him. You know he was in her *telenovela* television series this year that aired on ABC, NBC I don't know what network. More doors are opening up for him in pictures and film. He did a short film with Ricardo Chavilla who played Eva Longoria's husband on *Desperate Housewives*. That's going to be the future. I really think that's going to be the future for our kids to go into entertainment.

Eva Longoria, a national Mexican American icon, took it upon herself to feature Sebastien de la Cruz in mainstream television.

In addition to this opportunity, Sebastien de la Cruz participated in *America's Got Talent*. Lydia understands what this does for the Mexican American community, overall. Lydia explains that:

The other opportunity is reality television. The opportunity to participate in first rate professional production. That's what a lot of the kids in South Texas have that they never had before. Much of that is attributed to little Sebastien de la Cruz, because after he got on *America's Got Talent* all of the sudden everybody wanted our South Texas kids. Many of them have now gone to compete. It really opened up that door for them toward the entertainment business.

Part of this move is to provide opportunities to include other Mexican American faces in mainstream television and media. The move to normalize Mexican American's is a move that

serves as a form of resistance toward the way Mexican Americans are typically portrayed in the culture industry. While the immediate result is further rationalization, standardization, and eventual commercialization of Mexican American faces, it also allows for Mexican American faces to be viewed in spaces and situations that are atypical in the lexicon of stereotypes that are rampant in mainstream media.

### *Conclusion*

The insight from the mariachi community shows that many mariachi performers and instructors have experienced similar misconceptions that Sebastien de la Cruz experienced. The insight gleaned from these interviews show the complicated relationship that many Mexican Americans have in relation toward their culture in the United States. The reaction from the Spurs organization and other community members also demonstrates that the mariachi community is held in high regard, and part of the response toward prejudice is to work harder to normalize Mexican American faces on national media platforms.

## CONCLUSION

The original intent of this research was to explore the ways in which cultural producers and receivers identified mariachi music as a symbol of their cultural and ethnic identity in San Antonio. Additionally, discovering the varying motivations for becoming involved in mariachi music were important facets of the study's intent, as no sociological or academic research was conducted in the city of San Antonio in regards to a prevalent musical art form like mariachi. Along with the regional uniqueness of this study, the research method of in-depth interviewing brought deeper perspective on the data that was collected. In addition, the stratified sampling method that divided two distinct sampling populations from two different restaurants led to a rich set of informants with poignant perspectives, stories, and motivations for undertaking a life filled with musical performance.

Along with the value-added qualities to this research endeavor, some of the findings contributed to the body of sociological knowledge on mariachi music and perhaps other musical forms. For example, the findings in regards to cultural and ethnic identity showed that mariachi music is still a distinctly identifiable music form for Mexican American and Mexican-origin families in the United States, and while this is the case there are some performers that do not necessarily view themselves as embodiments of ethnic or cultural identity. This is where the interview method is instructive as it added a richly nuanced and complicated perspective from many mariachi performers in regards to mariachi music.

Findings that were discussed in regards to mariachi music's institutionalization by the public-school system added a unique contribution to this study. As mentioned throughout this study, San Antonio is a central hub for the concerted effort to preserve mariachi music in a



public education setting (Sheehy 2006). The interviews from varying perspectives presented illuminating details over this new educational space that has allowed a breath of vitality for mariachi music. As mariachi music becomes more entrenched in the school system, as identified by the findings, there are new spaces that mariachi musicians and instructors can encompass. There is a professionalization that will continue to evolve, which will provide more opportunity for Mexican American students who decide to involve themselves in mariachi music in an academic capacity. Interviews with instructors detailed this motivation.

This new educational space has also shifted mariachi music's original sensibilities that may not have originally provided many opportunities for women's involvement in mariachi music. Specifically, this study has identified some of the paradigm shifting that has occurred and is still presently occurring in mariachi music. The pervasive presence of women in mariachi music, along with the different perspectives from men, and cultural receivers are highlighted by in-depth interviews. Its strength came in the dynamic perspectives that were identified throughout the section on women's emergence in mariachi music. The varied perspectives on women's involvement in mariachi music is one of the most important findings of this study.

The data presented on technology's role in mariachi music showed that mariachi will constantly change with the availability of newer technology. It has streamlined the ability to learn new music, the ability to share sheet music with other mariachi musicians, and the ability to notate personal compositions of mariachi songs which shows that for the preservation of mariachi music rationalization is a viable strategy. The discovery of how hybridization is an ever-present reality in mariachi music also speaks to how mariachi music is constantly changing despite the strive toward an authentic representation of mariachi music. The problem with

advancing with the times, but honoring an old musical tradition was highlighted in the section on hybridization and authenticity.

The way that the mariachi and San Antonio community responded to the overtly prejudiced tone taken toward Sebastien de la Cruz, after his performance during the NBA Finals, was also revealing. The stories told by the various mariachi performers who were originally slated to perform spoke to the invaluable and unique strength that comes from in-depth interviews. To hear first-hand accounts from several individuals that the San Antonio Spurs organization were originally going to have a whole mariachi group perform the following game after the controversy that was ignited after Sebastien's performance is an example of what mariachi music means to the San Antonio community.

All of these varied findings show that this study has many strengths. With any research study that is undertaken, there are new directions that this particular study leads toward. For example, perhaps a direct and specific focus on particular facets of the mariachi community may lead to more direct and powerful results. If this study was focused solely on mariachi educational programs in public schools, perhaps more rich data on this particular topic would emerge. What do administrative officials think about mariachi's presence in their school districts? What answers do they have in regards to budgetary limitations or the lack of effort to establish stronger mariachi programs? Could a comparative study between a mariachi education program and a jazz program lead toward more fruitful investigation over the general limitations that exist for cultural music that finds itself in educational spaces? These are just some future directions that can potentially lead to more fruitful research in the future.

Another idea for further study is to investigate and compare the San Antonio mariachi community and another city's mariachi community. What discernable differences are there

between the San Antonio mariachi community and another mariachi stronghold such as Los Angeles? Are there differing perspectives that make San Antonio distinct from other mariachi communities throughout the United States? These are just some examples of unanswered questions that remain after this research, and open up additional avenues of potential research.

Despite these stated limitations, this study can serve as a starting point toward learning more about the mariachi community, and Mexican-origin culture. This study is instrumental in presenting the current state of the mariachi musical community in San Antonio, the perspectives of those immersed in this community, and the concerted effort to preserve mariachi music. The proliferation of various centers of mariachi instruction, its versatile utility in many aspects of the Mexican American community's lives, its slow growth towards inclusivity for women, and its self-preservation through its nascent foray into technology guarantees its lasting presence.

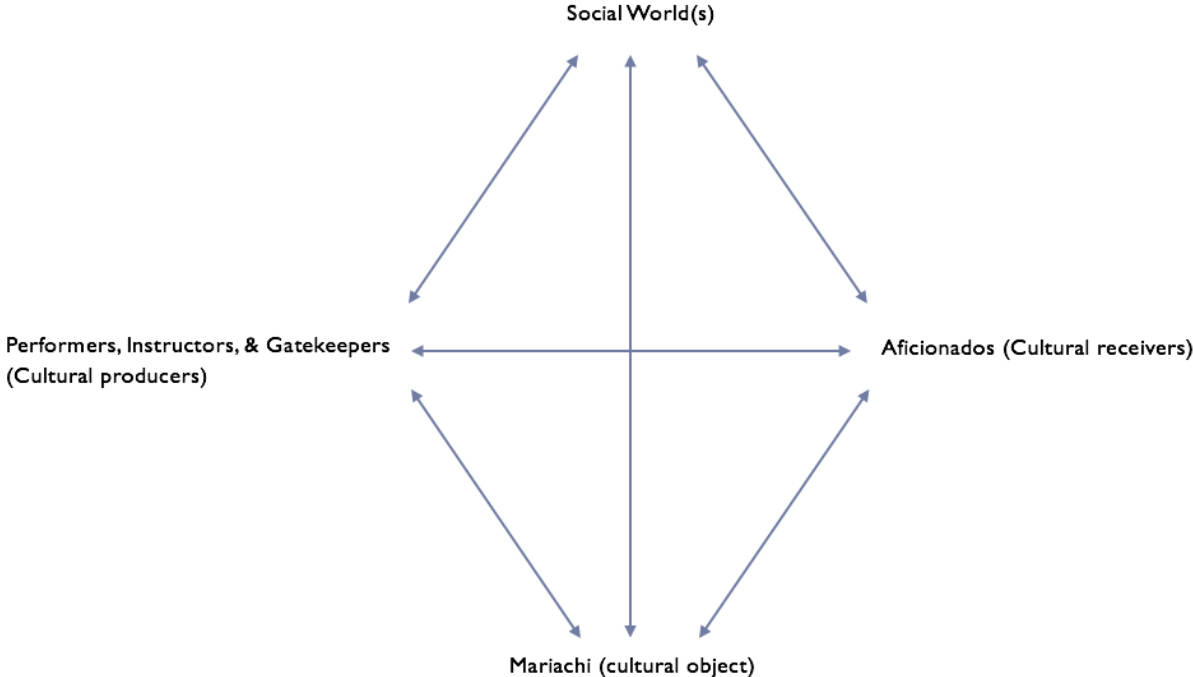
**APPENDIX A:  
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR MARIACHI CREATORS AND  
RECEIVERS (ENGLISH)**

1. Can you recall the first time you were exposed to mariachi music? Is it a musical style that you immediately enjoyed? [Why/Why Not?]
2. How much time do you spend [listening/performing] mariachi music? Are there other musical genres that you would say you [listen/perform]?
3. As a [musician/instructor/aficionado/gatekeeper], do you consider your role in mariachi music important? If [yes/no] why do you feel that way?
4. Do you have a favorite mariachi song that you like to [hear/perform]? Why is this song your favorite? What do you think of when you listen to this song?
5. Are there any mariachi musicians, groups, or singers that you think are important in the music genre? What important contributions have these musician(s)/singer(s) made, in your opinion?
6. What would you consider authentic mariachi music? Do you think most mariachi music you [perform/listen] to in San Antonio reflects this? [Why/Why Not?]
7. Are there any characteristics to a place that hosts mariachi that you feel are important for the musical experience?
8. What does mariachi music mean to you? What do you think mariachi represents?
9. As a [performer/instructor/aficionado/gatekeeper], what do you think of mariachi's presence in many educational programs throughout San Antonio? What particular features of mariachi do you think should be emphasized when taught?
10. In what ways do you think mariachi music has changed in your lifetime? What role has technology played in this change from your perspective as a [performer/instructor/aficionado/gatekeeper]? What do you think about these changes?
11. As a [performer/instructor/aficionado/gatekeeper], what do you think people who are not involved in mariachi think about this music?
12. Thank you for your time. Is there anything in regards to mariachi that you feel you need to mention that was not already covered in this interview?

**APPENDIX B:  
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR MARIACHI PRODUCERS AND  
RECEIVERS (SPANISH)**

1. ¿Puede usted recordar la primera vez que ha estado expuesto a la música de mariachi?  
¿Es un estilo musical que haya disfrutado de inmediato?
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas [escuchar/rendimiento] música de mariachi? ¿Hay otros géneros musicales que se diría que [escuchar /realizar]?
3. Como [artista/instructor/aficionado/guardián], ¿considera que su papel en la música de mariachi importante? Si [sí/no] ¿por qué te sientes así?
4. ¿Tiene una canción favorita de mariachi que le gusta [oír/realizar]? ¿Por qué es esta canción su favorito? ¿Qué opinas de cuando se escucha esta canción?
5. ¿Hay algún mariachi músicos, grupos o cantantes que se cree que son importantes en el género de la música? ¿Qué contribuciones importantes tienen estas músico(s)/cantante(s) realizado, en su opinión?
6. ¿Cuál sería para ti la música de mariachi auténtico? ¿Cree que la música de mariachi más que [realizar/escucha] en San Antonio refleja esto? [¿Por qué por qué no?]
7. ¿Hay alguna característica a un lugar que aloja mariachi que se siente son importantes para la experiencia musical?
8. ¿Qué significa la música de mariachi para usted? ¿Qué opinas de mariachi representa?
9. Como [artista/instructor/aficionado/guardián], ¿qué piensa usted de la presencia de mariachi en muchos programas educativos a través de San Antonio? ¿Qué características particulares de mariachi cree usted que debe ser subrayado cuando se les enseña?
10. ¿De qué maneras cree que la música de mariachi ha cambiado en su vida? ¿Qué papel ha jugado la tecnología en este cambio desde su punto de vista como [artista /instructor/aficionado/guardián]? ¿Qué opinas sobre estos cambios?
11. Como [artista/instructor/aficionado/guardián], ¿qué piensan las personas que no están involucradas en el mariachi ha gustado esta música?
12. Gracias por su tiempo. ¿Hay algo en lo que respecta a mariachi que usted siente que necesita hablar de que no se haya adquirido ya en esta entrevista?

**FIGURE 1:  
THE MARIACHI ARENA OF INTERACTIONS PROVIDED BY GRISWOLD'S  
CULTURAL DIAMOND (2012)**



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